

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Admits Watch

**Connecticut Attracted 62,000 Apps.** The U. of Connecticut attracted more than 62,000 applications for its Class of 2029, over 4,000 more than last year. About 4,500 are expected to matriculate at its flagship Storrs campus, 150 more than this academic year. Applications to Storrs soared by 27 percent over the past two years, perhaps in response to UConn's back-to-back NCAA national basketball championships. This was the first year that UConn used Early Decision. It attracted 1,500 applications and offered admission to 60 percent of them.

A total of 20,056 were enrolled on the Storrs campus in Fall 2024. It expects to enroll 26,200 undergraduates across all of its campus this fall: Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford and Waterbury.

"The surging interest in UConn demonstrates that its reputation for high academic quality, strong value, and a positive student experience is well known both throughout Connecticut and nationally," said Nathan Fuerst, vice president for student life and enrollment.

But record numbers also create problems. According to the editorial staff of *The Daily Campus*, UConn previously guaranteed up to eight semesters of guaranteed housing to undergraduates at Storrs. But this past winter, the university cut that number to two semesters. And, the Editorial Board warned that growing budget problems could lead to increasing class sizes and rents that students must pay in surrounding communities.

**Oberlin's Conservatory Plays on with a 41 Percent Increase in Applications!** Oberlin C. in Western Ohio attracted 10,427 applications for its Class of 2029, a 7.5 increase from last year. It accepted 34 percent of those applicants. But Oberlin's famed Conservatory experienced a 41.3 percent increase in applications from last year at 1,850. It admitted 25

percent of them. About 9 percent of the admitted class are first-generation students, up from 7 percent last year. This was the first year that Oberlin admitted students from the Houston chapter of the Posse Foundation that identifies students from diverse backgrounds as future leaders and provides financial assistance to its partner school.

"Now comes the difficult task of showing these amazing students that Oberlin is an amazing place for their next stop and could be a great fit for so many of them," said Manuel Carballo, vice president, in *The Oberlin Review*. Students had until May 1 to make their decision.

**Vanderbilt Expects 10 Percent of its New Class to Stem from the Wait List.** Vanderbilt U. in Nashville fielded 48,861 Regular Decision applicants for its Class of 2029, the largest pool in school history, according to *The Vanderbilt Hustler*. It admitted 1,411 of those RD students to join 891 who had been admitted Early Decision. Vandy's RD acceptance rate was 3.3 percent, while its ED acceptance rate was 13.2 percent, for combined rate of 4.7 percent.

Admitted students came from all 50 states and 87 different nations. International students make up about 15 percent of those admitted RD. Last year's yield, the number of students who actually enrolled, was 61.2 percent.

"When you think about an admit rate, it's really just a mathematical calculation of who applies to who gets in," said Doug Christiansen, vice provost for university enrollment affairs and dean of admissions and financial aid. "We don't want to have students think, 'Oh if I apply early, it's easier to get in.' The student we admit in Early Decision or Regular is the same student." He added that he expects about 10 percent of the class to come from Vanderbilt's wait list.

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## Financial Matters

**Pell Grant Recipients Increase.** According to the Urban Institute, the number of Pell Grant recipients increased by 17 percent at public two-year colleges, 15 percent at public four-year institutions and 14 percent at private nonprofit four-year institutions this school year, as a result of the new federal financial aid formula. The amount of the average Pell Grant also increased by \$96 or 3.6 percent.

**Charitable Giving Increases.** Philanthropic giving to U.S. colleges and universities grew by 3 percent when adjusted for inflation, according to the latest Council for Advancement and Support of Education's "Insights on Voluntary Support of Education 2023-24." See, <http://www.case.org>.

**Delaware Receives Largest Gift.** The U. of Delaware recently received a \$71.5 million gift from two alumni to build a new business school. "My time at UD, my incredible professors, the many experiences inside and outside the classroom, my vibrant network of friends and colleagues, helped make me who I am today," said Robert Siegfried of The Siegfried Group, (his wife Kathleen was the other donor). "To be able to share our success with the business students of tomorrow is an incredible honor."

