

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Admissions Watch

EDs Begin to Shape Class of 2029

Barnard Selects 56 Percent of New Class Early. Perhaps following Harvard's recent decision, Barnard, the all-women's college in New York City, did not release Early Decision numbers related to its Class of 2029. About 34 percent of the Class of 2028 was admitted early.

But Barnard did say that 18 percent of its new class is made up of first-generation college students, 1 percent higher than last year, and 6 percent more than two years ago. Also, 96 percent of admitted students rank in the top 10 percent of their high school class. The Early Decision class comes from 393 high schools and 40 states and territories. International students hail from 32 nations. About 56 percent of Barnard's new class has been admitted early. That's down from 60 percent of the Class of 2027. Barnard will release all its statistics for the Class of 2029 this spring.

Barnard has revealed that the number of black students in last year's first-year class, the first after the Supreme Court's decision against race-based affirmative action in admissions, fell by 2.5 percent to 9.5 percent of the Class of 2028. The percent of "Hispanic/Latine" students fell from 13 to 10 percent, while the number of Asian American students increased by 7 percent.

Brown Welcomes 906 ED Students. Brown U. in Providence, Rhode Island, admitted 906 Early Decision students to its Class of 2029. They were selected from an ED pool of 5,048 applicants, fewer than last year.

Among admitted students, 65 percent applied for financial aid and 19 percent will be the first in their family to attend college. Brown's QuestBridge cohort is made up of 90 students. The proportion of international

students in the Early Decision applicant pool increased 22 percent over the previous year, and 138 of them were admitted early.

"The depth of talent among the applicants in our Early Decision pool was extraordinary by all measures," said Logan Powell, associate provost for enrollment and dean of admission.

Duke Admits Record-Low 12 Percent ED. Duke U. in Durham, North Carolina, received 6,627 Early Decision applications, 6 percent more than the previous year and the most in Duke's history. It admitted 849 of those students or 12.8 percent. QuestBridge scholars accounted for 113 of those admitted. Last year, Duke admitted 12.9 percent early.

About 55 percent of this year's admitted students are female. Some 131 are first in their family to go to college and 207 are expected to receive Pell Grants. North Carolina contributed 148 of the early admitted students. About 7 percent of admitted students come from other nations.

Of admitted students, 672 plan to enroll in Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, while 177 plan to enroll in the Pratt School of Engineering.

Despite the Supreme Court's ruling against race-based affirmative action, Duke's Class of 2028, last year, experienced no change in black student enrollment, but a 6 percent decrease in Asian American students and a 1 percent decrease in white students.

Emory Received 3,311 ED Apps. Emory U. in Georgia received about 3,311 Early Decision I applications for its Class of 2029. It admitted 995 students ED. They

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Financial Matters

Congress Acts on FAFSA. After last year's problems, Congress overwhelmingly passed a new law, and President Biden signed it, which requires the U.S. Dept. of Education to make future FAFSA forms available by October 1 of every year.

"As college costs continued to rise, federal financial aid, including Pell Grants, is essential to making higher education more affordable and accessible," said Congressman Bobby Scott of Virginia.

By mid-December of this year, more than 1.5 million families had filed their 2025-26 Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

More Student Debt Relief. Almost 55,000 student borrowers received an early holiday present when the Biden Administration announced, that due to significant fixes of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, their remaining debts were being forgiven, in the amount of \$4.28 billion dollars. That brings recent student debt forgiveness to a total of \$180 billion for nearly five million former students. Teachers, public health officials, those in law enforcement and other critical public service fields are the most recent beneficiaries.

Donations Matter. A parent's donations to an elite college their child hopes to attend matters at some schools when admissions officers make their decisions, a December 17th *Wall Street Journal* article revealed, in reporting on a recent lawsuit. That suit charges MIT, Notre Dame, U. of Pennsylvania, Georgetown, and Cornell U. with price fixing, which they deny. Twelve other schools have already settled out of court.

