

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Economic Turmoil Impacts 2009 Admissions

UNCERTAINTY has been the watchword this past fall as admissions offices across the nation awaited the influx of new applications for the Class of 2013. Admissions officers wondered how the economic turmoil would affect their admissions numbers.

The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities reported that many institutions are concerned that not as many students are applying for the Class of 2013.

"We are all speculating that privates will see a decline while publics will gain, but it's way too early to know," Barmak Nassirian, a spokesman for the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers, told the *Burlington Free Press*.

Meanwhile, financial aid officers wondered how the loss of billions on the stock market and tens of thousands jobs would impact applications for financial aid. Last year, 1.4 million more students filled out FAFSA than in 2007, according to the U.S. Department of Education, a 10 percent jump. What will 2009 hold?

So far, the signs have been mixed. There has been no rush among students for more financial aid at schools such as Boston C., the U. of Central Florida or Washington U. in Saint Louis, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. However, requests for aid information were up 50 percent at Prairie View A&M U. in Texas, and financial aid applications jumped by 23 percent at Quinsigamond Community College in Massachusetts. "I have never experienced in my life this anxiety level of parents," one of that school's vice presidents told the magazine.

Private colleges, with their higher tuitions, may be feeling the ramifications of economic hard times the most as students turn to less

expensive public colleges and universities.

Many colleges and universities are responding with more financial aid. For example, Boston C. is increasing aid by an extra \$3 million. The U. of Toledo has bolstered aid to low-income "B" students from major Ohio cities. But Arkansas State U.—Jonesboro, which was inundated with requests for merit aid, cut off applications early.

So this month, *CB* brings you some early reports from around the nation about how this admissions cycle is shaping up.

APPLICATIONS MIXED

The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities reports that 93 percent of the nation's private schools were greatly or moderately worried about preventing enrollment declines. But individual colleges are reporting both gains and reductions in 2009 applications compared to last year.

Duke. Applications for the Class of 2013 soared by nearly 17 percent at Duke U. to 23,750. Duke has already admitted 547 Early Decision students. Overall, applicants are competing to fill only 1,120 seats in the new class. Undergraduate admission dean Christoph Guttentag told the Associated Press that the university is doing a better job of contacting prospective applicants. Many are attracted by the school's commitment to financial aid.

Illinois. According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the community colleges in Illinois have seen a 14 percent increase in applications, the biggest increase among the state colleges.

Also, "more students are applying for financial aid than at any time in state history," it noted.

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SAT Score Choice

YEA OR NAY? Beginning in March, the College Board will launch Score Choice, a new policy that will give students the option to select which scores they send to colleges. Students can send any or all scores to a college at "no additional cost," according to the College Board.

The feature will be available to the students in the class of 2010 participating in the March 2009 test administration. The College Board said that the policy is "designed to reduce student stress and improve the test-day experience."

Some guidance counselors, though, are worried the new policy may increase the stress for some students who may take repeated tests to improve their scores, perhaps to no avail.

And colleges are lining up on both sides of the issue on whether they will allow students who take the SAT or ACT multiple times to submit only their best score. MIT will allow applicants to select which score through its new Score Choice policy which becomes effective for applicants to the Class of 2014.

However, Yale U. will continue to require scores from all test dates on the SAT Reasoning and Subject tests. Cornell, Stanford and the U. of Pennsylvania have also decided to require all scores.

"Score Choice is not likely to have any effect on our process, as the differences that students might realize from taking the test over is pretty much noise to us," Stuart Schmill, MIT dean of admissions, told the *Yale Daily News*.

For more info on Score Choice see www.collegeboard.com. ■

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ECONOMIC TURMOIL

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Nearly 376,000 Illinois students submitted federal financial aid applications since July 1, “an 8 percent increase over last year.”

And the number of those students eligible for state grants passed 240,000, also a record. “We’ve never had application volume this high,” said Sue Kleemann, director of research for the Illinois Student Assistance Commission which last year ran out of funds in July.

Massachusetts. Public schools in Massachusetts have experienced a “jump” in applications, according to *Business West Online* last month. At the UMass Amherst, early action apps were up 29 percent to 8,045, and overall apps may be up 10 percent. Applications to Westfield State C. are up 40 percent and 60 percent at the Mass. College of Liberal Arts. Holyoke Community C. had 20 percent more apps over the same time the previous year.

