

10th

Anniversary

STATE OF COLLEGE ADMISSION 2012

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Acknowledgements

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the *State of College Admission Report*, we would like to thank those who have assisted and guided us in our efforts to provide this service to our members and the public.

Special appreciation goes to the following individuals and organizations:

- More than 13,000 college admission counseling professionals, including school counselors, independent counselors, community organizations, college admission officers, and other members of the college admission counseling professional community, who have guided the association and responded to our annual surveys.
- The NACAC volunteer leadership between 2002 and 2012, whose ranks are too numerous to single out individually, including members of the—
 - Board of Directors
 - Current Trends and Future Issues Committee
 - Inclusion, Access and Success Committee
 - Technology Committee
 - Admission Practices Committee
 - Member Relations Committee
 - Professional Development Committee
 - Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admission
 - Ad Hoc Committee on *U.S. News & World Report* Rankings
- The American School Counselors Association (ASCA), which has provided its endorsement of our annual Counseling Trends Survey each year.
- The College Board, which has provided NACAC with data from its Annual Survey of Colleges® to augment the data from our own surveys and from the Department of Education.
- The NACAC staff leadership, particularly Joyce Smith, NACAC CEO, for the encouragement and flexibility to allow this report to develop.
- The NACAC staff, both current and former, who contributed to the surveys and reports each year. Staff from research, publications, technology, education and training, member relations and administration has been essential to the success of this project.



National Association for
College Admission Counseling

Preface

“Has it become more difficult to get into college? Is the college admission process more competitive than it was in previous years? These are questions posed frequently to counselors, admission officers and education associations each year. Each year, NACAC stresses that the answers to these questions are difficult to quantify and are highly subjective. Through the following report, NACAC hopes to provide information to allow students, parents, educators and policymakers the opportunity to craft their own conclusions about the college admission process.”

These words opened the first-ever *State of College Admission* report in 2002. NACAC created the *State of College Admission* 10 years ago to offer information about college admission from a national perspective to anyone with an interest in the transition to college. Our focus has been on the transition to four-year colleges, which now comprise a smaller portion of the postsecondary landscape in the United States compared to 20 years ago, as community college enrollment and adult education have grown exponentially.

Nonetheless, many Americans focus on a baccalaureate degree as the key to success in the modern economy, and a direct transition from high school is still a reality for millions of students. We continue to believe it is important to offer information straight from the source—from those who live and breathe college admission: the counselors who assist students in secondary school and the admission officers who work at colleges and universities.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the *State of College Admission*, we wanted to provide a glimpse at some of the long-term trends we have observed as reflected in the data. We also wanted to offer a recap of some of our shorter-term observations, which are reflected in periodic research we conducted into issues of concern to students, families and college admission counseling professionals. Issues such as transfer admission, homeschooling and student loan debt are among those that gained prominence during the past decade.

A theme that is reflected throughout this report is uncertainty—uncertainty for colleges, high schools, students and families. Amid an historically large number of students flowing through the college application process, we have witnessed unparalleled uncertainty for both students and colleges. Colleges are less able to predict their enrollment trends now than they were 10 years ago, requiring them to work harder to meet their enrollment goals. Students are applying to more schools to hedge against uncertainty in the admission process, which has an inflationary effect on the application process that feeds on itself. School counselors and others who help students in transition find themselves overwhelmed at the volume of work now associated with the process.

As a service to our members, who guide students on the path to postsecondary education, we hope the *State of College Admission* offers the perspective and voice that the college admission counseling profession deserves. As a service to the public, we hope this and future reports offer a helpful checkpoint against the sea of information that inundates those who explore the college search process.

Executive Summary

Chapter 1: High School Graduation and College Enrollment

- The college admission pipeline contained an historically large number of high school graduates in the past decade. While the number of graduates has declined slightly since 2008, the total number of graduates seeking to enter college will remain at relatively stable levels until 2021 nationally. Regionally, fluctuations in the general population will result in sustained increases in some areas (the South and West) and sustained decreases in others (Northeast).
- High school graduation gaps between students of color and white students, which had declined prior to the decade between 2002-2012, remained relatively steady during the past decade. Similarly, gaps between low-income and wealthy students, which had declined previously, remained steady during the past decade.
- College enrollment among recent high school completers has grown slowly, but steadily, during the past decade. Similar to high school graduation, significant gaps remain between students of color and white students, as well as between students of different socioeconomic groups. The gap between women's enrollment and men's enrollment grew to a peak of 11 percent during the past decade, leading many institutions to initiate focused recruitment efforts that targeted young men in an attempt to achieve gender balance on campus.
- Total enrollment in postsecondary education grew 37 percent between 2000 and 2010 and is expected to grow another 14 percent by 2021.

Chapter 2: Applications to College

- Fueled by an increase in applications submitted per student, the number of applications submitted to colleges rose dramatically over the past decade.
- Acceptance rates for four-year institutions declined slightly during the past decade, from a national average of 69.6 percent in 2002 to 63.8 percent in 2011. The decline in acceptance rates was most pronounced at the most highly selective colleges, as those institutions receive a disproportionately large share of applications nationally compared to the share of students they enroll.

- Average yield rates at four-year colleges declined significantly over the past decade, from 49 percent in 2002 to 38 percent in 2011. Declining yield rates signaled greatly increased uncertainty for colleges, upending traditional methods of predicting the share of accepted students a college would enroll.
- The transformation of the application process from paper to an online format became nearly complete in the past decade. In 2002, colleges received 57 percent of applications online. In 2011, colleges received 85 percent of all applications online.
- Social media and enhanced technology created an entirely new environment for recruitment and admission. In 2002, 37 percent of colleges reported integrating social media into their online recruitment offerings. By 2011, 97 percent of colleges reported doing so. New technologies also gave rise to online admission notification portals, virtual college fairs and other ways of creating virtual connections between students and colleges.

Chapter 3: Admission Practices

- Over the past decade, the number of colleges that offered Early Action (EA) application options increased from 18 to 31 percent of all institutions. During the same time, the number of colleges that offered Early Decision (ED) remained relatively constant. The number of colleges reporting increased Early Action applications steadily rose over the last decade, while the number of colleges reporting increased Early Decision applications fluctuated (though generally rose on average).
- The gap in acceptance rate for ED students has decreased significantly in recent years. In the period from 2007 to 2009, institutions reported ED acceptance rates 12 to 15 percentage points higher than those for all applicants. In 2010 and 2011, that gap decreased to about eight and six percentage points, respectively.
- Nearly 45 percent of four-year institutions reported utilizing wait lists in 2011, up from 32 percent in 2002. Average wait list acceptance rates have hovered around 30 percent since 2004, though wait list acceptance rates at highly selective institutions have been much lower.
- New developments in early admission during the past decade include the use of "on-the-spot" admission and "priority applications," both currently in use in some form by approximately one-fourth of four-year colleges.

Chapter 4: Factors in the Admission Decision

- Academic performance in college prep courses has been consistently rated as the top factor in admission decisions over the past decade, with about 80 percent of colleges rating it as considerably important. The importance of other factors, such as teacher and counselor recommendations, the student interview and extracurricular activities also has remained relatively unchanged.
- Colleges changed the emphasis they placed on several factors during the past decade, including grades in all courses (increase), standardized admission tests (increase), a student's demonstrated interest in attending (increase) and class rank (decrease).
- A study of the transcripts of high school graduates in 2009 conducted by the US Department of Education indicated that students took more credits, completed more challenging curricula and earned higher GPAs in high school than previous cohorts. Compared to the class of 1990, graduates in 2009 earned over three additional credits (about 420 instruction hours) during their high school careers, and the proportion of graduates failing to complete a standard high school curriculum fell from 60 percent in 1990 to 25 percent in 2009.
- From 2002 to 2011, the number of high school graduates who took the ACT increased by approximately 45 percent (from 1.12 million to 1.62 million), and the number who took the SAT increased by about 27 percent (from 1.30 million to 1.65 million).
- About one-quarter (20 to 26 percent) of colleges rated a student's race/ethnicity, first generation status, high school attended and alumni relations as at least a moderately important factor in the application review process.

Chapter 5: School Counselors and College Counseling

- The national student-to-counselor ratio for all public schools, including elementary and secondary schools, in 2011 was 473:1, a slight decline over the past decade. The student-to-counselor ratio for public secondary schools in 2011 was 421:1, which changed very little over the past decade. Public school student-to-counselor ratios varied significantly by state. Student-to-counselor ratios at private secondary schools were significantly lower than those at public schools.
- School counselors have a variety of official responsibilities in addition to college readiness counseling. Data on the amount of time spent on each type of task for which a school counselor is responsible has not changed significantly over the past decade. Overall, public secondary school counselors spend an average of around one-fourth of their time on college counseling. Private school counselors spend more than half of their time on college counseling.
- School counselors engage in a variety of activities related to college counseling, though the number and extent of activities depend on the socioeconomic context in which the school is situated.
- Average school counselor salaries, in constant dollars, have actually declined slightly over the past decade, as budget difficulties at all levels of government have forced cutbacks and salary limitations.

Chapter 6: The Admission Office

- Over the past decade, the average ratio of applications per admission officer rose from 359 in 2005 to 662 in 2011.
- For the 2011 admission cycle, an average college admission office spent \$439 in recruitment and office costs for each student who applied, \$675 for each student who was admitted and \$2,311 for each student who enrolled (when staff salaries and benefits were included in total budget). The mean cost to recruit for both applicants and admitted students has declined slightly during the past decade.

Chapter I

High School Graduation and College Enrollment

CONTENTS

- High School Completion
- The Transition from High School to College
- College Enrollment

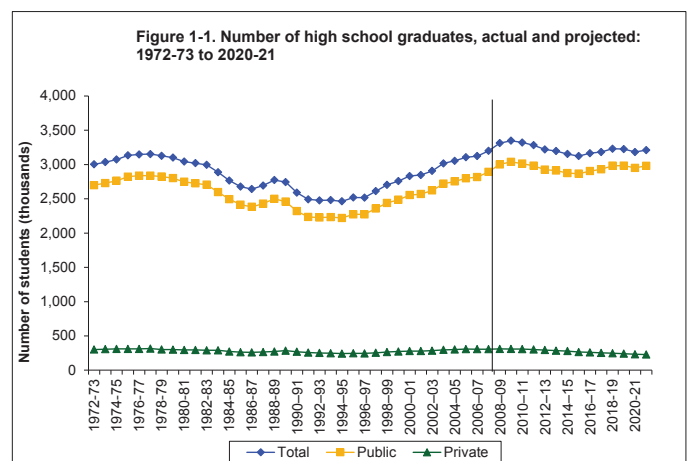
Assisting students with the transition from high school graduation to college enrollment is at the core of NACAC's mission. Students' participation in postsecondary education is becoming increasingly important for both individual success and for the economic future of the nation. In 2009, wage earners age 18 or over with a high school diploma reported mean annual earnings of only \$30,627, compared to \$56,665 for those with a bachelor's degree and \$73,738 for those with a master's degree.¹ This wage advantage has expanded since 1999 when high school graduates earned about \$21,106 less than bachelor's degree holders and \$31,069 less than master's degree earners each year.² Over the course of a typical working life, researchers have estimated that the average bachelor's degree recipient will earn 84 percent more than a high school graduate.³ As a group, college graduates also enjoy higher job satisfaction and are more likely to receive employer-sponsored pensions and health insurance. Other factors that are associated with increased levels of education include: lower levels of unemployment and poverty; decreased reliance on public assistance programs; healthier lifestyles; and higher levels of civic engagement, including volunteerism and voting.⁴ In 2011, 30 percent of all adults age 25 and older had obtained at least a bachelor's degree, up from 25.6 percent in 2000.⁵

High School Completion

INCREASE IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

According to projections published by the US Department of Education, the number of high school graduates in the US reached a

peak of 3.34 million in 2008-09 after more than a decade of steady growth. An estimated 3.22 million graduated in 2011-12. The number of graduates will continue to decline through 2014-15, but will rebound to 3.2 million by 2017-18 and remain near that number through 2020-2021.⁶ This pattern of change in the number of high school graduates—illustrated in Figure 1-1—largely reflects overall changes in the high-school-aged population, rather than increases in the percentage of students completing high school. High school completion rates have increased only slightly since the mid-1990's.⁷



SOURCES: *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 111).

Projections of Education Statistics to 2020. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics (Table 12).

¹ US Census Bureau. (2010). "Educational Attainment." 2012 Statistical Abstract of the United States. (Table 232).

² US Census Bureau. (2002). "Education." Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2002. (Table 211).

³ Carnevale, A., Rose, S., and Cheah, B. (2011). *The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce: Washington, DC.

⁴ Baum, S., Ma, J., and Payea, K. (2010). *Education Pays 2010: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society*. College Board: Washington, DC.

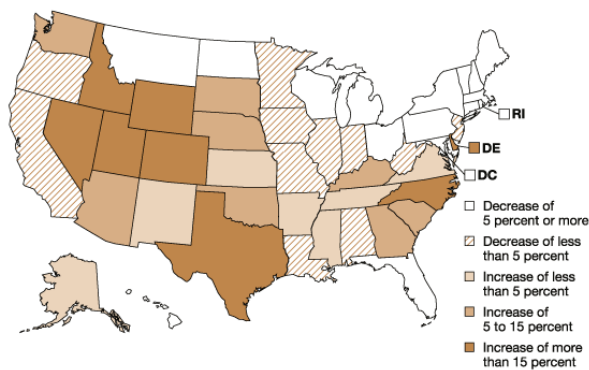
⁵ US Census Bureau. (2011). "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2011." (Table 2); US Census Bureau. (2002). "Education." Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2002. (Table 210).

⁶ *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 12).

⁷ Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2009*. US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

The pattern of change in high school graduates varies widely by state and region. At the national level, the number of public high school graduates is expected to decrease by one percent between 2007-08 and 2020-21. However, some states will experience high rates of increase in public school graduates, including Nevada (31 percent), Utah (26 percent), Texas (26 percent) and Colorado (23 percent); and others will experience substantial decreases, including the District of Columbia (35 percent), Vermont (23 percent) and Rhode Island (23 percent). Overall, increases will be seen in the South (7 percent) and West (4 percent), and decreases will be seen in the Northeast (13 percent) and Midwest (6 percent).⁸ Figure 1-2 illustrates the relative magnitude of changes in the number of public high school graduates by state for this time period.

Figure 1-2. Projected percentage change in public high school graduates, by state: 2007-08 to 2020-21

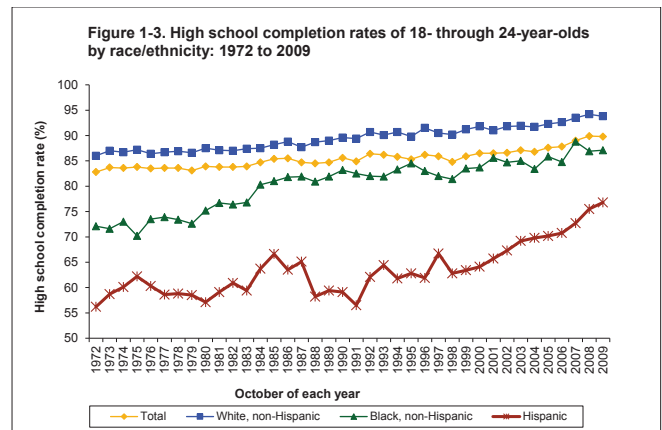


SOURCE: *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020*. (2011). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Figure 6).

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES⁹ BY RACE/ETHNICITY, INCOME AND GENDER

High school completion rates vary substantially among different groups of students. For example, in 2009, 94 percent of white 18-through 24-year olds completed high school, compared to 87 percent of black and 77 percent of Hispanic youth. As shown in Figure 1-3, the gap between black and white students narrowed considerably between the early 1970s and mid-1980s, but has remained between five and nine percentage points since that time. The gap between white and Hispanic students has decreased slightly in the last decade, but remains near 20 percentage points.¹⁰

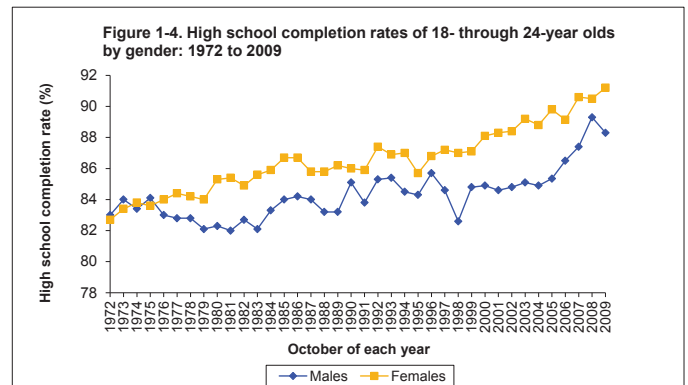
Important differences also exist among students from different income backgrounds. In 2009, the average high school completion rate among the top income quartile of dependent 18- through 24-year olds was 94 percent. Students in the third income quartile fared nearly as well at 90 percent, followed by 84 percent for the second quartile. However, the average graduation rate for students in the bottom quartile was only 70 percent—24 percentage points below that of students with the highest family incomes.¹¹



NOTE: Status completion rates measure the percentage of 18-through 24-year-olds who have left high school and who also hold a high school credential, including regular diploma and alternative credentials such as GEDs. Beginning in 2003, respondents were able to identify as "more than one race." The 2003 through 2008 white, non-Hispanic and black, non-Hispanic categories consist of individuals who considered themselves to be one race and who did not identify themselves as Hispanic. The Hispanic category includes Hispanics of all races and racial combinations. Because of small sample size, American Indians/Alaska Natives and Asian/Pacific Islanders are included in the totals but not shown separately. The "more than one race" category is also included in the total in 2003 through 2008 but not shown separately due to small sample size.

SOURCE: Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2009*. US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 11).

In every year since 1976, women have completed high school at a higher rate than men. In 2009—the most recent year for which data are available—the gap was 2.9 percentage points (see Figure 1-4).



NOTE: Status completion rates measure the percentage of 18- through 24-year-olds who have left high school and who also hold high school credential, including regular diplomas and alternative credentials such as GEDs.

SOURCE: Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). *High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2009*. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. (Table 11).

The Transition from High School to College

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES OF HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETERS

From the early 1970s to the late 1990s, the percentage of high school completers who go on to college fluctuated but also showed an overall pattern of increase, peaking at 67 percent in 1997. Since that time, the percentage has mostly hovered in the mid-60 percent range—decreasing slightly to a low of 62 percent in 2001.

⁸ *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 15).

⁹ High school completers include both diploma and GED recipients.

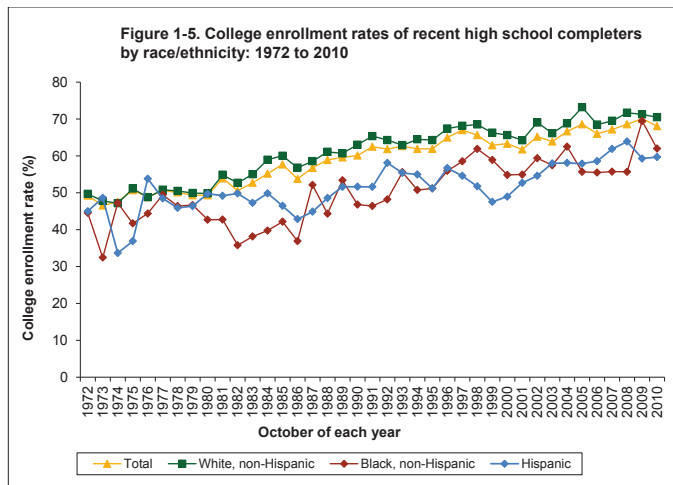
¹⁰ Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2009*. US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

¹¹ Mortenson, T. (2010). "Family Income and Educational Attainment, 1970 to 2009." *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, Number 221, November.

However, since 2006, the level has slowly increased to a new peak of 70 percent in 2009. In 2010—the most recent year for which data are available—68 percent of recent high school graduates enrolled in college (see Figure 1-5).

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, INCOME, GENDER AND HIGH SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

As with high school completion, there are persistent gaps in rates of transition from high school to postsecondary enrollment among different groups of students. As shown in Figure 1-5, both black and Hispanic students who complete high school are less likely than white students to enroll in college.



NOTE: Enrollment in college as of October of each year for individuals ages 16 through 24 who completed high school during the preceding 12 months. High school completers include both diploma and GED recipients. Data for Hispanics for all years except 1972 and 2009 are three-year moving averages to compensate for relatively large sampling errors caused by small sample sizes. Beginning in 2003, data for white, non-Hispanic exclude persons identifying as two or more races.

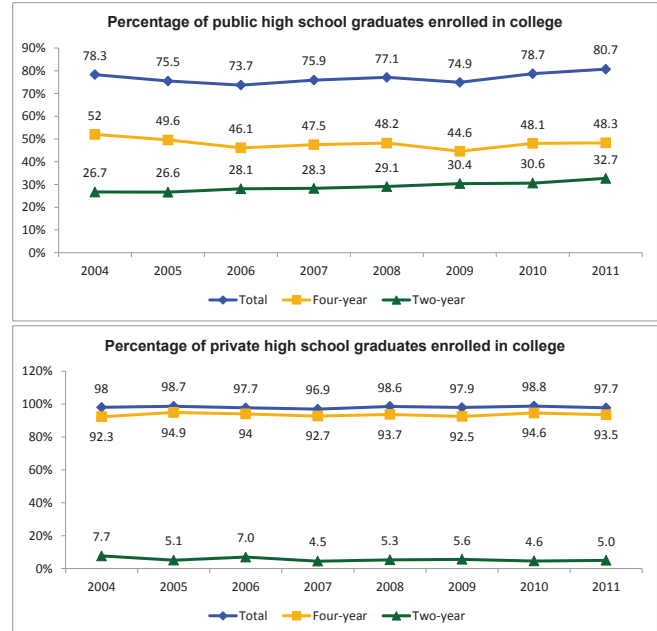
SOURCE: *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2011). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 210).

Even more dramatic differences are seen among high school completers of different income backgrounds. High school completers age 16 through 24 who are from the highest family income quintile transitioned to postsecondary education at a rate of 82 percent in 2010. Students from the middle 60 percent of family incomes continued to college at a rate of 67 percent. Only 51 percent of high school completers from the lowest income quintile enrolled in a two- or four-year college the fall following high school graduation in 2010.¹²

Results from NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey provide further evidence of this pattern. Counselors at schools with the highest proportion of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRPL)—a proxy for family income—reported much lower four-year college enrollment rates and total college enrollment rates for their graduates in each of the years from 2005 to 2011. Counselors at schools with more students in the FRPL program had slightly higher enrollment rates at two-year colleges (see Table 1-1).¹³ In addition, students who graduated from private high schools were much more likely to enroll in postsecondary education immediately after high school than students from public high schools, and they were about twice as likely

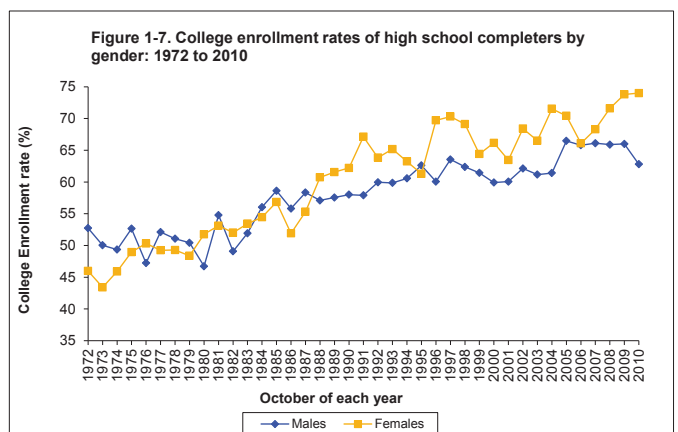
to enroll in four-year colleges. However, they were much less likely to enroll in two-year colleges (see Figure 1-6).¹⁴ These differences between public and private high school graduates have not changed in the past 10 years (see Appendix Table 1A-1).

Figure 1-6. Mean college enrollment rates of high school graduates at Counseling Trends Survey respondent schools: 2004-2011



SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2004-2011.

Gender differences in transition rates also have emerged since the late 1980s. Since this time, women have enrolled in college at a higher rate than men in almost every year. The gender gap in college enrollment reached a new peak of 11 percentage points in 2010. This is the largest gender gap in college enrollment since 2004 (see Figure 1-7).



NOTE: Enrollment in college as of October of each year for individuals ages 16 through 24 who completed high school during the preceding 12 months. High school completers include both diploma and GED recipients.

SOURCE: *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 209).

¹² *The Condition of Education*. (2012). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table A-34-1)

¹³ Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL in 2011 and two-year college attendance rate (.125), $p < .01$

¹⁴ Correlation between private school status and: total college attendance rate (.159), four-year college attendance rate (.436), two-year college attendance rate (-.413), $p < .01$

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased from 15.3 million in fall 2000 to just over 21 million in fall 2010. Of that 2010 total, 15.1 million (72 percent) were enrolled in public institutions and 13.3 million (63 percent) were enrolled in four-year institutions. Due to changes in both the number of high school graduates and the rate at which they enroll in college, the total number of students enrolled in postsecondary education has increased steadily over the past 35 years. Most of that growth has been at public institutions. The total number of college students is expected to continue increasing at least through 2021. Total enrollment increased by 37 percent from 2000 to 2010 and is projected to increase an additional 14 percent between 2010 and 2021.¹⁵

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ ETHNICITY, INCOME AND GENDER

Under-representation of certain groups in postsecondary education is a direct consequence of the different rates of high school completion and transition to college discussed earlier in the chapter. Although minority enrollment in postsecondary education has become slightly more reflective of the national populations, some minority groups are still under-represented (see Appendix Figure 1A-1). In 2010, black and Hispanic students constituted approximately 35 percent of the traditional college-aged population, but they represented only about 28 percent of all students enrolled in postsecondary education. Hispanic students were particularly under-represented among private and four-year institutions. Asian/Pacific Islanders were somewhat over-represented in all sectors of higher education, with the exception of private, two-year institutions, compared to their population share (see Table 1-2). In addition, more women than men have been enrolled in college in each of the past 35 years, and Department of Education projections indicate that this gender gap will continue to widen until at least 2020.¹⁶

Table 1-1. Mean college enrollment rates of high school graduates at Counseling Trends Survey respondent schools by school characteristics: 2011

	Four-year institutions	Two-year institutions	Total college enrollment rate
Total	58.3	27.2	84.1
Control			
Public	48.3	32.7	80.7
Private	93.5	5.0	97.7
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	95.3	3.2	97.9
<i>Private parochial</i>	90.2	7.8	97.3
Enrollment			
Fewer than 500 students	56.7	27.6	82.1
500 to 999	63.5	25.5	87.6
1,000 to 1,499	59.6	25.4	84.4
1,500 to 1,999	55.3	28.0	82.7
2,000 or more	52.7	33.0	85.5
Free and reduced price lunch			
0 to 25% of students eligible	66.9	24.7	91.2
26 to 50%	42.6	34.1	76.2
51 to 75%	38.9	36.6	75.5
76 to 100%	33.6	35.5	67.5
Students per counselor			
100 or fewer	67.1	25.7	91.0
101 to 200	65.0	24.0	86.7
201 to 300	57.3	26.6	83.1
301 to 400	53.2	30.2	82.6
401 to 500	53.1	29.3	81.8
More than 500	51.0	30.7	80.3

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

Table 1-2. Share of enrollment in postsecondary education by race/ethnicity in comparison with age 18 through 24 population share: 2010

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native
Percent of population age 18 through 24	58.9	14.8	20.1	5.3	0.9
Percent of all students enrolled in postsecondary education¹					
Total	60.5	14.5	13.0	6.1	0.9
Control					
Public	60.7	13.1	14.2	6.4	1.0
Four-year	64.0	11.5	11.0	6.6	0.9
Two-year	57.0	14.9	17.8	6.2	1.1
Private	60.2	17.9	9.9	5.3	0.8
Four-year	61.5	17.2	9.0	5.5	0.7
Two-year	44.9	26.3	21.2	3.7	1.3
Type					
Four-year or higher	63.0	13.8	10.2	6.1	0.8
Two-year	56.3	15.6	18.0	6.0	1.1

¹ Includes not-for-profit institutions only.

SOURCES: *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 236).

Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2010. (2010). US Census Bureau, Washington DC: Population Division. (Tables 2 and 4).

¹⁵ *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 20); *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 199).

¹⁶ *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 208).

