

# College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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## Admissions Watch

**Bates Welcomes “Problem Solvers.”** Bates C. in Maine welcomed 509 new students to its Class of 2027, its 161st incoming class. They were selected from 8,937 applicants, the most in school history.

Some 52 percent of the new class is male, while students of color make up 28 percent. Others include a nationally ranked competitive roller skater, a founder of a lobster and aquaculture oyster business, a competitive Rubik’s cube solver and a trapeze artist.

According to Leigh Weisenburger, vice president for enrollment and dean of admission and financial aid, the new young students were selected for their “engagement and action.” She added, “They’re problem solvers....[who] bring an awareness of how various issues, from climate change to racial justice, intersect with one another, and they feel a drive to be part of solutions for the long term.”

**Colby Touts New Opportunities.** Colby C., also in Maine, welcomed 608 first-year students, survivors of a 17,787 application pool, to its Class of 2027. They traveled from 42 states and 50 nations. Their median SAT score was 1490, their median ACT, 33. In 2023, Colby touts broad opportunities for its students including at its new Gordon Center for Creative and Performing Arts and its Island Campus off midcoast Maine, where students encounter various research and learning opportunities.

**Johns Hopkins Photo Shoots New Class.** Johns Hopkins U. in Baltimore welcomed more than 1,300 new students arranged for a photoshoot as “JHU 27” and told them to smile. The new students arrived from 37 countries, 46 states and three U.S. territories. More than 19 percent are first-generation students.

**Minnesota Leaders Welcome New Class.** The U. of Minnesota Twin Cities welcomed

6,700 first-year students to its Class of 2027, along with 1,600 transfer students. More than 200 Welcome Week Leaders, upper-class student volunteers, guided the new Gophers through a variety of activities and events.

**MIT’s Got Talent.** The Class of 2027 was welcomed at MIT’s (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Convocation by new president Sally Kornbluh, who told the new students, “We’re so delighted and so grateful that you chose to bring your talent, energy, curiosity, creativity, and drive here.”

**Nicholls State Touts Small, Friendly Campus.** In its 75th year, Nicholls State U. in Louisiana enrolled 6,200 students, an increase of 301 from Fall 2022. Of those, 568 are graduate students. Its first-time freshman class grew by 20.3 percent. High school students taking dual enrollment courses surged by 73.5 percent. Nicholls State posted a retention rate of 76.2 percent of last year’s freshmen, according to *lafourchegazette.com*. Half of its new students are first-generation. Its most popular majors this fall include nursing, allied health sciences, business administration, psychology and biology.

“Our recruiting efforts were successful, educating students on the benefits of our small, friendly campus, rich with excellent academic programs,” said Renee Hicks, vice president. “Our primary focus is the student experience.... The energy on campus this semester has been amazing.”

**Oregon Boasts Having Second Largest Class.** The U. of Oregon welcomed 5,057 first-year students to its Class of 2027, the second largest class in school history, which was last year. It’s also the largest class of Oregonians, coming from every county. Some 38 percent

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## Financial Matters

**100-Plus Groups Join SAVE.** More than 100 organizations have joined the Department of Education’s outreach campaign “SAVE on Student Debt.” It is reaching out across the country to inform more than 18 million student borrowers about the Department of Education’s new income-driven repayment (IDR) plan. Borrowers can view more resources and tools to find the right repayment plan at [StudentAid.gov/restart](https://StudentAid.gov/restart). More information about SAVE is available at [StudentAid.gov/save](https://StudentAid.gov/save).

The SAVE program “will cut payments to zero for borrowers making roughly \$15 an hour, save all other borrowers at least \$1,000 a year compared to other income-driven repayment plans, and stop runaway interest that leaves folks owing more than their initial loan, said DOE under secretary James Kvaal.

“As much as there is joy and relief to some borrowers,” Saint Mary’s C. economics professor Abrah Fitwi told the *Notre Dame Observer*, “...the economic issue of another plan may increase the cost of education, the tuition fee. It might also increase inflation, which means huge costs. It could be up to \$300 billion in costs. Another issue is the fairness issue ... especially for those of us who paid for college already or dropped out early.”

