

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Admissions Watch

### Early Apps...and More

ACCORDING TO THE COMMON APPLICATION, which processes about one-third of all applications to four-year institutions, the number of applications submitted this year before November 1 soared by 41 percent over the 2019-20 application season. Those from minority students rose by 67 percent.

The number of individual students who filed the Common App was up 12 percent to 836,679 over last year at the 834 colleges and universities that use the platform. Apps to public universities increased 82 percent.

About 73 percent of early apps came from applicants who live in zip codes with family incomes above the national median, while 27 percent live in zip codes below the national median. Only about half of applicants reported a standardized admissions test score, down from 80 percent in 2019-20.

In 2019-20, 55 percent of schools required standardized test scores. Now only 4 percent do so.

Whether or not this means more students will return to campus next fall or more students are simply interested in Early Action or Early Decision is still unknown.

#### EARLY RETURNS

**CUNY's October Apps Soar by 386 Percent.** Efforts by the City University of New York met with unprecedented success when nearly 41,000 students applied in October, up from 8,420 students who applied last October. More than 34,000 of those applicants, or about 83 percent, came from New York City Public Schools.

CUNY's enrollment was hit hard by the pandemic, when enrollment dropped from roughly 271,000 students in 2019-22 to about 226,000 last school year, according to *Chalkbeat New York*.

This year, CUNY officials sent personalized acceptance letters to all graduates of the city's high schools encouraging them to apply to either its four-year institutions or community

colleges. It also waived application fees for all of October for city students, and from October 16 through October 31 for all New York State high school seniors.

At its four-year colleges, CUNY's in-state tuition is about \$3,500, and \$2,400 for New Yorkers at CUNY community colleges. About 75 percent of its students graduate with no debt, and CUNY forgave roughly \$100 million in debt during the pandemic.

**Cornell U. Makes Change in Application "Process."** Beginning this admissions cycle, Cornell U. will reduce the "proportion" of students offered Early Decision admission, according to *The Sun*. Last year, Cornell admitted 1,670 students to the Class of 2027 applying ED. They were among the 4,994 students accepted overall, or about 33 percent. In September, a Presidential Task Force recommended reducing the number of students admitted Early Decision.

**Lafayette College Closes Early Decision Applications with Increase.** According to *The Lafayette*, there was a 15.7 percent increase in early applications to Lafayette C, for the Class of 2028, totaling 561 applicants. This marks a 20.9 percent increase compared to the five-year average. Forrest Stuart, vice president, told the paper that the increase will not impact how many students are admitted overall, but the Pennsylvania college "may try to increase the number of students who get in" Early Decision. Lafayette is recruiting in the Southwest, Texas and along the West Coast.

**Virginia Draws More than 42,000 Early Apps.** The U. of Virginia attracted 42,093 Early Action and Early Decision applications for the Class of 2028, 3.4 percent more than last year. Virginians accounted for 10,593 of

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### Fall 2023 Enrollment Increases

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, undergraduate enrollment grew in Fall 2023 for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. It was up by 2.1 percent. Community colleges are starting to rebound from the pandemic, showing a growth of 4.4 percent this fall, and are up 4.3 percent since Fall 2021.

However, freshman enrollment declined by 3.6 percent, almost reversing Fall 2022 gains (plus 4.6 percent). Freshman enrollment is now just 0.8 percent above Fall 2021 enrollment.

NSCRC also reported that, "Students continue to gravitate towards shorter-term credentials, with enrollments in undergraduate certificate programs jumping 9.9 percent, compared to 3.6 percent for associate degrees and just 0.9 percent for bachelor's degrees."

The Research Center reported that, "Black, Latinx and Asian students accounted for most of the undergraduate and graduate enrollment growth this fall. Enrollment of white students continued to decline at both the graduate (-1.9 percent) and undergraduate levels (-0.9 percent), most acutely among freshman (-9.4 percent)."

Also, "Among traditional-aged undergraduate students, enrollment is up across all neighborhood income levels, with students from the lowest income areas gaining 3.6 percent and those from the highest income areas gaining 1.4 percent this year."

