

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

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Admissions Watch

THIS MONTH, AS *CB* GOES TO PRESS, ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION notices are being posted and mailed. So we're taking stock of the end of this season's application cycle. Next month, we'll bring you a round-up of April admissions numbers.

APPLICATIONS SURGE (AGAIN) NATIONWIDE

Despite a stable pool of college-age students, the number of applications to prestigious schools increased last year by an estimated 7 percent. That meant that acceptance rates continued to decline. In fact, a recent study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling found that median acceptance rates dropped 10 percent at private, nonprofit four-year colleges and 7 percent at public schools from 2001 to 2008.

Yet, highly-qualified and less-qualified students continue to apply to top schools this year, no matter how slim their chances. For example, *The Los Angeles Times* recently reported that applications at the U. of Southern California rose by 3 percent this year; Stanford U. was up by 7 percent; Loyola Marymount U. soared by 12 percent and the U. of California saw a nearly 6 percent increase.

And UCLA researchers told *The Los Angeles Times* recently that nearly 18 percent of current college freshmen applied to eight or more colleges last year, up from nearly 16 percent the previous year and about 8 percent 10 years ago.

Common Application Record Set. Hitting an all-time high, the Common Application reported that during this admissions season, the online system was processing as many as 3.5 submissions *per second*. By January 1, the cutoff for some colleges, 1,809,193 applications had been submitted, nearly surpassing the total for the previous year.

Then by mid-March, 556,697 students had submitted 2,335,468 applications. According to Scott Anderson, director of outreach for The Common Application, "We anticipate a final application volume of 2.4 million by the time we close out the 2010-11 year in mid-July. Overall, our applications are up 23.4 percent over last year—but the number of unique applicants is also up nearly 18 percent."

Anderson told *CB* that counselors tell him students are applying to more colleges than in years past, mainly for two reasons. "First is the unpredictability that seems to have settled on the admission landscape, which for many students results in a scattershot application strategy," he said. "Second is the slow economic recovery and the pressure families feel to cover their bases financially by applying to a broad range of colleges."

Florida "B" Students Squeezed. Above average may not be good enough any more to secure a spot at Florida's public universities. According to the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*, competition has become so fierce that "B" students are being rejected from universities which would have admitted them just a few years ago. What's up? Florida high school graduation rates soared from 60 to 80 percent. In-state tuition is still comparatively affordable. And top students are cashing in on the state's merit-based Bright Futures scholarships.

"Absolutely, we are turning down qualified students," Chad Learch, assistant director of admissions at the U. of North Florida in Jacksonville where the average GPA was 3.79, told the paper. "It kills me that we have to do that, but when we set our freshmen targets, we have to live by those."

According to the *Sun-Sentinel*, the average GPA for freshmen last fall at the U. of Central Florida was 3.82, up from 3.62 five years ago; *continued on page 2*

Financial Aid Matters

Hardest in 30 Years? "In my more than 30 years in financial aid, this is the hardest year I've seen," Purdue U.'s executive director of financial aid, Joyce Hall, told the *Lafayette Journal and Courier*. That was her response to news that the U.S. House of Representatives passed a spending resolution cutting the maximum Pell Grant by 15 percent, or \$845 for next year. And while the Senate and the President have said they will not cut anything from the Pell amounts students receive, the two bodies of Congress have not been able to reconcile a full budget for next year, passing three-week stop-gap measures instead. About 202,000 Indiana students receive Pell Grants.

Not only would the Pell amounts fall, but 1.7 million students nationally could become ineligible for any Pell money under the House plan. Additionally, federal Academic Competitiveness Grants and the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grants both end next year. Adding to that uncertainty is the threat of state cuts in financial aid by the Indiana General Assembly.

New Tuition-Free Program For "B" Students. Meanwhile, Miami Dade C. in Florida, the nation's largest postsecondary institution with more than 170,000 students at its 10 campuses, announced that this fall it will become tuition-free for all Miami-Dade high school graduates who have earned a "B" or better. Miami-Dade Public Schools is the nation's fourth largest district. To *continued on page 2*

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3.9 at Florida State U.; 3.81 at the U. of South Florida; and 3.7 at FIU. At the U. of Florida, the average GPA this year was 4.3, reflecting the extra weight given for advanced classes.