**Central Arkansas Debt Free Graduates.** The U. of Central Arkansas launched an effort to provide students from Arkansas with a debt-free pathway to college education. Called the UCA Commitment, the program allows

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## ADMISSIONS WATCH

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identify as domestic minority students. The new students posted an average high school GPA of 3.75. Nearly 60 percent come to UO with some college credit.

“All of these numbers are a testament to the tremendous outreach work of our admissions team in building connections with the best and brightest students, who we are confident will excel and flourish at the University of Oregon,” said Roger J. Thompson, vice president for student services and enrollment management.

**Penn Asked Applicants to Write Thank-You Notes.** When the 2,416 members of the U. of Pennsylvania’s Class of 2027, gathered for their Convocation, they heard from Whitney Soule, vice provost and dean of admissions, who spoke about a new essay prompt for this class. It had asked them to write thank-you notes to people who influenced them on their journey to Penn. Soule said that she was awestruck by the nearly 60,000 notes to parents, teachers and others that came from applications and the chain reaction of gratitude sparked by them.

**Princeton Continues To Expand Its First-Year Class.** Princeton U., in New Jersey, welcomed 1,366 first-time, first-year members of the Class of 2027. Students came from 49 states and 64 countries. First-generation students make up 17 percent of the new class and 13 percent are children of alumni, while 22 percent are eligible for federal Pell Grants. Some 66 percent qualified for some kind of financial aid, with the average grant of about \$70,000 per year. Students from families earning less than \$100,000 now pay nothing to attend Princeton.

About a quarter of these new students are interested in an engineering degree, and 69 percent indicated they’re interested in a bachelor of arts. The Class of 2027 is the second in a four-year expansion of 500 students, to “ensure that more talented students from all backgrounds and sectors of society have access to a Princeton education.”

**St. Olaf Welcomes One of its Largest Classes.** St. Olaf U. in Minnesota welcomed 832 students to its Class of 2027, one of the largest classes in school history.

**Susquehanna Begins its 116th Year.** Susquehanna U. in Pennsylvania kicked off its 166th year by welcoming 594 first-year students. Among them are 18 international students, plus 50 transfer students. The Class of 2027 posted a high school GPA of 3.6, and includes six valedictorians and six salutatorians. Students from historically underrepresented groups make up 26 percent of the new

## Curriculum Capsules

**ChatGPT Trauma.** According to a survey from College Rover, 41 percent of college students use ChatGPT a few times a week, about 10 percent use it once a day and 9 percent use it several times a day. Widespread use of the relatively new AI writing tool has caused accusations of widespread “cheating.” For example, a writing professor at Conestoga C. in Canada reported a seven-fold increase in “academic integrity issues.”

Since developing good writing skills is synonymous with developing good thinking skills, schools are worried that the new technologies will erode their students’ skills or prevent them from acquiring these skills.

Professors around the world are grappling with how they will use or ban the new writing tool. The College Rover survey found that 36 percent of students reported their professors

class, 32 percent are first-generation college students and 26 percent are receiving federal Pell Grants. Student athletes make up 22 percent of the new class.

About 32 percent of the new class intends to major in the School of Natural and Social Sciences, 25 percent declared a major in business, 22 percent in the humanities, 9 percent in the School of the Arts and 12 percent are undecided about their majors.

President Jonathan Green told the new students, “You are arriving here at a moment when humanity is at an existential crossroads. We are always at a crossroads, but this one is different in that the path to a better future has probably never been more immediately dependent upon education, and especially a liberal-arts education....”

**Texas A&M Sets Record.** Texas A&M’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences welcomed a record-breaking freshman class of 1,400 students, 40 percent more than last year, when more than 2,400 on-campus students received internships or field experience. Chris Skaggs, associate vice chancellor, said that their majors will “propel these new students towards success in critical fields of study.”

**Tufts Expands Access.** Tufts U. in Massachusetts welcomed 1,742 first-year students to its Class of 2027. They were joined by 73 transfer students. About half of the incoming class of U.S. undergraduates identify as students of color, 7 percent as African American, 11 percent as Latinx/Hispanic, 20 percent as Asian American, 11 percent as multicultural and 47 percent identify as white. Forty first-year students identify as native or indigenous. Members of the Class of 2027 received \$33 million in need-based grants.