Minnesota. Saint Mary’s U. reported a 7.5 percent decline in applications from last year’s record numbers. Yet overall, 2009 is the school’s third largest applicant pool. Applications were up by about 9 percent at Winona State U. That was helped by a new online registration option that has streamlined the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system application process, which makes it easier to submit applications to several schools. Meanwhile, applications soared by more than 30 percent at Minnesota State College—Southeast Technical in Winona.

Ohio. Applications fell 5 percent from last year at Ohio U. in Athens, but they are up nearly 3 percent compared to two years ago and the school says it is on target to meet its enrollment goals. In-state applications are up; out-of-state apps are down. At the same time, international applications soared by 58 percent and transfer applications have leaped by 63 percent.

At Kenyon C., the state’s most expensive school, applications are down about 10 percent, even though Early Decision apps rose slightly. But Kenyon has had many more qualified applicants than it can admit, so officials say the downturn is not yet a cause for concern.

Rice U. More than 10,000 students applied to Rice U. in Texas for the Class of 2013, a school record, out pacing last year’s 9,700 applications. Rice received 720 applications for Early Decision, compared to 661 for this year’s class, a 5.5 percent increase. About 26 percent of the class of 2008-09 was filled through ED.

This year, applications from international students rose by 28 percent, with a significant spike from China where Rice’s president spent time last year. African American applications

jumped by 11 percent, out-of-state applications increased by nearly 13 percent and those from Texas residents were 10.5 percent higher.

Rice has maintained its need-blind admissions policy while it significantly expanded financial aid for students and has implemented a no-loan policy for students from families earning less than \$80,000 a year.

U. of California. On January 14, the regents of the U. of California system voted to cut back freshman enrollment to confront severe budget shortfalls. A total of 2,300 fewer freshmen will be admitted this year. The regents warned of more cuts if California’s \$43 billion budget deficit cannot be solved otherwise. The cuts amount to a 6 percent reduction to the 37,600 freshman class admitted this school year and are expected to save about \$20 million. Undergraduate fees will rise to \$8,669 for undergraduates and \$11,124 a year for UC graduate students. Some 285 executive salaries were also frozen.

All of California’s high school students who qualify for admission with the minimum grade-point average and test scores will be offered admission to the university. But more will end up in a referral pool, and receive offers from the allegedly less prestigious campuses.

UC San Diego will accept 520 fewer freshmen. UC Davis, Irvine, Riverside, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz will share the remaining reductions. UC Berkeley will be allowed to add 80 freshmen. UCLA will cut 35 slots. UC Merced, the university’s newest campus, will be allowed to continue to expand. UC is currently reviewing 98,000 freshmen applications.

Vermont. As of early January, applications at the U. of Vermont had shot up by 12 percent over last year. In-state applications rose by 18 percent, while applications from minority students soared by more than 20 percent.

At Vermont Technical Colleges, apps were up by 18 percent. They were up 12 percent at Castleton State C. and up 11 percent at Johnson State C. At the Community College of Vermont, registration was up by 18 percent over this time last year.

Early applications were up at St. Michael’s, while regular apps were close to last year’s numbers. At Champlain C., applications were up 15 percent as of January 1.

Meanwhile, the number of applicants to Middlebury C. dropped by 12 percent compared to last year, to 6,771. But it’s not the economy that is driving the decline, according to Robert Clagett, dean of admissions. Instead, the Vermont college has begun requiring an up-front application fee or a request for a fee waiver. “Due to this change, we were already anticipating about 700 to 800 fewer applicants this year,” Clagett told *The Middlebury Campus*.

Wisconsin. Applications are up moderately at most of Wisconsin’s private colleges, according to the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. But, applications are off 5 percent at the U. of Wisconsin—La Crosse. And according to the *La Crosse Tribune*, applications are down for most of the U. of Wisconsin system. But they are up by 16 percent at nearby Viterbo U., which is in the midst of a five-year enrollment growth plan.

Yale. 2009 is another record-breaking year at Yale U. Applications neared 26,000, up from 22,817 last year. At the same time, Jeff Brenzel, dean of admissions, told the *Yale Daily News* that the school accepted nearly 150 fewer early applications for the Class of 2013, returning to the policy employed prior to last year when 885 students were admitted early. Yale anticipates accepting between 1,900 and 2,000 applicants for the Class of 2013, similar to past years. Brenzel also expects to admit some students from its wait list.