Chapter I Retrospective

ADDITIONAL TRENDS IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

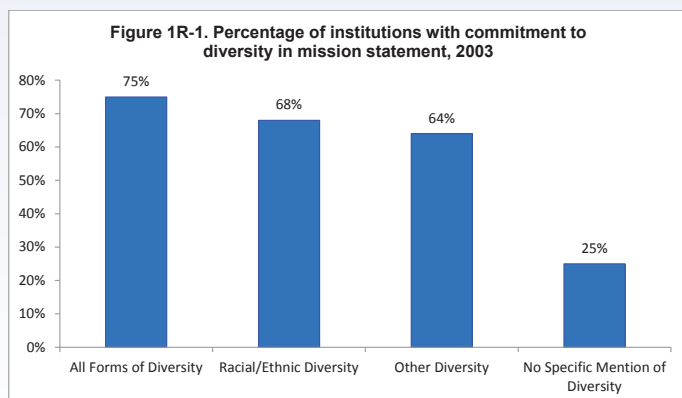
During the past decade, NACAC collected data on important issues that surfaced in the field of college admission. Some was published through the *State of College Admission* report, and some was published in other reports or venues. Issues highly relevant to the transition from high school to college included efforts to ensure diversity in and access to higher education, the rising number of homeschooled students seeking admission to college and the rise in the number of international students recruited by US institutions.

Diversity in College Admission

In 2003, the US Supreme Court further clarified the law regarding the use of race and ethnicity in admission as a result of the *Gratz* and *Grutter v. University of Michigan* cases. In 2012, the Court stands poised to issue yet another ruling on the consideration of race and ethnicity in admission in the *Fisher v. University of Texas* case. To ensure a full understanding of postsecondary institutions' commitments to diversity in all of its forms, NACAC issued the *Diversity and College Admission in 2003: A Survey Report*, which included the following observations.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY IN ALL FORMS

- Seventy-four percent of colleges and universities include in their mission statement a commitment to diversity of some form.
- Sixty-eight percent of colleges are guided by mission statements that encourage a racial and ethnic mix of students on campus.



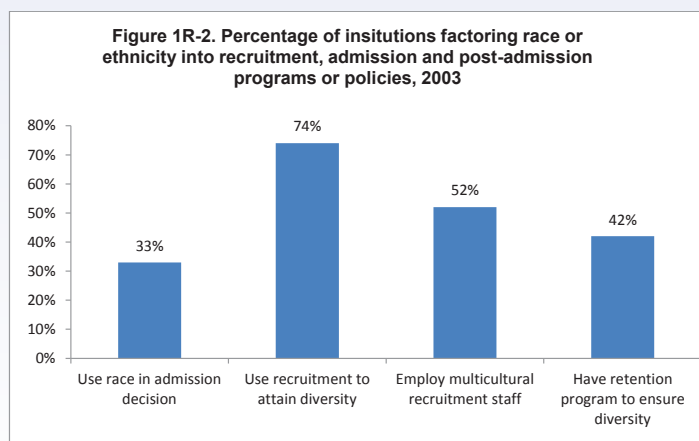
SOURCE: NACAC Diversity Survey, 2003

- Sixty-four percent said those mission statements also included a commitment to increasing diversity in other student populations.
- Among the 64 percent of institutions that include other forms of diversity in their mission statement, geographic diversity (77 percent) and socioeconomic diversity (66 percent) were the most frequently stated priorities. Also mentioned as desirable forms of diversity were gender, age, religion, first-generation status, international status, special talents and academic interests.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION FAVORED ABOVE ADMISSION TO GAIN DIVERSITY

The survey reveals three key findings about how colleges and universities seek to achieve diversity:

- The majority—67 percent—of institutions do not use race as a factor in the admission decision.
- Among those that do consider race/ethnicity as a factor in the admission decision, a sizable 82 percent credited this policy with boosting the number of racial/ethnic minority students represented in the student body.
- Seventy-four percent of institutions use recruitment to achieve racial/ethnic diversity.
- Forty-two percent of institutions use retention programs aimed at addressing special needs of diverse populations.



SOURCE: NACAC Diversity Survey, 2003

Homeschooled Students

During the last decade, the number of homeschooled students swelled to its largest ever, resulting in an increased focus on how to account for homeschooled students in the college admission process. The 2005 *State of College Admission* report included information about the increasing number of colleges that established written policies to ensure consistent treatment among homeschooled students and between homeschooled students and their traditionally-schooled peers. The 2005 report also included a list of the factors colleges considered most important when reviewing applications from homeschooled students.

NUMBER OF HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS IN THE US

According to an issue brief released by the US Department of Education in July 2004, the number of students participating in homeschool education in 2003 topped 1.1 million, up from 850,000 in 1999. Due to the increase of students participating in homeschool education, colleges and universities are increasingly adopting formal evaluation policies on admission of homeschooled students and the factors in admission for these students.

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS FROM HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS

Since 2000, NACAC has polled colleges and universities about two key indicators regarding homeschooled students and the college

admission process: (1) whether the number of applications from homeschooled students had increased, and (2) whether colleges and universities have a formal method of evaluating applications from homeschooled students.

Applications from homeschooled students continue to increase. In 2004, 97 percent of colleges reported receiving at least as many applications from homeschooled students as in 2003. Owing to the steady increase in homeschooled student applications to college, an increasingly large majority (83 percent) of colleges have developed formal policies for evaluating applications from homeschooled students (see Table 1R-1).

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS

What does it mean to say that 83 percent of colleges maintain formal policies for evaluating the applications of homeschooled students? More often than not, colleges now maintain a separate but similar set of written policies that indicate what homeschooled students must submit to the admission office for consideration and the standards by which admission offices evaluate the information submitted.

As part of the 2004 NACAC Admission Trends Survey, NACAC asked colleges and universities what they required of homeschooled applicants and what they recommended as information to be submitted to the admission office. As Table 1R-2 shows, between 80 and 90 percent of all colleges require homeschooled students to submit standardized test scores and a transcript or record of grades to describe their educational achievement.

Table 1R-1. Percentage of institutions with formal admission policies for homeschooled students, 2000-2004.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
College/University has formal evaluation policy	52	44	74	77	83
College/University does not have formal evaluation policy	48	46	26	23	17

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2004.

Table 1R-2. Admission requirements for homeschooled students, 2004.

Factor	Required	Recommended	Neither
Standardized admission test (SAT, ACT)	89.3	6.5	4.2
Transcript/record of grades	82.5	11.4	6.0
Minimum subject/course units	53.2	19.5	27.4
Recommendations from persons other than parents	40.6	28.2	31.2
Statement describing home school structure and mission	33.9	31.7	34.4
GED	20.7	30.1	49.2
Writing sample (separate from application for admission)	29.5	22.7	47.8
State high school equivalency certificate	25.7	25.7	48.6
Statement from the applicant attesting that the applicant completed a home school education in accordance with laws of the applicant's state	22.1	20.7	57.1
Statement from the district superintendent (or appropriate public official) attesting that the applicant completed a home school education in accordance with the laws of the applicant's state	15.6	21.7	62.7
Completion state proficiency test(s)	14.9	20.1	65.0
Standardized subject tests (such as SAT II)	9.6	18.9	71.6

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2004.

International Student Admission

Over the past decade, the recruitment of international students has expanded to more campuses in the US, resulting in a developing market for many colleges that have had limited or no experience in this field. A number of institutions utilize third-party agents, most of whom are paid on commission, to recruit students on behalf of the university. The compensation of agents on commission for student recruitment, while a common practice in other countries, represents a departure from traditional practice in US domestic admission. As such, NACAC has convened a Commission on International Student Recruitment to determine how its standards for admission practice, as manifested in the Statement of Principles

of Good Practice, apply to international recruitment. In support of the Commission’s work, NACAC’s 2010 Admission Trends Survey collected information about recruitment methods at four-year US colleges and universities.

NACAC’S ADMISSION PRACTICES COMMITTEE is currently engaged in a discussion about the use of agents in institutional efforts to recruit international students. NACAC seeks to determine the extent of the use of agents to make a fully-informed decision about its position on the issue.

Figure 1R-3. Student recruitment methods at four-year US colleges and universities (continued on next page)

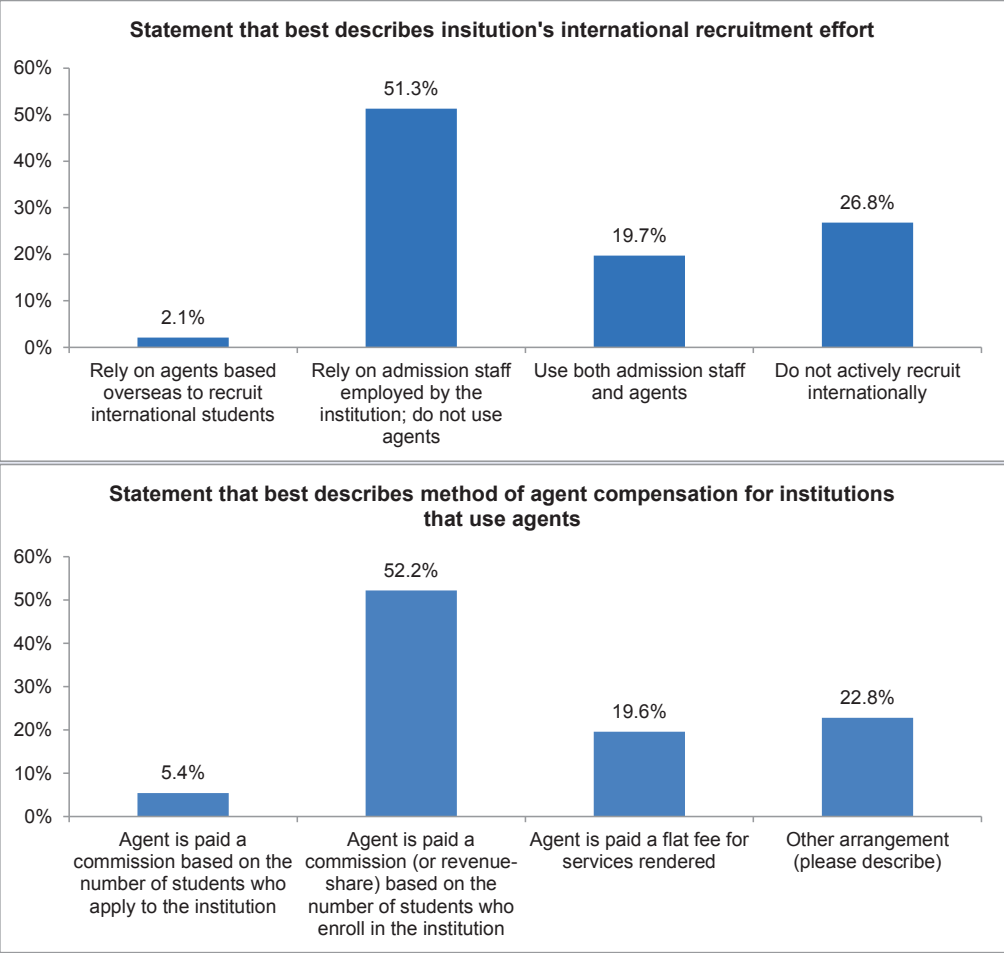
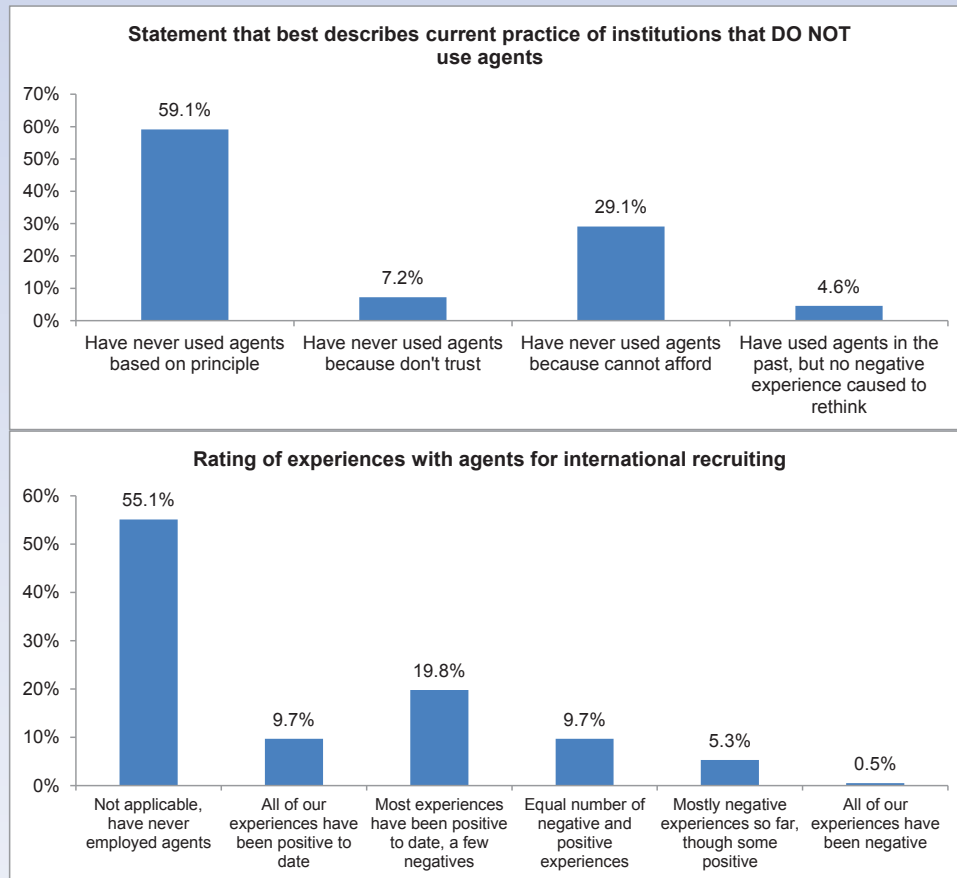


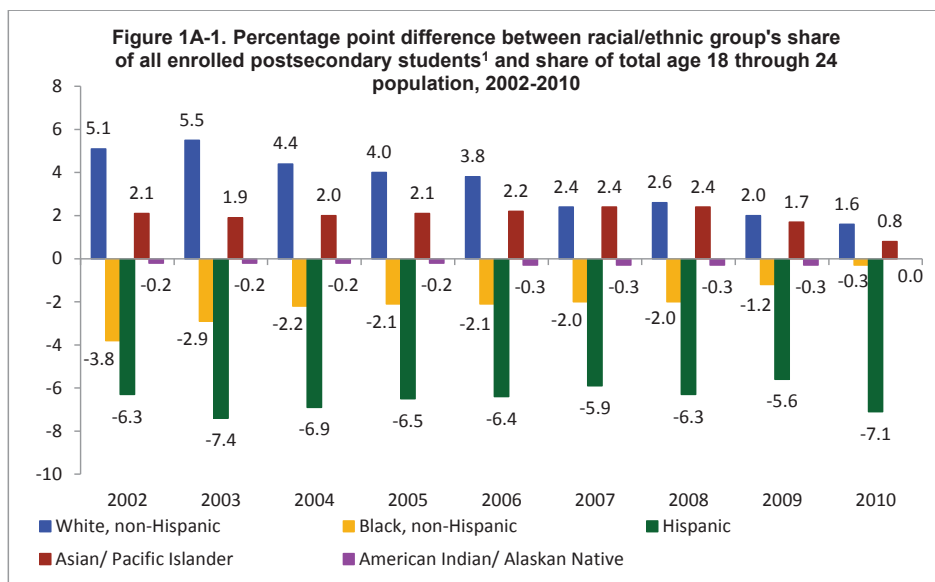
Figure 1R-3 (continued from previous page). Student recruitment methods at four-year US colleges and universities



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Chapter I

Appendix



¹ Includes not-for-profit institutions only.

SOURCES: *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 236).

Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2010. (2010). US Census Bureau, Washington DC: Population Division. (Tables 2 and 4).

Table 1A-1. Mean college enrollment rates of high school graduates at Counseling Trends Survey respondent schools by school characteristic: 2004-2011

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	85.5	81.0	77.2	79.3	79.9	77.7	82.1	84.1
Control								
Public	78.3	75.5	73.7	75.9	77.1	74.9	78.7	80.7
Private	98.0	98.7	97.7	96.9	98.6	97.9	98.8	97.7
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	98.2	98.8	97.3	97.1	98.6	97.8	98.9	97.9
<i>Private parochial</i>	97.6	98.5	98.2	96.5	98.7	98.2	98.6	97.3
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	90.8	88.7	84.8	86.1	83.5	82.7	86.5	91.2
26 to 50%	71.7	69.7	71.5	72.0	72.9	73.0	74.1	76.2
51 to 75%	64.1	62.5	61.0	66.1	69.1	66.5	71.5	75.5
76 to 100%	68.2	58.3	58.0	56.2	63.6	60.0	65.3	67.5
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	94.0	83.2	77.6	81.3	82.1	78.0	84.9	91.0
101 to 200	91.9	86.9	82.9	81.2	81.9	81.3	84.8	86.7
201 to 300	85.6	82.8	79.1	79.9	80.7	77.4	82.8	83.1
301 to 400	79.6	73.5	75.8	76.3	76.7	75.7	79.7	82.6
401 to 500	80.1	73.9	71.8	76.7	76.8	75.1	77.6	81.8
More than 500	78.4	73.9	73.7	77.0	76.2	75.7	76.9	80.3

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2004-2011.

Chapter 2

Applications to College

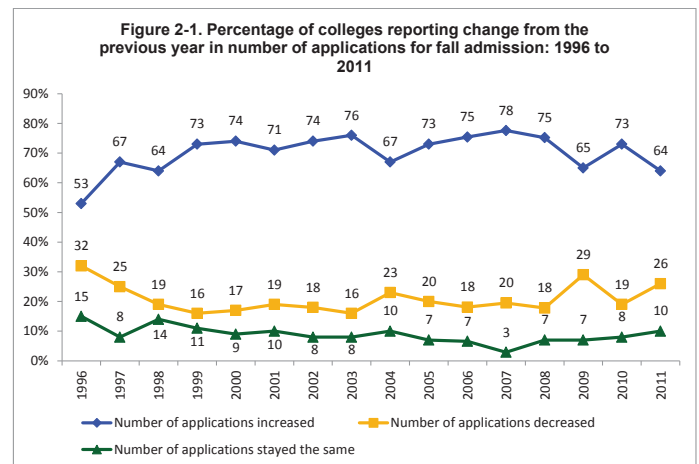
CONTENTS

- Application Change Over Time
- Selectivity and Yield
- The Admission “Interface”
- Cost of Applying to College
- Gender Trends in College Applications

Application Change Over Time

Results of NACAC's 2011 Admission Trends Survey indicate that most colleges (64 percent) experienced an increase in the number of applications they received compared to Fall 2010. For most of the past 10 years, approximately three-quarters of colleges have reported increases in applications, with the exception of 2009, when only 65 percent experienced increases (see Figure 2-1). According to the US Department of Education data, the average number of applications per institution increased 60 percent between 2002 and 2011. Although public institutions received more applications on average, the number of applications to private institutions increased at a faster rate compared to public institutions. The average number of acceptances followed a similar pattern. The average number of enrolled students did not change significantly over the last decade (see Figure 2A-1).

The application increases documented in recent years are due in part to the increased number of high school graduates—which peaked with the 2009 graduating class (see Chapter 1)—but also to an increase in the number of applications each student submits. Seventy-nine percent of Fall 2011 freshmen applied to three or more colleges, an increase of 12 percentage points over the last 10 years. The percentage of students who submitted seven or more applications reached 29 percent in 2011 (see Figure 2-2).

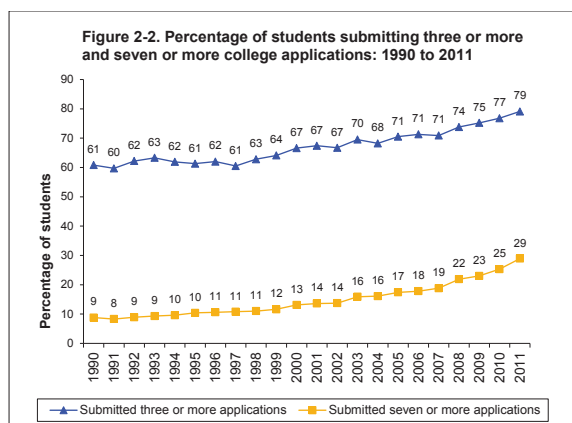


SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 1996 through 2011

Selectivity and Yield

SELECTIVITY

Selectivity is defined simply as the proportion of applicants who are offered admission, and is usually expressed as a percentage—(number of acceptances/number of applications) x 100. Higher



SOURCES: Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., Saenz, V.B., Santos, J.L., and Korn, W.S. (2007). *The American Freshman: Forty Year Trends, 1966-2006*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., Sharkness, J., and Korn, W.S. (2007). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2007*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

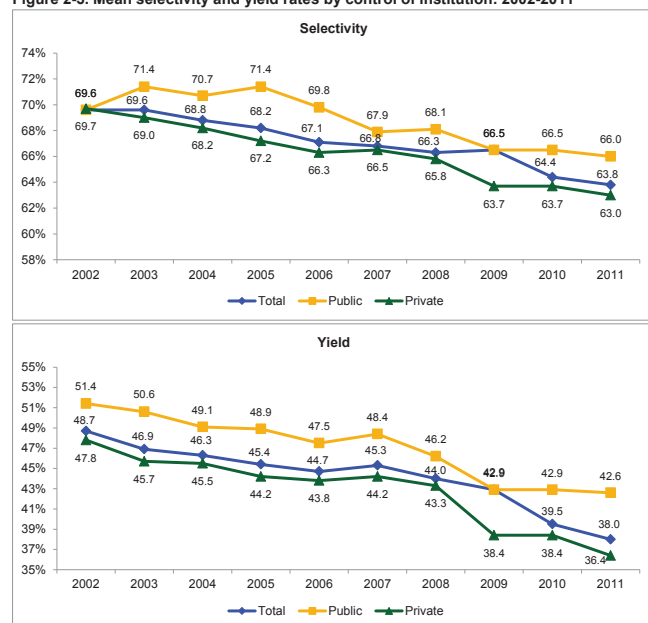
Pryor, J.H. et al. (2008). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2008*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., DeAngelo, L., Blake, L.P., and Tran, S. (2009). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2009*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., DeAngelo, L., Blake, L.P., and Tran, S. (2010). *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2010*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., DeAngelo, L., Blake, L.P., and Tran, S. (2011). *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2011*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Figure 2-3. Mean selectivity and yield rates by control of institution: 2002-2011



NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2002-2011 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. For each year of data, institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Institutions that indicating having open admission policies were then excluded. Institutions that did not report current year admission data also were excluded.

selectivity is equated with lower acceptance rates (i.e. a relatively small number of applicants are admitted). The selectivity rates of US postsecondary institutions range from acceptance of fewer than 10 percent to more than 90 percent of applicants. Although the media tend to focus on the most selective colleges, the average acceptance rate across all four-year institutions in the US is just under two-thirds (63.8 percent), according to most recent data. This average acceptance rate has decreased steadily from 69.6 percent in 2002 (see Figure 2-3). In addition, for Fall 2011, private institutions reported slightly lower acceptance rates than public institutions (63.0 versus 66.0 percent), a point consistent with the data from the past 10 years (see Table 2-1).¹

Table 2-1. Mean selectivity and yield rates by institutional characteristics: Fall 2011

	Selectivity	Yield
Total	63.8	38.0
Control		
Public	66.0	42.6
Private	63.0	36.4
Enrollment		
Fewer than 3,000 students	64.2	38.5
3,000 to 9,999	61.9	36.2
10,000 or more	64.8	38.7
Selectivity		
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	36.5	40.2
50 to 70 percent	61.6	36.0
71 to 85 percent	76.9	35.5
More than 85 percent	92.6	47.2
Yield		
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	63.4	21.8
30 to 45 percent	64.4	36.5
46 to 60 percent	64.9	51.6
More than 60 percent	61.9	76.7

NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2011-12 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. Institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Of the 1,967 total institutions, 1,243 (63 percent) provided selectivity and yield data.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2011-12). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Institutions that accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants are generally considered to be the most selective. On average, this group of colleges and universities receives many more applications per institution when compared to their less selective counterparts. Each group has experienced significant increases in application volume since 2002 (see Figure 2A-2). Very selective institutions also are much more likely to offer the Early Decision application option and to maintain a wait list, in part to manage the increased application volume (see Chapter 3).

¹ Correlation between acceptance rate and private control (-.073), $p < .05$

However, as Table 2-2 also shows, the most selective colleges as a group received 37 percent of all applications for Fall 2011 admission, and they represented only 23 percent of all full-time, first-year undergraduate students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities. Most students (69 percent) were enrolled in institutions with selectivity rates between 50 and 85 percent. The share of first-time, full-time students attending the most selective institutions has increased from 16 percent in 2002 while the share attending the least selective has decreased from 15 percent in 2002 to eight percent in 2011 (see Figure 2A-1).

YIELD

An institution's yield rate is defined as the percentage of admitted students who decide to enroll—(number of enrollments/number of admitted students) x 100. From an institutional perspective, yield is a very important statistic. Admission office staffs conduct

sophisticated analyses to predict yield rates in order to ensure that they will fill their freshman classes with students who are a good fit for their institutions. Admission officers also engage in a variety of outreach efforts to enhance the likelihood that students will attend their institutions.

For the Fall 2011 freshman class, the average yield rate among four-year colleges and universities was 38 percent, meaning that fewer than half of all students admitted to a given institution accepted those offers of admission (see Table 2-1). The average yield rate has declined steadily in recent years from 49 percent in Fall 2002 (see Figure 2-3). As shown in Figure 2-2, students are applying to an increasing number of institutions, on average. Consequently, the admission office's task of predicting yield rates and obtaining target enrollment numbers is more complex.

Table 2-2. Applications and enrollment by selectivity: Fall 2011

Selectivity	National share of institutions	Average number of applications per institution	National share of applications	National share of full-time, first-year students enrolled
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	21.2%	7,867	36.7	23.0
50 to 70 percent	41.6	4,166	38.2	40.8
71 to 85 percent	25.9	3,623	20.7	27.9
More than 85 percent	11.3	1,764	4.4	8.3

NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2011-12 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. Institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Of the 1,967 total institutions, 1,243 (63 percent) provided selectivity and yield data for Fall 2011.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2011-12). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Table 2.3. Mean percentage of applications received online by institutional characteristics: 2004-2011

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	56.5	49.2	57.5	68.2	72.1	79.9	84.7	85.0
Control								
Public	50.4	52.5	63.5	69.8	70.4	79.6	84.1	88.6
Private	59.6	47.6	55.4	67.6	72.9	80.1	84.8	84.1
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	66.4	44.4	52.4	64.7	68.2	76.7	82.7	81.9
3,000 to 9,999	43.6	53.8	63.3	69.3	75.4	84.3	85.9	85.9
10,000 or more	59.3	63.6	73.3	82.3	83.7	87.6	93.0	95.1
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	45.1	48.5	70.0	80.6	81.1	88.2	94.0	91.4
50 to 70 percent	77.9	54.9	56.8	68.4	71.3	80.7	83.0	84.6
71 to 85 percent	48.9	46.1	56.4	65.4	72.2	75.2	82.9	85.7
More than 85 percent	45.7	44.9	53.0	64.6	66.2	78.8	81.0	79.9
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	86.1	51.9	60.5	75.7	80.6	82.7	89.4	87.3
30 to 45 percent	50.2	53.9	61.1	67.5	72.9	78.9	85.2	88.4
46 to 60 percent	52.8	46.5	55.9	68.1	70.4	76.9	76.7	83.3
More than 60 percent	31.4	32.3	43.1	50.1	51.4	68.3	72.4	64.2

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2004 through 2011.

The Admission “Interface”

Although the admission process continues to rely heavily on personal contact and paper, technology is being used in specific ways to make the process more manageable. For example, students use technology to research college options, to contact colleges with admission inquiries and, in most cases, to submit applications. Institutions rely on technology to market to prospective students and to more easily and effectively disseminate information about their institutions and their admission procedures.

ONLINE APPLICATIONS

For the Fall 2011 admission cycle, four-year colleges and universities received an average of 85 percent of their applications online, up from 57 percent in Fall 2002. Enrollment size was directly related to the proportion of applications received online in each of the past 10 years. More selective institutions also received higher percentages of online applications compared to their counterparts (see Table 2-3).²

HOW STUDENTS APPROACH COLLEGES

Students use a variety of media to contact colleges about admission; however, email/Internet was the most popular in each year since 2003 and its use is increasing compared to other forms of inquiry. For the Fall 2011 admission cycle, colleges reported that 40 percent of all admission inquiries were received via email/Internet. College fairs were the second most prevalent at 16 percent, followed by high school visits and written sources (12 and 11 percent, respectively) (see Table 2-4). Telephone calls were the least utilized means of contacting colleges. In the “other” category, colleges reported hearing from students through drop-in visits to the campus; open houses and other on-campus events; referrals; and submission of application components, including test scores and transcripts.

