

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

Vol. 39, No. 3

November 2024

Enrollment Trends

Freshman Enrollment Declined

PRELIMINARY DATA collected by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Fall 2024 reveals that total undergraduate enrollment across the nation increased by 3 percent over last fall. All sectors saw growth in the number of undergraduates.

However, freshman enrollment declined, down 5 percent from this time last fall. Public and private nonprofit four-year institutions saw the largest declines of -8.5 percent and -6.5 percent, respectively. “An almost 6 percent drop in the number of 18-year-old freshman (a proxy for those enrolling immediately after high school graduation) is driving most of the decline.”

Declines in freshman enrollment are most significant at four-year colleges that serve low-income students. At four-year colleges where high shares of the undergraduate population receive Pell Grants, freshman enrollment is declining by more than 10 percent. At comparable community colleges, freshman enrollment increased by 1.2 percent.

Undergraduate certificate programs increased by 7.3 percent. And undergraduate and graduate enrollments for Hispanic, black, Asian and multi-racial students grew this fall. On the other hand, undergraduate white student enrollment continues to decline (-0.6 percent).

Latino Enrollment Continues to Grow, But Colleges Face Major Issues. UnidosUS, the nation’s largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy group, released its 2024 “Survey of Latinos in Higher Education.” It noted that Latinos now comprise one-fifth of all students in U.S. colleges and universities.

Key findings of its survey of 1,000 Latino

students 18-35 years of age:

- Latino students “see college education as an aspirational pathway to big life goals.”
- Latinos “face various barriers across the collegiate school system, and these are even higher among lower-income and LGBT+ students and single parents.” These barriers include, affordable and healthy food; maintaining full-and part-time jobs while in school; targeting of diversity and censoring students on campus.
- Many Latino college students experienced technical problems trying to file the 2023-24 FAFSA application.
- Two-thirds of Latino students considered leaving school at some point during their time in college; one third took a school leave at some point.
- Although many Latino students do not want to take more student debt, more than half do so out of necessity to afford college. Find the full report at www.unidosus.org.

Australia Limits International Students.

Australia is trying to push the number of international students it accepts back to pre-pandemic levels. In 2025, the number of international students allowed to study Down Under will be limited to 270,000. Tough English language requirements will be enforced. Australia currently hosts 717,500 international students, 10 percent higher than before Covid-19.

Each higher education institution will be given an individual restriction. The biggest cuts will come in vocational education and training programs. The new restrictions are designed to help Australia limit record migra-

continued on page 3

Financial Matters

FAFSA Update. In October, the U.S. Dept. of Education began testing the revised Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with a limited number of families and community-based organizations. So far, so good.

Jeremy Singer, former president of the College Board, told *Inside Higher Ed* that so far no “critical bugs” have appeared and feedback from families has been positive. “It’s gone better than we hoped.”

The application is scheduled to be available to students and families across the country on December 1. *CB* will keep you informed.

Holy Cross Expands Low-Income Tuition-Free Program.

The College of the Holy Cross, a Jesuit liberal arts college in Wooster, Massachusetts, announced that it will cover the full tuition of students from families earning less than \$100,000 a year, up from its previous \$75,000 limit. Holy Cross continues to meet 100 percent of demonstrated need at the time of admission.

“One of Holy Cross’s top priorities is to ensure that talented students from all backgrounds can access a Holy Cross education and be supported to flourish on our campus and beyond,” said President Vincent D. Rougeau.

Muhlenberg Offers \$2,000 to Students Who Complete the FAFSA.

In response to last year’s disastrous launch of the “reformed FAFSA,” and this year’s delayed launch, Muhlenberg C. in Pennsylvania urged students to use the simpler College Board CSS Profile to determine eligibility for financial aid, espe-

continued on page 2

INSIDE

- Enrollment Trends
- Admissions Watch
- Financial Matters
- News You Can Use

COLLEGE BOUND: Publisher/Editor: **R. Craig Sautter**, DePaul University; Chief Operating Officer: **Sally Reed**. Production: Design|Americom WVA.