Emory C. Apps Rise with Electronic Outreach. Applications rose 9.3 percent at Emory C. to 17,000 students. Last year, applications had declined for the first time in 20 years. Jean Jordan, dean of admissions, told the emorywheel.com that the university used emails in addition to paper mailing to recruit students who matched previous geographic interests and test score ranges. In addition, Emory used social media. Its Facebook page features a tour of the campus, videos and photos of events and student life. It also produced a YouTube page about campus life. Part of this year's increase in applications came from international students and California. Emory hopes to enroll 1,336 students this fall.

Georgetown U. Accepts 18 Percent of Apps. At the end of March, Georgetown accepted 3,468 students of the 19,275 regular applications, thehoya.com reported. Last year, the acceptance rate was 19.3 with some variation among the different colleges in the university. Black students were 11 percent of admitted students, Latinos 12 percent, Asian-Americans 16 percent and international students 10 percent.

Princeton Applications Hit Record for Seventh Year in a Row. Even as Princeton U. announced it will reinstate its Early Action policy, it reported receiving 27,115 applications for the class of 2015. This is a 3.3 percent increase over last year's record 26,247 applications. The university noted that most students applied online using the Common Application. One percent of applicants chose a paper application. Applications were evenly split between men and women. Only 1,300 students are expected to enroll in fall 2011.

Early Apps Drive Overall Apps to Wellesley. According to wellesleynewsonline.com, the elite college for women had a 2 percent increase in applications this year, with over 4,400 women applying for the Class of 2015. Jennifer Desjarlais, dean of admission, noted the college received an 18 percent increase, or 276, Early Decision applications. This was Wellesley's largest ED pool ever. In addition, Wellesley had 1,500 applications for the Early Evaluation plan. However, Wellesley will accept fewer students than last year when the college had a higher yield than expected.

The online site also reported that Smith C. had a 2.24 percent increase in apps this year, Vassar C. 2.06 and Barnard C. saw an 11 percent increase. ■

Community College Updates

Massachusetts C.C. Path to Four-Year Schools. Beginning this year, graduates of Massachusetts community colleges will be eligible for a number of new benefits, including guaranteed admission to the U. Mass flagship campus at Amherst through a new "UMass Amherst Community College Connection." Students who complete an A.A. degree at a Massachusetts community college with a 2.5 GPA will be eligible through the existing Joint Admissions or MassTransfer programs. Their applications will be examined before other transfer students. If these students earn a 3.0 GPA or higher, they also will receive free in-state tuition worth \$1,714. More than 500 community college graduates now transfer to UMass Amherst each fall.

"Community College Connection provides students with critical support to bolster their chances at success," commented Governor Deval Patrick. See: www.umass.edu/umccc.

UCSD Limits Transfers. But it's getting tougher for students at California's 112 community colleges to transfer into the U. of California San Diego campus. Previously, students who took certain required courses and maintained a 3.0 average were guaranteed a spot at UCSD under the Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) program. But a surge of applicants, up from 443 five years ago to 8,715 for this fall, and unpredictable state budget cuts

FINANCIAL AID

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become eligible for MDC's "American Dream Scholarship," students will need to be a legal resident of Miami-Dade County; graduate from high school with a weighted 3.0 or better GPA; earn MDC entry test scores indicating they can do college work; and apply for federal student aid.

More than half of MDC students come from low-income families and are eligible for financial aid and 57 percent come from Miami Dade County public schools. But the American Dream Scholarship also applies to students from private schools or those who are home schooled. It will cover 60 credit hours and be worth about \$6,500 to each student. MDC has allocated \$10-12 million to launch the scholarship with most of the funds from private alumni donations.

MDC President Eduardo Padron told *The Miami Herald*, "In Miami we have the potential to change things." He hopes the model will spur other colleges to make education more accessible to those who have difficulty affording it.

Lebanon Valley C. currently gives full scholarships to high school grads who rank in the top 30 percent of their class. And Bellarmine U. in Kentucky gives grants to students who

have led the popular school to increase the GPA requirement to 3.5 or above.