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SHAPING CLASS OF 2029

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will join 64 QuestBridge Scholars who were admitted earlier in December. About 805 students gained entry to Emory C. in Atlanta, while 400 were admitted to its Oxford C. campus. And 210 were admitted to both colleges and can pick which college they want to attend next fall.

"With their academic strength, community engagement, creativity and curiosity, these students are bound to make outstanding contributions to Emory's vibrant campus community," said John F. Latting, associate vice provost for enrollment and dean of admission.

Johns Hopkins U. Admits 551 Students

Early. Johns Hopkins U. in Baltimore admitted 551 students to its Class of 2029 through its Early Decision I option and QuestBridge cohort. They come from 15 countries and 43 states. The remainder of the class will be selected from Early Decision II and the Regular Decision applicant pools, and all will be announced by March 21.

Among admitted students is an inventor of a patent-pending microbot that breaks down plaque in coronary arteries, a published writer studying Mexican Indigenous medicine and the science behind it and a world champion Irish dancer.

All those admitted "share a sense of curiosity and desire to make a difference in their communities." Their teachers and counselors described them as "adaptable, self-aware, academic leaders interested in understanding the 'why' behind concepts."

Notre Dame Early Apps Up 16 Percent.

The U. of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, attracted a record 12,917 Restrictive Early Action applications for its Class of 2029 from students in all 50 states and territories and 149 nations. On December 17, ND announced it had reviewed them all and offered admissions to 1,669 of those students.

Admitted students also received their financial aid offers under the school's new "Pathways to Notre Dame" program that expands ND's access and affordability. ND is now need-blind for all domestic and international students. It also eliminated loans from its need-based aid.

"Making a Notre Dame education affordable and accessible to all students from all socioeconomic backgrounds is a fundamental priority," said Micki Kidder, vice president for undergraduate enrollment. "As the leading Catholic global research university, this is core to our mission."

Rice Accepts 13 Percent of Early Applicants. Rice U. in Houston received 2,970

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Harvard's Overall Diversity Remains Relatively Stable.

Harvard C.'s Class of 2028, the first admitted after the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling, experienced a decline in the number of black students, by 4 percent compared to its Class of 2027. Black student enrollment fell from 18 percent to 14 percent of that class. However, the overall racial demographic remained roughly similar to years prior because the percentage of Hispanic students increased from 14 to 16 percent of the class. The proportion of Asian American students remained the same at 37 percent, according to the *Harvard Crimson*.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

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"At Georgetown University, a former president selected students from a special admissions list by consulting their parent's donation history, not their transcript, according to the suit," the paper reported. "At Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a board member got the school to admit two applicants who were children of a wealthy former business colleague, the suit alleges. And at Notre Dame, an enrollment official in charge of a special applicant list wrote to others, 'Sure hope the wealthy next year raise a few more smart kids!' according to the suit."

A spokesperson for Notre Dame countered, "...every student admitted to Notre Dame is fully qualified and ready to succeed."

Reed's Tuition-Free Initiative. Reed C. in Portland, Oregon, known for its "high standards of scholarly practice, creative thinking and engaged citizenship," now offers tuition-free education for newly admitted Oregon, Washington and transfer students

Meanwhile, a poll by the student newspaper found that nearly 84 percent of the class of 2028 who responded to its survey said a diverse student body should remain a goal for Harvard. But, members of the freshman class who responded to the survey were split on whether they mentioned racial identity in their college essays. Some 49 percent of respondents said they did mention race, while 51 percent said they did not mention it, the paper revealed.

The survey also noted that 26 percent of the freshman respondents utilized a private admissions counselor in their application process. ■

from around the U.S. whose family income is under \$100,000.

The new initiative reaffirms Reed's dedication to "fostering a diverse, inclusive and intellectually rigorous community by eliminating financial barriers that may have previously hindered talented students from pursuing their dreams at one of the nation's top level liberal arts colleges."

St. Mike's Community Commitment. St. Michael's C. in Colchester, Vermont, launched a new initiative dubbed the "St. Mike's Community Commitment" for students whose families earn \$100,000 or less and maintain a GPA of 3.2. They will receive full free tuition. Additional aid will be available to most of them through the FAFSA and Pell Grants.