In comparison to private institutions, public colleges and universities reported receiving more student inquiries through college fairs (18 versus 14 percent) in 2011. Selective institutions received fewer inquiries through college fairs.³

Table 2-4. How institutions received admission inquiries from prospective students: 2002-2011

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Telephone	21.8	19.1	19	14	9.5	8.1	8.9	7.1	8.6	7.3
Email/Internet	27	30.4	36	32	32.5	30.2	33.3	36.8	40.1	39.9
Written sources	34.1	26.2	25	20	18.4	18	15.1	14.1	12.6	10.5
College fairs	--	21.7	24	20	15.4	15.4	15.1	14.1	15	15.7
High school visits	--	--	--	14	11.4	10.9	11.2	10	12.3	12.4
Other	--	--	--	--	12.8	17.5	16.3	17.9	17.9	20.3

-- Data are unavailable

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2002 through 2011.

Table 2-5. Features of college admission Web sites: 2002-2011

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
College cost information	--	--	95.1	94.4	97.3	98.4	99.4	100.0	99.8	100.0
Information about campus tours	90.4	93.4	95.6	94.0	96.7	96.3	97.4	99.0	99.8	99.6
Financial aid information	--	--	--	--	99.1	99.2	99.7	100.0	100.0	99.6
Detailed admission information (requirements, deadlines, admission options)	91.6	94.4	94.7	98.2	96.2	97.9	96.2	97.1	98.4	98.4
Online Application	93.1	94.7	97.5	87.8	93.3	96.3	95.7	98.4	98.4	97.2
Link to social networking	--	--	--	--	--	--	39.4	73.1	90.7	97.2
Online course catalog	84.9	88.7	94.1	92.1	95.9	96.3	96.5	97.4	98.0	96.9
Online forms to request information by mail	84.2	87.2	91.3	92.8	94.7	95.8	95.9	97.4	95.4	93.7
Information for parents	44.5	49.0	55.0	57.5	71.6	77.2	76.5	80.5	79.4	87.1
Online course registration	48.7	53.7	58.6	58.2	69.3	71.1	74.3	77.0	76.3	77.9
School profile/ freshman class academic qualifications	--	--	56.9	56.5	64.1	70.2	69.6	75.3	75.3	74.7
Information for counselors	27.6	32.9	37.2	37.2	49.7	57.6	55.5	62.8	61.5	72.1
Downloadable application submitted by mail	--	--	--	87.1	87.4	88.8	90.6	83.1	80.4	70.1
Virtual tour	--	--	--	--	--	63.3	67.9	71.8	66.5	68.4
Email newsletters	23.2	22.8	30.4	32.4	46.5	43.6	57.3	61.5	53.8	53.6
Blog (current student)	--	--	--	--	--	41.6	50.9	60.5	59.3	53.2
Blog (admission officer)	--	--	--	--	--	18.1	23.6	30.6	28.5	27.2
Online message board	--	--	--	--	--	--	29.2	32.7	32.4	26.7
Online chat rooms	12.1	18.5	26.2	29.3	34.8	32.1	30.6	34.6	30.3	24.7
Podcast	--	--	--	--	--	--	22.5	30.6	25.5	21.1

-- Data not available

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2002 through 2011.

² Correlation between percent of online applications and: enrollment (.230), selectivity (.190), $p < .01$

³ Correlation between public college status and: inquiries from college fairs (.180), $p < .05$; Correlation between selectivity and: inquiries from college fairs (-.173), $p < .05$

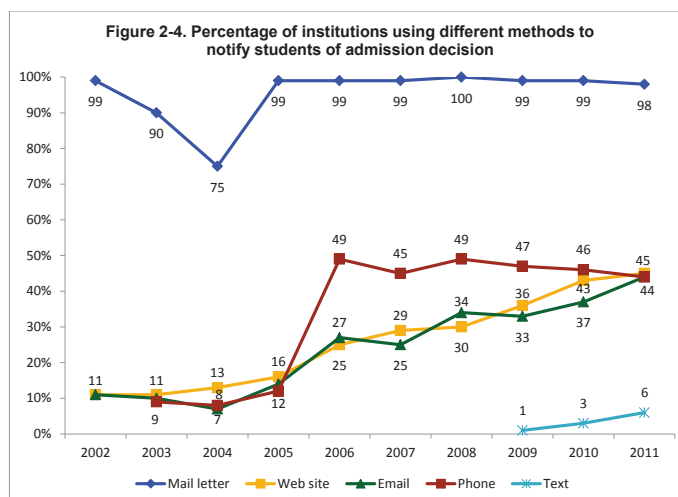
COLLEGE ADMISSION WEB SITES

Many institutions post admission-related information and services on their Web sites, making it easier for students to learn about and apply to their institutions. All or nearly all institutions have certain features, including detailed admission information, information about campus tours, college cost and financial aid information, online course catalogs, online forms allowing prospective students to request information via mail, online applications and links to social networking sites (see Table 2-5). In 2011, 87 percent of colleges and universities reported offering information on their Web sites that is tailored to parents of prospective students, up from 45 percent in 2002. A majority (72 percent) reported that they offer information intended for high school counselors, a significantly greater proportion than the 28 percent that provided this information in 2002.

Results of recent Admission Trends Surveys indicate that colleges' integration of social media tools continues to grow rapidly. In 2011, 97 percent of respondents reported that they provide links to their colleges' social networking sites (up from 39 percent in 2008 and 73 percent in 2009), and 53 percent reported offering blogs by current students (up from 42 percent in 2007). Some colleges and universities also had blogs by admission officers (27 percent), podcasts (21 percent) and online message boards (27 percent) in 2011, but not as many as in the most recent years (see Table 2-5).

HOW COLLEGES NOTIFY STUDENTS OF THE ADMISSION DECISION

Mailing letters is the standard practice for colleges and universities to notify students of admission decisions. Nearly all institutions that responded to NACAC's 2011 Admission Trends Survey reported mailing letters (98 percent). However, colleges do use other means, in addition to letters, to contact students about admission decisions. For the Fall 2011 admission cycle, 45 percent allowed applicants to check their admission status on the college's Web site, and 44 percent contacted students by email. The use of electronic means to notify students about admission decisions has increased steadily since 2002 when only 11 percent of institutions reported using Web site or email for notification. The proportion of colleges notifying students via text message doubled in one year from three percent in 2010 to six percent in 2011. Forty-four percent of institutions notified students by phone in 2011. Though not specified on the survey, it is likely that most of these institutions notify a sub-set of accepted students by phone rather than the entire group. The use of telephone calls peaked in 2006 and 2008 when nearly one half (49 percent) of institutions reported using this method to notify students and has decreased slightly since then (see Figure 2-4).



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2002-2011

In 2011, public colleges were much more likely than private colleges to allow prospective students to check their admission status on the Web site (76 percent versus 31 percent), and private institutions were more likely to notify students by phone (52 percent versus 25 percent). Larger colleges also were more likely to use the Web site for admission notification, while both smaller and less selective colleges were more likely to use phone calls.⁴

Cost of Applying to College

According to results of the College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges⁵ 88 percent of four-year, not-for-profit colleges had an application fee in 2011, which averaged \$41. Larger institutions and more selective colleges tended to have higher fees, as did those with lower yield rates (see Table 2-6).⁵ Of those institutions charging application fees, 87 percent waived them for students with financial need.⁶ Private colleges were somewhat more likely than public colleges to waive fees (90 versus 81 percent), as were more selective institutions and those with lower yield.⁷ The percentage of colleges that have an application fee has decreased slightly from 92 percent in 2004, while the average fee amount has increased from \$35.44 in this same time period.

⁴ Correlation between using Web site for admission notification and: enrollment (.456), $p < .01$; Correlation between using phone for admission notification and: enrollment (-.214), selectivity (-.271), $p < .01$

⁵ Correlation between application fee amount and: enrollment (.175), selectivity (.341), yield (-.088), $p < .01$

⁶ NACAC recommends that institutions of higher education consider waiving application fees for low-income students. The fee waiver guidelines are available on the NACAC Web site: www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver.

⁷ Correlation between waiving application fee and: private status (.119), selectivity (.150), yield (-.278), $p < .01$

Gender Trends in College Applications

According to US Department of Education data, females, on average, comprised 58 percent of applicants to four-year colleges for Fall 2011 admission. They comprised 58 percent of accepted students and 56 percent of enrolled students. Women also experienced a slightly higher acceptance rate in 2011 (64.3 percent

versus 63.0 percent for men).⁸ Women have outnumbered men in college applicants, acceptances and enrollment in each of the past 10 years. Both women and men have experienced decreasing acceptance and yield rates since 2002, but average women's acceptance rates were slightly higher and average women's yield rates were slightly lower compared to men during the last decade.

Table 2-6. Percentage of institutions with application fees and fee waivers and mean application fee amounts by institutional characteristics: 2011

	Percentage of institutions with application fee	For those institutions that have application fees:	
		Mean application fee amount	Percentage of institutions allowing fee waiver for financial need
Total	88.4%	\$41.45	86.6%
Control			
Public	92.3	41.66	81.0
Private	86.5	41.33	89.5
Enrollment			
Fewer than 3,000 students	86.5	38.62	92.6
3,000 to 9,999	91.1	43.15	87.2
10,000 or more	98.1	48.71	85.1
Selectivity			
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	89.7	50.89	92.0
50 to 70 percent	88.4	38.59	92.4
71 to 85 percent	88.7	38.6	88.9
More than 85 percent	88.3	35.18	71.2
Yield			
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	87.7	42.89	96.9
30 to 45 percent	90.2	41.03	90.8
46 to 60 percent	92.9	39.76	78.9
More than 60 percent	83.8	38.26	68.1

SOURCE: College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2012.[®] Data presented here include four-year, not-for-profit, bachelor's degree granting institutions in the US only.

⁸ Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2011-12). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Only colleges meeting the following criteria were included: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title IV-participating.

Chapter 2 Retrospective

APPLICATIONS TO COLLEGE

During the past decade, NACAC collected data on important issues that surfaced in the field of college admission. Some was published through the *State of College Admission* report, and some was published in other reports or venues. Two such issues included the quality of interaction between admission professionals and high schools during the recruitment process, as manifested in high school visits, and the rise of social media as a communication tool in the recruitment/application process.

High School Visits by College Admission Officers

NACAC's Summer 2005 *Journal of College Admission* highlighted the importance of establishing a college-going culture in secondary schools, particularly in the potentially valuable interactions between admission officers, school counselors and students. Utilizing research from the 2004 NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, the article included vignettes from an admission officer's experiences in different high school settings. The article is significant in that it emphasizes the role that personal connections continue to play in an admission process now dominated by electronic communication.

DEAR COUNSELOR,

I am sorry to have missed you today while I was at your school. I know that counselors' caseloads are large these days and you probably did not have time to meet with me. Although I did not get the opportunity to meet with any students in the library, I look forward to visiting again next year and perhaps meeting with you and any students that may be considering our institution. We had a number of students apply from your high school last year, and I hope that if students choose to apply in the nearfuture, you will feel free to call on me for any assistance that I can provide. I have enclosed information that you may find helpful as you counsel your students considering my institution. I wish you a very successful academic year!

Sincerely,

Angel B. Pérez

This journal entry is an example of the often-missed opportunities that occur during college admission officers' high schools visits. Although they work toward the same goal, high school counselors and admission officers often overlook one another as essential resources in the transition to postsecondary education. When addressing the best ways to utilize high school visits, education professionals must remember that while student academic preparation, family support and financial aid improve student access to postsecondary education, the adult tutelage provided to students regarding the requirements for postsecondary success and the process of securing admission, and financial aid, significantly add to the likelihood that students will attend a postsecondary institution (King, 1996;

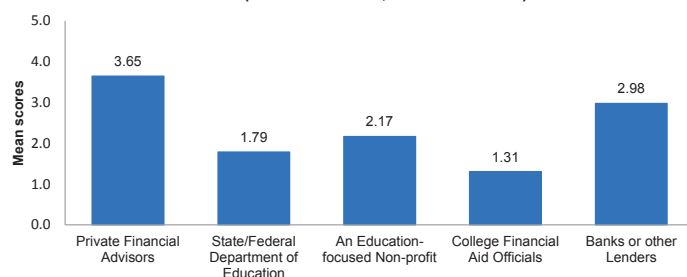
Adelman, 1999; McDonough, 1997 and 2004; Orfield and Paul, 1993; Plank and Jordan, 2001). No adults are greater experts than the high school counselor and college admission officer, especially when they work in conjunction.

In public schools, there is a well-documented need for college counseling staff and resources, particularly in lower-income settings. Moreover, most public schools, again in lower-income settings, have precious few connections with postsecondary institutions. Most of these schools rely on a patchwork of programs, services and professionals to provide college counseling. Students in these settings are fortunate if they receive any personalized counseling beyond group sessions with the school's counselor, whose job description may or may not emphasize college counseling.

Counselors in nearly all high schools—98.4 percent of public schools and 99.2 percent of private schools—from a sample of more than 1,500 high schools whose counselors responded to the 2002–2004 NACAC Counseling Trends Surveys, stated that one of the college counseling services provided to students included “hosting college representatives at their school.” On the surface, the data suggest that hosting college representatives is a standard practice at schools, both public and private. However, anecdotal evidence gathered during high school visits clearly indicates that further defining the term “hosting” would reveal vastly different practices that produce differing results for students, counselors and admission officers alike.

On a scale of one to four, one being “most trusted” and four being “least trusted,” school counselors indicated that college financial aid and admission officials were the most trusted source for information about paying for college (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2005). These ratings were nearly identical for both public and private schools, for all income ranges.

Figure 2R.1. Trusted sources of paying for college information, all schools (1 = most trusted, 5 = least trusted)



SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2004.

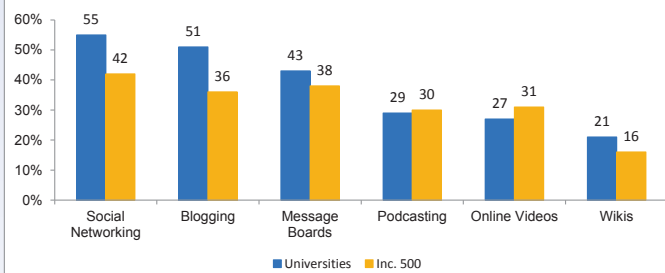
In 2009, NACAC released a discussion paper authored by Nora Ganim Barnes, Chancellor Professor of Marketing and Director of the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts (Dartmouth), examining the increasing role of social media in college recruitment/application processes. The evolution of social media in recruitment and admission proceeded in fits and starts during the past decade, as new technologies rose and fell based on changing platforms, devices and tastes.

THE CURRENT GENERATION OF PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS HAS GROWN UP

in the presence of Web technology. It is second nature to today's youth to gather information and conduct important social relationships online—they surf the Web instead of flipping through the pages of a newspaper; they download music instead of buying CDs; they Facebook instead of emailing; they even promote themselves and their ideas through personal blogs. Consequently, colleges and universities have begun to use these same tools in order engage with students more productively, in the classroom, but particularly in recruitment efforts. Data presented in this report show that well over half of all admission departments are using some type of social media in recruiting and about one-fifth use social media sites to screen at least a portion of their applicant pool. However, not all colleges are equally engaged in the use of social media and important ethical issues about its use in admission remain under-explored.

Colleges' were found to be more familiar, on average, than Inc. 500 companies.

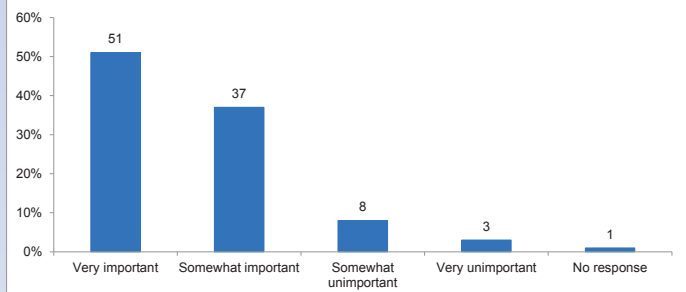
Figure 2R-2. Percent of admission officers that are very familiar with social media



SOURCE: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research

Colleges generally viewed social media as “very” or “somewhat” important to their recruitment strategy.

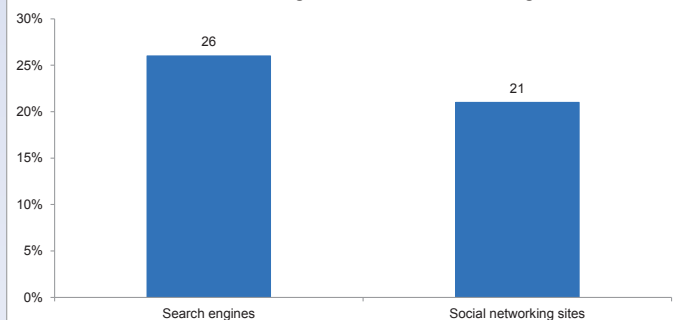
Figure 2R-3. Percentage of institutions attributing different levels of importance to social media technologies in recruiting



SOURCE: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research

Some colleges conducted research on students via search engines and/or social networking sites.

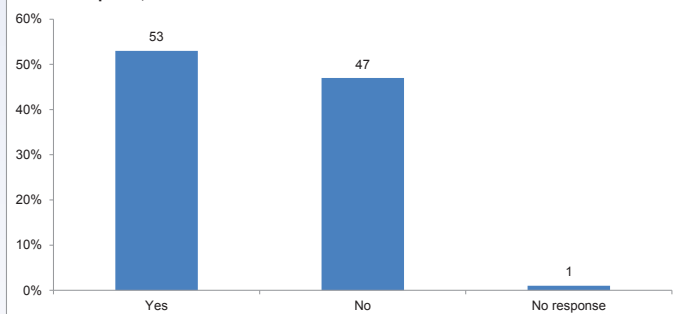
Figure 2R-4. Percentage of institutions that research potential students via search engines and/or social networking sites



SOURCE: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research

A majority of colleges monitor social media for buzz, posts, conversation and news about their institution and admission process.

Figure 2R-5. Percent of institutions that monitor social media for buzz, posts, conversations and news about their school and admission

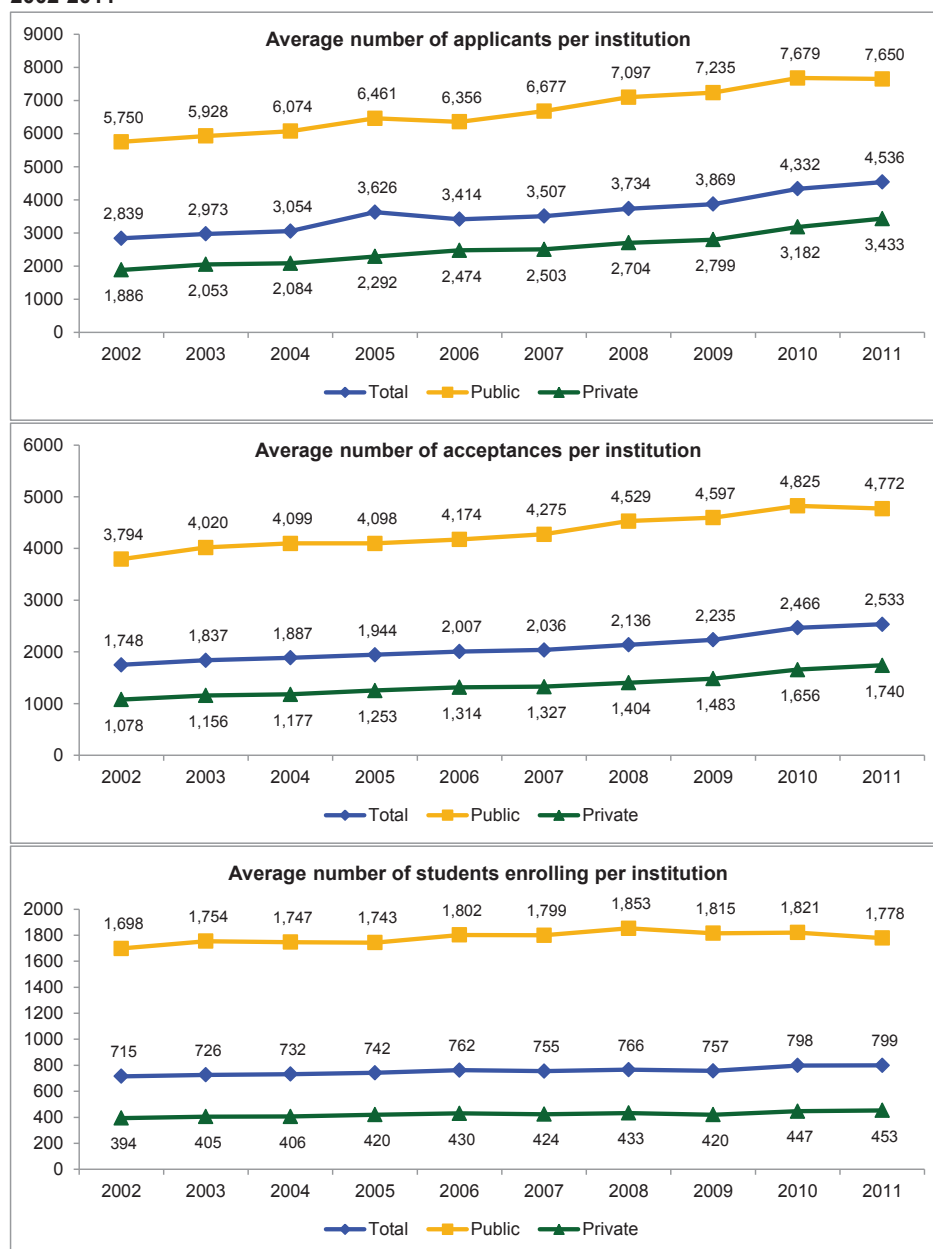


SOURCE: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research

Chapter 2

Appendix

Figure 2A-1. Applications, acceptances and enrolled students per institution by control, 2002-2011



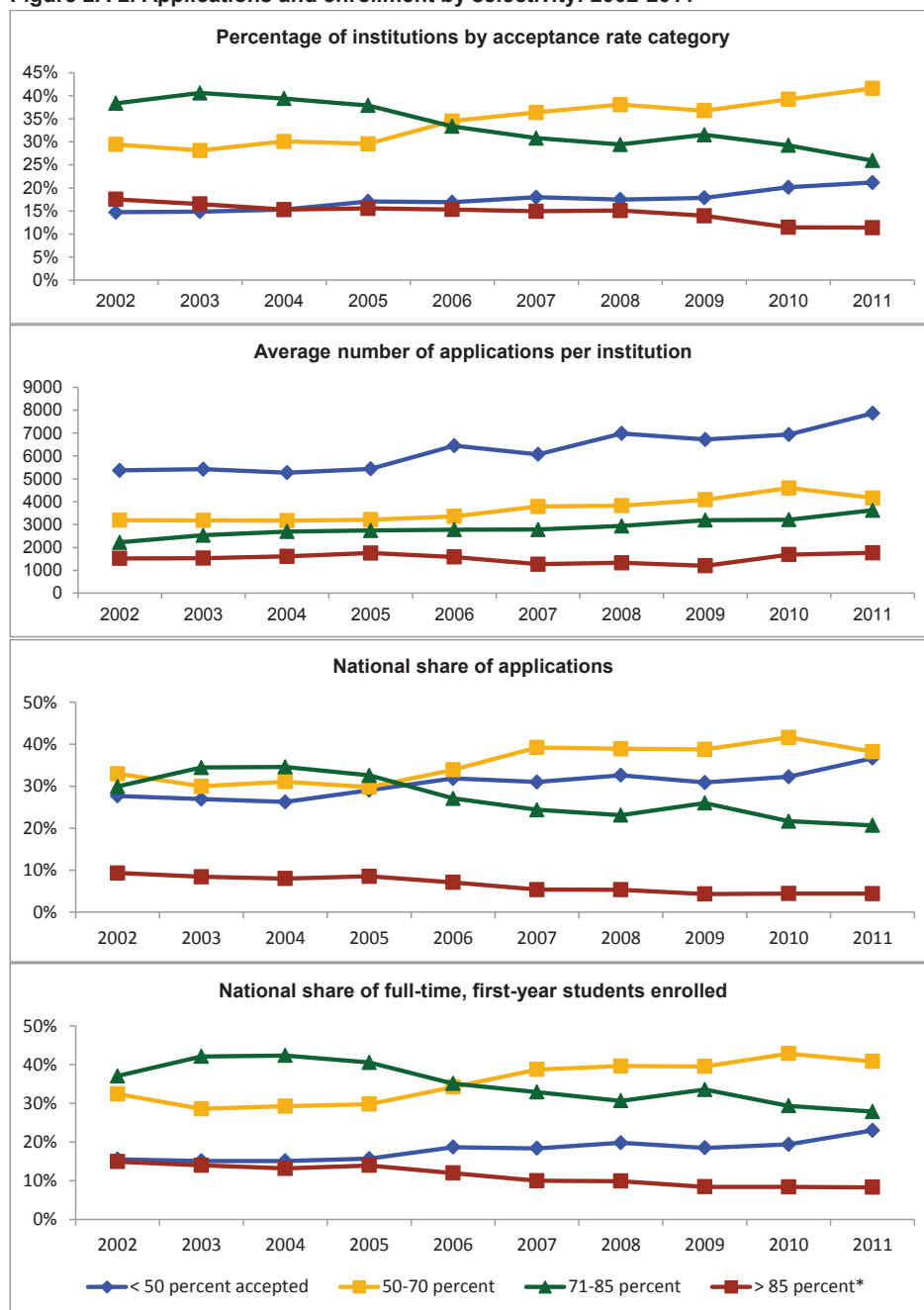
NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2002-2011 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. For each year of data, institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Institutions that indicating having open admission policies were then excluded. Institutions that did not report current year admission data also were excluded.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2011-12). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Chapter 2

Appendix

Figure 2A-2. Applications and enrollment by selectivity: 2002-2011



* The "More than 85 percent" selectivity category does not include institutions with open admission policies.

NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2002-2011 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. For each year of data, institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Institutions that indicating having open admission policies were then excluded. Institutions that did not report current year admission data also were excluded.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2011-12). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Chapter 3

Admission Strategies

Definitions of Early Decision and Early Action

Prior to 2005, colleges and universities generally adhered to one of two early application options: Early Decision and Early Action. However, intense debate over the effects of Early Decision prompted some universities to create variations on these policies, resulting in an increasing variety of early options.

In 2005, NACAC adopted a new set of provisions aimed at clarifying the admission options available to students. The association approved the use of the terms “restrictive” and “non-restrictive” to describe the effect of each type of policy on the choices that students may make in applying to and selecting a college. A summary of NACAC’s revised definitions is included here.

The use of multiple admission plans by colleges and universities often results in confusion among students, parents and college admission counseling professionals. NACAC believes institutions must clearly state policies, and counselors are advised to assist students with their understanding of the various admission decision options. The following outlines agreed-upon definitions and conditions.

Non-Restrictive Application Plans: These plans allow students to wait until May 1 to confirm enrollment.

- **Regular Decision** is the application process in which a student submits an application to an institution by a specified date and receives a decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.
- **Rolling Admission** is the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are completed and renders admission decisions to students throughout the admission cycle. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.
- **Early Action (EA)** is the application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution’s regular response date. Students admitted under Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution’s offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1. Under non-restrictive Early Action, a student may apply to other colleges.

Restrictive Application Plans: These plans allow institutions to limit students from applying to other early plans.

- **Early Decision (ED)** is the application process in which students make a commitment to a first choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. While pursuing admission under an Early Decision plan, students may apply to other institutions, but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time. Should a student who applies for financial aid not be offered an award that makes attendance possible, the student may decline the offer of admission and be released from the Early Decision commitment. The institution must notify the applicant of the decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time after the Early Decision deadline.

Usually, a nonrefundable deposit must be made well in advance of May 1. The institution will respond to an application for financial aid at or near the time of an offer of admission. Institutions with Early Decision plans may restrict students from applying to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate their specific policies in their Early Decision agreement.

- **Restrictive Early Action (REA)** is the application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution’s regular response date. Institutions with Restrictive Early Action plans place restrictions on student applications to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate these restrictions in their Early Action policies and agreements with students. Students who are admitted under Restrictive Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution’s offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1.¹

For purposes of this report, we continue to categorize early application policies using the Early Decision and Early Action terms, as variances on these two main forms of early application policies are too few for national data collection purposes. Early Decision (ED) is defined briefly as the application process in which students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. Early Action (EA) is the application process in which students make application to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution’s regular response date.

