

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Admissions Watch

Amherst Sets Record. Amherst C. in Massachusetts received a record high 15,818 applications for its Class of 2029 and admitted 7 percent of them. They hail from all 50 states and 40 countries. A full quarter of the new class is made up of students who are the first in their family to attend college.

Cal Poly Out-of-State Apps Rise. Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo received 81,914 applications for this fall, setting the new school record. That's an increase of 3.6 percent over last year. The average GPA of applicants was 4.06.

In 2025, out-of-state applications rose by 9.4 percent, those from out of the country rose by 6.8 percent. Those from California students increased by 3 percent.

According to the *SLO Tribune*, the California State U. typically accepts around 30 percent of applicants "but it has space for significantly less than that." Cal Poly is building a new 4,200-unit student housing project to help accommodate demand.

Last year, Cal Poly accepted 23,456 undergraduate students but enrolled only 6,192. It is particularly hard to find a spot in some majors.

Colby Admits 7 Percent. Colby C. in Maine attracted 20,144 students who applied for its Class of 2029, "the largest and most competitive applicant pool in the history of the college." Only 7 percent of those were offered a place in the new class. About 95 percent are expected to graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class. The median SAT score of admitted students is 1520. The median ACT score is 34.

"They are an incredible group of talented artists and writers, creative thinkers and innovators, award-winning scientists, impactful athletes and leaders who are transforming their schools and communities," said Molly Hodgkins, dean of enrollment.

Marquette More Competitive. The admit rate at Marquette U. in Milwaukee fell below 80 percent for the first time since 2016. Its target size for the Class of 2029 was 1,950 students. And it landed 1,949 students by May 1, its Decision Day.

Last year, 32 percent of the incoming class was made up of students of color. This year, according to Sarah Feldner, acting provost, the university didn't see a decline in any "key areas." She added that, "It's still a goal we're working on."

Middlebury Attracts Record International Apps. Middlebury C. in Vermont received 11,831 applications for its classes of 2029 and 2029.5. It admitted 13.9 percent of its applicant pool through Early Decision 1, Early Decision 2, Regular Decision and through its partnerships with QuestBridge, Posse and College Track.

Admitted students come from 73 countries and speak 95 languages. First-generation students represent 18 percent of admitted students. Middlebury awarded \$19.7 million in financial aid, and meets the full demonstrated need of admitted students.

Middlebury is in the fifth year of a test optional pilot policy, and 44 percent of those admitted this year did not share test scores. The test optional policy will continue at least through the entering Class of 2030.

"The Admissions Committee reviewed every submitted application from a highly qualified group of students who have demonstrated their rigorous academic preparation, personal fortitude and deep curiosity for ideas. They're ready to join Middlebury's dynamic global community," said Nicole Curvin, vice president for strategic enrollment and dean of admissions.

Penn State to Close Seven Campuses. Pennsylvania State U.'s Board of Trustees

continued on page 2

Financial Matters

Student Loan Default Collections Resume.

After a five-year COVID-driven hiatus, the U.S. Department of Education resumed collecting default student loans. Currently, more than 5 million borrowers are in default, and CNBC reported that the Trump administration believes that number could swell to almost 10 million within a few months. That's almost a quarter of all borrowers.

The U.S. Dept. of Ed says that altogether, 42.7 million borrowers owe more than \$1.6 trillion. Only 38 percent of borrowers are in repayment and current on their student loans.

That means that the federal government can seize tax refunds, paychecks, Social Security or disability benefits of individuals who are in default.

SAVE PLAN

CNBC added, "Millions of borrowers who signed up for the Biden administration's new repayment plan, known as SAVE, were caught in limbo after GOP-led lawsuits managed to get the plan blocked in the summer of last year. Many of those borrowers will now have to switch out of the Biden-era payment pause and into another repayment plan that will spike their monthly bill."

The repayment pause already cost taxpayers more than \$238 billion dollars. And the Congressional Budget Office estimates federal student loans will cost taxpayers another \$198 billion over the next decade. On average, the federal government recovers 65 to 75 percent of defaulted student loans.

continued on page 2

INSIDE

- More Financial Matters
- Curriculum Capsules
- Enrollment Trends
- News You Can Use

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Last-Minute Openings

NACAC's annual College Openings Update is a voluntary listing of NACAC-member post-secondary institutions that are still accepting applications from prospective first-year and/or transfer students for the upcoming fall term.