JT Duck, dean of admissions and enrollment

threatened to fail them if they were caught using AI for assigned coursework. But 60 percent of these students said they don’t believe their school should outright ban AI technologies.

However, technology experts warn that those without AI skills may find it hard to obtain high skill jobs in the future, since AI is being integrated into all areas of the economy. They argue it is essential to teach college students basic and advanced AI skills and these should be integrated into almost every class.

**Wisconsin’s New Ethnic Major.** “To meet growing demand for courses in Mexican and Latin American history and culture, the UW is launching a Chican@ and Latin@ bachelor’s degree this fall.” The program includes courses in the humanities, social sciences and community studies. ■

management, told the new students that, “this class represents our continuing commitment to expand access to a Tufts education and to expand the number of communities from which our students enroll.”

**Yale Reaches Out.** Following the Supreme Court’s decision on affirmative action, Yale C.’s Pericles Lewis, dean of the college, and Jeremiah Quinlan, dean of undergraduate admissions and financial aid, announced that the college is expanding “the reach” of its Yale Ambassador program. The program sends student ambassadors to engage with prospective students in their home areas to “increase geographic reach and engage more students in the application process.”

The Ambassador program “is a great way to engage undergraduates, and it’s a great way to cover more ground in the country, visit more schools and talk to more students and families than any one admissions staff possibly could,” said Quinlan.

Yale C.’s Class of 2027 is made up of 1,647 first-year students. Another 17 new transfer students and 21 new adult students matriculated through the Eli Whitney Students Program, and 22 students were most recently enrolled in community college. The new class includes 90 more students than last year. Some 22 percent are eligible for federal Pell Grants, up from 12 percent in 2013. Overall, Yale received 52,000 applications for this year’s new class.

**Forbes “America’s Top Colleges” 2023 Rankings.** Princeton U. ranked first, followed by Yale U., Stanford U., MIT, and the U. of California-Berkeley rounded out the top five. Public U.s also made the list with The U. of Michigan logging in at 23, the University of Virginia at 29 and the University of Maryland-College Park at 34. ■

## FINANCIAL MATTERS

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students from families earning under \$100,000 to graduate debt-free.

UCA hopes to raise \$100 million by the end of next year to help pay for the program. "Through higher education, we empower individuals, inspire innovation and drive economic development, and the UCA Commitment is another investment in our students and in the state of Arkansas," said President Houston Davis.

**Tuition Shock.** College tuition has skyrocketed a shocking 747 percent since 1963, according to the Education Data Initiative (EDI). Additionally, between 1980 and 2020, the average price of tuition, fees, room and board for an undergraduate increased by 169 percent, according to the Georgetown U. Center on Education and the Workforce.

Since 1970, student debt has soared by 2,807 percent according to EDI. Adjusted for inflation, the average debt is up 317 percent. During the last four decades, earnings for those between the ages of 22 to 27 only increased by 19 percent.

However, when adjusted for inflation, the actual annual price paid by undergrads at four-year private colleges (\$32,800) has declined by 11 percent over the past five years, and fallen by 13 percent at public institutions (\$19,000), according to the College Board.

**Duke Offers Free Tuition for Carolina Students from Families Earning Less than \$150,000.** Duke U. has expanded free tuition to students from North and South Carolina to cover all students from families earning less than \$150,000. "At Duke, we are very fortunate to be one of just over 100 institutions in the U.S. that admits students without attention to their financial background," Gary Bennett, Duke's dean of Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, told Yahoo!Finance.

**Illinois Partnership Loan Program.** Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs is using state funds to leverage loans for thousands of Illinois students who need to bridge a gap between college savings and other financial aid. The state is partnering with the non-profit ISL Lending. Since 1992, the Illinois Partnership Loan Program has helped nearly 400,000 students.

**McPherson Shoots to Top of Small College Endowment List.** McPherson C. in Kansas has leaped from number 581 on the small

college endowment list to number one, thanks to an anonymous \$500 million dollar matching gift that led to additional gifts and its new endowment of \$1.59 billion. McPherson President Michael Schneider announced a \$1 billion dollar endowment goal that set off the philanthropic avalanche. "A lot of people laughed at me, but no one is laughing now," he said.

