

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Enrollment Trends 2022

Enrollment Declines

WHILE THE IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS AND THE FLAGSHIP UNIVERSITIES continue to maintain enrollment, the latest statistics from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center indicate that undergraduate enrollment in Fall 2022 declined by 1.1 percent compared to last year. First-year enrollments declined 1.5 percent.

"After two straight years of historically large losses, it is particularly troubling that numbers are still falling, especially among freshmen," said Doug Schapiro, NSCRC executive director. "Although the decline has slowed and there are some bright spots, a path back to pre-pandemic enrollment levels is growing further out of reach."

Enrollment dropped 1.6 percent at public four-year institutions, 0.9 percent at private non-profit colleges and 2.5 percent at private for-profits. Community college enrollment declined by only 0.4 percent.

That appears to be because of an 11.5 percent jump in dual enrollment by high school students. Graduate enrollment declined by 1 percent, after last year's 2.7 percent gain. About 10.3 million undergraduate and graduate students enrolled this fall.

"Cataclysmic" Declines. "With the exception of wartime, the United States has never been through a period of declining educational attainment like this," Michael Hicks, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State U. in Indiana, told *The Hechinger Report*.

He was talking about the fact that 4 million fewer students go to college than 10 years ago. The standard explanations are that COVID-19, a demographic dip of 18-year-olds and a strong labor market explain part of the decline.

The Hechinger Report suggests the causes

are more deeply rooted. As a matter of fact, workforce participation for 16- to 24-year-olds is lower than it was before COVID-19 caused social disruption.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the proportion of high school graduates enrolling in college fell from a high of 70 percent in 2016 to 63 percent in 2020. It's worse in some states.

In Tennessee, for example, the number of high school grads going to college fell 11 percentage points since 2017 to 53 percent. In Indiana, it dropped 12 percentage points to 53 percent. In West Virginia, it fell 10 percentage points to 46 percent in 2020. In Michigan, it fell 11 percentage points.

All this, even though before the pandemic the U.S. was facing a shortage of more than 9 million college-educated workers over the next decade. Economic rivals "could wish for nothing better than to see the share of American adults who go to college drop by 12 percentage points," Hicks, told *The Hechinger Report*. "It is literally cataclysmic."

Will Students Return? Another analysis suggests about 1.4 million fewer students were enrolled last year than in 2020, a 9.4 percent decrease.

"What is more alarming is the divergent enrollment patterns across different types of higher education institutions," Joyce Beebe, a fellow at Rice U.'s Baker Institute for Public Policy, recently wrote in her blog, in part referring to community colleges that have been particularly hard hit. "Selective flagship public universities and private not-for-profit colleges have continued to attract a record number of applicants, despite the pandemic and the hot job market.

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Financial Matters

Student Loan Relief Plan to Cost \$379 Billion. The U.S. Dept. of Ed estimates that its student loan cancellation plan will cost about \$379 billion over 30 years. During the first 10 years of the program, total cost is pegged at \$305 billion.

However, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the program will cost \$400 billion over 30 years. Estimates differ because the DOE calculates that only 81 percent of eligible students will participate, while the CBO projects the participation rate at 90 percent.

Meanwhile, the program is on hold while federal courts decide on the legality of the program. However, applications for debt forgiveness are still being processed by the DOE.

Real College Costs Decline. For the second straight year, inflation-adjusted college costs declined, according to the College Board.

The average tuition and fees for the 2022-23 academic year rose by 1.6 percent to \$3,860 for two-year college students, 1.8 percent for in-state students at four-year public colleges to \$10,940 and 3.5 percent for students at four-year private institutions to \$39,400. But after adjusting for inflation, these average tuitions actually declined.

"More colleges and universities raised tuition and fees this year than last year," said Jennifer Ma, senior policy research scientist at the College Board. "However, the average increases in the public sector are still low by historical standards."

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ENROLLMENT DECLINES

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“The real issue is whether the reduced enrollment is temporary, in which case the students will return to campus once the job market cools down, or the 1 million students are lost for good. Unfortunately, if evidence from the prior housing market economic cycles provides any reference, the non-enrollment decision appears to be permanent.”

