

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Financial Aid Matters

\$50 Million to Boost FAFSA Numbers. As of May 24, the U.S. Dept. of Education announced that it had processed more than 10 million 2024-25 “Better” Free Application for Federal Student Aid forms. That meant that “nearly 90 percent of nonprofit and four-year institutions are packaging and sending out aid offers to students.”

But because of the well-publicized delays, DOE has committed an extra \$50 million to boost applications. As of May 6, DOE successfully had processed 9 million applications, 24 percent fewer last year. At that time, over 65 organizations had received some of these funds.

“We are determined to close the FAFSA gap,” said Cindy Marten, Deputy Secretary of Education. “The funding we are announcing today will support states, districts and community-based groups build capacity (hire advisors, counselors, coaches) and leverage their power to ensure that every student who needs help paying for college turns in the FAFSA form.”

On May 31, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona announced that the Dept. of Education will conduct “a full-scale review of its Federal Student Aid office,” following the chaotic rollout of the FAFSA, including management and staffing procedures and that it will “hold vendors accountable for performance issues.”

Evergreen S. Reports 1,000 Fewer FAFSA Apps. The new FAFSA roll-out problems are having critical impact at some schools. For example, as of early May, Evergreen State C. in Washington had received 1,000 fewer federal student loan applications than last year.

“It could have serious impact on fall enrollment,” John Reed, chief enrollment officer, told his board of trustees. His admissions office is hosting weekly workshops for parents on the FAFSA.

In fact, of the 82,000 Washington state seniors set to graduate this month, only 32,000 had completed the FAFSA for aid, according to theolympian.com.

Gear Up Kentucky Helps Students Complete FAFSA. Gear Up Kentucky, a unit of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education in partnership with the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority launched a statewide campaign to provide both virtual and one-on-one assistance for students to complete the FAFSA at more than 70 locations statewide.

Tennessee Extends FAFSA Deadline. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission, along with the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, extended the deadline for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to August 1.

LOAN NEWS

More Student Loan Cancellations. The Biden Administration announced that it is canceling another \$7.7 billion in federal student loans. About 54,000 borrowers enrolled in the new SAVE income-driven repayment plan and another 67,000 were eligible through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. The cancellations bring to \$167 billion in total student debt for 4.7 million borrowers granted during the current President’s term.

Direct Loan Interest Rates for 2024-2025. The U.S. Dept. of Education set the interest rates for this year for Direct Subsidized Loans at 6.53 percent, Direct Unsubsidized Loans at 8.08 percent and Direct PLUS Loans 9.08 percent.

States with the Most Federal Student Loans. According to the scholarships search
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Admissions Watch

Elon Accepts 66 Percent. As of May 4, Elon U. in North Carolina had commitments from 1,662 members for its Class of 2028. Elon expects to matriculate 1,700 students, according to Greg Zaiser, vice president for enrollment.

Harvard’s Yield Amidst “Tumultuous” Year. Despite what the Harvard *Crimson* called one of the “most tumultuous years for the university in decades,” more than 84 percent of Harvard C.’s admitted Class of 2028 plans on enrolling. The figure is slightly higher than last year’s yield, according to William R Fitzsimmons, dean of admissions and financial aid, and “is one of the highest yields since the ‘70s.” The Class of 2025 posted the highest yield in the college’s history at 85 percent.

Lafayette Admits 30.6 Percent. Lafayette C. in Pennsylvania attracted 10,191 applications for its Class of 2028, the second highest number in school history, topping the Class of 2026. It admitted 30.6 percent of those students and expects to enroll 700 this fall. The average high school GPA of admitted students is 3.67. About 41 percent submitted standardized test scores. “Applications are on the rise following the national trend because kids are applying to more schools,” Krista Evans, dean of admissions, told *The Lafayette*. “Students want to make sure that they have options from a selective perspective and financial perspective.”

New England Institute of Technology. The New England Institute of Technology in Rhode Island received more than 2,016 applications
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COLLEGE BOUND: Publisher/Editor: R. Craig Sautter, DePaul University; Chief Operating Officer: Sally Reed. Production: Design|Americom WVA.