**International Students Return.** More than one million international students arrived in

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## EARLY APPS

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those applications, while 29,334 came from out-of-state, according to *The Cavalier Daily*.

UVA also partners with 62 Virginia high schools to increase the number of early applications from underrepresented students. That number rose by 22.5 percent. The number of early apps from black students jumped 11.2 percent. However, applications from first-generation students actually declined by 2.1 percent this year to 4,671.

Greg Roberts, associate vice provost for enrollment and undergraduate admission, told the paper that the university participated in more than 500 separate recruiting events this fall, a significant increase.

Virginia plans to accept about 24 percent of Early Decision applicants. Decisions will be announced on December 15. It plans to admit about 16 percent of Early Action students, and those decisions will be made by February 15.

**Yale's Second-Largest Early Pool.** Yale C. received 7,866 Single-Choice Early Action applications for the Class of 2028, about 1 percent more than last year. That is slightly behind the record set by the Class of 2025, which attracted 7,939 early apps. SCEA applications are non-binding, but students may not seek admission to any other private, domestic institution in the early round. Decisions will be released on December 15.

This is the first cohort to be evaluated race-blind after June's Supreme Court decision, and possibly the last to be able to apply under Yale's test-optional policy.

"As always, the size of the applicant pool is far less meaningful than its academic strength and diversity along many dimensions," Mark Dunn, senior associate director of outreach and recruitment, told *Yale News*. "Our holistic review process is reviewing those aspects of the applicant pool over the next four weeks."

**P.S. Eliminate (or Keep) EA/ED?** In the wake of last June's Supreme Court decision eliminating Affirmative Action, many universities are debating whether to keep their early programs, fearing they work against underrepresented groups. In November, Wake Forest U. announced it will continue its Early Action admissions program, but only for first-generation applicants.

In September, Brown U. convened an Ad Hoc Committee on Admissions Policies to re-examine ED, which it has used since 2001, and determine "whether or not there's something that is better suited to our mission," according to *The Brown Daily Herald*. Last year, Brown admitted 879 students from its 2,609 ED applications. That was about 13 percent, more than three times higher than its 3.8 percent Regular Decision acceptance rate. ■

## State Enrollment News

**Idaho's Near-Record Class.** The U. of Idaho enrolled its second largest freshman class this fall, 1,869 students, slightly behind last year's new class. That helped boost the school's total enrollment to 11,849, up 3.4 percent from last year, according to *idahobusinessreview.com*. Idaho student enrollment was up 4.3 percent, international enrollment increased by 5.6 percent and dual-credit enrollment increased by 15.2 percent.

Undergraduate enrollment of American Indian or Alaska Native students is up 40 percent. Enrollment of African American students is up 16.5 percent, while Hispanic student enrollment increased by 2.6 percent. However, graduate enrollment declined by 1.4 percent to 1,929 graduate students.

**Indiana College Enrollment Soars.** Since last year, enrollment at Indiana colleges increased by roughly 4,700 students, according to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. That's the largest year-over-year increase in 13 years. Currently, about 244,600 students are enrolled in Indiana colleges. The number of undergraduates increased by 3 percent, while the number of graduate students declined by less than 1 percent. The number of students completing their degree on time also increased, by 9 percent over the last five years.

Two reasons for the increases are that qualified students are automatically enrolled in Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program and that all Indiana high school students are required to fill out the FAFSA.

**Iowa Resists Demographic Cliff?** While many states are expecting a sharp decline in

high school graduates over the next decade, the number of Iowa high school graduates is not expected to dip below 2019 levels until at least 2036, according to a new Iowa Board of Regents enrollment report. In fact, high school graduation numbers are expected to increase by 1 percent.

Meanwhile, neighboring Illinois could see a 24 percent drop-off in high school graduation rates over the same period. That could impact Iowa, since Illinois sent 10,241 students to Iowa regent universities this fall.

Wisconsin, which sent 1,571 students to Iowa, is expecting a 10 percent drop-off, while Missouri, which sent 726 students, could see a 7 percent loss.

**Massachusetts Immigration.** "It's no great secret that Massachusetts is losing people," Lane Glenn, president of Northern Essex Community College, told Axios. "We are propped up by immigration."