Now in its 38th year, the College Openings Update is a tool for counselors, parents and others assisting students who have not yet completed the college admission process.

This web page is the best source for the most updated information.

Participation in the College Openings Update is limited to NACAC member colleges. Primary contacts at NACAC member colleges can complete the form for the first time at <https://hub.nacacnet.org/SurveyForm>.

To see the current list, visit <http://www.nacacnet.org>. ■

ADMISSIONS WATCH

continued from page 1

announced that the university will close seven of its 19 Commonwealth Campuses over a two-year period. The effected rural campuses are in Dubois, Fayette, Mont Alto, New Kensington, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre and York. These campuses enroll about 3,200 students, but enrollment has been declining in recent years.

"We are subsidizing decline at the expense of growth. Maintaining the status quo is not sustainable," explained one board member. ■

FINANCIAL MATTERS

continued from page 1

The College Completion Crisis. According to EdTrust, 40 percent of students who start college never graduate, and for them "the consequences are devastating." These students are "three times more likely to default on their student loans."

EdTrust charges that today's college financial aid system "promises opportunity, but too often delivers debt without a diploma. And the ones most likely to be caught in this cycle? Low-income students, first-generation students and students of color."

Impact of Reduction of DOE Workforce. Impact of the reduction of workforce at the U.S. Dept. of Education on "access to federal student aid" is the top concern of 48 percent of the 900 higher education institutions surveyed in May 2025 by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Meanwhile, 59 percent of the institutions reported noticeable changes in Federal Student Aid responsiveness or delays in processing timetables since the Trump administration's reduction in force.

Nearly one-third cited disruptions to FAFSA/ISIR and e-App systems, undermining aid eligibility reviews and program compliance.

CURRICULUM CAPSULES

Lafayette's New Common Curriculum.

Members of the Lafayette Class of 2029 will be the first to study under the new Common Course of Study (CCS) comprised of 13 courses, depending on individual second language course requirements.

Some of the new sections of the curriculum are "Humanistic or Artistic Inquiry, Analysis or Creation," "Study of Social Activity," "Study of the Natural World (with lab)" and Human Interaction with the Natural World." A "Global Perspectives" and "Critical Engagement with Culture and Society" course is also required to fulfill requirements. A "Computational Reasoning" option is available as well.

"These institutional-level challenges are already affecting students' abilities to access, understand and rely on federal student aid."

Post-COVID State Funding Up 17.9

Percent. Although 2024 state public higher education appropriations increased only 0.8 percent beyond inflation, they surpass pre-COVID-19 funding levels of 2019 by 17.9 percent. That's according to the latest State Higher Education Finance (SHEF) report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association.

Yet the report adds that "fiscal year 2024 marks the largest decline in tuition revenue per FTE (full-time equivalent) since the start of SHEF database in 1980."

"Inflation-adjusted net tuition revenue decreased 3.7 percent in 2024 and has declined 8.1 percent in the last five years. Public institutions received \$7,510 per FTE in net tuition and fee revenue in 2024. Public institutions in 40 states and Washington D.C. collected less tuition revenue than they did five years ago.

Decreases in net tuition revenue are largely due to increases in state financial aid and minimal tuition growth (lower than the rate of inflation). Despite recent declines, since 1980, net tuition revenue per FTE has increased in every state and has increased by more than 100 percent in 41 states."

More at https://sheeo.org/shef_fy24/.

UMaine Helps Replenish Federal Cuts.

The U. of Maine announced that philanthropic sources have contributed \$250,000 to help its graduate students continue research projects where federal research funds were recently cut, so they can complete their work and graduate. The support comes from an anonymous gift to U. of Maine Foundation for merit and need-based grants.

"We are actively working to identify and engage additional donors who understand

Georgia's High-Demand Career List.