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Enrollment Trends

Where is the Enrollment Growth? In Spring 2024, undergraduate enrollment grew by 2.5 percent or about 359,000 students, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. The majority of those gains, 55.7 percent, were due to community college growth, which grew 4.7 percent over last spring.

Freshman enrollment grew at a rate of 3.9 percent compared to last spring and was strongest at community colleges, which grew at a rate of 6.2 percent. Freshmen women grew at a faster rate than men in spring 2024, 3.2 percent versus 2.2 percent for men. That was a reversal of the trend reported for the two previous years when men outpaced women's enrollment growth.

The number of dual enrollment high school students grew for the third year in a row, by 10 percent or 100,000 students. This group accounted for 28.1 percent of undergraduate enrollment increases.

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education.

The American Council on Education released its 2024 "Status Report on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education." It found that between the 1999-2000 and 2019-20 school years, the share of white students among all undergraduates dropped from 65.9 percent to 47.6 percent, while the share of students of color increased from 32.2 percent to 49.9 percent.

The six-year bachelor's degree completion rate at doctoral universities in 2021 ranged from 42.4 percent for Hispanic or Latino students to 47.2 percent for African American students, 56.6 percent for white students and 75.9 percent for international students.

Among 2019-20 bachelor degree recipients, nearly four in 10 Asian and international students studied STEM fields, while fewer than 20 percent of Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and African American students did so.

Meanwhile, 69.4 percent of all full-time faculty was white, whereas 6.1 percent of full-time faculty was African American.

CUNY Reconnects with 33,000 Students.

The City U. of New York has re-enrolled 33,378 former students since it announced its CUNY Reconnect program in 2022. More than 10 percent have already completed their degrees. The program was conceived by New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams and was established with a \$4.4 million investment from the city.

Returning students are paired with trained advisors who help them navigate their reentry. CUNY is the nation's largest urban public university serving more than 225,000 under-

graduate and graduate students and awards 50,000 degrees each year.

Two-Year Colleges at Four-Year Institutions. The Come to Believe Network is a nonprofit organization that seeks to open two-year degree programs at four-year colleges and universities. Based on a model started by Loyola U. Chicago and its two-year Arrupe C., the network is giving grants to universities to start their own associate degree programs. According to *The Hechinger Report*, several other colleges have now opened two-year programs, including the U. of St. Thomas in Minnesota, the U. of Mount Saint Vincent in New York City, Butler U. in Indiana and Boston C. Separate efforts include those at the U. of the Pacific in California and Mount Saint Mary's, Steve Katsouros, Arrupe's founding

ADMISSIONS

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and has already accepted more 1,487, for an admit rate of about 73 percent. Particularly because of FAFSA problems, it is still accepting new students on a rolling basis until each term starts, according to Scott Freund, executive vice president.

Smith Admits 20 Percent. Smith C. in Massachusetts received 8,666 applications for its Class of 2028, and admitted 20.5 percent of them. Smith expects to welcome a first-year class of approximately 650 students, according to *The Sophian*. This year, Smith experienced a 17 percent increase in Early Decision applications. "We received a total of over 1,000 applications for our Early Decision I and II rounds," Joanna May, vice president for enrollment, told the paper. "We admitted our largest ED class in history." Of admitted students, 18 percent are first-generation in their family to go to college, 14 percent speak multiple languages and 21 percent are eligible for Pell Grants. Smith has a unique housing system, where students of all class years live together in 41 different houses.

"We continued to offer virtual information sessions and virtual Smithie to Smithie chats... allowing students from around the world to experience Smith," May told the paper.

Tufts Accepts 10 Percent. Tufts U. in Massachusetts received more than 34,400 applications for its Class of 2028, 1 percent more than last year. It accepted 10 percent of those students, more than last year's 9.5 percent. More than 150 QuestBridge scholars were admitted. Accepted students represent 90 different college-access organizations that support low-income students. First-generation students account for 11 percent of those accepted. Tufts also accepted 400 international

dean and president and CEO of the Come to Believe Network, told *The Hechinger Report*.

Surveys indicate that 80 percent of community college students say they plan to get a bachelor's degree, but only 16 percent do so within six years. At Loyola's Arrupe C., 50 percent of students graduate and 70 percent of these continue in bachelor degree programs.