"The St. Mike's Community Commitment aligns with our institution's mission and the Edmundite value of access to education, which has been a priority since our founding," said President Richard Plumb. "This initiative enables talented students from all backgrounds to obtain a first-rate education." ■

Early Decision I applications to its Class of 2029, 3 percent more than last year. It accepted 13.2 percent of them. Additionally, Rice admitted 100 QuestBridge Scholars, up from last year's 77, Yvonne Romero da Silva, vice president for enrollment, told *The Rice Thresher*.

This is the first year that Rice has conducted two rounds of Early Decision. ED II applicants will receive a decision in February.

Williams Admits 26 Percent ED. Williams C. in Massachusetts attracted 964 Early Decision applications for its Class of 2029. It admitted 257 students, deferred 129 and denied admission to 572 of them. It also welcomed 18 QuestBridge Scholars to its new class, Liz Creighton, dean of admissions and student financial services, told the *Williams Record*. Last cycle, Williams admitted a

record-low 23.3 percent of its ED applicants, compared to this cycle's 26.6 percent.

In reference to the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling, Creighton said, "Admissions readers do not have access to information about applicants' self-disclosed race or ethnicity while reading their applications."

She added, "Applicants are, of course, able to discuss experiences related to race in any part of their application and admissions officers may consider this information so long as 'that discussion is concretely tied to a quality of character or unique ability,' as permitted by Chief Justice John Roberts' majority opinion for the court."

The student paper added that, "The racial demographics of the Class of 2028, the first cohort admitted after the Supreme Court decision, did not shift greatly compared to other recently admitted classes." ■

New Initiatives in Admissions

Florida International Conducts EA Decision Day. In early December, Florida International U. in Miami conducted its first ever Early Action Decision Day, the first of three Decision Days for its Class of 2029. This admissions cycle, fall applications rose 20 percent over 2023. This first Decision Day focused on Florida residents. By evening, several hundred students had been formally accepted into FIU's Class of 2029. Also for the first time, selected students received an immediate invitation into FIU's Honors College.

"This year we are seeing more applicants with a higher academic profile," said Jody Glassman, assistant vice president for enrollment and universities admissions. "More students with Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate diplomas and Cambridge diplomas, or students with dual enrollment beyond the required basic English courses, or students who understand that the benefits of a FIU education are the connections they make to careers, internships and research opportunities."

Quinnipiac U. Hosts 100th Class. Quinnipiac U. in Hamden, Connecticut, began welcoming its 100th class (Centennial Class of 2029) by surprising its first two students with visits to their high schools. "Chief Experience Officer" Tom Ellett handed the students their acceptance envelopes in person before assembled crowds of family, friends and high school classmates.

Stockton U. Hosts Instant Decision Day. Stockton U. in New Jersey conducted an "Instant Decision Day" in November, the fourth of 2024. More than 80 students sent in their RSVP for the November event. Prospective new students and their families visited the school, presented their credentials and received their acceptance decision in person. Faculty and staff from the university's seven academic schools were available to answer questions about their potential majors.

"This is an important event because of the large number that do attend Instant Decision Day do end up choosing Stockton," said Robert Heidrick, vice president for enrollment management.

Texas to Admit Top 5 Percent Automatically. Since 1997, the U. of Texas at Austin has automatically admitted Texas students who graduate in the top 6 percent of their high school class. That number will be cut to 5 percent beginning in 2026. (Other Texas public universities must admit the top 10 percent of each high school class.) For the Class

of 2028, that added up to about 7,000 students. But that makes the odds of admission for other students about on par with Dartmouth and other Ivy League colleges. Last year, a total of 72,885 students applied.

This past fall, that record was smashed by about 25 percent, when more than 90,000 applied for the Class of 2029 between August and December. Of those, 9,210 were admitted, 7,000 automatically. Complicating things for out-of-staters is the fact that Texas law limits out-of-state students to 10 percent of the university's undergraduate population of about 42,000 students, or about 8 percent of the new class of 2029. Students from families earning under \$65,000 a year attend tuition free. (About 75 percent of UT Austin students graduate in four years.)