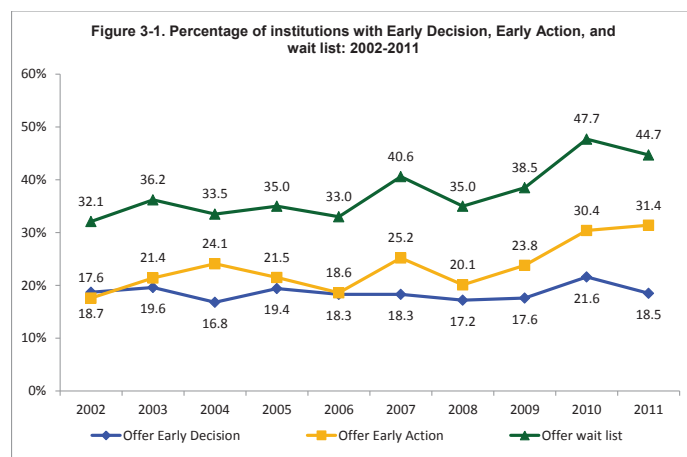
¹ NACAC’s Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP). Available online at: <http://www.nacacnet.org/AboutNACAC/Policies/Pages/default.aspx>

Early Decision

Results from NACAC's 2002-2011 Admission Trends Surveys reveal that the prevalence of Early Decision practices has remained relatively constant. About 20 percent of Admission Trends Survey respondents reported using Early Decision each year (see Figure 3-1). In 2011, 19 percent of all respondents offered Early Decision. Private institutions as well as selective institutions were more likely to offer Early Decision between 2002 and 2011.² In 2011, 21.7 percent of private and 10.8 percent of public respondents used Early Decision.

In Fall 2011, 55 percent of Admission Trends Survey respondents reported an increase in the number of applications submitted for Early Decision compared to Fall 2010. This is the largest proportion of institutions who experienced application increases since 2006, and substantially greater than the 38 percent of respondents who reported an increase in Early Decision applications in 2010. About 39 percent of institutions reported an increase in the number of students admitted through Early Decision in 2011. This rate of increase is consistent with survey results in the past decade with the exception of 2009 when 65 percent of respondents reported admitting more Early Decision students. Twenty-three percent reported a decrease in the number of Early Decision applicants and 26 percent reported a decrease in Early Decision admits in 2011. This means that although a majority of institutions experienced an increase in ED applications, far fewer reported actually accepting more ED students (see Table 3-1).³

Early Decision applicants represent only a small portion of the total applicant pool at colleges that have ED policies. In 2011,



ED institutions reported that only about 9 percent of their total applications for admission were received through Early Decision. This is consistent with survey results since 2004 (earliest year data were available) which indicate that Early Decision applications made up six to twelve percent of the total applicant pool. Schools with Early Decision practices reported a higher acceptance rate for ED applicants compared to all applicants in 2011 (59 compared to 53 percent). The gap in acceptance rate for ED students has decreased significantly in recent years. In the period from 2007 to 2009, institutions reported ED acceptance rates 12 to 15 percentage points higher than those for all applicants. In 2010 and 2011, that gap decreased to about eight and six percentage points, respectively. The more selective ED admission trends are likely due to the increase in ED applications discussed above.

Table 3-1. Percentage of colleges reporting change from the previous year in the number of Early Decision applications and the number of students admitted Early Decision: Fall 2002 to Fall 2011

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of colleges reporting change in ED applications										
Increased	53%	43%	37%	58%	63%	49%	49%	47%	38%	55%
Stayed the same	28	33	18	24	12	19	18	26	25	21
Decreased	17	24	45	18	25	31	33	28	38	23
Percentage of colleges reporting change in students admitted ED										
Increased	42	30	29	48	47	36	43	65	36	39
Stayed the same	41	44	22	31	16	32	26	30	38	35
Decreased	18	26	49	21	38	32	32	5	26	26

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2002 through 2011.

² Correlation between offering Early Decision in 2011 and: private control (.130), $p < .05$; selectivity (.347), $p < .01$

³ Results of the survey do not indicate the magnitude of these changes.

Due to the binding nature of Early Decision practices, the yield rates of Early Decision applicants were much higher compared to the average yield rate of all applicants. In 2011, 80 percent of admitted Early Decision students enrolled while the average yield rate for all students at ED institutions was 38 percent. Between 2004 and 2010, the yield rate of ED students was consistently 52 to 58 percentage points higher than the overall average yield rate (see Figure 3-2).

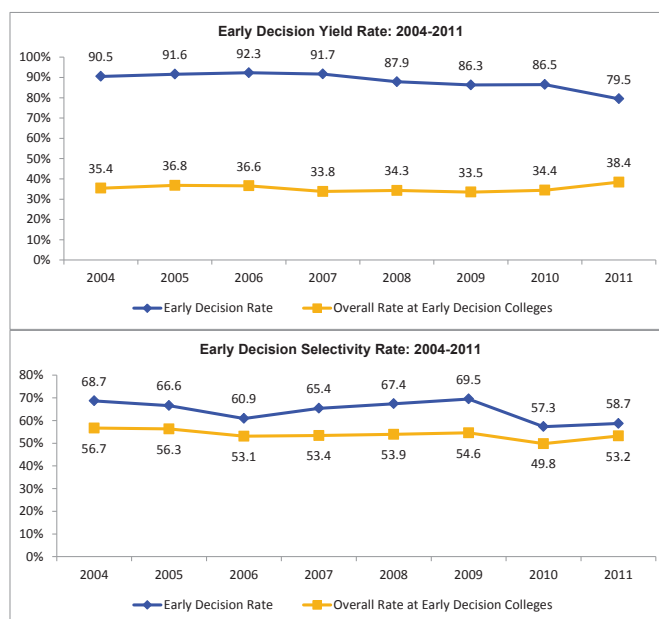
Early Action

The percentage of respondents to offer Early Action has increased significantly in the past 10 years. The proportion of survey respondents reporting the use of Early Action increased from 18 percent in 2002 to 31 percent in 2011.

Admission Trends Survey results from 2002-2011 indicate that a large majority of responding institutions experienced increases in the number of Early Action applications received each year. In 2011, 62 percent of institutions with Early Action policies reported an increase in the number of EA applications received, 18 percent reported no change, and 20 percent reported a decrease. Most respondents (64 percent) also reported increases in the number of students admitted through Early Action in 2011. The proportion of institutions reporting increases in the number of Early Action students admitted has fluctuated from 48 percent in 2004 to 73 percent in 2005 and 2009 (see Table 3-2).⁴

In 2011, Early Action applications represented about 40 percent of the total applicant pool at those institutions with Early Action policies. This proportion increased from 34 percent in 2004 (earliest year data were available) to 44 percent in 2010. Early Action applicants were accepted at a slightly higher rate compared to the total applicant pool (65 versus 63 percent) for Fall 2011. Although

Figure 3-2. Key Statistics for Early Decision colleges



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2004 through 2011.

this EA acceptance rate is slightly lower than it has been in previous years, the gap between EA and general acceptance rates is consistent with past trends. Early Action acceptance rates reached a peak of 72 percent in 2006 and 2007. Students accepted through Early Action in 2011 enrolled at a slightly higher rate than general applicants (35 versus 32 percent). These results are consistent with survey responses from 2006-2010 that found yield rates of Early Action students were generally two or three percentage points higher (see Figure 3-3).

Table 3-2. Percentage of colleges reporting change from the previous year in the number of Early Action applications and the number of students admitted Early Action: Fall 2002 to Fall 2011

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of colleges reporting change in EA applications										
Increased	72%	68%	56%	80%	70%	81%	65%	74%	72%	62%
Stayed the same	21	22	7	6	18	7	16	7	12	18
Decreased	7	10	37	14	12	13	19	19	15	20
Percentage of colleges reporting change in students admitted EA										
Increased	53	53	48	73	57	72	60	73	68	64
Stayed the same	35	36	15	7	24	13	24	15	21	23
Decreased	9	11	37	20	20	15	16	13	11	13

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2002 through 2011.

⁴ Results of the survey do not indicate the magnitude of these changes.

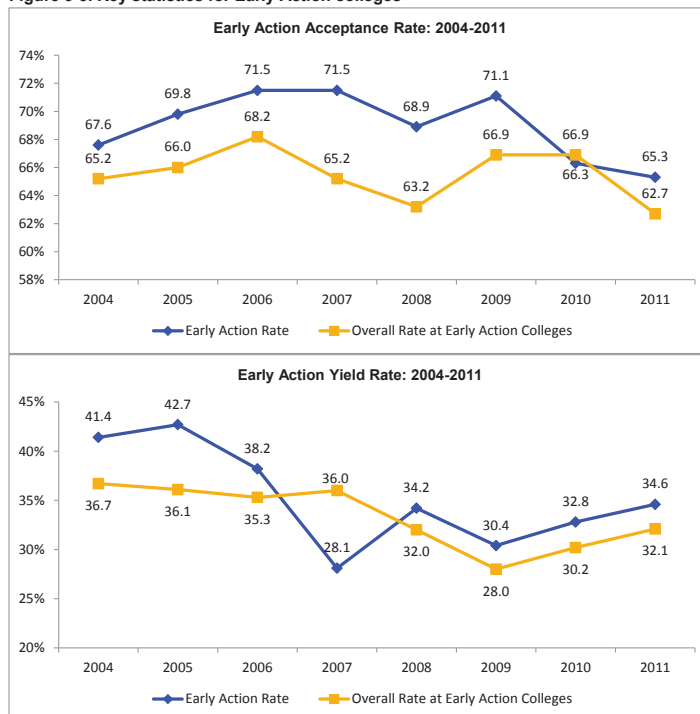
Wait List

More institutions are using wait lists as a strategy to manage enrollment. The prevalence of wait list use increased from 32 percent in 2002 to 44.7 percent of respondents in 2011. Institutions with higher selectivity and higher yield were more likely to use wait lists between 2002 and 2011.⁵

In 2011, about 45 percent of the institutions that responded to the Admission Trends Survey used wait lists. This proportion grew from 32 percent in 2002 to a peak of 48 percent in 2010. Thirty-eight percent of colleges and universities reported an increase in the number of students placed on the wait list in 2011 compared to 2010. This is a small proportion compared to survey results from the past; about 50 percent of respondents reported increases for each year between 2002 and 2010. This change is likely due to more institutions (37 percent) reporting no change in wait list admits in 2011 compared to previous surveys (see Table 3-3).⁶

Wait list institutions reported placing an average of nine percent of all applicants on the wait list for the Fall 2011 admission cycle. This is slightly fewer than the 10 percent reported in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. About 55 percent of the students wait-listed for Fall 2011 opted to remain on the list. On average, institutions accepted 31 percent of these students. The average acceptance rate of wait listed students has hovered around 30 percent since 2004. As expected, the wait list acceptance rate has always been much lower at the most selective institutions.⁷ In 2011, the most selective colleges and universities accepted 17 percent of students on the wait list, up from the 11 percent that the same group reported in 2010. The least selective institutions surveyed accepted about 96 of their wait-listed students in 2011 (see Table 3-4).

Figure 3-3. Key statistics for Early Action colleges



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2002 through 2011.

Table 3-3. Percentage of institutions reporting change from the previous year in the number of students placed on the wait list: Fall 2002 to Fall 2011

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Increased	48%	52%	--	49%	47%	56%	50%	47%	42%	38%
Stayed the same	32	34	--	25	26	23	25	17	30	37
Decreased	16	14	--	26	27	21	25	37	28	26

-- Data are not available.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2002 through 2011.

⁵ Correlation between using a wait list in 2011 and: selectivity (.371), $p < .01$; yield rate (.157), $p < .05$

⁶ Results of the survey do not indicate the magnitude of these changes.

⁷ Correlation between percent of students admitted off the wait list in 2011 and: selectivity (-.378), $p < .01$

On-the-Spot Admission

Occasionally, colleges and universities will offer on-the-spot admission to prospective students at college fairs, high school visits and on-campus events. Among respondents to NACAC's 2008 Admission Trends Survey, 25 percent reported offering on-the-spot admission in some form. Public schools were almost twice as likely to engage in the practice (37 percent versus 20 percent). The most selective institutions also were much less likely to offer on-the-spot admission than their less selective counterparts (see Table 3-5). Among those colleges that offer on-the-spot admission, on campus events (67 percent) and high school visits (62 percent) were the most often cited venues.

Priority Applications

The use of priority applications—partially completed, institution-specific applications that are sent to students by mail or email—among four-year colleges and universities has grown in recent years. In 2006, 12 percent of respondents to NACAC's Admission Trends Survey reported using priority applications. When this question was asked again in 2007 and 2011, the proportion increased to 16 percent and 22 percent, respectively. Private institutions as well as those with large enrollment were more likely to use priority applications in 2006, 2007 and 2011 (see Table 3-6).⁸

Table 3-4. Mean percentage of students admitted off the wait list by institutional characteristics: 2004-2011

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	27.3%	34.9%	28.9%	29.6%	30.3%	33.8%	28.0%	31.1%
Control								
Public	35.5	36.7	32.3	36.9	33.7	31.0	34.7	40.6
Private	24.6	34.4	27.9	27.2	29.1	35.1	26.2	28.4
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	25.7	38.2	32.3	30.1	36.1	35.2	29.4	33.8
3,000 to 9,999	33.8	35.9	20.6	33.1	23.2	30.6	26.5	25.0
10,000 or more	30.4	21.4	30.5	20.3	28.5	36.2	20.0	31.4
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	18.3	11.9	12.5	13.5	13.2	12.4	11.1	16.9
50 to 70 percent	29.8	40.5	29.0	29.2	33.4	35.9	34.2	35.0
71 to 85 percent	39.6	53.0	55.4	45.8	49.1	54.4	35.1	42.1
More than 85 percent	46.6	40.9	42.6	53.6	50.2	46.6	55.3	96.4
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	30.1	34.5	30.5	25.3	35.5	40.2	25.9	30.5
30 to 45 percent	19.3	32.1	26.6	26.9	19.6	25.3	27.3	25.5
46 to 60 percent	30.8	22.9	30.9	45.2	48.5	23.7	43.4	29.7
More than 60 percent	42.5	53.5	28.4	48.8	39.7	31.3	18.6	52.0

NOTE: Figures in italics should be interpreted with caution due to low sample size (fewer than 15 institutions per cell).

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2004 through 2011.

Table 3-5. Percentage of institutions offering on-the-spot admission: Fall 2008

Total	24.6%
Control	
Public	36.6
Private	19.8
Enrollment	
Fewer than 3,000 students	21.9
3,000 to 9,999	30.4
10,000 or more	27.3
Selectivity	
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	9.1
50 to 70 percent	29.4
71 to 85 percent	26.5
More than 85 percent	24.6
Yield	
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	21.5
30 to 45 percent	31.3
46 to 60 percent	21.0
More than 60 percent	15.9

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2008.

Table 3-6. Mean percentage of institutions that use priority applications

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2011
Total	12.2%	15.5%	21.8%
Control			
Public	4.4	5.8	7.4
Private	15.0	19.3	28.7
Enrollment			
Fewer than 3,000 students	14.8	18.0	26.5
3,000 to 9,999	11.3	15.2	19.7
10,000 or more	4.7	4.4	7.1
Selectivity			
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	4.0	0.0	17.1
50 to 70 percent	17.0	19.3	22.4
71 to 85 percent	13.9	18.3	26.4
More than 85 percent	6.5	17.2	19.5
Yield			
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	26.0	28.9	34.5
30 to 45 percent	10.3	13.7	11.9
46 to 60 percent	3.6	8.6	12.5
More than 60 percent	2.8	2.8	14.3

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2006, 2007, 2011

⁸ Correlation between priority application use in 2011 and: private control (.238), enrollment (.167), $p < .01$

Of the institutions that reported using priority applications in 2011, 78 percent used admission test scores, 64 percent used previous contact with the admission office, and 64 percent used geographic region as criteria to select students to receive the application. These criteria were also the most popular in 2006 and 2007. About one quarter of the respondents reported using high school attended while few reported using race/ethnicity, gender, participation in a summer enrichment program or economic status as priority application selection criteria (see Table 3-7).

In some cases, institutions waived application components for priority applicants. About 28 percent of institutions that used priority applications in 2011 waived the application fee for priority applicants (another 46 percent reported they do not require a fee from any applicant). Sixty-two percent of institutions reported waiving the application fee for priority applicants in 2006. A very small number of institutions waived essay and recommendation letter requirements in 2006, 2007 and 2011. Test score and transcript submission were very rarely waived (see Table 3-8).

Table 3-7. Criteria used by institutions to select students to receive priority applications

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2011
Economic status	3.2%	3.5%	5.5%
Participation in a summer enrichment program	6.5	5.3	5.5
Gender	--	--	10.9
Race/ethnicity	--	--	18.2
High school attended	28.6	21.1	25.5
Geographic region	--	55.4	63.6
Test scores	67.5	64.9	78.2
Contact with the admission office	74.4	78.9	63.6

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2006, 2007, 2011

Table 3-8. Percentage of institutions that waived application components for priority applicants only (Percentage that do not require component of any applicant)

	2006	2007	2011
Essay	5.0 (32.5)	7.1 (39.3)	10.9 (36.4)
Test scores	0.0 (2.4)	0.0 (7.0)	1.8 ¹ (10.5)
Recommendations	2.6 (35.9)	7.4 (38.9)	3.6 (35.7)
Transcripts	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	1.8 ¹ (0.0)
Application fee	61.5 (5.1)	38.2 (29.1)	27.8 (46.3)

¹Represents only one institution.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2006, 2007, and 2011

Chapter 3 Retrospective

ADMISSION STRATEGIES

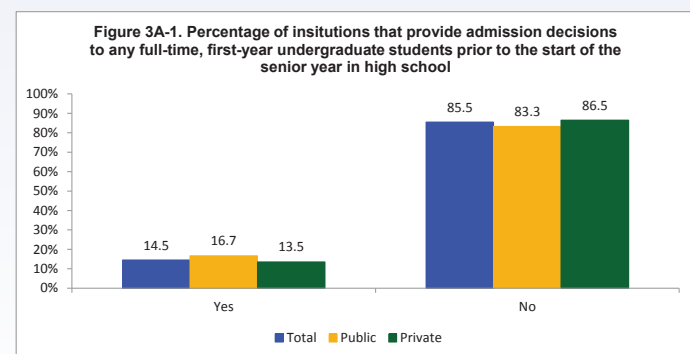
During the past decade, NACAC collected data on important and timely issues to inform professional discussions about implications for ethical admission practice. Some findings were published through the *State of College Admission* report, and others were published in separate reports or venues. Two such issues that arose in the past decade included earlier admission notifications for students, sometimes referred to as accelerated admission, and the implications for students of applying Early Decision.

Early Notification/Accelerated Admission

Between 2006 and 2009, NACAC grappled with the subject of accelerated admission processes, a multi-faceted phenomenon that, when boiled to its essence, involved a change in the timing of college outreach and decision-making. Fast-paced technology, insights into marketing to potential students and demand among varying populations of students for earlier information about college plans combined to produce a rapidly changing application and admission environment that many counselors and admission officers feared was encroaching too far into students' high school years. NACAC collected data to inform reports both internal and external as the association navigated the discussion among its professionals.

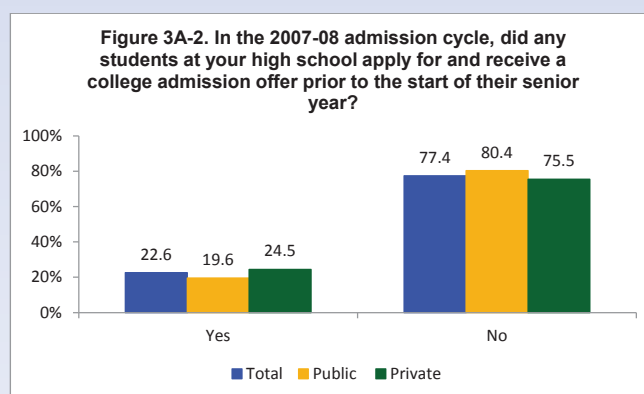
ONLY A HANDFUL (7.9 PERCENT) OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY RESPONDENTS

to the 2008 Admission Trends Survey reported offering admission decisions to high school students prior to the start of their senior year (for enrollment in the fall following their senior year) in 2008. A similarly small number of colleges and universities (7.2 percent) indicated that they planned to do so in 2009.¹ There were no significant differences in the number of colleges offering this admission option by institutional characteristics (control, enrollment, selectivity, yield).



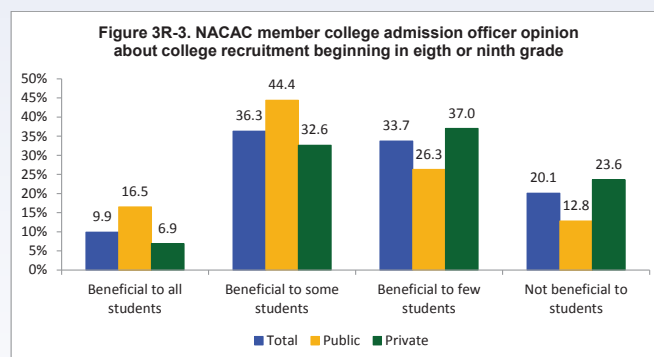
SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2008

According to NACAC's "Secondary School Member Opinion Survey," 23 percent of member school counselors reported that a student(s) at their high school applied for and received a college admission offer prior to the start of their senior year (excluding dual enrollment or other co-curricular offerings) in 2007-08. Seventy-seven percent of NACAC member school counselors reported that no students had applied for or received such an offer.



SOURCE: NACAC Secondary School Member Opinion Survey, 2008

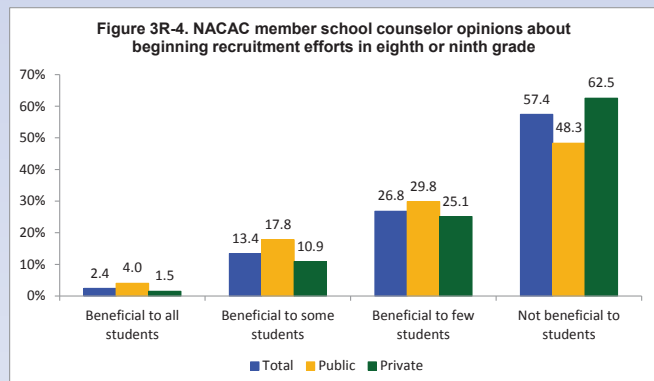
Seventy percent of NACAC member college admission officers believed that recruitment efforts targeted at eighth or ninth-grade students are beneficial to either "few" or "some" students. Twenty percent believed recruitment at this stage was not beneficial to students, and 10 percent believed it was beneficial to all students.



SOURCE: NACAC Postsecondary Early Notification Survey, 2008

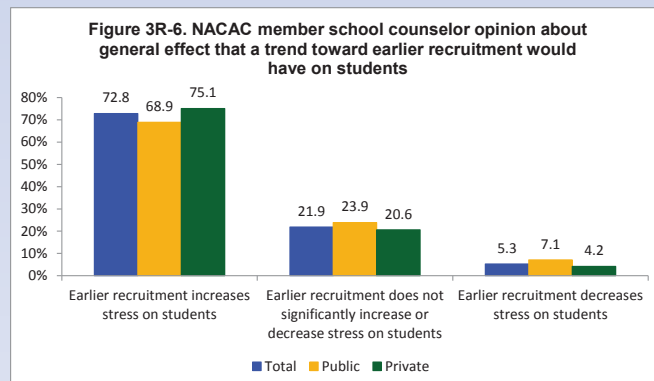
¹ Note: Survey research on the effects of the early notification restriction was conducted among four-year colleges only, as two-year colleges were exempted from the SPGP restriction.

A majority (57 percent) of NACAC member school counselors believe that college recruitment efforts focused on eighth- or ninth-graders are “not beneficial to students.” Forty percent of NACAC member school counselors believe that such recruitment efforts are beneficial to “some” or “a few” students, while two percent believe such efforts are beneficial to all students.



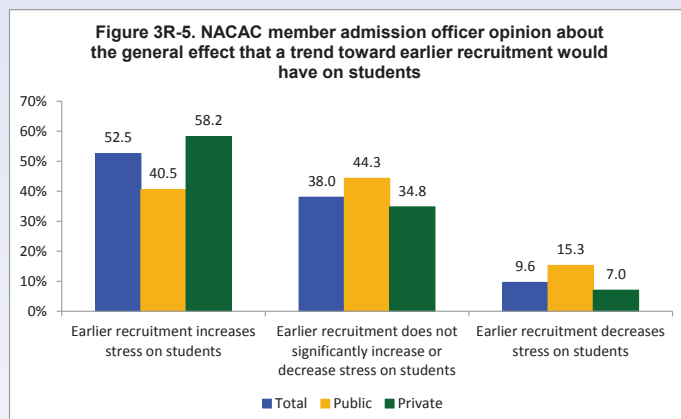
SOURCE: NACAC Secondary Early Notification Survey, 2009

Nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of NACAC member school counselors believe that earlier college recruitment increases stress on students. Twenty-two percent believe that earlier recruitment neither significantly increases nor decreases stress on students, while five percent believe that earlier recruitment decreases stress on students.



SOURCE: NACAC Secondary Early Notification Survey, 2009

More than half (53 percent) of NACAC member admission officers believed that earlier college recruitment increases stress on students. Thirty-eight percent believe that earlier recruitment neither significantly increases nor decreases stress on students, while 10 percent believe that earlier recruitment decreases stress on students.



SOURCE: NACAC Postsecondary Early Notification Survey, 2008

Implications of Applying Early Decision

In 2004, NACAC published an Early College Application Directory containing descriptions of early application policies for the 378 colleges and universities that offered early admission options at the time. As an addendum to this guide, NACAC published an article by Christopher Avery, Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, about the statistical effects of applying Early Decision. The article was based on the book that he co-authored with Andrew Fairbanks and Richard Zeckhauser in 2003 entitled, *The Early Admissions Game: Joining the Elite*. The following is an excerpt from that article, "Understanding the Essentials of Early Admissions."

OUR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH VERIFIES THE ADVANTAGE OF APPLYING EARLY.

Fourteen colleges provided us with access to their databases for five years of application records and decisions. We had data on more than 500,000 college applications. (These colleges provided us with data on condition of anonymity). We removed alumni children, athletes, and minorities—applicants who might receive special consideration in admission decisions—from the analysis. Then we compared the admissions decisions for early and regular applicants with similar test scores and high school class ranks. In some cases, we were even able to compare the admissions decisions for early and regular applicants with similar Admissions Office ratings – ratings given by the representatives who evaluated the applications.

For each of the fourteen colleges that provided us with data, we found that the early applicants had substantially better chances of admission than comparable regular applicants. We performed a separate analysis for a larger set of colleges using the data and admissions decisions reported by participants in the College Admissions Project. The results were very similar. In simplest terms, applying early to a highly-selective college appears to increase an applicant's chance of admission by the same amount as a 100 point increase in SAT score. This is true at both Early Action and Early Decision colleges, though Early Decision colleges may give a slightly greater advantage to early applicants than do Early Action colleges.

In fact, our analysis indicates that regular applicants have equal or stronger average credentials than early applicants at all but a few colleges.

Financial aid applicants face an additional tradeoff with the decision to apply Early Decision. They can wait for the regular process and accept a reduced chance of admission at every college, or they can apply Early Decision, foregoing the opportunity to compare the financial aid packages offered by different colleges.

Not surprisingly, our analysis of the applicant pools in the data provided to us by admissions offices indicated that financial aid applicants are significantly less likely to apply early than applicants who do not need financial aid. At the same time, these differences are not as large as one might imagine – these differences were generally a matter of a few percentage points in the colleges that we studied. In fact, financial aid applicants were more likely than others to apply early at two of the colleges that provided us with data. Finally, we found that financial aid applicants are even more underrepresented in the pool of early applicants at Early Action colleges than at Early Decision colleges, even though the conventional wisdom directs financial aid applicants to Early Action. This suggests that reasons that financial aid applicants are held back from applying early by factors other than financial aid.

More generally, it is frequently argued that Early Decision is just one more instance where the system favors privileged and well-connected students who are sufficiently well informed that they know the advantage of applying early and sufficiently wealthy that they can afford to do so. It is important to temper this argument with the observation that early application programs have little effect on the outcomes of the most disadvantaged students. In particular, many selective colleges are anxious to create a diverse class of students and will admit qualified minority applicants and first-generation college students whenever they apply.

Chapter 4

Factors in the Admission Decision

CONTENTS

- Factors in the Admission Decision: 2011 Summary
- Factors in the Admission Decision: Change Over Time
- Factors in the Admission Decision by Institutional Characteristics
- Top Factors in Depth
 - Grades and Strength of Curriculum
 - Standardized Admission Test Scores
- Student Characteristics as Contextual Factors

Factors in the Admission Decision: 2011 Summary

- Grades in college preparatory courses and strength of curriculum were considered by colleges to be the top factors in the admission decision, followed closely by admission test scores and grades in all courses. About 84 percent of all colleges and universities rated grades in college prep courses as “considerably important,” followed by 68 percent for strength of curriculum, 59 percent for admission test scores and 52 percent for grades in all courses.
- A second set of factors—essay or writing sample, counselor and teacher recommendations, student’s demonstrated interest and extracurricular activities—were most often rated as moderately important. For many colleges, these factors provide additional information about students’ academic performance and interests, as well as their personal qualities.
- Class rank, subject test scores (AP, IB) and work experience can add further depth to the admission application. Admission officers considered these factors as supplemental to the main academic factors, and as such, rated them with limited importance.