As a result, McPherson's enrollment has grown from 706 students in 2019 to 800 this year. McPherson plans to use the money to reduce student debt, enhance its Health Science Program and reduce gaps in rural health care, according to *Inside Higher Education*.

**Immigrant Tuition Update.** Currently, 17 states that grant in-state tuition also allow students to be eligible for financial aid, as does the District of Columbia, according to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal. Four states, Delaware, Iowa, Michigan and Pennsylvania restrict the number of public universities at which immigrants without permanent legal status are eligible for in-state tuition.

Five states, Arkansas, Idaho, Maine, Mississippi and Ohio only provide tuition discounts to young immigrants who have DACA status. Nine states, Indiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina specifically block access to in-state tuition or state financial aid for residents lacking permanent legal status.

**Wash U. Goes "No Loan."** Beginning next year, Washington U. in St. Louis will no longer include loans in its financial aid packages. Federal loans will be replaced with scholarships and grants. The university will continue its WashU Pledge, which provides a full undergraduate education, including tuition, fees, housing and meals, to students from Missouri and southern Illinois with an annual family income of \$75,000 or less.

"We are deeply committed to making a WashU education accessible for all talented students who earn admission," said Chancellor Andrew D. Martin.

**Hendrix To Match Home State Flagship Tuition.** Hendrix C. in Arkansas announced that next year, as part of its Tuition Advantage scholarship, first-year admitted students will pay no more tuition and fees than they would at their home state's flagship institution. Hendrix was founded in 1876 and is featured in *Colleges That Change Lives*. ■

## COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

*Heroic Fraternities: How College Men Can Save Universities and America* by Anthony Bradley, 222 pages, from WipF, ISBN-10:166-671-5530, \$35.

Bradley claims that 46 percent of current male college students feel hopeless, 75 percent feel exhausted 56 percent feel very alone, 59 percent very sad, 34.8 percent feel exhausted, 49 percent experience overwhelming anxiety, 37 percent feel overwhelming anger and 11 percent seriously considered suicide.

Bradley thinks that Greek life can help male

bonding to overcome these problems.

### How Important Are The College Rankings?

According to a survey of 800 recent high school grads by the Art & Science Group, only 25 percent of students surveyed said they paid attention to any one specific ranking source. *US News: Best Colleges* was most familiar to those who do look at rankings (22 percent), followed by *Niche: Best Colleges in America*, used by 17 percent of those surveyed. See, <https://www.artsci.com>.

*The K&W Guide To Colleges For Students With Learning Differences*, 16th Edition, by Marybeth Kravets, M.D. and Imy F. Wax, MS.

The Princeton Review, ISBN 978-0-593-51740-6, \$35.99. (350+ schools with programs or services for students with ADHD, ASD or Learning Differences.)

*The Best 389 Colleges, 2024*, by Robert Franek, The Princeton Review, ISBN 978-0-593-51686-7, \$26.99.

The book includes direct quotes from students about their school's professors, campus culture, career services, plus detailed admission information. ■

## ENROLLMENT TRENDS

### Community College Enrollment Rebounds.

According to *Community College Daily*, “Community college enrollments overall appeared to be blooming this fall in varying degrees...” For example, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System reports a 5.8 percent increase for the fall at its 16 institutions. “In Maine, early fall enrollment is up 18 percent, boosted by the second year of the Free College Scholarship program.” The Community College of Rhode Island reported a 5 percent increase in enrollment overall and a 9 percent increase among black students and a 4 percent rise among Hispanic students.

In California, the San Diego Community College District experienced a fall increase of 12 percent.

**Fitch Ratings for Higher Education.** The Fitch Ratings for the Higher Education sector, released in September 2023, found, “The higher education landscape remains bifurcated. Institutions without strong brands that are located in markets with the steepest drop in college-age population are the most vulnerable to enrollment declines. These markets also have a multitude of public and private institutions competing vigorously

for a shrinking pool of students. The enrollment environment means that revenue growth prospects are relatively limited for now, particularly for small nonselective private colleges that are highly dependent on tuition revenue and some regional public universities.