Over-Optimism about Future UK Enrollment. The Office for Students, an independent regulator in the United Kingdom, found a decline in financial performance in 2022-23 among UK universities. And it warned about over-optimistic projections for additional income from anticipated growth in both UK-based and international students. "Our modeling suggests that no growth across the sector could leave nearly two-thirds of institutions in deficit by 2026-27, with 40 percent facing low liquidity at the end of the year." ■

students from 100 nations.

This is the fourth year of a six-year test-optional pilot. However, about half of all applicants submitted test scores, and 60 percent of those admitted submitted the tests. Women make up 56 percent of accepted students. Women also make up 50 percent of the class entering Tufts's School of Engineering, down from 55 percent two years ago.

"We do not focus on what the admit rate of the class will be, rather, we focused on recruiting an outstanding pool of candidates, and then admitting and enrolling a class from that pool that best aligns with the mission of the university," JT Duck told the *Tufts Daily*.

Vanderbilt Seeks Local Talent. The Nashville Vanderbilt Scholars program is a partnership with the Metro Nashville Public Schools and its counselors. The program aims to identify and help high-performing local students apply and enroll in Vanderbilt. The highly-selective school will cover full costs for Pell-eligible students who are admitted and provide them with other benefits.

Other Admissions Matters

IU Indianapolis Pairs With Indianapolis Schools for Direct Admissions. Starting Fall 2025, Indiana U. Indianapolis will offer direct admission to students from Indianapolis' "innovation schools" who have earned at least a 3.0 GPA.

San Diego Students Guaranteed Entry to Cal State U. San Marcos. San Diego Unified School District graduates with a 3.0 will be granted automatic admission to California State U. San Marcos. "We are so grateful to San Marcos for this partnership which provides our students with access to a world class university," said SDUSD Deputy Superintendent Fabiola Bagula. ■

Year-End Odds and Ends

Counselors-to-Student Ratios. According to an analysis of federal data by Axios, the West and Midwest have the highest student-to-school counselor ratios (all grades). The states with the largest number of Latino and Native American populations had the worst student-to-school counselor ratios in the nation during the 2022-2023 school year.

The American School Counselor Association suggests a ratio of 250-to-1. Arizona had the worst ratio, 667-to-1. Michigan followed with a ratio of 598-to-1. Minnesota had a 544-to-1 ratio, followed by Indiana 519-to-1 and Illinois 501-to-1. Vermont had a 177-to-1 ratio, the nation's lowest, followed by New Hampshire's 199-to-1. The national average in 2022-2023 was 385-to-1.

However, according to the Education Trust, an estimated eight million students had no access to a school counselor. "Having fewer school counselors prohibits students from being identified or being seen," Eric Sparks, ASCA's deputy director, told Axios. They are at-risk of falling "through the cracks."

AI to Transform Admissions. "Starting this summer, AI recruiters will go out into the world, pair 1-1 with an institution's prospective students and personally nurture them across e-mails, SMS, direct mail and even phone calls to drive applications," claims a May 21 article from Forbes.com.

"Once they are widely deployed, AI recruiters will raise the bar for college marketing and communications, offer the first viable solution to the admissions staffing crisis, and dismantle critical enrollment barriers for parents and students."

Currently, the article asserts, "The median junior receives more than 1,500 emails in their inbox each year..." It adds, "enrollment teams are struggling with up to 50 percent turnover and as many as two-thirds of admissions officers reported feelings of burnout in the past year." Additionally, "AI recruiters will enable enrollment teams to have fluent, real-time conversations in more than 30 languages including Spanish, Arabic, French, Vietnamese and more."

Who Isn't Planning to Go to College? A new poll of high school seniors who "decide by the middle of the process not to attend a four-year institution full time...do not see themselves, for the most part, opting out of further education." The poll was conducted this spring

by Arts and Science Group researchers who concluded that these students are "deciding to pursue [their education] in a different way, via community college, two-year programs, part-time bachelor's program or a gap period."

However, their "educational and career goals and aspirations are not generally equivalent to those of students moving directly into four-year programs." And, "many of these students seem to have been at least leaning against going for some time, engaging less frequently in behaviors more typical of those planning to go to four-year institutions...." To read the entire poll, go to <https://www.artsci.com>.