Table 4-1. Percentage of colleges attributing different levels of importance to factors in the admission decision: 2011

Factor	Considerable importance	Moderate importance	Limited importance	No importance
Grades in college prep courses	84.3%	11.9%	2.3%	1.5%
Strength of curriculum	67.7	20.4	5.8	6.2
Admission test scores (SAT, ACT)	59.2	29.6	6.9	4.2
Grades in all courses	51.9	39.2	6.9	1.9
Essay or writing sample	24.9	37.5	17.2	20.3
Student’s demonstrated interest	20.5	29.7	24.7	25.1
Counselor recommendation	19.2	39.8	27.2	13.8
Class rank	18.8	31.0	31.4	18.8
Teacher recommendation	16.5	41.9	26.5	15.0
Subject test scores (AP, IB)	6.9	31.2	31.5	30.4
Portfolio	6.6	12.8	30.2	50.4
Interview	6.2	25.4	25.8	42.7
SAT II scores	5.4	9.7	22.6	62.3
Extracurricular activities	5.0	43.1	38.1	13.8
State graduation exam scores	4.2	14.9	23.8	57.1
Work	2.3	17.0	43.2	37.5

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2011.

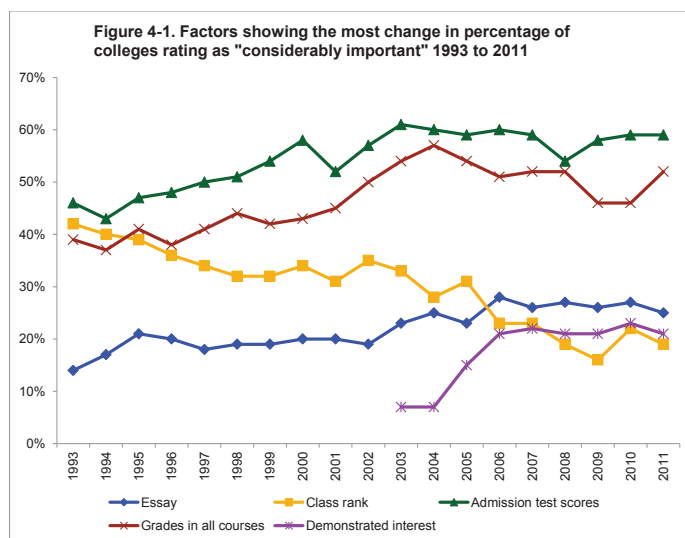
- Portfolios, SAT II scores, state graduation exams and student interview were among the lowest rated factors in admission decisions for 2011. A large majority of institutions rated these factors with limited or no importance.

Table 4-1 shows a complete overview of the relative importance of factors in the admission decision in 2011.

Factors in Admission: Change Over Time

Table 4-2 illustrates how the percentage of colleges rating factors in the admission decision as considerably important has changed over time, from 1993 to 2011. Academic performance in college prep courses has been consistently rated as the top factor in admission decisions over this 18 year time frame, with about 80 percent of colleges rating it as considerably important. The importance of other factors, such as teacher and counselor recommendations, the student interview and extracurricular activities also has remained relatively unchanged.

Those factors that have shown the most change are illustrated in Figure 4-1. The importance of admission test scores showed an overall increase through 2000, and with the exception of a dip in importance in 2008, has remained relatively unchanged with about 60 percent of institutions rating it considerably important each year. Similarly, grades in all courses increased in importance from 1993 to 2004, but declined again in recent years. The proportion of colleges rating demonstrated interest as considerably important increased dramatically between 2003 (when it was first measured) and 2006, but has since held at just over 20 percent. The factor showing the largest decline in importance is class rank. For Fall 2011, 19 percent of colleges rated it as considerably important, down from 42 percent in 1993.



Factors in Admission by Institutional Characteristics

The following section highlights admission factor differences among various types of institutions. Nearly all institutions attributed some level of importance to each of the factors discussed below, and

Table 4-2. Percentage of colleges attributing *considerable importance* to factors in the admission decision: 1993 to 2011

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Grades in college prep/ strength of curriculum ¹	82%	83%	80%	78%	81%	79%	84%	78%	80%	76%	78%	80%	74%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Grades in college prep	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	76%	80%	75%	87%	83%	84%
Strength of curriculum	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	62	64	62	71	66	68
Admission test scores	46	43	47	48	50	51	54	58	52	57	61	60	59	60	59	54	58	59	59
Grades in all courses	39	37	41	38	41	44	42	43	45	50	54	57	54	51	52	52	46	46	52
Essay	14	17	21	20	18	19	19	20	20	19	23	25	23	28	26	27	26	27	25
Class rank	42	40	39	36	34	32	32	34	31	35	33	28	31	23	23	19	16	22	19
Counselor recommendation	22	20	19	17	20	16	18	16	17	16	17	18	17	21	21	20	17	19	19
Demonstrated interest	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	7	15	21	22	21	21	23	21
Teacher recommendation	21	19	18	19	19	16	14	14	16	14	18	18	17	20	21	21	17	19	17
Interview	12	12	15	13	11	11	9	11	11	10	9	9	9	10	11	11	7	9	6
Extracurricular activities/work ²	6	6	7	6	6	4	5	7	6	7	7	8	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
Extracurricular activities	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	8	7	7	9	7	5
Work	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	2	2	2	2	2
Subject tests (AP, IB)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	7	5	7	8	7	8	7	10	7
State exams	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	7	6	7	6	4	4	3	4	4
SAT II scores	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	6	7	5	5	5
Portfolio	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	8	6	7

-- Data are not available.

¹Beginning with the 2006 survey, grades in college prep courses and strength of curriculum were listed as two separate factors. In previous years, one factor was listed as grades in college prep courses/strength of curriculum.

²Beginning with the 2006 survey, extracurricular activities and work were listed as two separate factors. In previous years, one factor was listed as work/extracurricular activities.

the relative importance of factors did not differ widely. With few exceptions, colleges viewed four factors—grades in college prep courses, strength of curriculum, admission test scores, and overall grade point average—as the top four factors in the admission decision. However, the institutional characteristics determined, to some extent, the way each factor in the admission process was rated. For a complete comparison of institutions by selected characteristics, see Table 4-3.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Differences between public and private institutions reveal that in many ways, private college admission is more “holistic” than public college admission, and these differences have remained relatively stable over the past decade. Private colleges considered a broader range of factors in the admission decision, which is likely due to differences in application volume. Admission officers at public institutions were responsible for reading an average of 2.5 to 3 times more applications for the 2005-2011 admission cycles than their counterparts at private institutions (see Chapter 6).

- In each of the last 10 years, private colleges assigned greater importance than public colleges to many factors other than the top four, including the essay/writing sample, the interview, counselor and teacher recommendations, extracurricular activities and demonstrated interest.

- In each of the last 10 admission cycles, public colleges assigned greater importance than privates to admission test scores.¹

INSTITUTIONAL ENROLLMENT

Some of the same differences that were observed between public and private institutions in the past 10 years also existed between small and large institutions. Larger institutions had to process a higher volume of applications in relation to the size of their staffs, in many cases necessitating a more methodical process (see Chapter 6).

- In each of the past 10 years, smaller colleges attributed more importance than larger colleges to the essay/writing sample, interview, counselor and teacher recommendations, and demonstrated interest.²

INSTITUTIONAL SELECTIVITY LEVEL

More selective institutions tended to place greater emphasis on many of the factors. Because applicants to the most selective institutions often have similarly high grades and test scores, these colleges need more information with which to evaluate each applicant. As a result, their admission process is more “holistic,” like that of private and smaller colleges. However, they still reviewed far more

Table 4.3. Percentage of colleges attributing considerable importance to factors in the admission decision by institutional characteristics: 2011 (continued on next page)

	Grades in college prep courses	Strength of curriculum	Admission test scores	Grades in all courses	Essay/writing sample	Demonstrated interest	Counselor rec.	Class rank
Total	84.3%	67.7%	59.2%	51.9%	24.9%	20.5%	19.2%	18.8%
Control								
Public	83.3	59	66.7	52.6	14.1	13.0	1.3	21.8
Private	85.1	71.7	56.9	50.9	29.3	23.1	27.6	17.8
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	83.4	67.4	55.9	50.7	28.3	25.7	25.5	16.6
3,000 to 9,999	86.4	71.2	67.8	44.1	22.0	13.6	11.9	23.7
10,000 or more	87.8	65.9	63.4	58.5	17.1	5.0	9.8	14.6
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	87.8	82.9	53.7	57.5	36.6	15.0	31.7	31.7
50 to 70 percent	88.0	72.3	60.2	54.2	25.3	21.7	13.3	15.7
71 to 85 percent	84.7	70.4	52.8	40.3	25.0	21.1	23.6	16.7
More than 85 percent	80.0	40.0	72.5	55.0	12.5	22.5	15.0	20.0
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	91.7	77.1	52.3	50.5	27.5	18.3	21.1	20.2
30 to 45 percent	82.9	65.4	59.8	47.6	19.5	18.3	14.6	22
46 to 60 percent	70.8	45.8	79.2	62.5	25.0	13.6	20.8	12.5
More than 60 percent	80.0	55.0	70.0	57.9	35.0	40.0	35.0	15.0

¹ Correlations between private status and attribution of importance in Fall 2011 admission: essay/writing sample (.312), interview (.417), extracurricular activities (.305), counselor recommendation (.399), teacher recommendation (.427), demonstrated interest (.244), $p < .01$

² Correlations between enrollment and attribution of importance in Fall 2011 admission: essay/writing sample (-.223), interview (-.342), extracurricular activities (-.168), counselor recommendation (-.315), teacher recommendation (-.321), demonstrated interest (-.314), $p < .01$

applications for each of the 2005-2011 admission cycles relative to their staff size in comparison to less selective institutions (see Chapter 6).

- In each of the past 10 years, more selective colleges attributed greater importance to strength of curriculum in comparison to their less selective counterparts.
- In each admission cycle from 2002 through 2011, institutions that accepted fewer applicants placed more emphasis on many factors outside of the top four. These factors included the essay, class rank, teacher and counselor recommendations, extracurricular activities, SATII scores and portfolios.³

INSTITUTIONAL YIELD RATE

Institutions with high yield rates are those that enroll most of the students they accept. Although this is an important statistic from an institutional perspective, it is very difficult to generalize about institutions on the basis of yield rates. For instance, highly selective schools, such as those in the Ivy League, share similar yield rates with large, open-enrollment public colleges.

In each of the past 10 years, institutions with higher yield rates attributed less importance to grades in college prep courses and

strength of curriculum compared to institutions with lower yield rates. The most likely cause of this finding is the behavior of high-yield, non-selective colleges, which accept almost all of the students who apply and enroll large numbers as a result.

The other admission factors were not significantly correlated with yield rates over time. A variety of factors were ranked as slightly more important by institutions with high yield in certain years, but there was no consistent trend. In 2011, institutions with higher yield rates were more likely to rank SAT II scores and portfolio as more important.⁴

Top Factors In-Depth

GRADES AND STRENGTH OF CURRICULUM

In each of the last 10 years, grades in college prep courses, strength of curriculum⁵ and grades in all courses—in that order—were the top factors that colleges considered in making admission decisions (along with admission test scores, which ranked third during this time period). Although overall GPA serves as an indicator of a student's academic success in high school, strength of curriculum—and particularly grades in college prep courses—are better indicators of a students' likelihood of succeeding in college.⁶ College prep

Table 4.3 (continued from previous page). Percentage of colleges attributing considerable importance to factors in the admission decision by institutional characteristics: 2011

	Teacher rec.	Subject test scores (AP, IB)	Portfolio	Interview	SAT II scores	Extracurricular activities	State graduation exam scores	Work
Total	16.5%	6.9%	6.6%	6.2%	5.4%	5.0%	4.2%	2.3%
Control								
Public	1.3	6.4	6.6	1.3	2.6	5.2	7.7	2.6
Private	23.7	6.4	6.9	8.7	5.8	5.2	2.9	2.3
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	22.8	8.3	8.3	9	7	4.1	3.4	2.1
3,000 to 9,999	6.9	8.5	5.1	3.4	3.4	3.4	5.1	0
10,000 or more	9.8	0	5.1	2.4	0	9.8	7.3	7.5
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	31.7	7.5	15.4	12.2	12.8	14.6	4.9	7.5
50 to 70 percent	9.8	8.4	6.1	7.3	2.4	6	2.4	2.4
71 to 85 percent	18.1	4.2	5.6	4.2	1.4	0	8.3	0
More than 85 percent	15	7.5	2.5	5	5.1	5	2.5	0
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	14.8	6.4	3.7	6.4	0.9	2.8	2.8	0.9
30 to 45 percent	13.4	4.9	5	1.2	1.2	6.1	6.1	1.2
46 to 60 percent	20.8	4.2	12.5	8.3	8.3	4.2	8.3	4.2
More than 60 percent	35	21.1	26.3	26.3	33.3	20	5	10

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2011.

³ Correlations between selectivity and attribution of importance in Fall 2011 admission: strength of curriculum (.185), SAT II scores (.260), essay/writing sample (.246), portfolio (.235), work (.265), extracurricular activities (.295), teacher recommendation (.195), $p < .01$

⁴ Correlations between yield rate and attribution of importance in Fall 2011 admission: SAT II score (.213), portfolio (.169), $p < .01$

⁵ From 2002-2005, grades in college prep courses and strength of curriculum were counted as a single factor.

⁶ Sixty-nine percent of respondents to NACAC's 2011 Counseling Trends Survey reported that they weight students' high school GPAs to account for course difficulty.

courses—which include Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment and other advanced coursework—are designed to approximate college-level work. Therefore, participation in a college prep curriculum and performance in the courses can indicate to college admission officers both motivation and ability to succeed in postsecondary education. In fact, results of two major research studies show that students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum are much more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than those who complete less rigorous curricula.⁷

According to NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey, the proportion of high schools offering an AP curriculum was about 80 percent between 2006 and 2011. The same percentage of schools also reported offering enriched and dual enrollment curricula during this time. Far fewer (less than 10 percent, on average) institutions reported offering an IB curriculum (see Table 4A-1).

A study of the transcripts of high school graduates in 2009 conducted by the US Department of Education indicated that students took more credits, completed more challenging curricula and earned higher GPAs in high school than previous cohorts.

Compared to the class of 1990, graduates in 2009 earned over three additional credits (about 420 instruction hours) during their high school careers, and the proportion of graduates failing to complete a standard high school curriculum fell from 60 percent in 1990 to 25 percent in 2009.⁸ The study also showed that students with a more rigorous curriculum scored higher on the math and science National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams. This finding confirms the connection between strength of curriculum and academic performance. Although all students showed gains in credits earned, rigor of curriculum, GPA and NAEP scores, the study found consistent gaps between different racial/ethnic groups. Black and Hispanic students consistently scored lower on NAEP exams than Asian/Pacific Islander and white students who completed similarly challenging curricula.⁹

Despite the importance of rigorous coursework, NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey revealed differences among types of schools that offer college preparatory classes as well as the proportion of students enrolled in these courses (see Table 4-4 for 2011 figures). For example, private high schools were more likely than public high schools to have offered AP and enriched curriculum in each year

Table 4-4. Percentage of schools that offer college preparatory curricula and mean percentage of 11th and 12th graders enrolled by school characteristics: 2011

	Advanced Placement (AP)		International Baccalaureate (IB)		Enriched curriculum		Dual enrollment	
	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled
Total	82.1%	31.7%	4.5%	19.2%	80.6%	45.6%	75.7%	16.3%
Control								
Public	79.8	24.6	4.7	14.7	78.2	38.4	88.1	16.5
Private	90.4	53.6	4.0	46.5	89.1	67.6	31.3	15.4
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	88.1	59.1	3.9	44.1	86.9	70.8	23.4	12.1
<i>Private parochial</i>	94.6	44.3	4.2	53.2	93.1	62.4	45.5	18.5
Enrollment								
Fewer than 500 students	62.1	31.8	1.7	25.1	67.7	43.8	70.9	20.5
500 to 999	91.1	31.6	2.9	20.1	86.4	47.6	70.6	13.9
1,000 to 1,499	97.7	31.4	2.9	8.3	89.5	45.6	81.4	14.7
1,500 to 1,999	98.2	32.4	12.1	23.0	90.2	42.4	90.3	11.1
2,000 or more	97.4	32.5	16.7	14.3	95.3	48.7	86.6	13.1
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	90.1	33.7	5.0	25.0	85.0	47.7	79.3	15.2
26 to 50%	79.3	22.3	4.9	13.4	77.7	36.0	90.1	18.5
51 to 75%	76.5	19.2	5.1	9.6	77.5	32.6	89.5	14.3
76 to 100%	66.7	22.5	1.4	31.0	65.1	33.6	81.5	15.1
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	71.0	35.3	4.0	23.3	72.8	47.3	60.5	21.1
101 to 200	79.8	36.6	3.5	28.2	81.6	50.3	63.2	15.9
201 to 300	84.9	31.8	4.2	14.1	81.6	45.8	79.7	16.6
301 to 400	87.9	28.0	6.6	18.0	85.1	40.8	86.2	14.7
401 to 500	81.8	28.0	4.1	13.9	79.3	41.6	86.3	15.5
More than 500	82.2	26.7	4.0	4.4	75.0	44.3	82.8	15.4

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

⁷ US General Accounting Office. (2003). *College Completion: Additional Efforts Could Help Education with its Completion Goals* (GAO 03-568). Washington, DC; Adelman, C. (2006). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

⁸ A standard high school curriculum includes at least four credits of English and three credits each of social studies, mathematics and science.

⁹ Nord, C., et.al. (2011). *The Nation's Report Card: America's High School Graduates* (NCES 2011-462). Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

between 2006 and 2011 (see Table 4A-1 for trend data). Private high schools also consistently reported higher enrollments, on average, in AP, enriched curriculum and IB courses. Public high schools were much more likely to offer dual enrollment, but no significant difference was found in the percentage of students enrolled in public compared to private schools.¹⁰

In addition, larger schools were more likely than smaller schools to offer all four types of college prep curricula in 2011, but smaller schools had a slightly greater proportion of students enrolled in dual enrollment courses.¹¹ These enrollment patterns have remained consistent since 2006 (see Table 4A-1).

In each of the years from 2006 to 2011, schools with higher percentages of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch programs (FRPL) were less likely to offer AP and enriched curricula. The average enrollments in AP and enriched curricula courses were also lower for schools with more students eligible for free or reduced price lunch during this time period (see Table 4A-1).¹²

Results of the College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges 2012® show the average number of high school course units (years of study) that colleges required and recommended for students interested in attending their institutions. On average, colleges required the most years of study in English (4.0), academic electives (3.3) and math (3.0). There were some small differences between the required and recommended number of course units based on institutional characteristics. For example, public colleges, on average, reported a higher number of both required and recommended total course units as well as units for English, math, social studies and science compared to private colleges (see Table 4-5).¹³

Institutions with higher selectivity levels required more total academic, foreign language and math credits. They also recommended a greater number of history, foreign language, math and science credits (see Table 4-5).¹⁴ These data do not indicate the level of coursework that colleges required or recommended, which also are likely to differ by institution type.

Table 4-5. Mean number of high school course units required and recommended by colleges: 2011 (continued on next page)

	Total academic units		History		English		Foreign language	
	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.
Total	16.2	18.5	1.6	2.2	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.5
Control								
Public	16.6	19.2	1.5	2.0	4.0	4.1	2.0	2.5
Private	15.9	18.3	1.7	2.3	3.9	4.0	2.0	2.5
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	16.1	18.3	1.7	2.2	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.5
3,000 to 9,999	16.5	19.3	1.5	2.4	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.6
10,000 or more	16.5	19.1	1.4	2.1	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.6
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	16.7	18.7	1.7	2.4	3.9	4.0	2.1	2.9
50 to 70 percent	16.3	18.8	1.6	2.2	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.4
71 to 85 percent	16.2	18.1	1.7	2.2	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.4
More than 85 percent	15.5	18.5	1.4	2.1	4.0	3.9	2.0	2.0
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	16.2	18.9	1.7	2.3	4.0	4.0	2.1	2.6
30 to 45 percent	16.4	18.7	1.6	2.1	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.5
46 to 60 percent	16.6	18.3	1.6	2.1	4.0	3.9	2.0	2.3
More than 60 percent	16.0	16.9	1.9	2.3	3.9	3.9	1.9	2.2

¹⁰ Correlation between private high school status and offering college prep curricula in 2011: AP (.115), enriched (.114), dual enrollment (-.546), $p < .01$

¹¹ Correlation between enrollment and offering college prep curricula: AP (.286), IB (.188), enriched (.204), dual enrollment (.130), $p < .01$

¹² Correlation between eligible for FRPL and offering college prep curricula in 2011: AP (-.071), $p < .01$

Correlation between eligible for FRPL and mean percentage of students enrolled in college prep curricula: AP (-.150), enriched (-.120), $p < .01$

¹³ Correlation between public college status and: required total courses (.123), recommended total courses (.114), required English (.111), recommended English (.122), required math (.327), recommended math (.262), required social studies (.121), recommended social studies (.149), required science (.245) and recommended science (.182), $p < .01$

¹⁴ Correlation between selectivity and: required total units (.099), required foreign language (.142), recommended foreign language (.308), required math (.085), recommended math (.161), recommended history (.142), recommended science (.168), $p < .01$

STANDARDIZED ADMISSION TEST SCORES

As reported earlier in this chapter, standardized admission test score ranked as the third most important factor in admission decisions in each admission cycle between 2006 and 2011. Nearly ninety percent of colleges placed considerable or moderate importance on this factor in 2011 (see Table 4-1). According to the College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges 2012,¹⁵ an average of 57 percent of enrolled students submitted SAT scores for Fall 2011 admission, and 54 percent submitted ACT scores. ACT submission has become more common since 2002 when 50 percent of enrolled students submitted while the proportion of students who submitted the SAT decreased slightly from 61 percent in 2002. Students enrolled in more selective institutions were more likely to have submitted SAT scores and less likely to have submitted ACT scores in comparison to those enrolled in less selective institutions.¹⁵ More freshmen submitted ACT scores and fewer submitted SAT scores at institutions with higher yield rates (see Table 4-6).¹⁶

Studies conducted by ACT and the College Board (creator of the SAT) showed a continued increase in the proportion of high school graduates taking each of the exams, relative stability regarding student exam performance, as well as persistent score gaps between different racial/ethnic groups. About 1.66 million (52 percent) of 2012 high school graduates in the US took the ACT and about the same number took the SAT while in high school.

From 2002 to 2011, the number of high school graduates who took the ACT increased by approximately 45 percent (from 1.12 million to 1.62 million) and the number who took the SAT increased by about 27 percent (from 1.30 million to 1.65 million). These increases are most likely due to population growth, growth in the number of state mandates requiring students to take admission exams during high school and greater proportions of students attending college.¹⁷

Mean scores on the SAT have fluctuated in the past 10 years. Mean critical reading scores decreased from 504 in 2002 to 496 in 2012. Mean writing scores decreased from 497 in 2006 (the first year the writing section was included) to 488 in 2012, and mean math scores remained relatively constant at 516 in 2002 and 514 in 2012. Over the same time period, ACT composite scores increased slightly from 20.8 in 2002 to 21.1 in 2012. Significant gaps in exam performance among different racial and ethnic groups have remained constant for both exams. Asian and white students have consistently scored higher on both the SAT and ACT than their Hispanic, American Indian, and black peers. In 2012, average scores on the writing section of the SAT were 528 for Asian American, 515 for white, 442 for Latino, and 417 for black exam takers. In 2012, average ACT composite scores were 23.6 for Asian, 22.4 for white, 18.9 for Hispanic, and 17.0 for African American exam takers. There has been very little change in these average score disparities over the last 10 years.¹⁸

Table 4-5 (continued from previous page). Mean number of high school course units required and recommended by colleges: 2011

	Math		Academic elective		Social studies		Science	
	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.
Total	3.0	3.4	3.3	3.4	2.4	2.7	2.6	3.1
Control								
Public	3.2	3.8	3.0	3.3	2.5	3.0	2.7	3.4
Private	2.9	3.3	3.5	3.4	2.3	2.7	2.4	3.0
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	2.9	3.4	3.5	3.2	2.3	2.7	2.5	3.1
3,000 to 9,999	3.1	3.7	3.3	3.6	2.4	3.0	2.7	3.3
10,000 or more	3.2	3.8	2.5	3.2	2.4	3.0	2.7	3.4
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	3.1	3.6	3.2	3.0	2.4	2.8	2.6	3.3
50 to 70 percent	3.1	3.5	3.2	3.5	2.3	2.8	2.6	3.2
71 to 85 percent	3.0	3.4	3.2	3.0	2.5	2.8	2.6	3.0
More than 85 percent	2.9	3.3	3.7	4.3	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.9
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	3.0	3.6	3.1	3.4	2.3	2.8	2.5	3.2
30 to 45 percent	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.0	2.4	2.8	2.6	3.2
46 to 60 percent	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.4	2.5	2.8	2.7	3.0
More than 60 percent	3.1	3.4	3.4	4.0	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.9

SOURCE: The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2012.¹⁵ Data presented here include four-year, bachelor's degree granting, not-for-profit institutions in the US only.

¹⁵ Correlation between institutional selectivity and percentage of enrolled students who submitted test scores: SAT (.168), ACT (-.140), $p < .01$

¹⁶ Correlation between institutional yield and percentage of enrolled freshmen who submitted test scores: SAT (-.230), ACT (.216), $p < .01$

¹⁷ ACT. (2012). *Enrollment Management Trends Report 2012*. Iowa City, IA: ACT.

¹⁸ ACT. (2012). *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2012*. Iowa City, IA: ACT; College Board. (2012). *The SAT Report on College & Career Readiness: 2012*. New York: The College Board.

Table 4-6. Mean percentage of first-year students who submitted standardized test scores by institutional characteristics: 2011

	SAT	ACT
Total	57.3	53.7
Control		
Public	58.8	55.5
Private	56.4	52.7
Enrollment		
Fewer than 3,000 students	55.9	51.6
3,000 to 9,999	63.7	50.9
10,000 or more	60.5	57.2
Selectivity		
Accept less than 50 percent of applicants	65.7	46.3
50 to 70 percent	56.9	54.4
71 to 85 percent	57.1	53.5
More than 85 percent	44.2	62.0
Yield		
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	65.9	46.0
30 to 45 percent	56.2	55.6
46 to 60 percent	45.2	61.4
More than 60 percent	46.7	62.9

SOURCE: The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2012.[®] Data presented here include four-year, bachelor degree-granting, not-for-profit institutions in the US only.

Table 4-7. Percentage of colleges attributing different levels of importance to the influence of student characteristics on the evaluation of factors in the admission decision: 2006-2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
First-generation status						
Considerable importance	5.0	5.9	6.1	6.5	4.5	3.5
Moderate importance	20.9	22.3	18.5	18.8	24.5	22.5
Limited importance	20.9	22.8	23.0	27.3	26.3	26.0
No importance	53.2	48.9	52.4	61.4	44.7	48.1
Race/ethnicity						
Considerable importance	5.3	8.0	6.7	5.9	5.1	4.7
Moderate importance	19.1	20.9	16.7	22.1	23.6	21.0
Limited importance	14.4	16.8	16.1	17.9	20.5	21.8
No importance	61.2	54.3	60.6	54.1	50.8	52.5
High school attended						
Considerable importance	2.6	2.9	3.3	2.6	4.5	3.5
Moderate importance	21.9	23.1	18.0	25.8	26.8	21.2
Limited importance	23.4	27.6	26.7	28.8	31.1	33.2
No importance	52.0	46.4	52.0	42.8	37.7	42.1
Alumni relations						
Considerable importance	2.9	4.3	3.6	1.9	3.1	2.7
Moderate importance	18.4	20.0	14.8	16.6	22.4	17.3
Limited importance	33.3	34.7	32.8	38.3	34.9	41.2
No importance	45.3	41.1	48.8	43.2	39.6	38.8
State/county of residence						
Considerable importance	3.8	2.9	1.2	3.2	3.7	5.8
Moderate importance	12.9	15.0	12.3	11.0	16.0	11.2
Limited importance	19.6	26.0	23.2	24.4	26.8	28.3
No importance	63.6	56.0	63.3	61.4	53.4	54.7
Gender						
Considerable importance	3.2	4.6	3.6	4.6	4.1	4.7
Moderate importance	10.3	10.0	8.2	9.2	10.2	8.2
Limited importance	14.2	20.5	16.1	18.3	21.1	23.0
No importance	72.3	65.0	72.1	68.0	64.6	64.1
Ability to pay						
Considerable importance	--	2.1	2.7	0.7	1.9	1.6
Moderate importance	--	8.6	6.0	3.9	9.6	3.5
Limited importance	--	14.2	14.7	15.3	16.4	20.2
No importance	--	75.1	76.6	80.1	72.1	74.7

-- Data are not available.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2006 through 2011.