Mae Brown, UCSD's assistant vice chancellor, told the *San Diego Union-Tribune* that, "Given the severe budget situation, and the university [statewide] taking a \$500 million or more budget reduction, if we are going to guarantee, we should be guaranteeing admissions to the best prepared."

New Biochemistry Program. Middlesex County C. and New Jersey Institute of Technology announced a new program that will allow students at the two-year school to enter the NJIT's Biochemistry Program as juniors. New Jersey is home to one of the greatest concentration of biotech industries in the world and the new joint program will prepare students for jobs in research, manufacturing, business, quality control and regulatory affairs, school officials said.

Oil Up, Students Down. Enrollment dropped at Williston State C. in North Dakota this year, with officials citing an abundance of good-paying jobs in the western North Dakota oil fields as part of the reason, according to an Associated Press report. The two-year college said 779 students enrolled for the spring semester, down more than 8 percent from a year ago and down more than 16 percent from last fall. ■

are admitted with a 3.2 GPA and ACT score of 21 or higher.

New Financial Aid Website. SimpleTuition.com is a new, free website that allows students and parents to try to control college costs by revealing an estimated total monthly payment for all financial aid borrowing for students and parents after graduation. "That monthly payment number is the ultimate determinant of what the family views as 'affordable,'" says Kevin Walker, SimpleTuition's co-founder and CEO. "Our aim is to bring transparency to college costs."

New Health and Safety Scholarship. At the end of March, the *Federal Register* released details for the Erma Byrd Scholarship Program for 41 students interested in industrial health and safety occupations, including mine safety. Students interested in an associate's degree receive \$2,500; bachelor's degree \$5,000. The scholarship has a "service obligation component." Recipients must be employed "in a career position related to industrial health and safety no later than six months after completion of the degree program," and for a period of one year. *Deadline: April 25.* See, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/ermabyrd/index.html>. ■

Inside Spring Reports

Each spring, news organizations and policy institutes focus on a particular aspect of the admissions process. Here are a few insights garnered this spring from various reports.

On Counselor Face Time. According to a U.S. Department of Education study, the average high school counselor is often over-worked yet spends only 38 minutes per student giving college admissions advice.

SFGate.com gathered related data. According to the American School Counselor's Association, the average student-to-counselor ratio currently is 476 to 1. And according to Public Agenda's 2010 Survey of Effectiveness of High School Guidance Counselors, one in five students delayed getting counselor advice; 48 percent felt that they were only "a face in the crowd" to their counselor; and 60 percent of college students rated their high school counselors "poor" on career and college advice. That's not very heartening to those over-stretched counselors.

In defense, the American School Counselor Association says that the huge student to counselor ratio "has significantly decreased [the] ability ...to work individually with students in navigating the complex financial aid and college admissions process."

Meanwhile, according to the NACAC State of College Admissions 2010 report, 23 percent of students applied to seven or more colleges and 75 percent applied to three or more. And a stunning 48 percent of college freshmen had graduated from high school with straight "A's."

On the Mental Health of Students. Nearly one third of college students seek some kind of mental health counseling, according to a recent report from the Consortium Mental Health and Counseling Study of more than 25,000 students. It was conducted by NASPA (the student affairs administrators in higher education) and the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Pennsylvania State U. Most commonly, students said they sought help for anxiety and stress. About 25 percent confessed that, "It's hard for me to stay motivated for my classes." An alarming 9 percent reported that they'd seriously considered attempting suicide. Five percent had actually attempted to take their own lives.

On a "Holistic" Review Process. The *Sacramento Bee* recently took an in-depth look at Berkeley's 10-year-old "holistic approach" to college admissions which tries to go beyond the grades and test scores of its applicants. There, the admissions committee also considers leadership skills, community service, special talents and how students have overcome personal challenges. And unlike other UC campuses, a person,

instead of a computer, scores each applicant. The newspaper described the Berkeley admissions process. "First, application readers look at data about the applicant's high school: How many students qualify for free lunch, are not native English speakers, complete college-prep courses and apply to UC. Next, the applicant's grades and test scores are ranked against three groups—other students from their school who applied to Berkeley, the entire class of applicants to Berkeley and other students from their school who applied to any UC campus."