Long-Term Outlook. Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings’ most recent report, “Weak Enrollment Pressures U.S. Higher Education,” predicts that “unfavorable demographics and shifting employment qualifications in the broader economy may negatively affect long-term enrollment.”

Undergraduate enrollment declined more than 9.4 percent since the pandemic began. International student enrollment, which accounted for 4.6 percent of total enrollment in 2020-21, fell by 15 percent. Chinese student enrollment fell by 35 percent.

While most selective universities have seen steady demand, Fitch predicts that, “enrollment at less selective, typically smaller, four-year degree institutions is unlikely to rebound to pre-pandemic levels this fall.”

New Data from NCES. The National Center for Education Statistics also released new data, including some from the 2020-21 academic year, on graduation rates, student outcomes, financial aid and admissions.

Results show that about 22 percent of first-time, full-time students at two-year institutions in 2017 graduated within two years, while 40 percent graduated within four years.

About 65 percent of full-time, first-time students enrolled in four-year institutions in 2015 graduated within six years at the college where they started.

It also found that in 2021, there were 12,167,779 applications to Title IV institutions (those that participate in federal financial assistance programs), and 7,328,654 of those gained admission.

In Fall 2021, these schools enrolled 1,610,332 students, of whom 1,547,189 were full-time. Some institutions did not fall as sharply, Enrollment at rural serving institutions, for example, fell 11 percent

Find the report at <https://nces.ed.gov/use-the-data/survey-components>.

Transfers Plunge During Pandemic. Finally, “higher education experienced a total two-year loss of 296,200 transfer students or 13.5 percent...,” according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Transfers to two-year institutions experienced double-digit rate declines, while transfer to four-year institutions fell 9.7 percent. ■

Admissions Watch

Some colleges are bucking admissions and enrollment trends.

Augustana’s Second Largest First-Year Class. Augustana U. in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, enrolled 550 full-time, first-year students this fall, the second-largest class in school history (1970 holds the record). The new class includes 72 first-year international students from 48 countries.

“When you have a strong year like this,” Adam Heinitz, vice president for enrollment, told the *Argus Leader*, “you have a variety of different factors: the transformation that’s taking place on campus in terms of facilities, the excitement of new athletic programs (including acrobatics and tumbling, hockey and women’s lacrosse), new academic programs (a bachelor’s in social work and a minor in brewing and fermentation) and reaching out to more students in the region.”

Colorado Enrollment Up. While many schools across the nation were losing students, enrollment at the U. of Colorado Boulder grew by 1.4 percent to about 28,600 students between the spring semesters 2019 and 2022.

DePauw Enrolls Largest Class in Four Years. DePauw U. in Indiana enrolled 535 first-year students this fall in its Class of 2026, the most in four years.

New students include a veteran of a Broadway show, a student who started his own sneaker business, a co-founder of a summer camp for young people and more than 50 captains of sports and academic competition teams.

The class posted an average high school GPA of 3.97. About 45 percent graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Some of the new students were drawn by DePauw’s

new School of Business and Leadership and its new Creative School. First- to second-year retention at DePauw is 92 percent.

Drexel’s Apps Climbed 7 Percent. Drexel U. in Philadelphia received 37,085 applications for the Class of 2026, 7 percent more than the previous year and a 22 percent increase over the past five years. About 43 percent of the new class identify as students of color, with 17 percent identifying as underrepresented students. First-generation students account for 29 percent of the new class, while 28 percent of students are Pell Grant eligible. A little over 43 percent of the incoming class hails from Pennsylvania, while international students from 57 different countries make up 10 percent of the new class.

HBCU in Demand. While many colleges are struggling with the impact of COVID-19, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have experienced a surge in enrollment. From 2018 to 2021, applications for a cross-section of the schools increased nearly 30 percent, according to the Common App. And applications using the Common Black College Application are projected to reach 40,000 this year, four times more than in 2016.