Men Favored Over Women: The Dilemma? Last year, Brown U. admitted men and women at a nearly 50/50 ratio. But the admit rate for men was 6.9 percent, while for women only 4.2 percent. In order to achieve the gender balance on campus, Brown had to select from 31,650 women who applied versus 19,666 men.

The Brown Daily Herald dug deeper into the apparent problem. It turned to Brown alum, Peg Tyre, author of the 2009 book, *The Trouble With Boys*. She told the paper, "Most applicants want to go to college in an environment that has a gender balance... except, girls who apply are much more qualified than boys." She cited data from the National Center for Educational Statistics that indicate that in addition to higher grades, girls have higher rates of participation in extracurricular activities and advanced classes.

She also pointed out that "boys do less well in college. They get more C's and D's. They do less homework." She explained that colleges will "put a little finger on the scale so that the differential is not greater than 60/40, because once it gets to 70/30, not only are boys not applying, but then girls don't apply."

Middle School Curriculum Critical. "The data shows us that getting into colleges is based on the courses that you were given, or not given, in middle school," said Joi Spencer, dean of the U. of California Riverside's School of Education. "For instance, students who don't take algebra by ninth grade most likely will never later take high school physics or calculus, classes that are important for college admissions."

That's why UC Riverside has launched a Middle School Initiative with local schools. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

"The Higher Education Financial Aid Workforce: Pay, Representation, Pay Equity and Retention" by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. Findings focus on the 6,073 financial aid employees reported by 956 institutions in CUPA-HR's higher education workforce surveys. Download at www.cupahr.org/surveys/research-briefs/higher-ed-financial.

Higher Education in 2035: How to understand and prepare for the challenges ahead from The Chronicle of Higher Education; \$199.00; find at <https://store.chronicle.com>.

Inequality in the Skills of City Youth: An

International Comparison by Stephen Lamb and Russell W. Rumberger; American Educational Research Association; paperback; ISBN 978-1-960348-00-5; \$60, non-members.

"How a Rural College Works to Prevent 'Brain Drain'" from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; examines how Eastern Oregon U. uses strategic partnerships to launch rural careers. Download the full case study at <https://store.chronicle.com>.

"Love is the Foundation for Life: Schott Report on Black Males in Public Education," produced in partnership with the UCLA Center for the

Transformation of Schools which found that between 2012 and 2020, "Black students experienced the highest graduation rate improvement of all groups, cutting the racial gap between graduating Black and white students nearly in half...." Download the report at <https://schottfoundation.org/resource/love-is-the-foundation-for-life>.

The 2024 Condition of Education. A new version of the National Center for Education Statistics "Report on the Condition of Education" was released the end of May with data on the "shifts in enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic" as well as "an indicator spotlighting career and technical education" at the high school and college levels.

For the full report, see, <https://ed.gov/programs/coe/sources>. ■

CURRICULUM CAPSULES

The Great Misalignment: Addressing the Mismatch between the Supply of Certificates and Associate's Degrees and the Future Demand for Workers in 565 US Labor Markets, according to a new report from the Georgetown U. Center on Education and the Workplace, which states that "...at least 50 percent of all middle-skills credentials would need to be granted in different fields of study... to fully align with projected labor growth through 2031."

Jeff Strohl, lead author, claimed that "We need to do a better job of ensuring that middle-skills providers are meeting the needs of their local labor market."

He added, "Roughly 30 percent of annual job openings through 2031 will go to workers with an associate's degree, a certificate, or

some college credit but no degree. But the current distribution of certificates and associate's degrees across programs of study differs significantly from the expected distribution of job openings for middle-skill workers." View the report at <https://cew.georgetown.edu/greatmisalignment>.