This year, the Northeastern Massachusetts college student population is 46 percent Latino, many from the Dominican Republic. About 11,000 undocumented students are enrolled in Massachusetts colleges.

**New Mexico Enrollment Increases.** Enrollment in New Mexico colleges and universities increased 2.3 percent over last year, according to the state's Higher Education Department. In 2022, New Mexico enacted an Opportunity Scholarship Act that has drawn an additional 6,700 students over the past two years.

Prior to the Opportunity Scholarship, New Mexico college enrollment was declining. Now, nearly 40,000 undergraduate students each year attend tuition free. ■

## ENROLLMENT INCREASES

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the U.S. to study at many of the nation's 4,000 accredited institutions of higher education during the 2022-23 school year. That is 12 percent more than the previous year and is the fastest rate of growth in 40 years, according to the Institute of International Education and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

International students arrived from more than 200 places of origin. The number of students from India jumped by 35 percent. Those from Sub-Saharan Africa rose by 18 percent, with 17,640 students from Nigeria leading the way. China still sends the most students to study in the U.S. Their most common fields of study are math and computer science, engineering, business and management, social sciences and physical and life sciences.

**Seton Hall's Most Diverse Class.** Students

of color make up more than half of Seton Hall's Class of 2027, according to *The Setonian*. Alyssa McCloud, vice president for enrollment management, told the paper that the university has always benefited "from a strong reputation as a diverse and welcoming community." She added that, "We have never factored race into our consideration for admission and we recruit widely across the country in all communities. Seton Hall is a true reflection of our world and our community, which makes for a very rich learning environment."

Seton Hall posted an 85.2 percent retention rate of its students from last year, a six-year high and 12 points above the national average of 73.4 percent.

"This is a testament to our world-class faculty, our student-focused curriculum and the individual care we provide to each and every student that calls Seton Hall home," said Monica Burnette, vice president of student services. ■

# Financial Matters

**Michigan State Offers Free Tuition...for Some.** Beginning Fall 2024, the Spartan Tuition Advantage Program will offer free tuition for about 1,500 students from families making \$65,000 or less. The program will cover tuition for all Pell Grant-eligible, in-state high school grads. Eventually, about 6,000 students a year are expected to take advantage of the program.

**Pittsburgh Promise Going Away.** The Pittsburgh Promise, launched in 2008, raised \$171.5 million to help nearly 12,000 Pittsburgh high school students attend college. But the program will run out of funds in 2028. The annual award of the Pittsburgh Promise, a last dollar program, reached \$10,000 per student in 2012, but dropped back to \$5,000 per student in 2018. As of 2019, only 60 percent of Pittsburgh Public School students attained the 2.5 GPA and attendance requirements to secure the award.

**Over Half of California Students Report Economic Insecurities.** According to the California Student Aid Commission, 53 percent of California college students claimed to be suffering from housing insecurity, while 66 percent reported that they were suffering from food insecurity. Those numbers rose dramatically from 2018-19, when 36 percent reported housing problems and 39 percent food scarcity.

**SAT Gap Between Rich and Poor Students.** Children whose parents are in the top 1 percent of wealth in the U.S. are 13 times more

likely to score 1300 or higher on the SAT, and similarly on the ACT, according to Harvard researchers. In a study released by Opportunity Insights, these inequities follow students from the earliest years of life and education through high school and beyond.

“What we saw was the accumulation of unequal opportunities over 18 years of a child’s life that culminates in these differences in scores on college preparation exams,” David Deming, one of the researchers, told *The Harvard Gazette*. “...what is new [is] seeing ...the magnitude of the disparities. It’s pretty sobering.”

More than 1.9 million students in the high school graduating class of 2023 took the SAT, according to the College Board. In 2020, before the pandemic, more than 2.1 million students took the exam.

**New Gainful Employment Regulation.** The Biden Administration has implemented a new “Gainful Employment Regulation” impacting for-profit and non-degree certificate programs that requires them to show that graduates can afford their yearly debt payments and that they are making more than an adult in their state who didn’t go to college.