Susan Pendo, assistant director of undergraduate admissions, told the paper, "Lots of applicants to Berkeley have a 4.0.... What we're looking at is, what's the strength of that curriculum? What's available at that school? ...Is it a 4.0 on the most rigorous program available?"

Berkeley uses 75 seasonal workers, including high school counselors, retired principals and graduate students to read applications for two months a year. Most applications get two reads; three if necessary. Then Berkeley's full-time admissions staff makes the final decision. About 75 percent of Berkeley's applicants were not accepted last year. But of those admitted, the GPA was an amazing 4.19. Robinson told the paper that about 1,000 students a year challenge their rejections. "It's hard if you are the parent, not to mention the student, who has that super GPA, over-the-top test scores and you didn't get an offer," he said.

(This year's acceptance and rejection letters were rolling out as *CB* went to press. We'll keep you posted.)

On How It Really Works. To listen to a vivid National Public Radio report on how the admissions process actually works at Amherst C. (with tape running while the committee debates various potential students), go to: <http://www.npr.org/2011/03/28/134916924/Amherst-Admissions-Process>.

On the Hopes and Worries of Families. The Princeton Review surveyed 12,185 parents and students January to early March on their hopes about college and their experience with the application process. Most news reports have focused on the "dream" colleges cited, with the usual suspects mentioned. But, within the report are also these stats:

Forty-five percent of respondents will apply to five to eight colleges; 61 percent say financial aid will be extremely necessary to pay for college; 37 percent state their biggest worry is that their child will get into their first-choice school and they won't be able to pay for it; and 50 percent of parents would like their child to attend college less than 250 miles from home while 66 percent of students would go to college more than 250 miles from home. See, www.princetonreview.com. ■

COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses, the much talked-about book by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (U. of Chicago Press); 256 pages; ISBN: 9780226028569; \$25.

Big-Time Sports in American Universities, Charles T. Clotfelter (Cambridge U. Press); 336 pages; ISBN: 9781107004344; \$29.

Crazy U: One Dad's Crash Course in Getting His Kid Into College, Andrew Ferguson (Simon & Schuster) 240 pages; ISBN: 9781439101216; \$25.

Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American Higher Education, Ann L. Mullen, a comparison of the students at Southern Connecticut State U. and nearby

Yale U. (The Johns Hopkins U. Press); ISBN: 9780801897702; \$50.

Lowering Higher Education: The Rise of Corporate Universities and the Fall of Liberal Education, James E. Côté and Anton L. Allahar (U. of Toronto Press, 2011); 256 pages; ISBN: 9781442611214; \$24.95.

P.S. The State Higher Education Executive Officers just released its annual report on state funding and enrollment trends. See, <http://www.sheeo.org>. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Failing U.S. Schools? The percent of public elementary and secondary schools designated as “failing” by the U.S. Department of Education for not meeting yearly targets in math and reading could rise dramatically from 37 to 82 percent this year, according to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. One reason: the “No Child Left Behind Law,” passed by a bi-partisan coalition in Congress in 2002, requires states to continue to increase standards. But students are not keeping pace.

Although Duncan noted that the law has done a good job of shining light on achievement gaps among minorities and low-income students, he wants to change it. “This law has created a thousand ways for schools to fail and very few ways to let them succeed.”

Boosting Grad Rates. Meanwhile, the Obama administration announced a new initiative to boost U.S. college graduation rates. The U.S. has fallen from first to ninth in the percent of its population holding a postsecondary degree. South Korea is first with 58 percent. The U.S. is tied for ninth with four other nations in the percent of 25-34 year-olds with college degrees, at 42 percent. The U.S. has to double its graduation rate, which means 8 million more students need to earn an associate’s or bachelor’s degree by 2020.

The U.S. Dept. of Ed states that one-third of first-year students at U.S. four-year colleges and 42 percent at two-year colleges take remedial courses. This often frustrates students who in turn dropout. So states are seeking to

increase standards and student performance at the high school level.

In response to the completion problem, the administration released a new “College Completion Tool Kit” last month at an education summit held in the capital. It includes seven approaches that state governors can use to increase completion rates at their colleges, including performance-based funding for higher education, stabilizing tuition growth, encouraging adults with some college to return to class and making it easier for students to transfer from college to college.