Meteorologists Find New Niche. Trained meteorologists are suddenly finding jobs in the financial field due to their knowledge about climate change and forecasting. "Industry is absorbing meteorologists for a lot more applications, such as the energy industry [and] transportation..." Jenni Evans, a professor of meteorology and atmospheric science at Penn State told *Fortune* magazine. ■

SCHOLARSHIP SCOOPS

Bowling Green Receives \$250 Million for Scholarships. Bowling Green State U. in Ohio received \$250 million for scholarships from the Thompson Foundation, the largest gift in state history. With the grant, the Thompson Working Families Scholarship program will be extended through 2035. To date, 1,910 students have benefitted from earlier Thompson gifts. More than 6,200 more students now will receive support.

"This is a generational defining gift for thousands of students who might not otherwise afford to earn a degree," said Rodney K. Rogers, BGSU president.

Colorado Expands its Promise. The State of Colorado has established a state-level program to cover tuition and fees for up to two years at trade schools and community colleges, as well as four-year institutions.

Called The Colorado Promise, it covers 100 percent of tuition and fees for up to 65 credits for all students in good standing with a household income of \$90,000 or less. It goes into effect next fall.

P.S. Global Scholarships. Globalscholarships.com is a scholarship search engine dedicated to supporting international students. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Curry Commitment. Curry C. in Massachusetts is promising that its graduates will find a job within six months of graduation. The Curry Commitment starts with the current cohort of freshman. If they don't receive a job offer or are not admitted to graduate school within six months, the college will pay their student loans for up to a year and place them in a year-long paid internship with an organization connected to their field of study.

"The number one thing that students and families want today out of their investment in college is a good job," said Ay Gonzalez, president. "...we're going to hold ourselves accountable for doing that."

Davenport C. in Michigan has operated a similar program for the past decade.

Illinois Requires ACT Instead of SAT to Graduate. Starting next year, Illinois high

school students will be required to take the ACT to graduate. The Illinois State Board of Education awarded a \$53 million contract to ACT to administer the test over the next six years. For the last decade, Illinois students have been required to take the SAT to graduate. "At the end of the day, it came down to price," said Stephen Isoye, the board's chairman.

Wisconsin Keeps ACT/SAT Optional. Wisconsin's 13 public universities, including UW-Madison, will continue to make standardized tests optional through the Summer 2027, in part because the policy helps "identify a broader range of students who can succeed."

Harvard U., Stanford and the U. of Texas at Austin, among many others, have reinstated standardized test requirements that were paused during the COVID crisis.

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website Scholaroo, New Hampshire has the highest percentage of students who received federal student loans, 63.9 percent. It is followed by Pennsylvania, 52.5 percent; South Dakota, 51 percent; Rhode Island, 47.7 percent; Louisiana, 44.4 percent; Vermont, 43.5 percent; Massachusetts, 43 percent; Delaware, 42.8 percent; Maine, 42.8 percent and Ohio, 42.5 percent.

Top 10 State College Undergraduate Spending. Also, according to the scholarships search website Scholaroo, Wyoming spends the most on college students, \$16,340 per undergraduate.

It is followed by South Carolina, \$3,052 per undergraduate; Tennessee, \$2,252 per undergraduate; New Mexico, \$2,242 per undergraduate; Georgia, \$2,168 per undergraduate; New Jersey, \$2,038 per undergraduate; California, \$1,751 per undergraduate; Louisiana, \$1,632 per undergraduate; Kentucky, \$1,615 per undergraduate and Virginia, \$1,391 per undergraduate.

So How Do Students Pay for College?

About half of students (51 percent) at four-year institutions use scholarships, grants and merit aid to pay for college, according to a recent College Avenue survey conducted by Barnes and Noble College Insights.

Of those who receive aid, 40 percent borrow federal student loans while 16 percent borrow private student loans, it reported. ■

Tacoma Addresses Housing Insecurity. In 2014, Tacoma C.C. and the Tacoma Housing Authority launched the College Housing Assistance Program to address homelessness and housing insecurity. A recent evaluation found that its clients were either new to town, experiencing a family crisis, loss of income or medical expenses and tended to be a single woman with an average age of 30. About 40 percent had dependents of their own.

Ultimately, only one in four students admitted to the program "leased up with a housing choice voucher." However, the students who managed to sign a lease did well in college and experienced other positive outcomes. The average national three-year completion rate for community college students is 35 percent. Students in this program who were homeless graduated at a 28 percent rate, while those who had housing graduated at a 43 percent rate. ■

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