COLLEGE BOUND is published monthly, ten times a year. Inquiries should be directed to P.O. Box 6536, Evanston, IL 60204; **773-262-5810**.

Facebook [@collegeboundnews](https://www.facebook.com/collegeboundnews); www.collegeboundnews.com

Twitter/X [@cbnewsletter](https://twitter.com/cbnewsletter)

FINANCIAL MATTERS

continued from page 1

cially for Early Admissions applicants.

"This helps students, families and Muhlenberg to get a real understanding of what aid offers can be made.... For families' sake, we don't want to have a repeat of last year," said Greg Mitton, director of financial aid and associate dean of admissions.

However, to finalize and take advantage of that offer and federal aid, students will still be required to complete the FAFSA when it becomes available. Muhlenberg is offering a \$2,000 incentive for students who do so.

Questioning the Value of College. According to pewresearch.org, more Americans are questioning the value of a four-year education, especially when students are forced to go into debt to earn their degree. About 35 percent say a college degree is somewhat important, while 40 percent say it is not too or not at all important to get a well-paying job in today's economy. And only 22 percent say the cost of getting a four-year college degree today is worth it if someone has to take out loans.

Repayment Problems. As of August 2024, 30 percent of federal student loan borrowers (9.7 million people) were "past due" on their repayments, according to the Government Accountability Office, amounting to \$290 billion.

GAO noted that the Dept. of Education is effectively communicating with these borrowers. However, Denise Carter, acting Chief Operating Officer for Federal Student Aid, wrote the GAO that "communications cannot fix the broken repayment system where many borrowers have loans they cannot afford and are unable to access the benefits of a federal student loan."

STATE NEWS

Nebraska Requires Universal FAFSA. By law, all Nebraska high school seniors now must complete the FAFSA before they graduate. Last year, about 47 percent of Nebraska seniors completed the form.

This year, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Oklahoma passed similar requirements. They join Illinois and Texas (the first two states to require seniors to fill out the FAFSA) and Indiana.

New York's Expanded Tuition Assistance Program. Last year, New York expanded its Tuition Assistance Program to aid students from families earning up to \$125,000. The result is that 40,000 additional students applied and will receive a minimum grant of \$1,000 each.

"The recent increase in TAP applications is a testament to our commitment to making

Updates on the Class of 2028

NYU's Pell-Eligible Population Grows. New York U. enrolled 5,705 first-year students in its Class of 2028. The percent of first-generation college students remained steady at 21 percent compared to 2023, the number of Pell Grant eligible students rose from 19 percent in 2023 to 23 percent this year, while the number of international students from 82 nations fell from 27 percent in 2023 to 26 percent.

The number of African American students fell from 7 percent in 2023 to 4 percent this year, the number of Latino students declined from 15 percent in 2023 to 10 percent for the Class of 2028, while the number of Asian American students increased from 22 percent in 2023 to 27 percent this year. The number of white students increased from 21 percent in 2023 to 23 percent. Students representing two or more races make up 5 percent of the Class of 2028, up from 4 percent in 2023.

NYU president Linda G. Mills said, "NYU was conceived as a university that would open higher education beyond the upper class for which it was largely reserved in the early 19th century. Over nearly two centuries, our community has worked to achieve broad racial and ethnic diversity because we believe that scholarly and education benefits flow from that outcome, because it is in line with NYU's founding mission and because it contributes to our nation's commitment to opportunity and equality.... We will, we must, continue to innovate on and expand educational opportunity for students of all backgrounds and experiences."

Stanford Students Speak 76 Languages. This fall, Stanford U. enrolled 1,704 students in its Class of 2028. They come from all 50 states and speak 76 unique languages other than English. About 21 percent are first in their families to attend a four-year university. Women represent 51 percent of the new class.

In the first class admitted since last year's Supreme Court ruling against race-conscious

admissions, enrollment of black students fell from 9 percent in 2027 to 5 percent in the Class of 2028. Hispanic enrollment dipped from 17 percent to 15 percent. Meanwhile, Asian-American enrollment increased from 26 percent to 27 percent and white enrollment grew from 21 percent to 22 percent. Enrollment of American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders remained steady at about 1 percent.