“By implementing measures that ensure both accountability and transparency, the department will take a stand against predatory practices and safeguard the future of students and hard-earned money of taxpayers,” commented the think tank New America.

**Student Debt Data.** According to the *Harper’s Index*, two-thirds of all U.S. student-loan debt is held by women, and it takes women two years longer than men to pay off their student loans. ■

## SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

**New “Family Grant.”** The U. of Dallas has created a new Family Grant for students with at least one other sibling in a college anywhere, who apply to college for the first time in Fall 2024.

The rationale: The recent changes in the way that the federal government factors additional college students into a family’s estimated contribution towards their next child’s college education, “could significantly raise the out-of-pocket costs for many families with multiple children in college.”

**Eastern Michigan Boosts Financial Aid and Scholarships by 8.9 Percent.** The Board of Regents of Eastern Michigan U. in Ypsilanti, the state’s second oldest public

university, approved an 8.9 percent increase in financial aid and scholarships for 2024-25. That’s 22 percent more than a decade ago.

The majority of EMU’s 14,000 students receive financial aid, including approximately 90 percent of first-year students. EMU offers 300 majors, minors and concentrations.

“We are determined to remove barriers that stand in the way of students achieving their goals, and a critical element of this is providing financial assistance,” said university president James Smith.

**Meredith’s Full-Ride Merit Scholarship.** Meredith College in North Carolina will award full-ride scholarships to “strong women look-

ing for a top-notch education.” Recipients of the revised scholarship who remain in good academic standing will receive tuition, food, housing and fees annually for four years, as well as funding for international study, the school said.

In the past, those who have been awarded similar merit scholarships have posted a weighted GPA of 4.65, demonstrated leadership and service to others and have strong communication and interpersonal skills.

**UCLA Affordability Scholarships.** Thanks to alumnus Peter Merlone, the U. of California at Los Angeles will offer a new Affordability Initiative with \$20,000 scholarships to 35 California residents, beginning next year. It will focus on expenses beyond tuition such as housing and meals. ■

## COUNSELOR’S BOOKSHELF

*New Pathways for College; from The Chronicle of Higher Education; \$129; <https://store.chronicle.com>.*

**Ed Research for Action Study.** *Increasing Teacher Preparedness Through Effective Student Teaching*; published October 2023; Brief N.

27; summarizes research on key topics to provide K-12 education decision-makers and advocates with evidence-based data to ground discussions about how to best serve student teachers.” See, <http://edresearchforaction.org>.

*HBCU Enrollment and Longer-Term Outcomes;*

Annenberg Brown University’s EdWorkingPaper No. 23-883; analyzed data from nearly 1.2 black SAT takers who initially enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities. It then compared this data to students with similar portfolios and found that students initially enrolling in HBCUs are 14.6 percentage points more likely to earn a BA degree and have 5 percent higher household incomes around age 30; <https://edworkingpapers.org>. ■

## CURRICULUM CAPSULES

**Alma C.'s Route to Ferris State's College of Pharmacy.** Alma C. in Michigan is partnering with Ferris State U. to create a pathway for its graduates to attend Ferris State and earn a Doctor of Pharmacy, and also earn a dual degree as a Master of Business Administration or Master of Public Health.

**Ithaca's Integrative Studies Major.** After a two-year pause, Ithaca C. in New York has opened applications for its Integrative Studies major, according to the *Ithacan*.

"The program allows students to design a major that is not offered at the college by selecting individual classes. Ithaca students must be in their sophomore year to start the program."

The major "gives them an opportunity to pull together resources that we have here on campus to build a program that is focused on what they really want to study in college," said David Brown, associate dean, told the paper.

**Johns Hopkins' New Distribution Requirements.** Members of the Class of 2028 at Johns Hopkins U. in Baltimore will face new course distribution requirements. These will be in six categories of language and writing, scientific and quantitative thinking, creative expression, citizenship within global diversity, ethical reflection and impactful projects.

**UCLA's Disabilities B.A.** The U. of California at Los Angeles now offers a Bachelor of Arts in Disability Studies. It is a "way of thinking about how we construct identities around health and well-being, functionality and in some degree citizenship itself," according to Victoria Marks, chair of the interdisciplinary degree program. Courses include health, humanities and bioethics.