Louisiana’s Downs and Ups. The U. of Louisiana-Lafayette enrolled 15,219 degree-seeking students this fall, a decrease of 6.2 percent from last year.

At the same time, Louisiana enrollment jumped by 12 percent at Bossier Parish C.C. this fall, in part, because it opened two new campuses, one in Natchitoches and another in Many, and it expanded night, online and weekend courses.

Maine C.C.s Rebound. Public policy may have something to do with whether or not students return to community colleges. For example, a state program in Maine that encourages recent high school graduates to attend tuition free is one reason that 47 percent more students have enrolled for the fall semester than last year at Central Maine C. C. in Auburn.

Statewide, applications for this fall were up by 11 percent for the Maine C. C. System, totaling slightly more than in 2019. One popular 19th century political slogan claimed, “As Maine goes, so goes the nation.” Hopefully, that’s true when it comes to colleges in the 21st century.

Montana’s “Cycle of Growth.” Enrollment for the Class of 2026 at the U. of Montana is up 6 percent this fall. It is part of what UM President Seth Bodnar calls a “cycle of growth,” according to the *Missoulian*. ■

Disability Programs Spread

An estimated 11 percent of undergraduates register a disability with their school. Some observers estimate that the actual number of students with disabilities could be twice that number. But about one-third of students with disability report that they’re unaware of programs designed to help them in their post-secondary education institution.

In 2004, only 25 programs were offered at U.S. colleges and universities to address these problems. But by 2019, more than 260 colleges and universities offered on-campus transition programs for intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). IntellectAbility is one group that is working to improve services for the students. See, www.ReplacingRisk.com. ■

Decision Drivers

WHAT FACTORS MOST INFLUENCE A STUDENT'S decision to apply to college? According to some estimates, nearly 60 percent of students say the number one factor is the strength of an institution's academic offerings, while 56 percent of students say they are influenced by the cost of the institution.

However, while the advertised cost of public institutions increased by 25 percent between 2010 and 2019, and 30 percent for private institutions, when discounts are taken into consideration the increases are slightly smaller. According to Eduventurers, the actual net price of public institutions has increased by 21 percent, and 18 percent at private schools.

What are other decision drivers?

What Drives Legacy Admissions? The legacy advantage primarily benefits white admission candidates from wealthy backgrounds, according to "Through the Front Door: Why Do Organizations (Still) Prefer Legacy Applicants?" which appeared in the October 2022 issue of *The American Sociological Review*.

Researchers from MIT and the U. of Colorado-Boulder studied one elite university, which they called "The College," where 34.2 percent of legacy applicants were admitted compared to 13.9 percent of non-legacy applicants.

They claim that the legacy practice conflicts with two other stated goals of colleges--increasing diversity and admitting students on the basis of merit. Yet they argued that there are two reasons that colleges still rely on the practice. Legacies as a group have a better yield once they are offered admission and they need less financial aid.

College No Guarantee of Prosperity. According to a survey of 1,000 Americans with a college degree by Intelligent.com that asks, "Is College Worth It?" One-in-seven college grads earn less than the federal poverty threshold; 25 percent earn less than \$30,000 per year; 48 percent say they live paycheck to paycheck; and the majority do not actually work in their field of study.

Yet according to the 2022 College Confidence Index by GradGuard and College Plus, a survey of 1,500 current and prospective college students and 500 parents found that 83 percent of college students are completely, very or somewhat confident "that they will earn enough money to make the cost of college worth it." However, only 63 percent of parents of college students feel confident that a college education will allow their children to get a good job, and only 60 percent think it's worth the investment. Only 36 percent of parents of college students feel confident that they can pay for four years of their child's college education.

NEW DRIVERS

Parents Plan on FAFSA. According to an annual survey from Discover Student Loans, 58 percent of parents with college-bound students have changed their minds about filling out the FAFSA. Now, 72 percent of all college-bound students plan to fill it out. The survey also found only 20 percent of parents knew the application can be submitted starting October 1.

California Drives Admissions with New Program. The U. of California announced a new dual admissions program for Fall 2023 that will allow a new opportunity for California high school graduates who were ineligible for admission.