“We do not anticipate widespread closures or downgrades within our rated portfolio... [but] Fitch Ratings anticipates further closures, mergers and significantly restructured operations are inevitable for some institutions in the face of continued challenges in the U.S. higher education sector. Enrollment declines and related pressures on tuition and student fee growth prospects have been a common thread in each of the negative rating actions Fitch has taken year to date.”

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

**Faculty Shift.** In 1987, 47 percent of faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities worked part-time or contingent positions with lower salaries and few benefits. By the fall of 2021, that number had grown to 70 percent as institutions sought ways to control costs.

**Fewer Take Internships.** In 2018 before the pandemic, only 29.2 percent of college students participated in internships. In 2022, only 17 percent of college students participated in an internship, according to the Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions at the U. of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Chat Tutors.** According to a survey by intelligent.com about 10 percent of high school and college students aged 16 to 24 say they studied with both ChatGPT and a live tutor over the past academic year. Nearly all the students in this survey had replaced some of their tutoring sessions with ChatGPT and 90 percent said that they prefer studying with Chat GPT over studying with a live tutor. Math and science were the most common subjects that they used ChatGPT to improve their grades.

Students said that they found ChatGPT to be more helpful and convenient. They like the fact that it is available 24/7. Also, ChatGPT is less expensive than a live tutor.

However, reliance on ChatGPT is causing some concern. Students may be using ChatGPT too often. “This in turn reduces their ability to think creatively and quickly come up with solutions...,” said Meteusz Kostrz, cofounder of Edunade. “That can be very easily seen when writing essays, which some students cannot do anymore without help from AI.”

**Lumina Foundation’s Great Admissions Redesign.** The Lumina Foundation in Indianapolis launched a \$3 million effort to make it easier for students to apply for and be admitted to college. The Great Admissions Redesign challenges higher education institutions and state agencies to find ways to simplify what many see as a complicated process.

“The time is ripe for some real innovations to take place here,” said Melanie Heath, strategy director for participation at Lumina. “So, what we’re looking for are ways to simplify the process by making it proactive, automated and transparent,” she told Inside *Indiana Business*.

**Student Spending on Course Materials.** College students are spending 57 percent less on their course materials than they did a decade ago, according to Student Watch. “This year was actually the lowest recorded course material spending in 16 years since we began tracking that measure. As the space shifts to digital, costs too decrease. A lot of inclusive access programs are digital first.”

**New Research on Student Success.** “Indicators of high school grades and standardized test scores that take into account the level of school, neighborhood, and financial resources available to students are strongly associated with those students’ success in college,” according to researchers at the U. of Michigan and U. of North Carolina, just published in the *AERA Open*, the Journal of the American Educational Research Association.

“These findings extend our knowledge of the relationship between students’ contextualized high school performance and college success, which have so far mostly been limited to studies of class rank,” said Michael N. Bastedo. ■

**UConn Acceptance Rate High.** Nine out of ten Connecticut residents who apply to one of the U. of Connecticut’s five campuses are accepted. That compares to the 75 percent average rate for all students, including out-of-staters and international students. However, only 50 percent of state residents are admitted to the flagship campus at Storrs.

About 30 percent of UConn’s Class of 2027 is made up of first-generation college students, while 30 percent also come from backgrounds that are historically underrepresented in higher education. About 4,200 students are enrolling at the Storrs campus and another 1,600 at regional campuses in Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford and Waterbury.

“Interest in UConn is at an all-time high, as we continue to see increases in applications from Connecticut residents and students throughout the country and world,” said Vern Granger, director of undergraduate admissions.

**Harvard Crimson Editorializes on Harvard’s New Application Questions.** *The Harvard Crimson* is not entirely onboard with Harvard’s new undergraduate questions on the Common App. “We have misgivings about the ability of these new questions to thoroughly capture the diverse array of student experiences.”

And the paper charges that one of the new prompts: “Briefly describe an intellectual experience that was important to you,” has bias because “This question seemingly privileges applicants from well-resourced backgrounds for whom additional academic opportunities were plentiful in high school.” ■

### Happy Autumn

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