**Michigan Offers \$1 Million in Prizes for FAFSA Completers.** To boost its FAFSA completion rate, Michigan Governor Gretchen

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## ADMITS WATCH

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**William & Mary Admitted 36 Percent.** William & Mary U. in Virginia received 16,890 applications for its Class of 2029, up nearly 20 percent since 2020. It admitted 6,136 of those students for an admit rate of about 36 percent. Some 1,478 of those applicants came through its two rounds of Early Decision. And 735 of them were admitted early.

Of the admitted students whose schools use class rank, 91 percent placed in the top 10 percent of their class. The SAT middle-50th percentile of admitted students is 1410-1520, the ACT middle-50th percentile ranges from 33-35. Last fall, W&M reached its goal of ensuring that at least 20 percent of in-state students were Pell Grant recipients.

"In addition to being academically talented, this group is also extraordinarily engaged and service-minded, making an impact in the classroom and in their communities," said Tim Wolfe, associate provost for enrollment.

After Virginia, the top states sending admitted students were New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, California, North Carolina, Connecticut, Texas and Illinois. ■

## FINANCIAL MATTERS

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Whitmer launched a "Ticket to Tuition" sweepstakes for high school students. Forty students will win \$10,000 each and another 10 will walk away with \$50,000 each.

"I encourage all high school seniors who want to go to community, private or public college to fill out their FAFSA, save thousands of dollars while attending school and enter to win in our sweepstakes!" Whitmer exclaimed.

The sweepstakes adds onto the financial support offered by the Michigan Achievement Scholarship that provides up to \$27,500 for students to attend one of the state's colleges.

## TUITION TABS

**\$100,000 Colleges.** Which college will hold the dubious distinction of being the most expensive in the nation and the first to cross the \$100,000 barrier? According to the *Boston Business Journal*, the all-women Wellesley C. in Massachusetts will cost students \$100,541 to attend. That includes \$92,440 for undergraduate tuition, housing, fees and meals, plus indirect costs such as books, personal expenses, travel, transportation and additional health insurance.

Other colleges on the \$100,000 brink include Vanderbilt U. in Tennessee, the U. of Chicago, the U. of Southern California, Washington U. in St. Louis and Tufts U., also in Massachusetts. At the same time, these universities also boast of some of the highest endowments and are among the most generous with student aid.

## ENROLLMENT TRENDS

**DePaul U. Launches Direct Admit Program for Some Chicago Public Schools Students.** Beginning this admissions cycle, any Chicago Public School student with a weighted 3.7 GPA or above will be admitted automatically to DePaul U., a Catholic Vincentian university in "The Windy City." These students also will be eligible automatically for the Chicago Promise Scholarship, a renewable award worth \$20,000 a year.

"The college application process can be overwhelming, especially for students who might be the first in their family to go to college," said Erin Updegraff, executive director of first-year admissions and recruitment. "If you graduated from a Chicago Public high school with a 3.7 GPA or higher, you're automatically admitted to DePaul. All you have to do is apply."

**Indiana's Automatic Admissions.** Students who earn Indiana's new Enrollment Honors Plus diploma, adopted by the State Board of Education last December, will be eligible for automatic admission to all seven of the state's public colleges and universities, including IU, Purdue, Ball State, Indiana State, Ivy Tech, U. of Southern Indiana and Vincennes U., according to the *Indianapolis Recorder*.

Students who complete the state's new Employment Honors Plus degree, which requires 650 hours of work experience will be eligible for other opportunities, such as interviews and apprenticeships with large companies and trade organizations based in the state.

**More U.S. Students Head for UK.** According to the University and College Admissions

Service in Great Britain, 6,680 U.S. students applied to UK schools for 2025-26, 12 percent more than last year and a record number. But there actually may be more students headed for the UK. According to recent Home Office statistics, 15,274 U.S. applicants were issued sponsored study visas in 2024, 5 percent more than in 2023.

**More First-Year Law Students.** According to new data released by the American Bar Association, the number of first-year JD students at U.S. law schools in 2024 increased by 4.5 percent over 2023, from 38,891 to 40,650. The numbers are rebounding from a few years ago when Law Schools actually paid for students to live while they found a job.