Georgia House Bill 192 mandates the State Board of Education to incorporate programs from Georgia's High-demand Career List, according to ledger-inquirer.com. It's designed to help schools update their offerings and officially establishes the Georgia MATCH program which connects high schoolers to colleges and career opportunities. Grades 6-12 students will be required to develop individual college and career plans in these areas.

High demand careers include aerospace, agribusiness, business services, construction, education, energy and environment, entertainment, hospitality and tourism, life sciences, logistics and manufacturing. ■

the urgent need to address the impact of lost federal research funding that so many of our graduate students depend upon," said Jeffery Mills, president and CEO of the U. of Maine Foundation. He pointed out that many of the research projects are directly tied to "improving the health and economic well-being of Maine people."

UMass Dartmouth Receives \$1.5 Million to Improve Student Success and Retention.

The philanthropic gifts will help develop a technology-aided advising program and establish a Student Retention Grant program at the school. See, <https://www.umass.edu>.

New Admissions Offices at Washington & Lee.

An anonymous \$30 million gift to Washington and Lee U. in Virginia will be dedicated to building new facilities for its offices of admissions, financial aid and the Johnson Program in Leadership and Integrity.

FAFSA Deadline. This year's FAFSA deadline is June 30th. "In 2021 alone, there was \$3.7 billion in Pell Grants money left on the table because students didn't complete the FAFSA," Jennifer Andreas, senior money path manager with SecureFutures told Fox6now.com in Wisconsin.

College Board Cancels Racial Award Programs.

The College Board announced that it is eliminating award programs for high-performing Black, Latino and Native American students. The decision follows the 2023 Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the use of race in college admissions.

The award program was started in 1983 to recognize high-performing Hispanic students. In 2020, two other racial categories and small town and rural designations were added. Last year, the category expanded to include first-generation students. ■

Enrollment Trends

Current Term Enrollment Estimates. Undergraduate enrollment for Spring 2025, compared to Spring 2024, grew by 3.5 percent, reaching 15.3 million students, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's preliminary estimates. But, that remains 2.4 percent below pre-COVID 19 numbers or -378,000 undergraduate students.

Undergraduate enrollment increased by 2.1 percent for bachelor programs, 6.3 percent for associate programs and 4.8 percent for undergraduate certificate programs, which are now 20 percent above 2020.

The number of undergraduate students between ages 21-24 increased by 3.2 percent, while those between 25-29 grew by 5.9 percent. The number of black undergraduate students jumped by 10.3 percent, while the number of multiracial undergraduate students soared by 8.5 percent.

For the third consecutive year, high vocational public two-year students (at trade-focused institutions) grew by 11.7 percent or about 91,000 students. Enrollment in these schools has grown by almost 20 percent since Spring 2020, and now comprises 19.4 percent of public two-year enrollment.

Meanwhile, graduate enrollment grew by 1.5 percent and is 7.2 percent (209,000) higher than 2020.

Colleges "A Little Less Diverse." According to a CBS News analysis of enrollment records of the first class of freshmen since the Supreme Court's June 2023 ruling against the use of Affirmative Action in admissions, this class was "a little less diverse" than the class before it.

The analysis examined 116 colleges and universities, 76 of which considered race in admissions before the Supreme Court ruling. It found that the share of "underrepresented minority" students decreased by about 2 percent from Fall 2023 to 2024. "Underrepresented minority" students include Hispanic, Black, indigenous or Pacific Islander students. Among the 35 schools that did not previously consider race in admissions, the share of underrepresented minority students remained roughly the same.

At selective colleges and universities that accept less than 10 percent of applicants, CBS News found that the share of minority students fell nearly 5 percentage points.

"Despite this, the most selective schools still had a slightly higher share of underrepresented minority students than other institutions we collected data from," the report said. See, [cbsnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com).

Is Admissions Getting Easier? Most colleges now accept more of their applicants than they did 20 years ago, according to Preston Cooper, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Indeed, most

colleges accept the majority of their applicants. According to Cooper, only 13 percent of nonprofit four-year colleges rejected more than half of their applicants. Meanwhile, 13 percent offer an open enrollment policy. Cooper cites declining demand for higher education and the demographic dip for an easing in the admission numbers.