Student Characteristics as Contextual Factors

NACAC's Admission Trends Survey regularly asked colleges to indicate how various student characteristics may influence how the main factors in admission are evaluated. These student characteristics included race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, state or county of residence, high school attended, alumni relations and ability to pay. As shown in Table 4-7, institutions attributed relatively little importance to these student characteristics, even as contextual factors over the past five years. In 2011, about one quarter (20 to 26 percent) of colleges rated race/ethnicity, first generation status, high school attended and alumni relations as at least moderately important.

There were some interesting differences in how various types of institutions rated the student characteristics as contextual factors in 2011. In most cases, the differences were small and were the result of attributing limited importance versus no importance.

- Private colleges were more likely to attribute some level of importance to alumni relations and ability to pay in comparison to public colleges. Not surprisingly, public colleges rated state or county of residence more highly.¹⁹
- Larger colleges rated first-generation status and state or county of residence as having more influence, while smaller colleges rated alumni relations and ability to pay more highly.²⁰
- More selective institutions attributed more influence to almost all of the student contextual factors, including race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, state or county of residence and alumni relations.²¹
- Institutions with lower yield rates also attributed somewhat more importance to some of the student characteristics, including first-generation status and state or county of residence.²²

¹⁹ Correlation between private control and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: ability to pay (.250), alumni relations (.242), state or county of residence (-.229), p<.01

²⁰ Correlation between enrollment and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: first-generation status (.217), state or county of residence (.209), ability to pay (-.190), p<.01; alumni relations (-.157), p<.05

²¹ Correlation between selectivity and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: first-generation status (.344), race/ethnicity (.278), gender (.190), state or county of residence (.177), p<.01; alumni relations (.154), p<.05

²² Correlation between yield rate and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: state or county of residence (.199), p<.01; first-generation status (.162), p<.05

Chapter 4 Retrospective

FACTORS IN THE ADMISSION DECISION

During the past decade, NACAC collected data on important and timely issues to inform professional discussions about implications for ethical admission practice. Some findings were published through the *State of College Admission* report, and others were published in separate reports or venues. Three issues associated with the application review process included admission criteria for transfer students, indicators of a student's 'demonstrated' interest in attending a college and an exploration of challenges related to standardized admission testing.

Admission Criteria for Transfer Students

During the past decade, transfer admission emerged as a critical pathway to a baccalaureate degree. As college costs rose, state budgets for higher education faltered and demand exceeded supply at many four-year institutions, community colleges emerged as an attractive starting point in the postsecondary process for baccalaureate students. In addition, four-year colleges viewed transfer students as an attractive option for recruitment, as they are highly motivated to complete their degree once enrolled and fill spaces at institutions where students transfer out. In 2006, NACAC collected data from colleges about the factors considered by admission offices when reviewing applications for transfer admission.

THE POSTSECONDARY GRADE POINT AVERAGE IS CLEARLY THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR TRANSFER ADMISSION,

according to results of NACAC's survey. More than 90 percent of survey respondents rated the overall postsecondary GPA as "considerably important," and almost 60 percent gave this rating to grades in transferrable courses. Another set of factors were rated as moderately or considerably important by a large proportion of

colleges: grade point average in high school (56 percent), recommendations and quality of prior postsecondary institution (48 percent each), essay or writing sample (47 percent) and scores on standardized tests (42 percent). Each of the remaining factors that were assessed was rated with low to no importance by nearly two-thirds or more of institutions.

As expected, factors related to high school academic performance are less important for transfer students than for first-year students. For first-year admission decisions in the same year, grades in high school college prep courses, strength of high school curriculum, standardized test scores and overall high school GPA were rated as the top four factors. Although 51 percent of respondents rated high school GPA to be considerably important for first-time students, only 12 percent considered this factor considerably important for transfer admission. The difference for standardized test scores is even more dramatic, with 60 percent rating them as considerably important for first-year admission compared to only 7 percent for transfer admission.

In addition to rating the importance of specific admission factors, NACAC's survey also asked respondents to indicate if another set of transfer applicant characteristics and behaviors were viewed as positive, negative or neutral in selecting candidates for admission. In most cases, the majority of colleges categorized the attributes as neutral, and very few viewed them as negative. About 11 percent of colleges considered it a negative if a student planned to enroll part-time, and 6 percent viewed having 60 or more hours of transferrable credits or having received a GED negatively. Half of the survey respondents considered it a positive if a student had attended a highly competitive four-year institution, and 40 percent viewed the receipt of an Associate's degree favorably. More than one-third of colleges classified the following attributes as positive: student visited the campus, student has a particular academic or professional focus and student plans to enroll full time.

Table 4R-1. Percentage of colleges attributing different levels of importance to factors in the transfer admission decision: Fall 2006

Factor	Considerable importance	Moderate importance	Limited importance	No importance
Grade point average at postsecondary institution	91.9%	5.0%	1.6%	1.6%
Average of grades in transferable courses	58.6	26.1	7.6	7.6
Essay or writing sample	20.5	26.5	21.8	31.2
Recommendations	18.2	29.9	27.0	24.8
Students' interest in attending	12.6	21.1	27.4	38.8
Articulation with prior institution	12.4	22.5	27.6	37.5
Grade point average in high school	11.7	44.0	34.8	9.5
Quality of prior postsecondary institution(s)	11.7	36.1	32.9	19.3
Interview	8.3	20.7	31.2	39.8
Scores on standardized tests (ACT, SAT)	7.3	34.5	38.9	19.3
Work/Extracurricular activities	4.7	26.2	36.3	32.8
Quality of high school	2.8	21.8	41.3	34.1
Ability to Pay	2.5	8.6	11.7	77.1
Alumni Relations	2.5	17.5	33.7	46.3
Race/Ethnicity	2.5	12.7	16.6	68.2
State or county of residence	2.2	6.6	16.5	74.7

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2006.

Table 4R-2. Percentage of colleges attributing “considerable importance” to factors in the transfer admission decision by institutional characteristics: Fall 2006 (continued)

	Grade point average at postsecondary institution	Grade point average in high school	Average grades in transferable courses	Scores on standardized tests	Quality of prior postsecondary institution(s)	Quality of high school	Articulation with prior institution	Essay or writing sample
Total	91.9%	11.7%	58.6%	7.3%	11.7%	2.8%	12.4%	20.5%
Control								
Public	95.2	3.7	72.5	3.8	7.4	0.0	19.5	6.1
Private	90.8	14.5	53.8	8.5	13.2	3.8	9.9	25.5
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	89.4	13.7	50.0	9.8	13.7	3.8	11.3	23.6
3,000 to 9,999	95.8	8.5	71.7	4.3	4.2	2.1	14.9	16.7
10,000 or more	100.0	4.8	85.4	0.0	9.8	0.0	19.5	7.1
Transfer Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	95.3	18.8	71.9	7.8	15.6	4.7	14.3	28.1
50 to 70 percent	94.7	11.5	56.3	8.0	15.3	3.6	12.7	17.0
71 to 85 percent	95.7	4.4	56.1	4.4	5.9	0.0	17.6	16.2
More than 85 percent	80.9	9.1	47.8	8.9	6.5	2.2	8.5	17.4
Transfer Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	60.0	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
30 to 45 percent	95.5	19.0	59.1	13.6	14.3	9.5	14.3	42.9
46 to 60 percent	96.9	10.4	62.4	4.2	10.6	1.1	9.7	17.9
More than 60 percent	90.7	10.7	55.4	8.7	13.3	2.7	14.1	20.0

Table 4R-2 (continued). Percentage of colleges attributing “considerable importance” to factors in the transfer admission decision by institutional characteristics: Fall 2006

	Work/ Extracurricular activities	Recommendations	Ability to pay	State or county of residence	Race/ Ethnicity	Students' interest in attending	Alumni Relations	Interview
Total	4.7%	18.2%	2.5%	2.2%	2.5%	12.6%	2.5%	8.3%
Control								
Public	1.2	0.0	0.0	6.2	2.4	4.9	1.2	0.0
Private	5.9	24.6	3.4	.9	2.6	15.3	3.0	11.1
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	4.7	23.0	3.8	0.9	1.9	17.0	3.3	10.9
3,000 to 9,999	6.3	14.6	0.0	0.0	4.3	2.1	0.0	4.2
10,000 or more	4.9	2.4	0.0	9.8	4.8	0.0	2.4	0
Transfer Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	9.4	26.6	0.0	1.6	4.8	6.3	1.6	9.5
50 to 70 percent	3.6	17.0	2.7	2.7	0.9	11.6	1.8	9.1
71 to 85 percent	2.9	8.7	0.0	0.0	1.5	10.1	1.5	5.9
More than 85 percent	4.3	19.6	6.7	2.2	4.4	19.6	4.3	6.5
Transfer Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	0.0	0.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
30 to 45 percent	13.6	52.4	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.5	14.3
46 to 60 percent	3.2	14.7	0.0	1.1	2.2	8.4	0.0	9.5
More than 60 percent	5.4	17.9	3.3	2.0	3.4	18.0	4.0	6.8

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2006.

Factors Indicative of Demonstrated Interest

As discussed in Chapter 4, the concept of “demonstrated interest” emerged as a key “tip” factor in the admission process during the past decade. Awash in applications, guessing at increasingly unstable yield outcomes and with less time to review each application, colleges began to seek ways to sort between applications from students who were serious about enrolling in the institution if accepted and those who may simply have submitted the applications as a hedge against uncertainty in the application process. Understanding a student’s motivation for applying assisted a college in maintaining steady acceptance and yield rates, which have ramifications well beyond the admission office, as trustees, presidents, faculty, alumni and college rankings publications all utilize such data in their evaluations of college quality. In 2004-05, NACAC asked colleges what typically constituted an indicator of “demonstrated interest” so that students would have a better idea of how to communicate their interests during the application process.

FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS (2003-2005), THIS REPORT HAS DOCUMENTED COLLEGES’ ATTENTION TO APPLICANTS’ “DEMONSTRATED INTEREST”

in attending as a factor in the admission decision. Although there is no commonly agreed-upon definition for the term, “demonstrated interest” is best described as the admission office’s evaluation of the student’s commitment to attending the institution if accepted. Overall, 59 percent of colleges assigned some level of importance to a student’s interest in attending the institution (15 percent considerable, 21 percent moderate and 23 percent limited).

There is no standardized way to compute or tabulate a student’s interest in attending the institution, but some examples of ways in which colleges and universities may ascertain a student’s interest are campus visits, content of open-ended essays, contact by the student with the admission office, letters of recommendation and early application through either Early Action or Early Decision.

The 2004 and 2005 NACAC Admission Trends Survey asked colleges to indicate whether certain applicant activities would be considered a “plus factor” in the admission process.

Table 4R-3. Percentage of institutions that consider applicant activities a “plus factor” in the admission process

	Student visited the campus		Student participated in interview (on or off campus)		Student frequently contacted the admission office		Student applied Early Action or Early Decision		Student had particular academic or professional focus		Student noted contact with faculty members on campus	
	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005
Total	46.9%	45.6%	47.8%	44.5%	33.6%	34.8%	22.6%	19.9%	37.2%	40.0%	29.2%	33.9%
Control												
Public	21.1	19.1	16.6	17.3	17.1	15.2	10.6	7.1	28.5	26.3	15.2	16.5
Private	59.7	57.4	63.7	56.8	41.9	43.6	28.7	25.7	41.6	45.9	36.3	41.8
Selectivity												
Accept less than 50 percent of applicants	50.0	46.1	57.8	49.4	22.7	30.8	41.5	37.8	37.9	42.9	27.3	33.3
50-70 percent	43.7	45.3	44.4	42.3	36.3	33.0	28.0	17.3	43.0	40.6	32.8	35.8
71-85 percent	54.9	57.1	55.9	52.2	41.4	45.5	18.9	19.0	35.5	38.5	32.2	36.9
More than 85 percent	34.7	36.6	31.3	37.8	27.1	26.8	4.3	12.7	29.2	34.6	19.1	30.9
Yield												
Enroll less than 30 percent of admitted students	61.9	59.0	58.3	56.6	42.7	41.3	35.8	26.9	39.8	39.6	43.3	38.5
30 to 45 percent	51.3	47.2	54.1	42.5	37.0	34.0	24.4	26.5	38.0	36.4	34.8	34.4
46 to 60 percent	30.9	32.3	36.3	32.3	25.9	26.2	10.3	11.1	32.5	36.9	8.9	31.8
More than 60 percent	32.6	45.0	37.0	52.5	23.9	39.3	17.4	7.3	33.3	48.3	17.8	32.2

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2004 and 2005

Challenges Related to Standardized Admission Testing

In 2008, NACAC’s Commission on the Use of Standardized Testing in Undergraduate Admission released a comprehensive report containing recommendations for test use at colleges and universities in the US.

THE COMMISSION’S FINDINGS INCLUDED:

- Despite their prevalence in American high school culture, college admission exams—such as the SAT and ACT—may not be critical to making good admission decisions at many of the colleges and universities that use them. While the exams, used by a large majority of four-year colleges and universities to make admission decisions, provide useful information, colleges and universities may be better served by admission exams more closely linked to high school curriculum. There are tests that, at many institutions, are more predictive of first-year and overall grades in college and more closely linked to the high school curriculum, including the College Board’s AP exams and Subject Tests as well as the International Baccalaureate examinations.
- What these tests have in common is that they—to a much greater extent than the SAT and ACT—measure knowledge of subject matter covered in high school courses; that there is currently very little expensive private test preparation associated with them, partly because high school class curricula are meant to prepare students for them; and that they are much less widely required by colleges than are the SAT and ACT.
- A possible future direction for college admission tests is the development of curriculum-based achievement tests designed in consultation with colleges, secondary schools, and state and federal agencies. Such achievement tests have a number of attractive qualities. Their use in college admission sends a message to students that studying their course material in high

school, not taking extracurricular test prep courses that tend to focus on test-taking skills, is the way to do well on admission tests and succeed in a rigorous college curriculum.

- Regularly question and re-assess the foundations and implications of standardized test requirements and establish a NACAC Knowledge Center to share the results of research on the validity of tests.
- Understand test preparation and take into account disparities among students with differential access to information about admission testing and preparation; inform the public of all research about test prep and the current consensus that it produces only a 20-30 point gain (on the old 1600 point scale), not the 100 points or more that is conventional wisdom.
- Draw attention to possible misuses of admission test scores at such institutions as the National Merit Scholarship Program, *U.S. News & World Report* and bond ratings agencies.
- Establish opportunities for colleges and secondary schools to educate themselves and their staffs about the appropriate uses of standardized tests by instituting a NACAC training program for admission counseling professionals.
- Understand differences in test scores among different groups of people and continually assess the use of standardized test scores relative to the broader social goals of higher education.

In 2008, NACAC collected data on colleges’ use of standardized tests and commissioned a research paper by Derek Briggs, chair of the Research and Evaluation Methodology Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder, on the effects of test preparation. The survey research was combined with Briggs’ research to provide context for the national discussion about test preparation in an effort to provide information to students and families as they considered the effectiveness of test preparation programs as part of the college admission process.

Table 4R-4. The table below shows possible SAT Math section scores for a hypothetical student applying for admission to your institution. Holding all other factors about the student’s application constant, to what extent would a score increase of 20 points improve this student’s likelihood of admission? (Example: A student scores a 420 instead of a 400.)

	Little to no impact on student’s likelihood of admission	Significantly improve student’s likelihood of admission
400 to 420	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
450 to 470	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
500 to 520	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
550 to 570	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
600 to 620	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
650 to 670	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
700 to 720	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
750 to 770	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

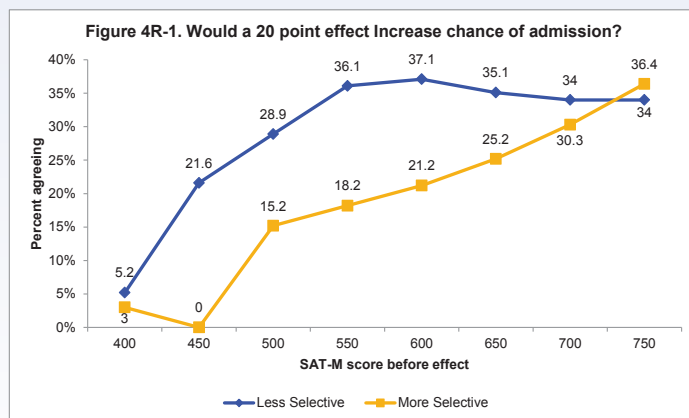
SOURCE: NACAC Test Preparation Survey, 2008.

THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF COACHING EFFECTS

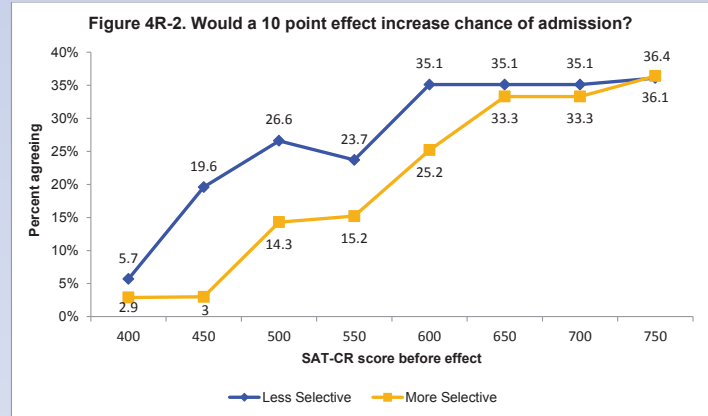
From a psychometric standpoint, when the average effects of coaching are attributed to individual students who have been coached, these effects cannot be distinguished from measurement error. Recall that the standard error of measurement on any section of the SAT tends to be about 30 points; for the ACT it is between 1.5 and 2 points. Using this as a benchmark, none of the coaching effects estimated in the large-scale studies by Powers & Rock, Briggs, and Briggs & Domingue are practically significant. On the other hand, if marginal college admission decisions are made on the basis of very small differences in test scores, a small coaching effect might be practically significant after all.

To investigate this, the postsecondary institutions responding to the NACAC survey were given the prompt shown in Table 4R-4. In this prompt, the key idea was to ask whether after “holding all other factors about the student’s application constant,” a score increase of 20 points on the SAT-M would “significantly improve a student’s likelihood of admission.” Note that each row of the prompt represents a different starting point on the underlying SAT score scale, and is therefore a distinct item. A similar prompt was provided for the Critical Reading section of the SAT, however the hypothetical test score increase was 10 points rather than 20.

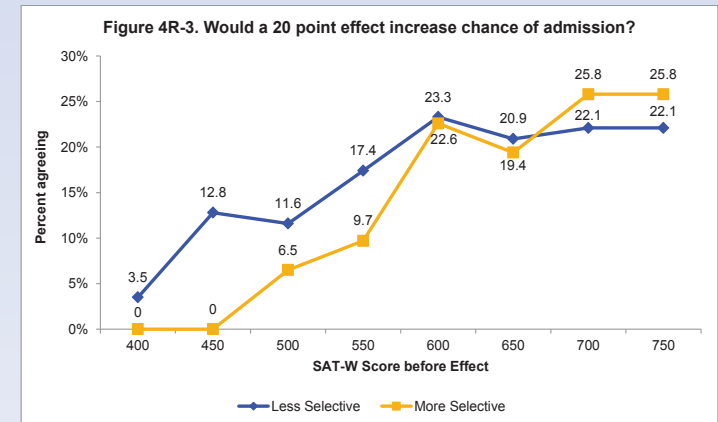
There were a total of 130 out of 245 admission counselors who indicated that their postsecondary institution used the SAT to make admission decisions and who responded to all prompts about score increases on the SAT-M and SAT-CR. These institutions were further subdivided into those who admitted less than 50% of their applicants (“more selective”, N=33) and those who admitted 50% or more of their applicants (“less selective”, N=97). Finally, the proportion of respondents endorsing option 2 (“Significantly improve student’s chances of admission”) was plotted by selectivity for each of the eight SAT scale score options for the items described in Table 4R-4. The results are shown in Figures 4R-1 (Practical Significance of Coaching Effect on SAT-Math) and 4R-2 (Practical Significance of Coaching Effect on SAT-Critical Reading) below. These results



SOURCE: NACAC Test Preparation Survey, 2008.



SOURCE: NACAC Test Preparation Survey, 2008.



SOURCE: NACAC Test Preparation Survey, 2008.

indicate that in some cases more than one third of postsecondary institutions agreed that a score increase on the SAT-M of 20 points, or a score increase on the SAT-CR of 10 points, would “significantly improve student’s chances of admission.” This proportion tends to rise as the base level of the SAT score before the 20 or 10 point score improvement rises. This is especially true for the more selective institutions. At lower scores on the SAT scale, a small score increase does the most to improve a student’s chances of admission at less selective institutions; at higher scores, the same increase appears to have an equally large or even larger impact at more selective institutions. This is probably because at the most selective institutions, the SAT scores of applicants fall in a relatively narrow range at the top end of the scale, artificially magnifying the importance of a 10 or 20 point score difference.

The score improvements of 10 and 20 points for the SAT-CR and SAT-M were chosen to reflect the sorts of score increases the average student might be likely to experience because of coaching. Since there is no evidence as to the size of the coaching effect on the SAT-W section, the same prompt was posed with hypothetical score increases of 20 points, under the assumption that it might be possible for coaching to produce the same effect on the writing section as has been found on the math section. A total of 117 out

of 245 institutions using SAT scores to make admission decisions responded to this prompt. The results are shown in Figure 4R-3 (Practical Significance of Coaching Effect on SAT-Writing). Here the impact of score increases—while still considerable—is smaller than that shown in Figures 4R-1 and 4R-2, perhaps because the writing section is relatively new and has less of a history as a device for high-stakes admission decisions.

The results displayed in Figures 4R-1 through 4R-3 might be considered surprising since a case could be made that the psychometrically “correct” response about the role of a 10 to 20 point score improvement at the level of an individual student is that it should “have little to no impact on a student’s chances for admission.” Indeed, the College Board makes this point in its SAT Program Handbook:

“When comparing section scores, remember that the student’s true score is not a single number—a test-taker may score slightly higher in one area but still be equal in both skills. There must be a 60-point difference between critical reading and mathematics scores, and an 80-point difference between writing and another section, before more skill can be assumed in one area than another.” (p. 28)

Along these lines, in the document *Guidelines on the Uses of College Board Test Scores and Related Data*, The College Board gives a specific example of a use that should be avoided: “Making decisions about otherwise qualified students based only on small differences in test scores.” (p. 16)¹

The results here seem to indicate that at some postsecondary institutions such advice has gone unread or is not being taken to heart. Those institutions agreeing that a 10 or 20 point score increase would improve a student’s chance of admission were much more likely to have responded that the SAT is used to define a cut-off threshold for admission. At such institutions, a 10 or 20 point coaching effect is clearly very practically significant if it crosses a cut-off threshold. Although similar prompts were not provided with respect to the ACT exam, it is very likely that such small differences in ACT score would have similar impacts on admission decisions. In fact, in the documents it makes available to post-secondary institutions (see <http://www.act.org/aap/resources.html>²), ACT Inc. makes little to no mention about the role that measurement error plays in test score interpretations.

¹ These College Board documents can be found at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-reasoning/about> and www.collegeboard.com/research

² The relevant documents are entitled “Your Guide to the ACT”, “2008-2009 User Handbook” and “Using ACT Scores in Admission and Placement Decisions: An Update.”

Chapter 4

Appendix

Table 4A-1. Percentage of schools that offer college preparatory curricula: 2006-2011 (continued)

	Advanced Placement (AP)						International Baccalaureate (IB)					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	79.5%	82.5%	82.0%	76.4%	81.3%	82.1%	11.9%	4.6%	5.3%	4.2%	4.6%	4.5%
Control												
Public	77.0	81.1	80.3	77.5	79.2	79.8	11.1	4.7	5.4	4.2	4.8	4.7
Private	88.7	89.7	89.7	90.9	90.8	90.4	14.9	4.3	4.8	4.8	4.0	4.0
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	84.7	87.5	87.2	88.1	86.6	88.1	14.6	3.6	5.7	5.7	3.9	3.9
<i>Private parochial</i>	95.3	94.8	94.1	97.2	98.3	94.6	15.5	6.1	3.3	2.9	4.3	4.2
Enrollment												
Fewer than 500 students	60.9	63.1	62.3	58.4	59.2	62.1	7.4	1.4	2.5	1.6	0.8	1.7
500 to 999	87.2	88.1	91.3	84.1	89.1	91.1	9.9	4.2	3.2	2.9	3.0	2.9
1,000 to 1,499	94.6	96.9	97.9	97.3	96.8	97.7	15.6	4.5	6.2	4.3	5.2	2.9
1,500 to 1,999	99.2	99.1	99.5	98.4	98.9	98.2	18.5	7.5	10.2	11.5	9.3	12.1
2,000 or more	97.1	98.8	98.6	99.4	97.5	97.4	24.1	13.6	16.6	13.5	17.0	16.7
Free and reduced price lunch												
0 to 25% of students eligible	88.3	87.7	88.4	86.7	87.7	90.1	14.1	5.3	6.1	4.2	4.9	5.0
26 to 50%	70.3	73.2	72.8	73.0	73.6	79.3	11.0	3.8	5.7	5.6	3.8	4.9
51 to 75%	69.3	72.5	72.0	66.3	70.7	76.5	10.8	1.7	2.8	3.3	5.4	5.1
76 to 100%	50.6	71.9	73.6	66.9	66.3	66.7	8.0	4.2	3.9	1.5	1.0	1.4
Student-to-counselor ratio												
100:1 or fewer	64.9	67.9	67.5	61.4	64.6	71.0	11.5	3.2	6.0	2.1	2.1	4.0
101:1 to 200:1	75.0	82.1	81.8	77.8	78.9	79.0	10.3	3.4	4.3	3.9	3.8	3.5
201:1 to 300:1	79.9	84.5	84.1	85.0	84.8	84.9	10.6	5.5	3.9	4.4	4.0	4.2
301:1 to 400:1	85.3	89.0	87.3	82.2	87	87.9	12.2	6.6	7.0	5.5	6.5	6.6
401:1 to 500:1	81.1	88.2	89.9	82.7	85.5	81.8	11.2	3.4	5.7	5.3	7.0	4.1
More than 500:1	79.1	77.1	85.9	73.4	69.1	82.2	22.0	4.3	12.3	5.4	1.3	4.0

Table 4A-1 (continued). Percentage of schools that offer college preparatory curricula: 2006-2011

	Enriched Curriculum						Dual Enrollment					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	83.7%	85.6%	84.6%	77.6%	82.8%	80.6%	80.4%	78.8%	80.2%	80.6%	78.9%	75.7%
Control												
Public	82.6	84.6	83.1	79.7	81.4	78.2	89.5	87.6	90.3	89.9	88.8	88.1
Private	87.8	90.4	91.1	87.3	89.0	89.1	44.4	32.2	35.9	36.1	33.7	31.3
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	84.2	88.6	89.4	82.4	87.1	86.9	35.3	24.5	28.5	28.2	24.4	23.4
<i>Private parochial</i>	93.5	94.5	94.1	98.6	92.3	93.1	58.3	49.5	48.7	53.5	50.4	45.5
Enrollment												
Fewer than 500 students	70.5	73.4	71.5	67.5	68.7	67.7	74.6	73.0	73.9	79.6	76.0	70.9
500 to 999	88.9	90.2	90.7	84.8	86.2	86.4	77.5	77.9	79.7	82.0	76.2	70.6
1,000 to 1,499	95.3	93.7	94.3	91.1	92.2	89.5	87.4	80.4	82.7	86.5	80.1	81.4
1,500 to 1,999	96.7	95.2	96.4	93.6	97.1	90.2	90.8	85.5	90.5	92.6	88.0	90.3
2,000 or more	96.1	93.5	96.1	92.3	94.4	95.3	93.3	89.8	91.3	91.1	87.7	86.6
Free and reduced price lunch												
0 to 25% of students eligible	88.3	88.5	89.3	84.5	87.7	85.0	75.4	73.0	86.9	87.5	84.4	79.3
26 to 50%	81.0	81.2	78.5	76.6	78.1	77.7	91.9	88.5	90.4	91.7	90.3	90.1
51 to 75%	81.5	82.9	78.5	78.2	76.6	77.5	92.1	86.4	94.0	89.9	89.4	89.5
76 to 100%	50.6	78.5	78.1	69.1	61.5	65.1	77.5	80.9	85.7	86.6	84.5	81.5
Student-to-counselor ratio												
100:1 or fewer	65.3	76.7	76.9	71.6	74.8	72.8	57.1	64.3	63.2	72.1	61.0	60.5
101:1 to 200:1	80.3	86.4	82.4	80.9	80.5	81.6	63.1	72.7	75.0	81.6	69.8	63.2
201:1 to 300:1	87.8	86.0	86.7	82.4	85.1	81.6	82.2	82.4	83.2	82.2	83.0	79.7
301:1 to 400:1	87.0	88.2	87.8	83.8	86.0	85.1	88.9	88.9	88.4	88.4	90.6	86.2
401:1 to 500:1	85.0	88.6	88.7	82.4	83.6	79.3	91.5	85.5	90.6	90.6	84.4	86.3
More than 500:1	78.8	80.9	89.2	76.3	76.5	75.0	86.0	81.2	90.6	89.4	75.3	82.8

Source: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2006 – 2011.