“On the one hand, the early pool is very strong and we want to reach out to the most outstanding students who apply early,” Brenzel said. “On the other hand, many of the best candidates do not apply until the regular process, and we want to make sure we have plenty of room to offer them places.”

“By accepting fewer students early, Yale will help alleviate the admissions frenzy and rush to apply early,” Jon Rider, director of college counseling at San Francisco U. High School, told the student paper.

Other Numbers. According to *The New York Times* recently, applications are down by 16 percent at **Hamilton C.** and down about 14 percent at **Colby C.**

CHANGES IN ADMISSIONS TO WATCH

New Dual Admissions. Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), Cleveland State U. and Kent State U. announced a new dual admissions program. “Dual admissions is an excellent choice for students who want an affordable, high-quality college education, especially if they know from the outset that they intend to use the community college as a springboard to a bachelor’s or other advanced degree,” said Ohio’s Board of Regents Chancellor Eric D. Fingerhut. Students admitted in the program gain access to certain services at the four-year schools while still studying at Tri-C.

Iraqi Students. Iraq Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki invited representatives from Texas A & M, the U. of Bridgeport, U. of Chicago, U. of Kentucky, U. of Oregon and 15 other universities to visit his nation and meet with prospective students in a series of college fairs. Iraq hopes to send 10,000 students a year abroad to learn the skills they need to rebuild the Iraqi economy. ■

Inside Admissions Offices

EACH YEAR, *CB's* annual survey asks admissions officers questions about their incoming class. Here is what they said about the Fall 2008 entering class.

MOST POPULAR MAJORS

"What are the most popular majors or programs at your school?" was one question on the survey. (Actually, the lists haven't varied much over the years.) But among the offerings noted this year are interesting examples of the wide variety of programs.

It might be no surprise, given its location, that NYU would report "theatre" as one of its most popular majors. But did you know, that at Lawrence U. in Appleton, Wisconsin, "Music Performance" is one of the most popular majors? James Madison U. has an "Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies" that is its third most popular major. At Gannon U. in Erie, Pennsylvania, "Sports and Exercise Science" is popular. Florida Institute of Technology names "Marine Sciences" as a top choice for students. And at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical U., "Global Security and Intelligence" ranks high. Drake has a popular "Law, Politics & Society." And at Carnegie Mellon U., where "Electrical Engineering" and "Computer Science" are popular, so is "Drama."

There's "Integrative Physiology" at the U. of Colorado at Boulder and "Philosophy" at Reed. These popular majors both reflect the interests of the students on a particular campus and the wide array of studies in the nation's colleges.

The list of the 10 top majors cited this year in *CB's* survey in rank order: Business, Biology, Psychology, Education, English, Communication, Nursing, Engineering, Economics, Criminal Justice.

TRENDS NOTED IN 2008

Other admissions officers noted other interesting trends. Patricia H. Johnston at Bucknell U. said, "Families were more targeted in choosing which campuses to visit."

Stephanie Elpers, director of admission operations and communications, Butler U., noticed "more search traffic to website rather than direct traffic."

Susan Winstel, director of admissions, Carlow U., said, "Nursing continues to be strong. Overall, SAT scores seem to be dropping."

Amy Nichols, associate director, Drake U., noted "Even more AP and college coursework taken by entering first-year students."

Lesley Al-Haheri, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical U., "Parents are more involved. Students are more interested in careers and outcomes. There is more reliance on electronic media."

AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL GPA

What was the average GPA for the 2008 incoming freshmen?

Here are a few examples:

School	GPA
Brandeis U.	3.85
Carnegie Mellon U.	3.65
Claremont McKenna U.	3.9
Colgate U.	3.61
Embry-Riddle—Dayton	3.25
Georgia Southern U.	3.17
New York U.	3.63
Temple U.	3.37
U. of Arizona	3.27
SUNY Binghamton	93

Sources: *CB's Annual Survey Fall 2008*

Michael Perry, director of admission, Florida Institute of Technology, added, "There were more visitors to campus."

Michelle Miller at Gannon U. saw "more multiple deposits that eventually cancelled."

Patrick Roberts, Georgia Southern U., said, "More students seemed to be 'depositing' at several schools, and then making a 'final' decision in May."