"The program is targeted toward students who graduate from high school with at least a 3.0 grade-point average, but without all the required courses," according to EdSource.

Those students will be given a conditional offer of admission to a specific UC campus. But they will first need to go to a community college and complete their lower-division classes. (However, UCLA, UC Berkeley and UC San Diego are not part of the pilot program.)

Last year, about 3,700 California high school grads posted a 3.0 GPA or better, but they had not taken all the required courses. They were predominantly from underrepresented groups. Students will receive letters inviting them to participate in the program.

Milwaukee Requires Students to Fill Out FAFSA to Graduate.

In order to make students aware of the federal aid for college available to them, the Milwaukee County (Wisconsin) Board of School Directors voted to require all graduating students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Research indicates that 91 percent of graduating students who fill out the FAFSA enroll in college the same year, versus 50 percent who enroll who did not complete the form. This year, only 42 percent of Milwaukee's graduates filled out the form. Alabama, California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland and New Hampshire also require students to fill out the form as a condition for graduation.

"Wisconsin ranks 41st nationally in FAFSA completion rates, and the National College Attainment Network estimates that Wisconsin high school students left \$50 million on the table in 2021," said U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Chancellor Mark Mone.

P.S. Multiple Applications. A recent Student Voice survey found that 40 percent of undergraduate students who plan to graduate in 2025 applied to 6 to 10 institutions. That's not much different than two decades ago when competition heated up. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Poison Ivy: How Elite Colleges Divide Us by City U. of New York professor Evan Mandery; New Press; ISBN 978-1-62097-695-1; \$29.99.

"The Affordability Gap," report from the National College Attainment Network (NCAN). Findings state that for the average Pell Grant recipient in 2019-20, just 24 percent of public four-year colleges/universities

were affordable, and that the affordability gap was \$2,627. Only 40 percent of public two-year community colleges were affordable, with an affordability gap of \$907. See, www.ncan.org/page/affordability.

Paying for College: Everything You Need to Maximize Financial Aid and Afford College by Kalman A. Chany with Geoff Martz; updated

Princeton Review guide; Penguin Random House, ISBN 978-0-593-51649-2; \$25.99.

The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs latest survey found that need-based grant aid decreased 1.8 percent nationwide from \$9.3 billion in 2019-22 to about \$9.15 billion in 2020-21. It also found that 87 percent of state aid came in the form of grants, of which 73 percent was need-based.

Find survey results at www.nassgapsurvey.com/survey_reports/2020-2021-52nd.pdf. ■

FINANCIAL MATTERS

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Borrowing Declines for Eleventh Year. The College Board said that both the share of bachelor's degree recipients who borrowed and the average amount borrowed declined for the 11th straight year. Last year, students and parents borrowed \$94.7 billion, down from \$141.6 billion a decade ago when average federal loans reached their peak. Analysts suggest the decline is probably linked to the undergraduate enrollment decline.

Parents Raid College Savings Plans. According to a poll of 1,001 parents by intelligent.com, one-third of them have dipped into their current college savings for non-educational purposes, including for medical payments and gambling. Overall, nearly half (45 percent) of parents haven't even started a college fund, and 13 percent never planned to do so.

Top 10 Colleges for Financial Aid. Here is the Princeton Review's 2022 list of top colleges for financial aid, in order:

Vanderbilt U.; Williams C.; Washington U. in St. Louis; California Institute of Technology; Bowdoin C.; Rice U.; Thomas Aquinas C.; Grinnell C.; Skidmore C.; C. of the Atlantic.

STATE FINANCIAL NEWS

Illinois C.'s Advantage Plus Scholarships. Illinois C., a residential liberal arts school in Jacksonville founded in 1829, announced its Advantage Plus guarantee of a minimum \$20,000 in scholarships for all four years, for all first-year students.

Also, first-year students who are Illinois residents and who posted a 3.0 high school GPA will have 100 percent of their financial aid met. These new benefits are added on to IC's guarantee that students will graduate in four years, or the college will cover the cost of their remaining courses, textbooks and tuition.