Christian Colleges Experiencing Higher Enrollment. According to *Christianity Today*, overall college enrollment has declined by about 15 percent since 2010, but only 3 percent at religious schools. According to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, a consortium of more than 170 religious schools, the enrollment is up an average of 82 percent across member religious schools since the pandemic, compared to a 57 percent increase in public, nonreligious institutions. Observers associated with the religious schools attributed the increase to the sense of community that students feel and their search for moral and spiritual guidance.

Independent College Applicants Double. The number of independent college applicants, those independent of their parents, has more than doubled in the last eight years, according to a new report from Common App. Domestic applicants over the age of 23 grew by 223 percent between the 2016-17 and 2023-2024 application cycles. The number of applicants with children grew by 201 percent. However, fewer than 30 percent of students older than 23 completed their degrees within six years.

"If colleges don't address these students' issues, it's going to have a big impact on the overall student success," Jennifer Turner, a researcher at the Institute for Women's Policy Research told *Inside Higher Ed*. She added that most colleges don't even collect data on student parents. "They're an invisible population."

Minnesota Direct Admissions Expands. The number of high schools participating in Minnesota's direct admissions program is expanding this year, up from 21 schools with 11,931 students when the program started in 2021 to 245 high schools with more than 37,000 students in 2025. Students at participating schools receive a personalized letter inviting them to participate in automatic admissions to Minnesota colleges and universities, based on their high school academic record.

A recent state report indicated that in 2024, 76 percent of students at participating schools completed the FAFSA compared to 50 percent of all graduating seniors. And 46 percent actually enrolled in Minnesota colleges versus 28 percent of students from non-participating high schools. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better and Live Better by Anderson and Winthrop; (Crown, 2025). A toolkit for parents of "checked-out and stressed-out teens" and "what to do (and stop doing) to support their academic and emotional flourishing." ISBN-13 :978-0593727072; \$30; <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/>.

The Home Stretch of Student Recruitment, How Colleges are reinventing the post-admissions process; The Chronicle of Higher

Education, 58 pages, <https://store.chronicle.com/products/>.

Forget the Rankings: The Values-Driven College Search is a subscription-based card sorting activity aimed at helping students, counselors and parents work through the college selection process. "Each deck contains 47 cards as part of our unique 2-part criteria and values-based card sorting activities," the web site states. Price: \$9.99 a month for counselors. See, <https://www.forgettherankings.com/store>.

How to Apply for College as an International Student: A Comprehensive Guide from Scholaro Insights, May 23, 2025; <https://www.scholaro.com/db/News/How-to-Apply-for-College-as-an-International-Student-A-Comprehensive-Guide-246>.

"A College For the Future: How One University is Building a Truly Interdisciplinary AI and Cybersecurity College"; Higher Ed Perspective from the University of South Florida; https://perspectives.usf.edu/college-for-the-future?utm_source=ub&utm_medium=homepage-may&utm_campaign=aic. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

16 AP Exams Go Digital. Sixteen AP tests transition to a fully digital format in May 2025.

"I think our students are getting more and more accustomed to taking the exams online," Tracy Weeks, senior director of education policy and strategy at Instructure, an education policy and technology company, told *USNews*.

The new digital tests are in African American Studies, Art History, Comparative Government and Politics, Computer Science A, Computer Science Principles, English Literature and Composition, Environmental Science, European History, Human Geography, Latin, Psychology, AP Seminar, United States Government and Politics, United States History and World History: Modern.

Eastern Michigan Severs Relations with Chinese Colleges. In response to Republican state lawmakers concerned about research theft, Eastern Michigan U. ended its agree-

ment with two Chinese universities, Guangxi U. and Beibu Gulf U. The move comes at a time when the Trump administration is "aggressively" revoking the visas of international students from China "who have connections with the Chinese communist party." That move is almost certain to impact foreign student admission at universities across the nation.

The Michigan legislators charged that the universities' collaborations "jeopardize the integrity of U.S. research, risk the exploitation of sensitive technologies and undermine taxpayer investments intended to strengthen America's technological and defense capabilities."

Ohio U. Now a R1 Research Institution.