**Illinois C.C. Enrollment Surges.** Enrollment in Illinois community colleges jumped nearly 9 percent this spring. It is the third year in a row that spring enrollment grew. In 2021, enrollment in the state's community colleges fell to below 240,000 students. Now, in part due to increased state investment, it has grown to more than 283,000 full- and part-time students.

"We are the home to the third largest community college system in the nation," said Governor J.B. Pritzker, "and we want to continue seeing growth and opportunity for working families by making a higher education more affordable and accessible for students across the state."

Meanwhile, Illinois' dual enrollment high school/college programs increased 19.8 percent since last year and an incredible 61.9 percent since the spring of 2021. ■

**B.C. Hikes Tuition by 3.5 Percent.** Boston C. is increasing its tuition for the 2025-26 academic year by 3.5 percent to \$72,180. Add the cost of fees, room and board, and the total cost of attending Boston C. will increase to \$91,792.

To help offset increased costs, the trustees voted to enhance need-based undergraduate financial aid by 7.5 percent or \$13 million, to a total of \$190 million. BC meets 100 percent of demonstrated need of all domestic students, with an average need-based financial aid package of about \$60,000. More than 67 percent of Boston C. students receive financial aid.

**Cornell U. Hikes Undergraduate Tuition by 4.2 Percent.** The Cornell Board of Trustees approved a 4.22 percent increase of undergraduate tuition for the next academic year. Tuition will increase between \$1,954 and \$2,886 "due to inflationary, regulatory and risk management pressures." Undergraduate tuition for out-of-state residents will hit \$71,266. For New York State residents attend-

ing the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Human Ecology and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations tuition will increase to \$48,010.

Additionally, Cornell will extend \$470 million in institutional grants and scholarships for the 2025-26 academic year. Cornell gives more aid to students than any of the top 20 ranked universities in the U.S.

**GW's Tuition Hike.** This fall, undergraduate tuition at George Washington U. in Washington DC will increase by 3.5 percent or \$2,360, according to *The GW Hatchet*. Sticker price tuition and costs could come to about \$94,000. Financial aid increases are expected to off-set the tuition hike for some students.

"Full-time undergraduate students' average cost of attending with financial aid was \$45,466 for the 2023-24 academic year," the paper noted. About 79 percent of full-time undergraduates received merit or need-based aid in 2022-23. ■

# More Trends to Watch

**AI & College Admissions Essays.** More college admissions officers are expressing concern about how students are using AI programs when writing their admissions essays. The admissions officers stress that they are looking for “authentic personal statements” that demonstrate original thinking and do not rely on AI-generated content.

In general, students are permitted to use AI to research or help organize their thoughts, but not to directly write their essay. Studies by groups such as Microsoft and Carnegie Mellon U. point out that over-reliance on AI can diminish independent thinking, one of the primary reasons that students go to college in the first place.

For example, Georgia Institute of Technology warned students that, “in the same way you would not copy directly from other sources you may incorporate into the writing process, you should not copy and paste directly out of any AI platform or submit work that you did not originally create.”

Students should be aware that admissions officers are being trained to spot AI-generated material, or to use software to spot it. They say that using AI could disqualify students in competitive situations.

**First-Year Student Trends.** English is not the primary language for about 10 percent of today’s new college students, according to The CIRP Freshman Survey 2024. The survey recorded responses of 24,000 students across 55 colleges and universities and was conducted by the American Council on Education and UCLA’s School of Education and Information Studies. It also found that first-generation students make up about 12 percent of the overall college population. Eight percent are military students.

The survey also reported that college application behaviors vary widely across demographic groups and that financial worries were particularly pronounced among 81 percent of Hispanic/Latino survey respondents and 69 percent of African American students. Another finding was that women outperformed men academically before entering college, but reported lower confidence in their mathematical and intellectual ability while in college. About 51 percent of women also reported feeling overwhelmed in college, more than double the rate of men (24 percent).

**Iowa Eliminates Gender Options.** The Board of Regents governing Iowa’s public universities voted to edit application forms at state colleges and universities so they offer only “male” or “female” options. Previously, applicants to the U. of Iowa had seven gender options.

Schools are also mandated to remove references to diversity, equity and inclusion from their strategic plans.

**Is College Still Worth It?** Not for everyone, says a new study by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. It depends upon how much financial aid a student gets and how much a student has to pay out-of-pocket, as well as choice of major, future earning potential and how long it takes to graduate.