Phyllis Schultz, Lawrence U., said, "Parents continue to be highly involved in the college selection process, which helps entire families make more fully considered decisions."

Robyn Winetanley, Nazareth C., said, "68 percent of students submitted SAT and/or ACT scores; 32 percent did not submit them."

Gail Capel Stephenoff, director of enrollment management analysis, The Ohio State U.-

Columbus, said, "A good trend: campus visits are on the rise. Campus visits should be the biggest factor in a student's college selection process. A bad trend: students are missing the FAFSA filing deadline."

Mary E. Gooch, admissions director at Prairie View A&M U., said, "Students are applying earlier, using emails and posted higher GPAs." And William L. Pierce, director of freshman admission at the U. of Toledo, saw "better prepared applicants."

ADVICE FROM ADMISSIONS OFFICERS FOR 2009

THE *CB* survey also asked, "What can you advise 2009 applicants?" A number of admissions officers suggested advice on navigating the financial waters. For example,

Patricia H. Johnston, Bucknell U., wanted to remind applicants that, "Financial aid can vary among institutions. In fact, those institutions that have a lower 'sicker price' may not necessarily be more affordable for you than those with higher tuition rates. The best thing to do is to apply to the schools that align best with your learning style and educational goals and then compare the financial aid packages of those to which you have been admitted, rather than the initial cost of the schools."

Michael Perry, Florida Institute of Technology, reminded students to "apply for financial aid early." Carol A. Rowlands, Lafayette C., said, "Apply to a broad range of schools and do not let the current economic situation deter you from considering all your options."

"We are advising 2009 applicants to think about—but not worry about—the economy," said Phyllis Schultz, Lawrence U. "While many families have seen college savings plans suffer in the current economic environment, many of them forget that they may become

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THE COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Top Values. In these seemingly dark economic days, students and their parents want value for their dollars. That's why people took interest in this year's Princeton Review/*USA TODAY's* "100 Best Value Colleges for 2009." The rankings were based on 30 factors in the areas of

academics, cost of attendance and financial aid.

The Top 10 Best Value Private Colleges were: Swarthmore C., Harvard C., Princeton U., Rice U., Yale U., Williams C., Amherst C., California Institute of Technology, Pomona C. and Stanford U.

The Top 10 Best Value Public Colleges: U. of

Virginia, New C. of Florida, C. of William & Mary, State U. of New York at Binghamton, Florida State U., North Carolina State U., U. of California—San Diego, City U. of New York—Hunter College, U. of Georgia and The C. of New Jersey.

View the entire list of best values at either The Princeton Review's or *USA TODAY's* websites, and find, as well, more in-depth information about each featured school. ■

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Online Growth. Enrollment in online courses rose by 12 percent in 2007 over the previous year. The 2008 Sloan Survey of Online Learning of 2,500 colleges and universities found that approximately 3.94 million students were enrolled in at least one online course in the fall of 2007. "Chief academic officers ... say increasing fuel costs, unemployment and the downturn in the economy are expected to drive further increases in online student enrollment over the next year," said the report's co-author Elaine Allen, research director of the Arthur M. Blank Center for Entrepreneurship at Babson C. To view the entire report, go to www.sloanconsortium.org.

Community College Completion. Only one-third of students who enroll in community colleges earn a certificate, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree within six years. But a new study of low-income community college students in Louisiana sponsored by MDRC, a 35-year-old New York non-profit, found that under a performance-based scholarship program "students were more likely to stay in school and register full-time" and "earn higher grades and more credits."

"The findings from MDRC's study reaffirm the importance of financial aid and student services to help our students succeed in college," said the vice chancellor of Delgado Community College. "We hope that these positive results will convince our state and federal policymakers to provide more funds for performance-based scholarships."

Low Selectivity. One of the most requested *USA Today* online college stories is on acceptance rates, updated from November 8, 2006. And while the numbers have changed slightly in the past few years, it is still worth revisiting.

Fewer than 3 percent of the nation's four-year, not-for-profit colleges that accepted more than a 1,000 applicants in 2004 accepted fewer than 25 percent of their applicants, according to a study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). Conversely, nearly 83 percent of those schools accepted more than half of their applicants.