Nearly 100 percent of IC's graduates are employed or pursuing advanced degrees immediately following graduation.

Del Mar Tuition/Fee-Free for Eligible Students. Del Mar C. in Texas is now tuition/fee-free for students who receive Pell or state grants. The Tuition Advantage Grant Program could help thousands of Texas students. Nearly 70 percent of the school's students rely on Pell Grants.

Oklahoma State to Reduce Student Debt. According to Oklahoma State president Kayse Shrum, the state's second-largest university is concentrating on boosting enrollment, student retention, limiting student debt and growing

Oklahoma's STEM workforce.

By Fall 2025, OSU plans eight new Bachelor of Technology degrees, three new Bachelor of Science degrees, a new non-degree certificate program in "mission-critical" areas of the economy and eight new online programs.

OSU plans to graduate 60 percent of students debt-free. Those with debt will be limited to \$3,000 a year, or \$12,000 upon graduation. OSU enrolled 4,643 new freshmen this year and plans to enroll even more, expand the number of scholarships and awards and increase graduation rates by 10 percent by 2027. Only 26 percent of Oklahoma adults earned a bachelor's degree or higher, below

the 33 percent national average.

Texas Expands Free-Tuition Programs. The U. of Texas System created a \$300 million endowment to help seven universities expand their free-tuition programs. The Promise Plus program will allow UT-Arlington, UT-Dallas, UT-El Paso, UT-Permian Basin, UT-Rio Grande Valley, UT-San Antonio and UT-Tyler to increase income thresholds for program eligibility.

"We're going out of our way to commit every dollar we can to these programs to lower tuition and cover tuition for our students," said UT System Board Chair Kevin Eltife. ■

SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

Arizona's High School Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. Arizona is first in the nation to allow parents to choose which schools their children will attend, and other education learning options. State dollars will follow them. The Arizona legislature and Governor Doug Ducey expanded the Arizona Scholarship Accounts to make them available to all K-12 students beginning September 2022. The results will be interesting.

Greater Texas Services Awards \$1.5 Million to Texas HBCUs. Greater Texas Services, a public charity that focuses on Texas students, will award \$1.5 million to nine Texas Historically Black Colleges and Universities for scholarships to support student retention and graduation. Beneficiaries include Texas Southern U., Huston-Tillotson U., Jarvis Christian C., Paul Quinn C., Southwestern Christian C., Texas C., Wiley C. and St. Phillip's C.

Nuclear Energy. The U.S. Dept. of Energy is awarding more than \$5 million in scholarships for students across the country pursuing degrees in nuclear energy and engineering. Individual students will be awarded \$5,000 per year.

Students at community colleges and four-year colleges and universities are eligible. Apply through the U.S. Dept. of Energy.

Sacred Heart's Public Health Scholarships. Sacred Heart U. in Connecticut received a grant of nearly \$1.5 million for scholarships from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services to "strengthen the emergency preparedness workforce."

According to Jacqueline Vernarelli, program director, the program will provide 45 scholarships to fund the education of students over a three-year period," including undergraduates. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Suicide Watch. According to Marquette U. president Mike Lovell, who has prioritized mental health and recently had a Mental Health Center on campus named after him, suicide is the number two cause of death among college students. More than 1,100 students commit suicide each year. And that person is known by 25 percent of students who are often affected by the tragedy as well.

Washington State Nursing Admits Holistically. The C. of Nursing at Washington State U. now looks beyond grades and test scores to evaluate potential students on "how well their experiences and skills align with the attributes of a nurse," according to *WSU Insider*. Consideration given to a student's GPA

"is now half of what it was in the past." The interview process is now more important and objective. Prior life experiences are also given more credence.

"Holistic admissions helps us better match the mission, vision and values of the college, and WSU's land-grant mission..." said Chris Sogge, director of the Center for Student Excellence.

Social Media. Almost all students with internet access (96 percent) are using at least one social network. Botter and ChatClass are two popular social media tools that are being used for educational purposes. ■

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