In the wake of the Supreme Court's affirmative action decision, Tennessee and New York have adopted a guaranteed admission policy similar to that of Texas to ensure racial and economic diversity.

Washington Encourages 10th Graders. As part of its effort to encourage more students to attend college, the State of Washington plans to contact low-income 10th graders to let them know that they qualify for college or technical training, tuition free. During its 2024 spring session, the Washington Legislature passed legislation to notify students in grades 10-12 whose families receive state or federal food assistance that they can attend a state college or university with state support. The Washington program is modeled after a similar approach in Michigan.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

More Brits Attend College. According to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, a record number of British 18-year-olds accepted a place in higher education in 2024, including record numbers from poor backgrounds. Overall, 2.9 percent more 18-year-olds, or 279,000 students accepted offers. That means 36.4 percent of UK 18-year-olds will enter higher education.

Greek University Reform. Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, Greek universities will greatly increase the number of students they accept. Currently, only 12 percent of students are admitted via placement exams. But that number is set to increase to 30 percent. "This change expands access and empowers individuals to reimagine their academic and professional trajectories," said Higher Education Secretary-General Nikos Papaioannou. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Reimagining Student Engagement: From Disrupting to Driving by Amy Elizabeth Berry; Corwin Publishing; ISBN-10:107-188-0306. "When you reimagine student engagement, you'll see your students as true agents of their own learning and provide them with the motivational resources that fuel collaboration and school success."

Radical Reimagining for Student Success in Higher Education, edited by Jo Arney, Timothy Dale, Glenn Davis, Jillian Kinzie; Routledge and

the American Association of State Colleges and Universities; ISBN:9781642671537, \$39.95. "The authors argue that really putting student success at the center of attention will require a radical reimagining of higher education."

The Great Upheaval: Higher Education's Past, Present, and Uncertain Future by Scott J. Van Pelt and Arthur Levine; Johns Hopkins University Press, ISBN:142-144-2574; \$22.95 paperback.

What Universities Owe Democracy by Ronald

J Daniels; Johns Hopkins University Press; ISBN-10:142-144-2698; \$29.95. "Ronald J. Daniels, president of Johns Hopkins University, argues, it is critical for today's colleges and universities to reestablish their place in democracy."

Academic Belonging in Higher Education: Fostering Student Connection, Competence, and Confidence, edited by Erendira Rueda, Candice Lowe Swift; Routledge; ISBN:9781642675290; \$42.95. For those "who wish to enhance their students' sense of academic belonging by taking informed, practical measures to make them feel valued and supported." ■

TESTING TABS

Dartmouth Reinstates Testing Requirement. Dartmouth U. in New Hampshire attracted 3,550 Early Decision applications for its Class of 2029. That is a 71 percent increase in ED applications since 2019. Dartmouth suspended required standardized testing scores in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, but reinstated the requirement for this new class.

This cycle, 95 percent of those offered early admission tested in the 75th percentile of SAT or ACT test takers. And 98 percent of admitted students rank in the top 10 percent

of their senior class. A record 22 percent are projected as valedictorians or salutatorians of their high school class. About 25 percent qualified for a financial aid package without parental contribution.

"We consider test scores in the context of the applicant's school and community and the environmental factors associated with the location," said Lee Coffin, vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid.

"Our admissions process is anchored in thoughtful, holistic review," added Kathryn Bezella, assistant vice president.

Princeton Remains Test-Optional. Princeton U. in New Jersey used Single-Choice Early Action to select its first cohort of the Class of 2029. It has not released admission data for this class, which will be the school's largest as it expands its student body to 5,700 students. Princeton, alongside the U. of Pennsylvania, Cornell and Columbia remained test-optional Ivy League colleges.

Yale Starts "Flexible Testing Policy." Yale C. in New Haven, Connecticut, admitted the first cohort to apply under Yale's new "flexible testing policy," that allows students to submit one or more types of tests from four options: the ACT, SAT, AP and IB.