“While expensive schools and on-campus living may seem to make college a risky bet, our estimates suggest that even a relatively high-cost college education tends to yield a healthy return for the typical graduate,” the report said.

“Taking five or six years to complete a degree also still generally pays off. However, as many as a quarter of college graduates end up in relatively low-paying jobs, and for them, a college degree may not be worth it, at least in terms of economic payoff.”

**Gallup Finds Public Often Dissatisfied.** In early January, before the inauguration of President Trump, Gallup conducted interviews with 1,005 randomly selected adults over the age of 18. About 80 percent of interviews were conducted with cell phone users and the other 20 percent with landline users. The results were as follows:

- On the overall quality of life, 62 percent were satisfied, 37 percent unsatisfied;
- On the opportunity for a person to get ahead by working hard, 53 percent were satisfied, 46 percent unsatisfied;
- On the influence of organized religion, 48 percent were satisfied, 46 percent were unsatisfied;
- On the effect that technology is having on U.S. society, 43 percent were satisfied, 55 percent dissatisfied;
- On the size and power of the federal government, 33 percent were satisfied, 65 percent dissatisfied;
- On our system of government and how well it works, 31 percent were satisfied, 68 percent dissatisfied;
- On the way income and wealth are distributed in the US, 29 percent were satisfied, 69 percent dissatisfied;
- On the size and influence of major corporations, 25 percent were satisfied, 72 percent dissatisfied;
- On the moral and ethical climate, 22 percent were satisfied, 78 percent dissatisfied. ■

## COUNSELOR’S BOOKSHELF

**Five Stellar Wellness Centers.** The “May 2024 Student Voice survey” by *Inside Higher Ed* and Generation Lab found that 40 percent of students say mental health has a “great deal” of impact on their academic performance. So the publication profiled five new mental health centers that are working to address the problem: The U. of Texas, Dallas’ “Brain Recharge Station;” San Diego State U. Imperial Valley’s “Student Wellness and Success Center;” Clemson U.’s “Wellness Zone;” Indiana U. Bloomington’s “Wellness House” and Yale U.’s “The Good Life Center.” To read about

them, go to [www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellne](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/health-wellne).

**Student Basic Needs.** Temple U.’s “2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report” of 74,350 participants in 91 institutions located in 16 states found that 59 percent of students experience at least one form of basic human needs insecurity.

About 41 percent of students experience food insecurity, 48 percent experience housing insecurity and 14 percent experience homelessness. And when the survey added issues

of mental health, child care, transportation and internet/technology access, 73 percent of students said they are affected. Find the full survey at <https://hope.temple.edu/research/hope-center-basic-needs-survey-2023-2024>.

**Half Lack Credentials.** According to the Lumina Foundation’s report, “A Stronger Nation,” only about half of working-age adults have credentials beyond a high school diploma. “Still, there is cause for optimism because millions of those who lack credentials do have some college experience and skills that should be recognized.” The report tracks progress in each state towards a national goal of 60 percent earning postsecondary credentials. ■



## CURRICULUM CAPSULES

### **Amherst C. Limits Students to Two Majors.**

Last December, Amherst's faculty voted to limit the number of majors a student can acquire to no more than two. The action resulted from reaction to the increasing number of triple and quadruple majors in recent years. The faculty voted for depth over breadth, according to [amherststudent.com](http://amherststudent.com). The practice of multiple majors was aimed at building credentials that looked more desirable to employers and graduate schools.

**Barnard C. Curriculum Change.** Beginning this fall, first-year students at Barnard C. in New York City will be required to complete most of their first-year requirements and "Modes of Thinking" classes at Barnard.

The new curriculum "embraces Barnard's distinct identity as a liberal arts institution that, while intricately intertwined with Columbia, must remain able to offer students a curriculum that can be completed within the college's gates, if desired," one faculty member told the *Columbia Spectator*.

Barnard offers four programs and departments that are not available at Columbia; dance, architecture, urban studies and theater.