"Stanford is committed to diversity broadly defined because we believe diversity of background, perspective and experience is essential to our work of research and education," said Stanford provost Jenni Martinez. "We are committed to working aggressively to continue seeking diversity through legal means, including through further expansion of our outreach to high-achieving students from underserved populations, and to foster community for our students here on campus."

Wesleyan's Minority Population Remains Steady. Wesleyan U. in Connecticut enrolled 824 first-year students in its Class of 2028. It also admitted 48 transfer students. About 16 percent of new students are the first in their family to go to college. The percentage of domestic students of color remains at 32 percent, the number of African-American students rose to 12 percent, while Latino/Hispanic students increased to 12 percent. Students self-identifying as multiracial rose to 16 percent. The number of Asian/Asian American students fell slightly to 22 percent of the class. Native American/Native Alaskan or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander also increased to 2 percent.

"Despite the Supreme Court's ruling last June, we were able to enhance student body diversity, socio-economically in particular," said vice president and dean of admission and financial aid, Abdul-Malik González. ■

higher education more accessible to all New Yorkers," said Betty A. Rosa, New York State Education Commissioner. "We are dedicated to supporting our students and fostering a brighter future for our state."

In addition, New York launched a new SUNY Top 10 percent Promise Program. New York students in the top 10 percent of their high school class are guaranteed a place at one of the SUNY campuses. The new direct admissions program comes after SUNY and CUNY along with over 50 private institutions in the state waived application fees for students during College Application Month.

"We are particularly worried about low income, high achieving students who might be intimidated by the application process," said

SUNY Chancellor John King Jr.

Texas Transparency. A new Texas direct admissions program allows any end-of-year junior or senior to plug-in their class rank, grade point average and standardized test score into the state's college and career website, My Texas Future, to get a list of participating state universities to which they would be accepted.

Thirty-one public universities in the state are participating including flagships such as the U. of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M U. Texas developed the new tool with a \$250,000 grant from the Lumina Foundation as part of its Great Admissions Redesigned competition. ■

Fall Surveys, Reports

Why Is Enrollment Declining? To answer that question, HCM Strategists and Edge Research used 10 focus groups to survey 18- to 30-year-olds who did not finish college or who never enrolled, and concluded: “Higher education must prove value to potential students, who are currently more attracted to immediate, lower-cost options; Each phase of the college journey—pre-college, paying for college, attending college—contains problem areas that must be addressed; students want expert help along the way in addition to financial assistance; media matters—tone of information about college impacts perspectives on future attendance.”

Nearly 40 Percent of H.S. Upperclassman Have Trouble Finding Reliable Information About College. A new survey of 11th and 12th-graders by ACT found that 34 percent of white students and 44 percent of Asian and black students report that they had difficulties finding useful college information.

“We found 78 percent of students agreed that the more information they use, the more confident they felt in making a college or major decision,” said research scientist Joyce C. Schneiders.

ACT says that on average, students use a combination of eight maternal and people resources to gather information about postsecondary opportunities. College websites were reported as the most used and helpful resources, as is the FAFSA website.

ACT recommends that colleges and universities provide instructional pages on their website to help prospective students learn how to find information and navigate their websites; and that high schools provide workshops to help students learn how to find different types of information. For more, go to: <https://leadershipblog.act.org/2024/09/student-college-information>

GPA Less Reliable Indicator. Another new study from ACT finds that post-COVID-19 the “predictive power of high school GPA has notably decreased since 2020.” But it also found, perhaps not surprisingly, that ACT Composite scores have remained a reliable indicator of students’ early college success.

Certificates or College. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, adults between 18 and 20 years of age completed more certificates at higher education institutions than any other age group during the 2022-23 academic year. Nearly 154,000 of the 670,665 college or university certificate earners were young people who chose a certificate program over traditional college.