Jeremiah Quinlan, dean of undergraduate admissions and financial aid, said, "Our applicants are not their scores.... [They are] in combination with other information, mindful of a student's" environment and other factors.

Yale fielded 6,729 Early Action applications for its Class of 2029. It offered admission to 728 applicants, or 10.8 percent, while 17 percent were deferred. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Workforce Needs. According to You Science's 2024 Workforce Report, "Fixing America's Broken Talent Pipeline," there are currently 8.2 million job openings in the U.S., but only 7.2 million unemployed workers. That means that for every 100 job openings, there are just 93 workers to fill them. In fact, 40 percent of business owners say they have job openings that they can't fill, a 20-year high.

Not only that, 86 percent of employers reported that entry-level workers require additional training to succeed. And 40 percent of those surveyed employers complained that educational institutions do not adequately prepare students for careers in their fields. And 7 percent indicated that entry-level talent is "not at all prepared."

Nearly 80 Colleges Could Close in Next 5 Years. A recent report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia warns that as many as 80 colleges could shut down by 2029 as a result of trends in demographics, financial pressures, escalating tuition and costs, as well as changing perceptions about the value of higher education. By 2029, overall college enrollment could plunge by 15 percent.

Who is at risk? According to the Federal Reserve, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, women's colleges and colleges with small endowments are most at-risk of closing their doors. Urban schools are less likely to fail because cities offer many additional attractions for students.

Other Budget Deficits. And in another sign of the times, Brown U., one of the nation's wealthiest universities, is also battling financial problems. While it is under no threat of closing, Brown U., with an endowment of about \$7.2 billion, announced it is facing a \$46 million structural budget deficit. That's about 3 per-

cent of its operating budget this year, but the deficit will force the Ivy League school to limit growth in hiring and in doctoral programs.

"Without changes to the way Brown operates, the structural deficit is expected to continue to deepen significantly, including a deficit next year that would grow to more than \$90 million, with steady increases in subsequent years," said Francis J. Doyle III, provost.

Screen Time and Loneliness Linked to Insomnia. According to a new study by Oregon State U. scientists, in collaboration with researchers at Harvard and Chaminade universities, both loneliness and screen time elevate the risk of insomnia, which is detrimental to the health of college students. More than eight hours of screen time a day elevates the risk of insomnia. And, more than one quarter of college students report insomnia.

But surprisingly, loneliness, which is "an epidemic," is a better predictor of insomnia. And according to the U.S. Surgeon General, about half of U.S. adults reported measurable levels of loneliness, which is on par with smoking for raising the risk of premature death.

Voters Like Community Colleges Best. According to Data for Progress, 69 percent of the 1,216 voters it surveyed had a favorable view of both community colleges and trade schools. Less than half (48 percent) had a favorable view of public colleges and universities. Liberal Arts colleges garnered a 26 percent favorability rating, while Ivy League colleges were rated favorably by only 13 percent of these voters.

About 54 percent of the voters say colleges and universities are effective at helping students secure a well-paying job. However, 45 percent of the surveyed voters do not think college is worth the cost of attending. ■

President-Elect Trump Selects U.S. Education Secretary

As *CB* went to press, President-Elect Donald J. Trump had appointed (and the U.S. Senate was debating the confirmation) Linda McMahon as his new Secretary of Education. McMahon served as a former Administrator of the Small Business Bureau during the President's first term. Trump said, "We will send education back to the states, and Linda will spearhead that effort."

According to *Forbes*, McMahon graduated with a degree in French and an education certificate from East Carolina U., although she never taught. As a self-made multi-millionaire, McMahon has been an education philanthropist, promoting literacy and donating to her alma mater. She also served on the boards of Sacred Heart U., the World Special Olympics and briefly on the Connecticut Board of Education. She unsuccessfully ran twice to become a U.S. Senator from Connecticut.

During his campaign last year, the President vowed to abolish the Department of Education, which split from the old Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1979. But observers believe Congress is unlikely to shut it down. However, the new Secretary may be able to redistribute funds and functions to the states without abolishing the DOE. What will happen to the \$1.6 trillion student aid portfolio is unclear. ■

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