Chapter 5

School Counselors and College Counseling

CONTENTS

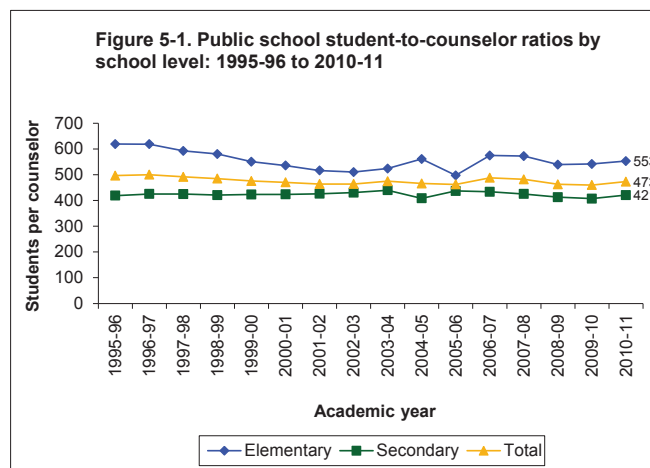
- College Counseling Defined
- Student-to-Counselor Ratios
- Counseling Department Priorities and “Time on Task”
- Professional Development and Compensation

College Counseling Defined

NACAC’s “Statement on Precollege Guidance and Counseling and the Role of the School Counselor” defines precollege counseling as generally including activities that help students: 1) pursue the most challenging curriculum that results in enhanced postsecondary educational options; 2) identify and satisfy attendant requirements for college access; and 3) navigate the maze of financial aid, college choice and other processes related to college application and admission.¹ Assisting students in reaching their full potential requires the cooperative efforts of school administrators, teachers, community representatives, government officials, parents, and the students themselves, as well as a trained staff of school counselors who are able to facilitate student development and achievement. Of particular importance to student success is access to a strong precollege guidance and counseling program that begins early in the student’s education. Counselors can be significant assets in the college admission process. Students face additional challenges without strong counselors to help them, which can make the college application and admission process more difficult.

Student-to-Counselor Ratios

According to US Department of Education data, in 2010-11, each public school counselor (including elementary and secondary) had responsibility for 473 students, on average. Counselors at second-



NOTE: For the purpose of these calculations, the elementary ratios include students in grades K-5, and secondary ratios include students in grades 6-12. The total number of counselors is provided only by school level, not grade level.

SOURCE: Common Core of Data Build a Table. (1995-96 to 2010-11). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

ary schools had somewhat smaller caseloads than elementary school counselors, serving an average of 421 and 533 students, respectively. Secondary school counselor ratios have changed very little over the past 15 years (see Figure 5-1).²

¹ National Association for College Admission Counseling. (1990). “Statement on Precollege Guidance and the Role of the School Counselor.” Available at: <http://www.nacacnet.org/about/Governance/Policies/Pages/default.aspx>.

² In this case secondary is defined as grades 6 through 12.

Results of NACAC's 2011 Counseling Trends Survey, which includes private schools, indicated a high school student-to-counselor ratio, including part-time staff, of 274:1, on average. NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey also asked respondents to report the number of counselors at their schools based on the extent to which college counseling is part of their job responsibilities, allowing for the calculation of a student-to-college counselor ratio. For 2011, the average student-to-college counselor ratio was 335:1, including part-time counselors (see Table 5-1).³ Ten year trends (2003–2011) in the high school student-to-counselor ratio tracked by NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey show little change, and the same can be said for the student-to-college counselor ratio, which NACAC has measured since 2005 (see Appendix Table 5A-1).

Table 5-1. Mean student-to-counselor ratios and student-to-college counselor ratios by school characteristics: 2011

	Mean number of students per counselor	Mean number of students per college counselor
Total	274	335
Control		
Public	291	338
Private	212	323
Private non-parochial	213	319
Private parochial	212	331
Enrollment		
Fewer than 500 students	214	245
500 to 999	283	356
1,000 to 1,499	301	360
1,500 to 1,999	319	403
2,000 or more students	425	556
Free and reduced price lunch		
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	287	340
26 to 50%	302	334
51 to 75%	275	333
76 to 100%	246	337

NOTE: The student-to-college counselor ratio is based on both the total number of counselors who exclusively provide college counseling for students and the total number who provide college counseling among other services for students. As such, it overestimates the focus on college counseling.

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

VARIATION IN STUDENT-TO-COUNSELOR RATIOS

According to NACAC's 2011 Counseling Trends Survey, public schools had higher student-to-counselor ratios than their private counterparts.⁴ Public school counselors were responsible for almost 80 more students, on average (see Table 5-1). In addition, 74 percent of private schools reported that they had at least one counselor (full- or part-time) whose sole responsibility was to provide college counseling for students, compared to only 27 percent of public schools. Larger schools also tended to have higher ratios for both total counselors and college counselors (see Table 5-1).⁵ Appendix Table 5A-1 shows that similar patterns have remained consistent over the past decade.

US Department of Education data show that public school student-to-counselor ratios also varied widely from state to state. In 2010-11, some states had exceedingly high student-to-counselor ratios including California (1,016:1), Arizona (861:1) and Minnesota (782:1). See Table 5-2 for the public school student-to-counselor ratios for all states and Appendix Table 5A-2 for ten-year trends in ratios by state.

Table 5-2. Public school student-to-counselor ratios, by state: 2010-11

State	Students	Counselors	Students per counselor
US Total	49,484,181	105,079	471
Alabama	755,552	1,802	419
Alaska	132,104	327	404
Arizona	1,071,751	1,245	861
Arkansas	482,114	1,527	316
California	6,289,578	6,191	1,016
Colorado	843,316	2,100	402
Connecticut	560,546	1,081	518
Delaware	129,403	281	461
District of Columbia	71,284	260	275
Florida	2,643,347	5,859	451
Georgia	1,677,067	3,557	471
Hawaii	179,601	632	284
Idaho	275,859	564	489
Illinois	2,091,654	3,193	655
Indiana	1,047,232	1,688	620
Iowa	495,775	1,157	428
Kansas	483,701	1,061	456
Kentucky	673,128	1,515	444
Louisiana	696,558	1,919	363
Maine	189,077	575	329
Maryland	852,211	2,389	357
Massachusetts	955,563	2,168	441
Michigan	1,587,067	2,249	706
Minnesota	838,037	1,072	782
Mississippi	490,526	1,096	448
Missouri	918,710	2,613	352
Montana	141,693	457	310
Nebraska	298,500	811	368
Nevada	437,149	880	497
New Hampshire	194,711	824	236
New Jersey	1,402,548	3,904	359
New Mexico	338,122	815	415
New York	2,734,955	6,979	392
North Carolina	1,490,605	3,976	375
North Dakota	96,323	309	312
Ohio	1,754,191	3,655	480
Oklahoma	659,911	1,610	410
Oregon	570,720	1,032	553
Pennsylvania	1,793,284	4,763	377
Rhode Island	143,793	384	374
South Carolina	725,838	1,816	400
South Dakota	126,128	345	365
Tennessee	987,422	2,889	342
Texas	4,935,715	11,212	440
Utah	585,552	807	726
Vermont	96,858	413	234
Virginia	1,251,440	3,977	315
Washington	1,043,788	2,045	510
West Virginia	282,879	738	383
Wisconsin	872,286	1,874	465
Wyoming	89,009	444	201

SOURCE: Common Core of Data Build a Table. (2009-10). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

³ The student-to-college counselor ratio is based on both the total number of counselors who exclusively provide college counseling for students and the total number who provide college counseling among other services for students. As such, it overestimates the focus on college counseling.

⁴ Correlation between public school status and: student-to-counselor ratio (.182), $p < .01$

⁵ Correlation between enrollment and: student-to-counselor ratio (.358), student-to-college counselor ratio (.352), $p < .01$

Counseling Department Priorities and “Time on Task”

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

On NACAC's 2011 Counseling Trends Survey, respondents were asked to rank order the importance of four main counseling department goals. As shown in Table 5-3, “helping students with their academic achievement in high school” was ranked as the highest priority of counseling departments, followed closely by “helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education.” “Helping students with personal growth and development” and “helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school” were ranked third and fourth, respectively.

High schools differed in how they ranked the priorities of their counseling departments. For example, public schools ranked “helping students with their academic achievement in high school” as the top priority while private schools ranked “helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education” as most important. Public schools also ranked “helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school” slightly more highly than their private school counterparts (see Table 5-3).⁶ Trends from 2004 to 2011 in the mean rankings for all four department counseling goals that NACAC has measured are shown by school characteristics in Appendix Table 5A-3.

TIME ON TASK

Most counselors have a variety of job responsibilities in addition to college counseling. Results of NACAC's survey showed that in 2011, high school counseling staffs spent an average of only 30 percent of their time on postsecondary admission counseling. As shown in Table 5-4, counselors in public schools reported spending only 23 percent of their time on college counseling, compared to 54 percent for private school counselors. Counselors at schools with lower student-to-counselor ratios also spent more time on postsecondary counseling.⁷ See Appendix Table 5A-4 for 2005–2011 trends in the percentage of time spent on postsecondary admission counseling by school characteristics.

After postsecondary admission counseling, the next most time-consuming tasks for counseling staffs include helping students choose and schedule courses (22 percent) and personal needs counseling (19 percent). They also spend nearly 20 percent of their time on academic testing and other non-counseling activities combined (see Table 5-4). Figure 5-2 shows that there has been very little change in the percentage of time that counseling staffs have spent on these tasks in the recent past (2005 – 2011).

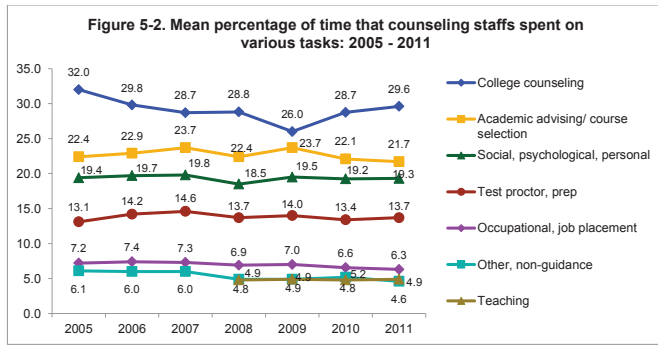
Table 5-3. Mean ranking of counseling department responsibilities by school characteristics: 2011
(1 = most important)

	Help students plan and prepare for postsecondary education	Help students with academic achievement in high school	Help students with personal growth and development	Help students plan and prepare for work roles after high school
Total	2.0	1.8	2.8	3.4
Control				
Public	2.1	1.7	2.8	3.4
Private	1.5	2.2	2.6	3.7
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	1.5	2.2	2.6	3.7
<i>Private parochial</i>	1.6	2.0	2.6	3.7
Enrollment				
Fewer than 500 students	1.9	2.0	2.7	3.4
500 to 999	1.9	1.8	2.8	3.4
1,000 to 1,499	2.1	1.6	2.7	3.5
1,500 to 1,999	2.0	1.6	2.8	3.6
2,000 or more	1.9	1.6	2.8	3.6
Free and reduced price lunch				
0 to 25% of students eligible	1.9	1.7	2.8	3.5
26 to 50%	2.1	1.7	2.8	3.3
51 to 75%	2.1	1.8	2.9	3.2
76 to 100%	2.2	1.7	2.7	3.4
Students per counselor				
100 or fewer	2.1	2.0	2.5	3.5
101 to 200	2.0	1.9	2.7	3.4
201 to 300	1.9	1.8	2.8	3.5
301 to 400	2.1	1.7	2.8	3.4
401 to 500	1.9	1.9	2.9	3.3
More than 500	2.1	1.6	2.9	3.4

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

⁶ Correlation between public school status and ranking of: “helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education” (–.265), “helping students with their academic achievement in high school” (.196), “helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school” (.160), $p < .01$

⁷ Correlation between percent of time spent on postsecondary counseling and: private school status (.626), student-to-counselor ratio (–.110), $p < .01$



COUNSELOR ACTIVITIES RELATED TO COLLEGE COUNSELING

Counselors engage in a variety of activities to assist students with the process of applying to college. As shown in Figure 5-3, the most frequent activities for 2011 included individual meetings with students to discuss postsecondary admission options and hosting college representatives. Forty-three percent of counselors also reported that they frequently engaged in electronic communications with students and parents about the admission process,

and 42 percent actively representing students to college admission offices. Nearly 40 percent reported frequently reviewing student applications.

There are variations in the extent to which students at different types of schools benefit from these services. For example, counselors at private schools engaged more frequently (to varying extent) than those at public schools in most of these activities. Public school counselors more frequently organized college tours and provided assistance with financial aid.⁸ No difference was found between public and private school counselors in providing assistance with financial aid.

Counselors at larger schools spent more time meeting with parents, and engaging in electronic communication with students and parents. Those at smaller schools more frequently organized college tours, helped to develop curricula and provided application assistance.⁹ Counselors at lower-income schools engaged less frequently in individual meetings with students, meetings with parents, electronic communications with students or parents and standardized testing advice. However, counselors at lower-income schools provided counseling on financial aid options and organized tours of college campuses more frequently than those at higher-income schools.¹⁰

Table 5-4. Mean percentage of time that counseling staffs spent on various tasks, by school characteristics: 2011

	Postsecondary admission counseling	Choice and scheduling of high school courses	Personal needs counseling	Academic testing	Occupational counseling and job placement	Teaching	Other non-guidance activities
Total	29.6%	21.7%	19.3%	13.7%	6.3%	4.6%	4.9%
Control							
Public	22.6	24.5	21.3	14.9	7.5	4.3	4.9
Private	53.8	12.1	12.7	9.5	2.4	5.4	4.8
Private non-parochial	57.7	10.9	8.3	9.4	1.9	6.4	5.4
Private parochial	46.2	14.3	19.6	9.6	3.7	3.4	3.5
Enrollment							
Fewer than 500 students	30.0	17.8	17.2	15.7	6.8	6.4	6.6
500 to 999	32.0	20.5	19.3	13.6	5.9	3.8	4.2
1,000 to 1,499	29.1	24.4	21.9	11.4	6.2	3.0	4.2
1,500 to 1,999	23.6	27.9	22.3	11.8	6.4	3.6	4.7
2,000 or more	22.6	31.2	21.1	11.7	6.0	2.9	4.8
Free and reduced price lunch							
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	29.0	23.2	21.3	11.9	6.2	4.2	4.2
26 to 50%	21.1	24.4	21.4	15.1	7.9	4.2	5.9
51 to 75%	20.6	23.3	19.6	18.4	8.3	4.4	5.5
76 to 100%	23.2	25.0	19.9	15.3	6.9	5.5	4.1
Students per counselor							
100 or fewer	32.6	16.7	16.8	13.4	6.7	7.8	6.0
101 to 200	34.6	18.3	19.3	12.2	5.8	5.0	4.7
201 to 300	29.7	22.1	19.6	13.9	6.4	3.9	4.3
301 to 400	24.1	25.0	20.4	14.9	6.2	3.8	5.5
401 to 500	24.9	25.0	19.5	14.1	6.8	4.2	5.4
More than 500	27.2	24.0	17.8	14.7	7.2	4.4	4.7

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

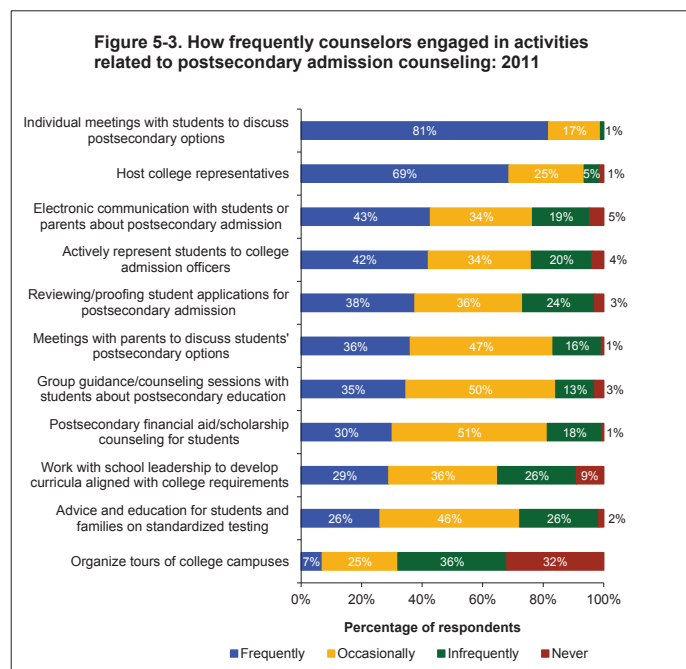
⁸ Correlation between private school status and frequency of: group meetings with students (.217), individual meetings with students (.188), meetings with parents (.276), electronic communication with students and parents (.362), testing assistance (.303), application assistance (.299), hosting college reps (.199), actively representing students (.307), helping to develop curricula (.142), organizing college tours (-.134), financial aid assistance (-.060), $p < .01$

⁹ Correlation between enrollment and frequency of: meeting with parents, electronic communication with students and parents (.151), helping to develop curricula (-.098), organizing college tours (-.109), application assistance (-.057), $p < .01$

¹⁰ Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL and frequency of: meeting with parents (-.069), electronic communications with students and parents (-.137), test advising (-.092), organizing campus tours (.140), financial aid counseling (.118), $p < .01$; individual meetings with students (-.151), $p < .05$

Professional Development

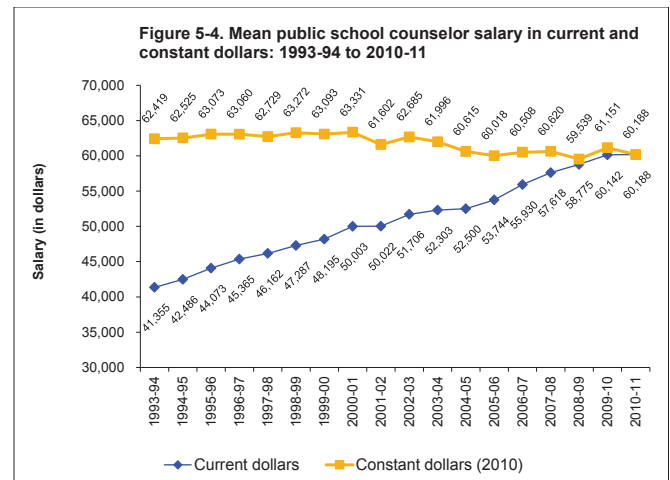
In 2011, 35 percent of high schools reported that counselors responsible for college counseling were required to participate in professional development related to postsecondary counseling. Private high schools were much more likely than publics to require professional development of counselors (56 percent versus 30 percent). As shown in Table 5-5, most schools also cover at least a portion of the costs of professional development for counselors, but private high schools were more than twice as likely to cover all costs of professional development in comparison to public schools (73 percent versus 32 percent). Table 6 shows that the percentage of secondary schools covering no costs of professional development has increased slightly since 2002 even as the percentage of schools requiring professional development has remained relatively stable in recent years.



SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

Compensation

According to the Educational Research Service, the mean public school counselor salary has increased steadily over the past two decades based on current year dollars. In the 2010-11 school year, the mean salary for a public school counselor was \$60,188, up from \$41,355 in 1993-94. However, inflation-adjusted figures calculated by NACAC using the annual average Consumer Price Index provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that salaries have actually declined slightly in 2010 constant dollars, indicating that counselor salaries have not kept pace with inflation (see Figure 5-4).¹¹



NOTE: Current dollar figures from source cited below. The 2010 constant dollar figures were calculated by NACAC using the Consumer Price Index annual averages provided by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

SOURCE: Educational Research Service. (2010). *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2010-11*. Arlington, VA. 38th edition of the National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools. Arlington, VA.

¹¹ Educational Research Service. (2010). *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2009-10*. 37th edition of the National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools. Arlington, VA.

Table 5-5. Percentage of secondary schools that require college counselors to participate in professional development and that cover professional development costs by school characteristics: 2011

	Percentage of schools that require professional development	Percentage of schools that cover professional development costs		
		All costs	Some costs	No costs
Total	35.3%	40.5%	43.9%	15.7%
Control				
Public	29.7	31.5	49.5	19.0
Private	55.6	73.0	23.5	3.5
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	56.5	78.9	17.6	3.4
<i>Private parochial</i>	53.8	62.2	34.3	3.5
Enrollment				
Fewer than 500 students	33.5	47.2	37.6	15.2
500 to 999	39.5	46.9	40.8	12.2
1,000 to 1,499	29.4	34.6	50.2	15.2
1,500 to 1,999	34.9	22.3	60.2	17.5
2,000 or more	39.9	22.4	50.7	27.0
Free and reduced price lunch				
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	32.7	34.9	50.8	14.3
26 to 50 percent	24.0	31.2	49.0	19.8
51 to 75 percent	31.5	33.6	44.4	22.0
76 to 100 percent	44.0	35.3	44.7	20.0
Students per counselor				
100 or fewer	50.6	47.7	39.2	13.1
101 to 200	43.8	52.1	36.7	11.2
201 to 300	31.0	38.2	48.2	13.6
301 to 400	25.7	32.7	46.9	20.4
401 to 500	29.5	29.7	45.9	24.4
More than 500	34.3	36.4	47.5	16.2

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

Table 5-6. Percentage of secondary schools that require college counselors to participate in professional development and that cover professional development costs: 2002 - 2011

	Percentage of schools that require professional development	Percentage of schools that cover professional development costs		
		All costs	Some costs	No costs
2002	--	41.9	52.0	4.1
2003	--	37.0	58.0	6.0
2004	--	33.0	60.0	8.0
2005	--	31.1	61.3	7.6
2006*	45.1	50.5	35.9	13.6
2007	36.6	39.2	47.5	13.2
2008	39.9	39.2	47.4	13.4
2009	31.2	32.2	50.3	17.5
2010	24.5	--	--	--
2011	35.3	40.5	43.9	15.7

-- Not available.

* For 2006 survey only, respondents were asked to indicate professional development cost coverage only if professional development was required, which likely accounts for the larger percentage (50.5) indicating that all costs were covered, in comparison to other survey years.

NOTES: For the 2002 – 2005 survey, response options for costs covered were all, most, some and none. Most and some were combined to match the response options—all, some, no—in subsequent survey years.

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2002 - 2011.

Chapter 5 Retrospective

COUNSELING

During the past decade, NACAC collected data on important issues that surfaced in the field of college admission counseling. Some was published through the *State of College Admission* report, and some was published in other reports or venues. In addition to school counselors' multiple focuses and a workload that, at times, bordered on the unmanageable, the rising cost of college and complexity of paying for college presented a new set of issues for counselors to confront. In a 2007 special report, NACAC and The Project on Student Debt combined to present data from NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey about counselors' views on the risks and opportunities of student loans.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF *BALANCING ACTS: HOW HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS VIEW RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF STUDENT LOANS*:

WIDESPREAD CONCERN ABOUT STUDENT DEBT

- The vast majority of high school counselors (86%) are concerned about the level of debt students are taking on to pay for college.
- Most school counselors (78%) say that students' and parents' concerns about loan debt affect whether and where students go to college.
 - Counselors at schools with a majority of low-income students are much more likely to say that fear of debt "strongly affects" college choices (56%) than counselors at schools with fewer low-income students (34%).
- Nearly all high school counselors (97%) say that students and families need a lot of help making decisions about student loans.

GIVING ADVICE ABOUT STUDENT LOANS CAN BE CHALLENGING

- Most high school counselors feel generally prepared to discuss loans with students and families. Eighty percent feel at least "somewhat prepared," including 25% who feel "very prepared."
- However, counselors find certain typical questions about student loans much more difficult to answer than others.
 - More than half of counselors find it at least "somewhat easy" to answer questions about whether to borrow to pay for college (62%), and what happens if the student does not graduate from college (53%).
 - Three-fourths (76%) of counselors find it at least "somewhat hard" to advise students and families about how much they can afford to borrow; and two-thirds say it is hard to answer questions about what type of loan to take (66%) and what happens if borrowers cannot pay back their loans (64%).

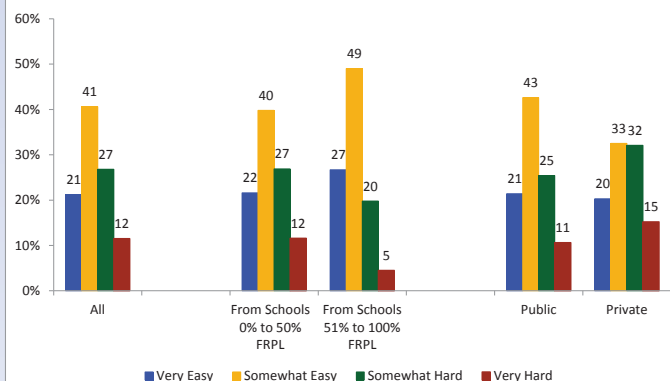
GENERALLY POSITIVE VIEWS OF STUDENT LOANS, BUT CONCERNS ABOUT RISKS FOR LOW-INCOME, LESS PREPARED

- Most high school counselors believe student loans are a good investment for a typical student at their school: 83% believe loans are at least a "somewhat good" investment, including 37% who believe they are a "very good" investment.
- Most counselors (89%) say that student loans help low-income students attend college.
- However, more than one-third of counselors (37%) believe that low-income students should avoid student loans because of the risks of default.
- Counselors in high schools with a majority of low-income students are much more likely to view loans as at least "somewhat risky" for a typical student at their school (33%) than counselors in schools with fewer low income students (14%).
- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of high school counselors agree that students who are not well-prepared for college should avoid the risk of student loans. Slightly more (79%) say students who are well prepared can afford the risk of student loans.