Ohio U. in Athens has been reclassified as one of just 187 of R1 institutions in the latest Carnegie Classifications, out of nearly 4,000 institutions. Ohio U. also received an Opportunity College and University designa-

tion as part of the new Student Access and Earnings Classification developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Council on Education.

U.K. Establishes Fund to Attract Fleeing U.S. Scholars. The Royal Society in the United Kingdom announced a \$40 million fund designed to attract global research talent. The Faraday Fellowship will provide \$5.4 million per academic or group willing to relocate to British universities and research institutes over the next five to ten years.

According to *Times Higher Education* in London, "The announcement comes as countries around the world vie to attract leading scholars who are considering fleeing the U.S. in protest of President Donald Trump's attacks on research funding and diversity initiatives."

Adrian Smith, president of the Royal Society, told the paper that international science was "in a state of flux with some of the certainties of the postwar era now under question." He added, "With funding streams and academic freedom coming under threat, the best scientific talent will be looking for stability. The U.K. can be at the front of the queue in attracting that talent."

AI's Impact on New Graduates. "For Some Recent Graduates, the A.I. Job Apocalypse May Already Be Here," a May 30th *New York Times* article menacingly announced. That is the "troubling conclusion" author Kevin Roose reached after conversations with economists, corporate executives and young job-seekers.

He pointed out that the unemployment rate of recent college graduates has jumped to an unusually high 5.8 percent. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York warned that the employment situation for these workers had "deteriorated noticeably." And the research firm Oxford Economics found that graduates in technical fields such as finance, computer science and eventually marketing, where AI is making the fastest gains, are particularly vulnerable.

Roose warned that the current data is only "the tip of the iceberg" and that some "firms are making rapid progress towards automating entry-level work." He said that many companies are racing to build "virtual workers" to "replace junior employees at a fraction of the cost."

For example, one executive told him that a single data scientist could now do the work that previously required a team of 75 people. ■

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The "New Ivies"

The traditional Ivy League colleges and universities are under fierce attack by the Trump administration for a variety of rational and irrational reasons ranging from their "woke" policies (which historically have been an effort to overcome the nation's and their own past discrimination) to disruptive political "free speech" activities (protected by the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution).

But according to a recent survey of 380 corporate vice presidents and other managers conducted by *Forbes*, 37 percent said they are less likely to hire an Ivy League graduate than five years ago. Another 12 percent said they would "never" hire an Ivy League graduate. One respondent said, "I believe Ivy League candidates are over-valued, and frequently have a higher than real opinion of themselves."

Instead, many employers are turning to other highly selective colleges and universities that also accept and educate some of the nation's best and brightest students. For the second year in a row, *Forbes* posted its list of "Private and Public Ivies" favored by employers, along with their undergraduate admissions rates:

Forbes' Private Ivies:

- Carnegie Mellon U. in Pennsylvania, admit rate of 11 percent;
- Emory U. in Georgia, admit rate 11 percent;
- Georgetown U. in Washington D.C., admit rate 13 percent;

- Johns Hopkins U. in Maryland, admit rate 8 percent;
- Northwestern U. in Illinois, admit rate 7 percent;
- Rice U. in Texas, admit rate 8 percent;
- Tufts U. in Massachusetts, admit rate 10 percent;
- U. of Notre Dame in Indiana, admit rate 12 percent;
- Vanderbilt U. in Tennessee, admit rate 6 percent;
- Washington U. in St. Louis, admit rate 12 percent.

Forbes' Public Ivies:

- Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus in Georgia, admit rate of 16 percent;
- Purdue U.-Main Campus in Indiana, admit rate 50 percent;
- U. of Texas at Austin, admit rate 29 percent;
- United States Military Academy in New York, admit rate 14 percent;
- U. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, admit rate 44 percent;
- U. of Michigan-Ann Arbor, admit rate 18 percent;
- U. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, admit rate 19 percent;
- U. of Pittsburgh-Pittsburgh Campus, admit rate 50 percent;
- U. of Virginia-Main Campus, admit rate 17 percent;
- C. of William & Mary in Virginia, admit rate 33 percent. ■

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