### **Cal State and L.A. C.C.s Team Up On Nursing.**

The California State University system and Los Angeles County's 19 community colleges are teaming up on a "Nursing 2035 Initiative" to tackle local nursing shortage. Some experts project over 6,400 job openings for registered nurses in Los Angeles County annually through 2035. But degree completion data from 2023 shows local colleges only produce 5,363 graduates with relevant degrees.

**Columbia's New Dual Degree in Engineering and Climate Science.** Columbia U.'s Climate School and Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science will launch a new dual Master's degree beginning September 2025.

"The management and abatement of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and access to secure and plentiful energy remain two of the biggest challenges facing our world," said Climate School Dean Alexis Abramson. "The Climate School is thrilled to partner with Columbia Engineering to offer this program, which combines climate science, societal impacts and carbon management expertise to prepare students to develop and implement low-carbon strategies across sectors and industries."

### **George Washington U. Pauses Admission to Data Science Minors.**

Due to a surge in demand, George Washington U.'s data science program paused admission of new students last fall. The program recently hired three new professors to deal with "overwhelming" demand. It currently enrolls 171 majors in the subject and 69 students who are pursuing it as a minor. GW is unsure of when it will reopen enrollment.

**Landmark's Three New Majors.** Landmark C., the preeminent college "designed for students who learn differently" (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and so forth), approved new majors in History, Health Sciences and Media Arts Production, beginning Fall 2025, "to prepare students for career success in a wide variety of fields, from law and public policy to the medical field and an ever evolving media industry."

This spring, the Vermont Legislature honored Landmark on its 40th anniversary and for its educational, cultural and economic contributions to the Town of Putney and the State of Vermont. At the ceremony, student government president Grace Nelson said, "before attending Landmark, I thought of my learning differences as roadblocks, things that will cause me pain and make me less than. But Landmark College is a testament to what it looks like when we provide learning suited to each individual student. Landmark gives people with learning differences a chance to thrive...."

**Merrimack Adds Sign Language.** As of this spring, Merrimack C. in Massachusetts has added American Sign Language as part of its foreign language requirement. ASL joins Spanish French and Italian as foreign language choices.

ASL "is a great skill for nursing students, education students and social workers," said one Merrimack student who worked on the committee that helped change the language options. ■

## Testing Tabs

### **Mississippi Tops 4th Grade NAEP Test.**

Long ridiculed for bringing up the bottom of states in educational performance, Mississippi at last can brag. Its fourth-grade students rank first in reading and math among fourth-graders in the recent National Assessment of Educational Progress scores.

Other southern states, including Louisiana, Florida, Texas and Georgia, were not far behind, according to analysis of raw test scores conducted by the Urban Institute. One observer credited the progress in southern states to the commitment of recent southern governors to education reform and excellence.

But overall, the recent test results were not encouraging. Researchers at Harvard and Stanford found that just 6 percent of American students live in school districts where math and reading levels are higher than they were in 2019.

### **The Ohio State U. Reinstates Standardized Test.**

Students applying to The Ohio State U. during the 2026 admissions cycle and beyond will be required to submit an ACT or SAT score. "Our goal is to find and admit students who will succeed at Ohio State, and test scores provide valuable insights into academic success at our university," said Ravi V. Bellamkonda, provost. ■

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## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### **Mental Health Study of HBCU Students.**

"Community, Culture, and Care, a cross-institutional analysis of mental health among HBCU and PBI (Predominantly Black Institutions) Students," sponsored by the United Negro College Fund found:

- "HBCU and PBI students face lower rates of depression and anxiety compared to national estimates;
- HBCU and PBI students report higher rates of flourishing or positive mental health;
- HBCU and PBI students have lower rates of mental health service utilization and show preference towards dealing with mental health challenges on their own or with the support of family and friends, rather than therapy or counseling."

### **The Aspen Institute Prize for Community College Excellence.**

Southwest Wisconsin Technical C. received the prestigious Aspen Institute Prize with a \$700,000 award as a "high-achieving" community college making strides in its academic outcomes, notably high completion rates and wage outcomes. San Jacinto C. in Texas and South Puget Sound C.C. in Washington State were recognized as finalists.

**Comings and Goings.** Limestone U. in Gaffney, South Carolina, will close at the end of this school year. The private non-profit non-denominational Christian U. was founded in 1845. It said it was one of the first colleges in America to admit women. ■

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