The nonprofit, Credential Engine, found that as of 2022, there were more than one million secondary and postsecondary credentials offered across the country, more than three times the number that were offered

in 2018. There are almost 60,000 different credential providers, more than half outside academia. Some are “micro-credentials” as well as “stackable credentials,” in which students earn credits toward future degrees.

So many options are available that the Dept. of Education has been unable to track them all. But students who are trying to avoid student debt and are skeptical about the value of a four-year degree or who do not want any more formal education are turning to the micro-credential and credentials options.

Is College Worth The Trouble? That question is popping up more often given the expense of attending college and debt load many graduates and dropouts carry. A recent USA Today survey found that 46 percent of respondents said they could have gotten their current job without earning a degree.

About 72 percent who received their degree felt college was worth their time and effort. Another 33 percent, “Wish they had taken a different approach or not attended college at all.” About 17 percent said they would have gone to community college. Some 31 percent wish they had taken a gap year before going to college.

Student loan debt burdens more than 42.2 million Americans. The average debt upon leaving school is \$29,400. “Financial constraints were the top reason preventing people from attending college. The next most common reason was family obligations.” Find the full article at: www.usatoday.com/money/blueprint/student-loans/is-college...

Only 30 Percent of Families on Track to Reach College Savings Goals. About three-quarters of families have begun saving for their children’s college. But according to Fidelity’s College Savings Indicator, only 30 percent of families are on track to reach their college savings goals. Family investments in 529 college savings plans though have jumped by 10 percent over last year.

Fewer Than Half of Public High Schools Doing Enough for College Preparation. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 47 percent of 1,600 public high schools it surveyed say they are doing a “very good” or “excellent” job preparing their students for college.

Schools in the high-poverty communities were less likely to grade themselves as doing an “excellent” or “very good” job in college preparation.

However, nearly 90 percent of these schools align their graduation requirements to admissions requirements at public colleges and universities, but only 62 percent include college and career milestones in their graduation requirements. ■

COUNSELOR’S BOOKSHELF

The Best 390 Colleges, 2025 Edition by Princeton Review, editor Robert Franek; Penguin Random House; ISBN 9780593517505; \$26.99.

Also, see the Princeton Review’s college rankings in 50 categories such as “Great Financial Aid,” “Profs Get High Marks” and “Best Career Services,” based solely on

168,000 student surveys. Both books are available at www.PrincetonReview.com.

Class Dismissed: When Colleges Ignore Inequality and Students Pay the Price by Anthony Abraham Price; Princeton U. Press; ISBN: 9780691237466, \$29.95. “A candid portrait

of the challenges of undergraduate life for disadvantaged students even in the elite schools that invest millions to diversify their student body.” ■

ENROLLMENT

continued from page 1

tion levels, which have put added pressures on existing housing and infrastructure. Critics called the government’s action “draconian” and “interventionist.” ■

CURRICULUM CAPSULES

Chicago Expands C.C. Engineering Program. City Colleges of Chicago announced that next fall it is expanding its successful engineering education program from one location at Wilber Wright C. to Harold Washington C. in the Loop and Harry S Truman C. on the North Side of the city. By Fall 2026, the program will expand to Olive-Harvey C. and Richard J Daley C. on the South Side. The program now enrolls 650 students.

Currently, 70 percent of all engineers are white and more than 80 percent are male. CCC hopes to diversify that workforce. Also, the U. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign will allow some students who enroll in this program to simultaneously take classes at the university, and most will be able to transfer credits.

"Our students are very, very successful," said Doris Espiritu, one of the program's founders, "so we are contributing to the economic upward mobility of each student... We also change their communities...."

DePaul's B.S. in Robotics. DePaul U.'s Jarvis C. of Computing and Digital Media launched a new Bachelor of Science degree in robotics that focuses on three main learning

objectives: robot design and system integration, core principles in computer science and mathematics and cross disciplinary applications. Students can work hands-on with ground robots, flying robots and robotic arms into DePaul's new Robotics and AI Lab.