**UW-Oshkosh Launches School of Informatics.** "Informatics is the art, science and business of digital information in society today," Frank Braun, dean of UW-Oshkosh's College of Business, told WLUK Green Bay.

Existing majors such as computer science, public relations, information systems and multimedia journalism are part of the new school. Informatics is "a model of what we believe the future of learning looks like," added UW-Oshkosh Provost and Vice Chancellor Ed Martini.

**Accounting Graduates Decline.** According to the American Institute of Certified Public Accounts, the number of accounting Bachelor's degrees dropped by 7.8 percent from 2021-22, while the number of Master's degree completions fell by 6.4 percent. The number of Hispanic/Latino graduates increased by 1 percent since 2020-21. ■

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**Connecticut Offers Automatic Admissions.** Connecticut students who rank in the top 30 percent of their graduating class are now eligible for automatic admission to several Connecticut state colleges and universities through the Common App.

"The Common App's Next Chapter is all about reimagining the admissions process so that all students feel welcome and ready to apply and enroll in college," Jenny Rickard, CEO of the Common App, told [ctpublic.org](http://ctpublic.org). "This partnership is one of many ways we can simplify the admissions process and expand access to postsecondary opportunities."

**Direct Admissions.** Currently, 70 colleges and universities across 28 states operate Direct Admissions programs. In November, more than 300,000 students received acceptance letters from at least one college or university in their state, according to *USA Today*. In 2015, Idaho was the first state to introduce the program.

"Direct Admissions" programs proactively

admit students using data such as their GPA and ACT/SAT scores rather than asking them to apply, according to Brookings. One reason is that about one quarter of students who begin an application never submit it. Another reason is that the application process seems so complicated to many students and their families.

**Employer Confidence in College Grads Remains High.** Eight out of 10 employers either "strongly or somewhat agreed that higher education prepares graduates to succeed in the workforce and that getting a college degree is worthwhile, despite the cost in time and money," according to a new survey released by The American Association of Colleges and Universities.

The survey also found "strong support for the broad knowledge and skills associated with a liberal education, as well as for the development of specific mindsets and dispositions while in college."

Also, the survey found strong support for micro-credentials, and 68 percent "would

## Legacy Connections

**Harvard Freshmen Oppose Legacies.** Sixty-three percent of members of Harvard College's Class of 2027 who responded to *The Harvard Crimson's* freshman survey (45.9 percent) reported that they do not support legacy admissions. Over 75 percent of the respondents said they do not have any relatives who attended Harvard or Radcliffe. Of those with no legacy connections, 66 percent do not support legacies, while 55 percent of those with legacy connections do not support legacy admissions.

In the same survey, 66.5 percent of the Class of 2027 said they support affirmative action in college admissions, while 14.7 percent do not favor it and nearly 19 percent remain unsure. However, about 39 percent of the respondents mentioned their racial identity in their college application essays. And 86 percent said that Harvard should strive for racial diversity in college admissions.

**Haverford's Quaker Connection.** Haverford C. outside Philadelphia, which has been strong on diversity, intends to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling against directly checking off race and ethnicity in composing its first-year class. But it will "continue to take Quaker affiliation and legacy into account," according to *Clerk*, the independent student newspaper. However, Quaker students account for only 2 percent of the Class of 2027 and 10 percent are legacies of any kind, Jess Lord, vice president and dean of admission and financial aid, told the paper.

Meanwhile, the number of Haverford students majoring in natural sciences has increased from 31 percent for the Class of 2013 to 43 percent for the Class of 2022, according to the *Clerk*, while those majoring in the humanities fell from 31 percent to 19 percent during the same time. ■

prefer to hire a college graduate who has a micro-credential." However, only 34 percent of employers agreed that "recent college graduates are very well prepared" when it comes to oral communication.

**Hidden Gem.** Shepherd U. in West Virginia was founded in 1871. The public liberal arts school, set on a 323-acre campus above the Potomac River 30 miles from the nation's capital, offers more than 80 majors and attracts students primarily from its home state, Maryland, Virginia, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. ■

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