Less Than Half of U.S. Students Proficient in Science. Results of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation’s Report Card, indicate that only 34 percent of fourth-graders, 30 percent of eighth-graders and 21 percent of twelfth-graders are proficient in science, a field that is critical for the nation’s future. See, www.nationsreportcard.gov.

Bias Study Halted. A year-long investigation by the Commission on Civil Rights into possible gender bias against women in college admissions has been abruptly halted by a 4-3 commission vote because of questionable data subpoenaed from 19 colleges, according to a recent report by the Associated Press. Women currently outnumber men nearly 60 to 40 percent at colleges across the nation. But, as Charlotte Hays writes in the *National Women’s Forum*, “this reversal makes it harder

for women to get into college. That’s an issue that nobody really wants to talk about, and the colleges that do give an edge to guys are very quiet about it.”

Curriculum Capsules. Bryant U. in Rhode Island has added new Mandarin Chinese and Spanish majors. The majors are part of the university’s mission to cultivate a global perspective among its students. Student interest is reputedly strong and school officials predict rapid growth in the program among students eager to learn a second or third language.

And SUNY’s Fashion Institute of Technology added a new degree in entrepreneurship. FIT has created a B.S. degree in Entrepreneurship for the Fashion and Design Industries beginning fall 2011. Noting the degree was in response to industry requests, FIT said the degree was the first in the New York City area and would target both business and design students. See, www.fitnyc.edu. ■

International Affairs

Korean U.’s Simplify Admissions Process. In response to complaints from parents and students, the Korean Council for University Education announced it was adopting new admissions procedures, according to the *JoongAng Daily* last month. Currently, South Korea’s 84 universities have their own admissions process, which critics claim leads to confusion. So the council is reducing “the number of different admissions procedures in the country to 3,298, down from 3,678.” Six universities will abolish essay-based entrance exams. Yet 41 will continue them including Seoul National U., Korea U. and Yonsei U.

NYU Creates NYU Shanghai. Following the creation of its campus in Abu Dhabi, New York U. announced last month that it will create a comprehensive research university with a liberal arts and science college in Shanghai. NYU said the new campus is part of its goal of creating “a global network university.” The first class of undergraduates will enroll September 2013. Ultimately, the student body will include 3,000 students. See <http://www.nyu.edu>.

Strengthening STEM with Brazilian Partnerships. Following President Obama’s visit to Brazil, the U.S. Department of State announced new educational partnerships. In particular, new exchanges will take place with U.S. Historically Black Colleges and Universities beginning September. There will also be new exchanges of students in science. ■

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TUITION TABS

Dayton Tuition Increases. The U. of Dayton increased tuition and fees for the next academic year by \$1,710 or 5.5 percent, to a total of \$31,640. At the same time, it boosted financial aid to \$7.4 million. Housing will climb from \$5,940 to \$6,220 and meal costs \$3,560 to \$3,730. According to Stuart Kumarasamy, vice president, enrollment management, Dayton’s tuition has climbed by 55 percent over the last eight years, while financial aid increased by 115 percent. UD meets nearly 100 percent of student financial aid need.

U. of Chicago Tuition Goes Up. The U. of Chicago announced that tuition, room and board will increase by 4.1 percent next year to \$55,416. However, its financial aid fund will be bolstered by 15 percent.

Two other private Chicago schools announced tuition increases. Northwestern

U. will increase its tuition by 4.4 percent to \$41,592 for the next year. Room and board rates will increase 4.4 percent to \$12,780 for a total of \$54,763. Tuition at DePaul U. will jump by 6.2 percent. Most freshmen will pay \$30,000.

U. of Illinois Freshman Tuition Jumps. And, tuition at the U. of Illinois will increase by 6.9 percent this fall. Freshman attending the flagship Urbana-Champaign campus will be charged \$11,104 in tuition. Students attending U. of I. at Chicago (UIC) will pay \$9,764, and those at U. of I. Springfield will be charged \$289 per hour. Add to that the cost of housing and mandatory fees. But by law, these rates are locked in for freshmen for four years of a student’s undergraduate career. The 6.9 percent increase averages out to 2.7 percent a year over the four years. ■