DePaul students can also earn a certificate in Trauma Psychology, a BSB in Business Analytics and an Online Certificate in Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Law.

Fordham's Internship Promise. Beginning with the Class of 2029, the new Fordham Internship Promise pledges that every undergraduate student will have an opportunity to participate in at least one internship, research project or other form of experiential learning.

A recent survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that employers ranked internship experiences within their industry as the top factor they consider when deciding between two otherwise equally qualified candidates.

"Learning by doing has always been part of the Fordham experience as our students demonstrate every year through their internships

and research in our hometown of New York City," said Fordham's president Tania Tetlow.

Fordham students have interned at places as varied as Bloomberg, the Apollo Theater, the United States Tennis Association and Disney.

Morgan State Opens Center for Urban and Coastal Climate Science Research.

Morgan State U. and the State of Maryland established a new Center to address issues of climate change on Baltimore and coastal areas of the state. Maryland Governor Wes Moore committed \$3 million annually to the interdisciplinary center. It is the sixth research center that Morgan State has launched in the past five years, and the university is increasingly known for its outstanding STEM programs and research.

St. Ambrose U. and Mount Mercy U. Sign "Strategic Agreement."

At the end of 2026, Mount Mercy U. in Iowa will fully combine under St. Ambrose, with distinct campuses, educational offerings and intercollegiate athletic programs in both Davenport and Cedar Rapids.

"St. Ambrose and Mount Mercy are better together and our campuses will grow in vibrancy," said Amy Novak, St. Ambrose president. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

AI Resumes "Sabotaging" Job Hunters.

According to Resume.io, which commissioned a survey of 3,000 hiring managers, 49 percent said they automatically dismiss resumes created by AI. And 78 percent of the managers stated that they would prefer a poorly written but authentic resume over a perfectly written yet disingenuous AI-generated one.

"AI generated content often contains tell-tale signs, such as overly polished and excessively detailed cover letters and HR professionals now have access to sophisticated tools that easily identify such content," said Amanda Augustine of Resume.io. "If you're going to use AI, you need to make it your own. The human touch is irreplaceable."

Harvard Resumes Testing. Beginning with the Class of 2029, Harvard C. again will require submission of standardized test scores. Research published last year by three Harvard professors, using data from 400 institutions and 3.5 million undergraduates showed that standardized tests are an important tool to identify promising students at less-well-resourced high schools, particularly when paired with other academic credentials.

"The virtue of standardized tests is their

universality," said David J. Deming, one of the researchers. "Everyone has the chance to ace the SAT or ACT."

Legacies Illegal in California. Last month, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill that banned the use of legacies in college admissions at private California colleges and universities. The use of legacies was already illegal for admission to the U. of California, California State U. Newsom said that "merit, skill and hard work should determine college admissions."

The new law affects admissions processes at prestigious schools such as Stanford U. and Southern California U., where in 2022 about 14 percent of students were admitted with legacy or donor connections. It is unclear whether those students also would have met those schools' rigorous academic standards. Maryland is the only other state to ban legacy preferences at both private and public colleges and universities. Illinois, Virginia and Colorado have made legacy preferences illegal in state institutions.

Students No Longer Read. Is that a Problem? Recent surveys show that as many

as 70 percent of college students do not read assigned text! Whether it is because they can't read sophisticated books, or that they are uninterested, or that they learn through other medium such as YouTube, the problem has become worse with GenZ.

Some see the influence of alternative electronic media that drives shorter attention spans as the source of the problem. Others blame the influence of the COVID pandemic and online learning in isolation. Some say today's college students are overly-scheduled with jobs and extracurricular activities. Some students are using ChatGPT to summarize their assignments.

Whatever the source of the problem, many academics fear that the shift will rob students of the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a much more competitive, global workplace.

A generation ago, the majority of students especially humanities students, were assigned and read 100 pages or more a week, and completed their assignments. Today's literature students may be an exception to the new phenomena since they are actually drawn to their books. ■

To renew your subscription, go online to www.collegeboundnews.com