The top 20 schools with the lowest acceptance rates in 2004, and the percent accepted, were: Harvard U. 10.4 percent, Yale U. 11.4 percent, Princeton U. 12.7 percent, Stanford U. 13 percent, Columbia U. 13.2 percent, California Polytechnic State U.-San Luis Obispo 15.9 percent, Massachusetts Institute of Technology 15.9 percent, Brown U. 16.4 percent, U. of Puerto Rico-Bayamon 18.1

percent, Dartmouth C. 18.5 percent, Williams C. 19.2 percent, Amherst C. 20.7 percent, U. of Pennsylvania 21.2 percent, Duke U. 21.4 percent, Georgetown U. 21.9 percent, Washington U. in St. Louis 22.2 percent, Rice U. 22.2 percent, Middlebury C. 22.6 percent, U. of California-Los Angeles 23.5 percent and U. of California-Berkeley 23.9 percent.

United Kingdom. Meanwhile, across the ocean, record numbers of undergraduates enrolled in colleges across the United Kingdom last year, according to the *Guardian*. The

Financial Aid Flash

SMART Grants. Participation in the Academic Competitiveness (AC) and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) grant program grew by 28 percent in 2007-08 to more than 467,492 students. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings said, "These programs have provided additional funds to low-income students across the U.S. who have taken rigorous courses in high school and are pursuing college degrees in areas vital to American competitiveness in the 21st century." The programs were created in 2006.

Stop Hunger Scholarships. Five students who are active in their communities in the fight against hunger will receive \$5,000 Stop Hunger Scholarships from the Sodexo Foundation. An additional \$5,000 will be donated to the hunger-related charity of their choice. Also, 20 regional honorees will have \$1,000 donated in their name to their favorite hunger charity. Deadline: February 27, 2009. See www.sodexofoundation.org.

New 529 Flexibility. The U.S. Treasury Department has ruled that 529 college savings owners can make two, instead of just one, changes to their investment strategy in a single year. The change came after an appeal from College Savings Planning Network, an affiliate of the National Association of State Treasurers. To learn more, go to www.irs.gov. To find out more about 529 college savings plans, see www.collegesavings.org.

New Merit Scholarships. CB's survey asked colleges if they had NEW scholarships for first-year students. Here is what a few said:

Bucknell U. Men's Athletic, Women's Swimming, Men's Swimming, Women's Soccer, Men's Soccer, Women's Lacrosse, Men's Wrestling, Women's Cross-country.

number of full-time students rose by more than 10 percent, or 43,197 students, to a total of 456,627. This year's applications to Oxford and Cambridge, and for medicine and dentistry courses, increased by 6.5 percent.

The Royal Society of Chemistry said the number of chemistry undergraduates had risen above 4,000 for the first time in a decade. The U.K. is still working to reach its goal of 50 percent higher education participation for its young people.

The number of overseas students taking degrees in British universities rose nearly 6 percent, with students from Romania up 140 percent, Bulgaria up 109 percent, Singapore up 32 percent and China up 21 percent. ■

Claremont McKenna C. Seaver Leadership Scholarship (full tuition).

Elon U. Fellows Merit Scholarship (\$2,000-\$10,000), Endowed Scholarship (\$2,000-\$8,000).

Indiana State U. University Honors Scholarship.

Kalamazoo C. Enlightened Leadership Awards for Environmental Activism.

Purdue U. Presidential Scholarship, Trustee Scholarship.

Scripps C. New Generation Scholarship.

U. of Rochester. Joseph Wilson "Change" Scholarship, Say Yes Scholarship, Edmund Hajim Engineering Awards, Rochester Pledge.

The U. of Toledo. Blue and Gold Scholarship.

Wabash C. Top Ten Scholarships.

UPCOMING DEADLINES: Scholarships for Hispanic students sponsored by the Ronald McDonald House Charities, Feb. 16; www.rmhc.org. Scholarships from the National Burglar & Fire Alarm Association, Mar. 31; www.alarm.org/pubsafety/. ■

INSIDE ADMISSIONS OFFICES

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eligible for more financial aid from colleges. We are encouraging students not to defer or deny their college dreams because of intimidating college sticker prices; take the shot at your dream colleges and give them a chance to provide you with an admission offer, and, if appropriate, a financial aid/scholarship offer to consider."

As Gail Capel Stephenoff, The Ohio State U., advised, "Plan to apply for aid via the FAFSA even if you doubt your eligibility." ■

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