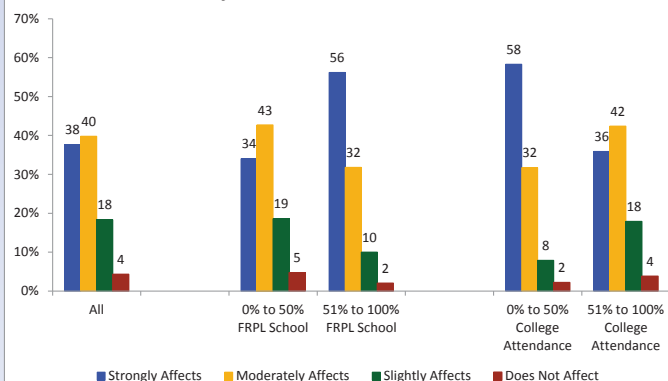
Table 5R-1. Counselors' Assessments of Difficulty Answering Questions About Student Loans

	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Hard	Very Hard
Should I/We Take Out Loans to Pay for College?	21.2%	40.6%	26.8%	11.5%
How Much Can I/We Afford to Borrow?	5.4	18.4	36.6	39.6
Which Kind of Loan is the Best for Me/Us?	8.7	25.1	36.6	29.6
What Happens If I/Our Child Doesn't Finish College?	18.3	34.2	28.1	19.3
What Happens If I/We Cannot Repay the Loans?	12.2	23.7	35.5	28.6

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2006

Figure 5R-1. Counselors' Assessments of Difficulty of Advising: "Should I/We Take Out Student Loans?," by Selected School Characteristics

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2006

Figure 5R-2. Counselors' Assessments of the Effect of Debt Fear on College Decisions, by Selected School Characteristics

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2006

Table 5R-2. Counselors' self-assessments of their preparation to discuss student loans by selected school characteristics

	Not at all prepared	Not very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Very prepared
All Schools	2.1%	17.6%	55.7%	24.6%
Control				
Public	2.2	18.0	53.7	26.1
Private	1.6	16.0	64.6	17.7
Private Non-Parochial	2.0	17.3	66.0	14.7
Private Parochial	1.1	14.0	62.4	22.6
Free and reduced price lunch				
0 to 25%	1.4	15.7	57.4	25.5
26 to 50%	3.3	16.7	54.9	25.1
51 to 75%	0.8	15.2	56.8	27.2
76 to 100%	1.3	17.7	45.6	35.4
Enrollment				
Fewer than 500	2.0	17.1	60.4	20.4
500 to 999	1.3	17.8	55.9	25.1
1,000 to 1,499	2.7	20.7	50.0	26.6
1,500 to 1,999	1.8	13.4	50.0	34.8
2,000 or more	3.1	16.5	48.5	32.0
Students per counselor				
Fewer than 100	0.0	25.4	53.7	20.9
100 to 199	1.8	18.3	56.3	23.7
200 to 299	2.3	15.2	54.4	28.1
300 to 399	1.2	16.1	57.1	25.5
400 to 499	2.7	18.7	54.7	24.0
500 or more	3.8	21.3	57.5	17.5
College attendance rate				
0 to 25%	0.0	17.2	58.6	24.1
26 to 50%	2.7	20.7	54.1	22.5
51 to 75%	1.5	18.0	55.1	25.4
76 to 100%	2.1	17.2	55.2	25.6

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2006

Chapter 5

Appendix

Table 5A-1a. Mean student-to-counselor ratios by school characteristics: 2003 - 2011

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	263	288	262	295	247	246	261	272	274
Control									
Public	309	314	289	311	260	265	270	285	291
Private	--	241	167	234	177	167	195	215	212
Private non-parochial	194	245	157	236	175	161	206	215	213
Private parochial	241	243	189	231	181	177	170	215	212
Enrollment									
Fewer than 500 students	193	218	191	236	190	190	217	218	214
500 to 999	263	286	275	308	259	257	278	277	283
1,000 to 1,499	315	343	304	352	271	269	283	279	301
1,500 to 1,999	331	326	333	342	291	290	287	297	319
2,000 or more students	407	379	418	368	334	380	335	425	425
Free and reduced price lunch									
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	--	309	258	285	242	273	264	272	287
26 to 50%	--	319	291	320	265	253	287	287	302
51 to 75%	--	332	278	300	237	265	260	301	275
76 to 100%	--	--	213	270	209	235	226	237	246

Table 5A-1b. Mean student-to-college counselor ratios by school characteristics: 2003 -2011

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	--	--	348	345	311	315	320	333	335
Control									
Public	--	--	383	358	321	331	325	338	338
Private	--	--	214	300	254	250	283	310	323
Private non-parochial	--	--	188	311	251	239	298	312	319
Private parochial	--	--	273	279	261	270	252	305	331
Enrollment									
Fewer than 500 students	--	--	221	258	220	219	244	247	245
500 to 999	--	--	346	357	328	315	344	353	356
1,000 to 1,499	--	--	435	399	337	354	368	335	360
1,500 to 1,999	--	--	482	415	340	365	356	390	403
2,000 or more students	--	--	654	531	515	608	451	540	556
Free and reduced price lunch									
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	--	--	330	328	305	338	304	320	340
26 to 50%	--	--	362	384	307	309	339	327	334
51 to 75%	--	--	418	354	330	352	325	402	333
76 to 100%	--	--	403	342	332	351	351	309	337

-- Not available.

Note: The student-to-college counselor ratio is based on both the total number of counselors who exclusively provide college counseling for students and the total number who provide college counseling among other services for students. As such, it overestimates the focus on college counseling.

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2005 - 2011.

Chapter 5

Appendix

Table 5A-2. Number of students per counselor in public schools, by state: 2001-02 to 2010-11

State	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
U.S. Total	407	478	488	479	474	480	467	457	459	471
Alabama	402	436	435	428	409	404	397	398	404	419
Alaska	263	465	489	492	481	465	452	467	428	404
Arizona	590	742	783	772	797	749	750	743	815	861
Arkansas	694	314	373	366	329	330	339	333	337	316
California	319	951	966	990	902	986	809	814	810	1,016
Colorado	327	541	553	544	548	411	470	387	392	402
Connecticut	168	429	435	427	411	417	409	507	519	518
Delaware	336	489	449	444	429	438	451	440	455	461
D.C.	288	313	1,301	775	761	729	356	275	205	275
Florida	346	450	448	444	479	442	434	434	452	451
Georgia	227	451	456	455	452	446	448	449	454	471
Hawaii	412	283	283	279	275	270	273	272	279	284
Idaho	313	420	438	434	441	451	443	434	447	489
Illinois*	455	708	689	673	666	1,172*	1,076*	672	667	655
Indiana	332	554	560	559	574	553	543	540	539	620
Iowa	292	403	408	413	412	405	400	354	396	428
Kansas	415	412	421	422	411	412	418	419	439	456
Kentucky	361	453	451	474	441	475	454	459	445	444
Louisiana	260	236	231	218	221	225	225	238	356	363
Maine	335	316	322	306	309	305	315	318	302	329
Maryland	336	389	388	388	374	360	349	348	352	357
Massachusetts	440	336	463	461	454	444	426	432	432	441
Michigan	446	671	649	634	628	631	643	638	660	706
Minnesota	259	797	792	795	811	799	777	759	771	782
Mississippi	405	510	489	487	484	479	464	234	441	448
Missouri	419	339	347	353	348	346	337	373	355	352
Montana	509	347	344	339	331	322	310	309	303	310
Nebraska	434	367	377	373	369	364	369	366	365	368
Nevada	310	517	536	561	519	496	484	511	493	497
New Hampshire	334	269	269	251	249	251	243	233	232	236
New Jersey	268	379	376	585	604	524	495	613	334	359
New Mexico	307	413	420	422	422	456	404	391	400	415
New York	328	399	445	433	413	409	463	411	416	392
North Carolina	260	390	395	394	388	407	379	374	385	375
North Dakota	428	374	368	363	357	379	366	335	327	312
Ohio	243	512	500	481	478	482	493	499	477	480
Oklahoma	352	398	419	404	400	393	391	381	379	410
Oregon	332	473	495	452	404	537	485	522	540	553
Pennsylvania	251	423	419	415	415	419	380	386	379	377
Rhode Island	466	454	419	60	60	373	360	355	371	374
South Carolina	500	405	412	405	395	399	407	383	390	400
South Dakota	500	400	383	425	382	424	390	400	375	365
Tennessee	293	494	488	486	471	473	357	353	344	342
Texas	402	429	436	434	441	437	430	435	437	440
Utah	294	715	726	746	741	720	772	733	711	726
Vermont	206	239	233	231	224	218	220	207	208	234
Virginia	369	498	465	467	455	289	300	308	318	315
Washington	502	515	522	515	513	506	500	491	505	510
West Virginia	326	428	426	416	405	409	405	387	382	383
Wisconsin	228	452	461	441	453	451	454	464	453	465
Wyoming	407	225	222	218	212	192	203	197	183	201

* The number of counselors reported by Illinois for 2006-07 and 2007-08 was substantially lower than adjacent years and likely the result of a reporting error.

SOURCE: Common Core of Data Build a Table. (2009-10). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Chapter 5

Appendix

Table 5A-3. Mean ranking of counseling department responsibilities, by school characteristics: 2004 - 2011 (1 = most important) (continued on next page)

	Help students plan and prepare for postsecondary education							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0
Control								
Public	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1
Private	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.5
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.5
<i>Private parochial</i>	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.6
Enrollment								
Fewer than 500 students	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.9
500 to 999	1.7	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9
1,000 to 1,499	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
1,500 to 1,999	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0
2,000 or more	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.1
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9
26 to 50%	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1
51 to 75%	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.1
76 to 100%	--	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.2
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	1.5	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.1
101 to 200	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.0
201 to 300	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9
301 to 400	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.1
401 to 500	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.1	1.9
More than 500	1.6	2.0	1.8	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1

	Help students with academic achievement in high school							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8
Control								
Public	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Private	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.2
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.2
<i>Private parochial</i>	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0
Enrollment								
Fewer than 500 students	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.0
500 to 999	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8
1,000 to 1,499	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.6
1,500 to 1,999	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6
2,000 or more	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7
26 to 50%	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7
51 to 75%	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.8
76 to 100%	--	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.7
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.8	2.0
101 to 200	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.9
201 to 300	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8
301 to 400	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.7
401 to 500	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.9
More than 500	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.6

Chapter 5

Appendix

Table 5A-3 (continued from previous page). Mean ranking of counseling department responsibilities, by school characteristics: 2004 - 2011 (1 = most important)

	Help students with personal growth and development							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
Control								
Public	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.8
Private	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6
<i>Private parochial</i>	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6
Enrollment								
Fewer than 500 students	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7
500 to 999	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8
1,000 to 1,499	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.7
1,500 to 1,999	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8
2,000 or more	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.8
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
26 to 50%	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8
51 to 75%	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
76 to 100%	--	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.9	2.7	3.0	2.7
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.5
101 to 200	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7
201 to 300	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8
301 to 400	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8
401 to 500	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.9
More than 500	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.9

	Help students plan and prepare for work roles after high school							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4
Control								
Public	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Private	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.7
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.7
<i>Private parochial</i>	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.7
Enrollment								
Fewer than 500 students	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
500 to 999	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.4
1,000 to 1,499	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5
1,500 to 1,999	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6
2,000 or more	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5
26 to 50%	3.0	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
51 to 75%	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.2
76 to 100%	--	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	3.8	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.5
101 to 200	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.4
201 to 300	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5
301 to 400	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4
401 to 500	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.3
More than 500	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.4

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2004-2011.

Chapter 5

Appendix

Table 5A-4. Mean percentage of time that counseling staffs spent on postsecondary admission counseling, by school characteristics: 2005 - 2011

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	32.0%	29.8%	28.7%	28.8%	26.0%	28.7%	29.6%
Control							
Public	24.4	22.8	23.1	22.8	22.3	22.8	22.6
Private	57.4	56.4	57.5	54.4	53.6	55.2	53.8
<i>Private non-parochial</i>	60.6	60.9	62.0	59.6	57.4	60.2	57.7
<i>Private parochial</i>	50.1	48.9	47.6	45.2	45.3	46.3	46.2
Enrollment							
Fewer than 500 students	35.1	31.8	31.3	31.5	26.4	29.6	30.0
500 to 999	34.0	32.4	30.4	30.0	27.8	31.7	32.0
1,000 to 1,499	28.1	27.6	26.2	26.8	26.0	27.2	29.1
1,500 to 1,999	26.1	25.0	24.5	22.6	23.7	24.0	23.6
2,000 or more	24.1	21.8	23.0	24.0	21.6	25.2	22.6
Free and reduced price lunch							
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	37.1	34.9	33.0	26.7	26.0	27.3	29.0
26 to 50%	20.6	22.2	21.1	21.0	20.6	20.8	21.1
51 to 75%	20.5	18.4	21.9	21.0	19.9	21.7	20.6
76 to 100%	16.7	18.8	21.7	20.0	20.4	23.3	23.2
Students per counselor							
100 or fewer	35.7	37.9	35.0	35.8	29.9	37.7	32.6
101 to 200	40.0	39.1	32.3	31.8	29.1	32.3	34.6
201 to 300	32.6	29.6	27.1	27.8	25.7	29.2	29.7
301 to 400	22.8	24.5	23.5	23.6	22.6	23.0	24.1
401 to 500	22.1	24.1	23.0	23.1	22.5	23.7	24.9
More than 500	21.6	31.0	27.7	27.7	26.0	29.2	27.2

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2005 - 2011.

Chapter 6

The College Admission Office

CONTENTS

- Admission Office Staff
- Budget and Cost to Recruit

Admission Office Staff

The admission office staff typically includes a dean or vice president for admission or enrollment management, middle-level managers or assistant directors, admission officers and administrative support staff.

RATIO OF APPLICATIONS TO ADMISSION OFFICERS

As shown in Chapter 2, nearly two-thirds of colleges (64 percent) reported increases in the number of applications they received, resulting in high application loads for admission officers. For the Fall 2011 admission cycle, colleges reported that the average admission officer was responsible for reading 662 applications, and this application volume per reader has steadily increased from 359 for the Fall 2005 admission cycle (see Table 6-1).

Fall 2011 survey results indicate that the burden of large application volume was particularly prevalent at certain types of institutions. For example, admission officers at public institutions were responsible for reading almost 3 times more applications than their counterparts at private institutions. Admission officers at larger colleges and those at more selective institutions also had to contend with higher application volumes.¹ As shown in Table 6-1, these patterns have been consistent in recent years, even as the overall application burden has increased.

COMPENSATION

Table 6-2 shows the median salaries for various admission positions according to results of the 2011-12 edition of an annual survey conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). Salaries for all positions vary according to the Carnegie classification of the institution, but they vary most widely for higher-level positions. For example, an admission counselor earned \$35,032, on average, in 2011-12, and this salary varied only slightly by the Carnegie classification. The median salary for a chief admission officer was \$90,000, and this salary ranged from \$73,997 at Associate's institutions to \$112,217 at Doctorate-granting institutions. Chief enrollment managers earned the highest median salary of \$129,738 in 2011-12.

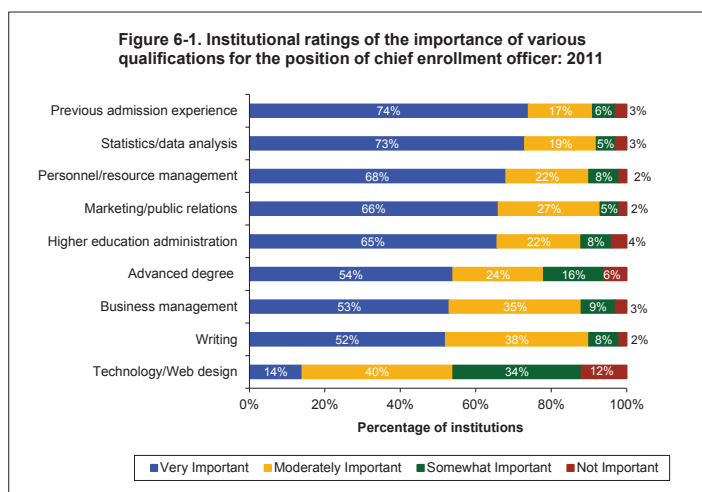
NACAC has tracked the salaries of admission professionals collected by CUPA-HR since 2003-04, and these trends are presented in Appendix Figure 6A-1. Salaries are shown in both current year dollars and in constant 2011 dollars.² Higher level positions, such as chief admission officer and chief enrollment manager, had mean salaries that increased in constant dollars, but other position salaries failed to keep pace with inflation to varying degrees.

¹ Correlation between application-to-admission officer ratio and: public college status (.482), enrollment (.508), selectivity (.198), $p < .01$

² NACAC calculated inflation-adjusted figures using the annual average Consumer Price Index provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICERS

The job of a college admission officer involves attracting students to apply to the institution, evaluating applications and attempting to enroll students who have received offers of admission. The admission process, though different at each school, has attained a level of standardization that enables admission officers to move between institutions and apply similar practices. Figure 6-1 shows how colleges rated the importance of various skills to the position of chief enrollment officer in 2011. Previous admission experience and statistics/data analysis were rated as the most important factors, followed closely by higher education administration and marketing/public relations. Different types of institutions rated most of the chief enrollment officer skills in very similar ways.



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2011.

Table 6-1. Mean number of applications per admission officer by institutional characteristics: 2005 - 2011

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	359	393	423	459	514	527	662
Control							
Public	683	741	742	825	949	981	1,204
Private	279	279	300	333	368	402	418
Enrollment							
Fewer than 3,000 students	231	251	249	248	291	324	362
3,000 to 9,999	--	593	686	756	765	699	755
10,000 or more	--	961	962	1,091	1,148	1,219	1,555
Selectivity							
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	534	649	669	712	728	809	928
50 to 70 percent	482	434	473	496	548	595	702
71 to 85 percent	300	339	370	380	499	426	534
More than 85 percent	315	233	253	316	280	297	539
Yield							
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	429	469	503	569	529	521	590
30 to 45 percent	399	408	410	456	538	551	695
46 to 60 percent	455	402	453	426	534	499	877
More than 60 percent	245	162	271	326	274	499	667

NOTE: Figures in italics should be interpreted with caution due to low sample size (fewer than 15 institutions per cell).

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2005 - 2011.

Table 6-2. Median salary of admission staff by Carnegie classification: 2011-12

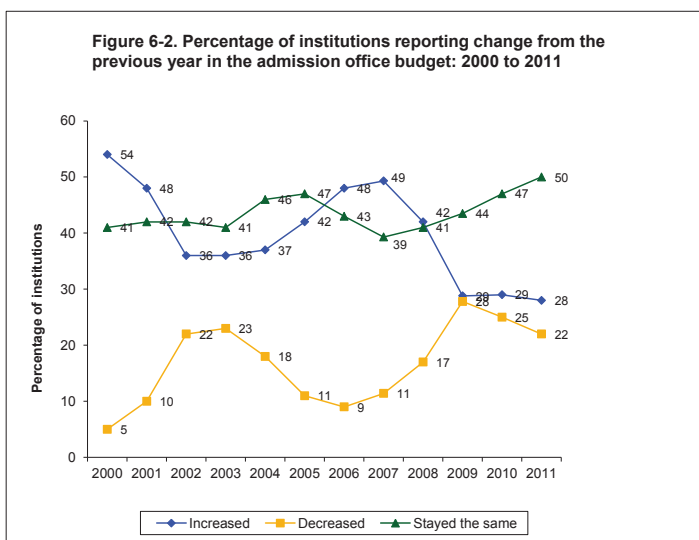
	Median salary	Median salary (in dollars) by Carnegie classification			
		Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctorate-granting
Admission Counselor	35,032	38,827	33,108	34,603	36,308
Associate Director, Admission	56,107	55,924	51,000	55,145	65,733
Director, Admission and Registrar	71,654	68,347	62,385	72,500	103,370
Director, Admission and Financial Aid	90,614	--	121,290	94,126	--
Chief Admission Officer	90,000	73,997	86,000	85,315	112,217
Chief Enrollment Management Officer	129,738	91,185	117,500	130,594	160,750

--Not reported.

SOURCE: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. (2011-12). *Mid-Level Administrative and Professional Salary Survey and Administrative Compensation Survey*.

Budget and Cost to Recruit

Admission office budgets include funds to cover expenses such as staff salaries and benefits, publications and mailings to prospective and admitted students, staff travel for recruitment and yield-related purposes, application printing and processing, Web site maintenance and enhancements, and other activities conducted by the admission department or third-party contractors. The proportion of colleges reporting decreases in their admission office budgets was 22 percent in 2011, down slightly from a high of 28 percent in 2009. In addition, slightly fewer than 30 percent of colleges have reported budget increases for the past three years, which is down from almost half of colleges reporting increases in 2006 and 2007 (see Figure 6-2). Fifty percent reported no change in budget levels.



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2000 through 2011.

COST TO RECRUIT

NACAC's 2011 Admission Trends Survey asked institutions to report the total fiscal budget for the admission office for the Fall 2011 admission cycle. The survey also asked institutions to report the total number of applicants, accepted students and enrolled students, allowing for the calculation of "cost to recruit" figures.³ In an effort to measure cost to recruit as accurately as possible, the survey also asked institutions to report what categories of expenses were included in the total admission budgets they provided. The percentage of institutions that included each of the expense categories were as follows:

- admission staff salaries (70 percent)
- admission staff benefits (55 percent)
- staff travel expenses for recruitment/yield (99.6 percent)
- expenses for participation in college fairs and other recruitment/yield events (100 percent)
- publication expenses (91 percent)
- payments made to third party contractors for admission or recruitment/yield services (92 percent)

Table 6-3 shows 2011 cost to recruit figures for two sets of respondents: 1) those who included all expense categories *except* for staff salaries and benefits in their total admission budgets; and 2) respondents who included all of the expense categories, including staff salaries and benefits in their total admission budgets.⁴

For the 2011 admission cycle, an average college admission office spent \$254 in recruitment and office costs for each student who applied, \$369 for each student who was admitted and \$1,273 for each student who enrolled. When staff salaries and benefits were included, the average cost to recruit figures were \$439 per applicant, \$675 per accepted student and \$2,311 per enrolled student (see Table 6-3).

As shown in Table 6-3, costs to recruit varied widely among different types of institutions. The following examples refer to cost to recruit figures which included staff salaries and expenses.

- Private colleges spent more than twice as much as public colleges to recruit both applicants and admitted students, and three times as much to recruit enrolled students for Fall 2011.⁵

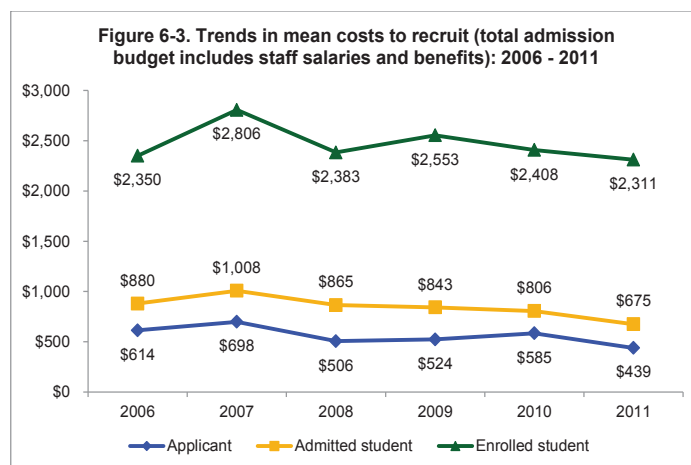
³ Each cost to recruit figure is obtained by dividing the total admission budget by the respective pool of students (applicants, admitted students and enrolled students).

⁴ Twelve percent of respondents reported data that allowed the calculation of a cost to recruit figure that included all categories except for staff salaries and benefits. Twenty-one percent of respondents reported data that allowed the calculation of a *full budget* cost to recruit figure. All cost to recruit figures were then trimmed five percent due to extreme outliers.

⁵ Correlation between private college status and cost to recruit (full budget): applicant (.487), admitted student (.519), enrolled student (.674), $p < .01$

- In comparison to the largest colleges (10,000 or more students), the smallest colleges (fewer than 3,000 students) spent approximately three times as much to recruit each applicant, admitted student and enrolled student.⁶
- On average, less selective colleges spent more to recruit applicants, and colleges with lower yield spent more to recruit enrolled students.⁷

Figure 6-3 shows recent trends (2006–2011) in mean costs to recruit for applicants, admitted students and enrolled students when the total admission budget, including staff salaries and benefits, was included. The mean cost to recruit for both applicants and admitted students has declined slightly during this time.



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2006 – 2011.

Table 6-3. Mean cost to recruit per applicant, admitted student and enrolled student: 2011

	Respondents who excluded staff salaries and benefits from the total admission budget			Respondents who included all expense categories in the total admission budget		
	Mean cost per applicant	Mean cost per admitted student	Mean cost per enrolled student	Mean cost per applicant	Mean cost per admitted student	Mean cost per enrolled student
Total	\$254.00	\$369.00	\$1,273.00	\$439.00	\$675.00	\$2,311.00
Control						
Public	114.78	198.76	471.99	235.88	371.04	995.13
Private	290.64	425.16	1,548.69	574.85	860.98	3,118.38
Enrollment						
Fewer than 3,000 students	323.50	460.21	1,455.77	623.22	907.07	3,201.57
3,000 to 9,999	108.47	181.39	797.97	338.76	571.38	1,750.46
10,000 or more	90.72	141.15	624.41	181.68	326.06	1,020.39
Selectivity						
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	138.37	464.37	1,550.54	188.90	599.01	1,666.76
50 to 70 percent	190.31	309.76	1,004.25	458.19	723.18	2,487.70
70 to 85 percent	344.40	432.89	1,504.85	508.79	612.67	2,458.00
More than 85 percent	292.25	324.61	1,172.13	532.20	788.45	2,289.64
Yield Rate						
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	228.90	333.54	1,559.73	446.98	675.83	3,026.59
30 to 45 percent	286.83	356.52	911.77	414.78	617.10	1,747.67
46 to 60 percent	217.52	556.06	1,168.52	521.79	741.96	1,466.84
More than 60 percent	272.29	539.04	887.96	176.61	1,034.41	2,659.57

NOTE: Figures in italics should be interpreted with caution due to low sample size (fewer than 15 institutions per cell).

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2011.

⁶ Correlation between enrollment and cost to recruit (full budget): applicant (-.432), admitted student (-.448), enrolled student (-.510), $p < .01$

⁷ Correlation between selectivity and cost to recruit (full budget): applicant (-.262), $p < .05$; Correlation between yield and cost to recruit (full budget): enrolled student (-.386), $p < .01$

Chapter 6 Retrospective

COLLEGE ADMISSION OFFICES

During the past decade, NACAC collected data on important and timely issues to inform professional discussions about implications for ethical admission practice. Some findings were published through the *State of College Admission* report, and others were published in separate reports or venues. Two prominent issues in the past decade included rankings of colleges and universities and the role of financial aid in the admission process.

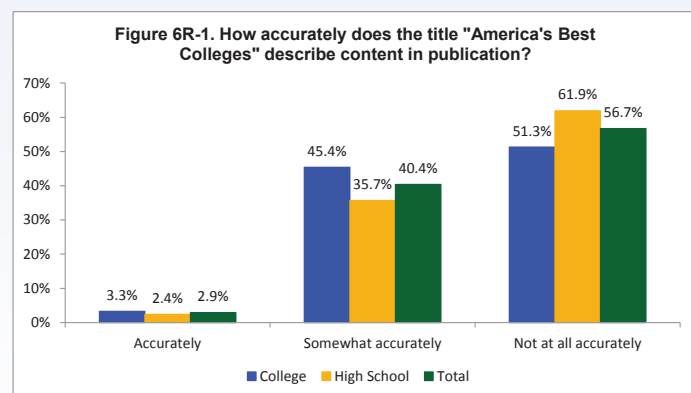
College Rankings

In 2010-11, NACAC convened an Ad Hoc Committee on the *U.S. News & World Report* Rankings to discuss concerns that college admission counseling professionals had about the rankings directly with *U.S. News & World Report* staff. The Committee commissioned two surveys of NACAC members—one in each professional segment—that provided insight into the attitudes and perceptions of those who often experience the most direct effects of the rankings. The Committee issued two reports on the survey data, including a preliminary report in May 2011 and a final report, with recommendations, in September 2011.

“BEST FOR WHOM?”

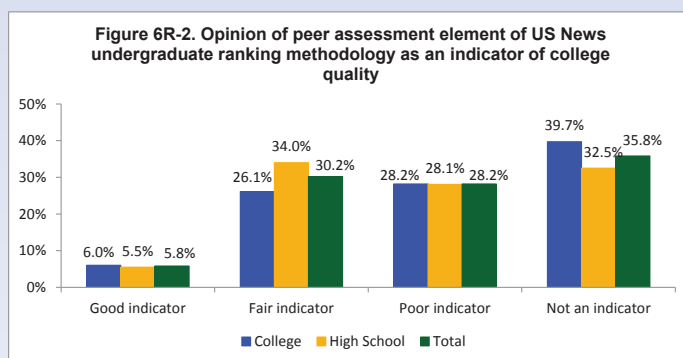
NACAC members expressed something approaching a consensus on the question of whether the title of *U.S. News & World Report's* (*USNWR*) annual publication, “America’s Best Colleges,” accurately represents the information presented therein.

Only 2.9 percent of all respondents (2.4 percent of high school counselors and 3.3 percent of college admission professionals) believed that the title of the publication accurately represents the content delivered by the publication. The majority of college admission officers (51.3 percent) and high school counselors (61.9 percent) reported that the title is not at all accurate.



PEER ASSESSMENTS

Secondary and postsecondary professionals are overwhelmingly skeptical of the reputational survey component of the *USNWR* rankings methodology. In the committee’s survey of NACAC members, only five percent of respondents called the peer assessments a “good indicator” of college quality. By comparison, nearly 40 percent of NACAC members agreed that graduation and retention rates, similarly weighted factors in the *USNWR* rankings, were good indicators of college quality.



INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE RANKINGS

In a report on the effect of rankings in higher education policymaking, the Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) noted:

*“Rankings have the potential to shift institutional behaviors in ways that may negatively affect policy goals. Rankings create incentives for institutions to take actions designed to improve their positions. This reactivity creates conditions in which institutions respond to the concept of educational quality embedded in rankings, which is not always aligned with public policy goals, such as equity and diversity.”*¹

Figure 6R-3 demonstrates that an overwhelming majority (95.1 percent) of NACAC members believe that the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings “put pressure on institutions to invest in strategies and practices primarily for the purpose of maintaining or strengthening position in the rankings,” either consistently or occasionally.

High school members are more suspicious of institutional responses to the rankings. Nearly two-thirds (63.6 percent) of high school respondents believe that the rankings “consistently” put pressure on institutions, compared to only 46.5 percent of college respondents.

¹ Sponsler, 2009.

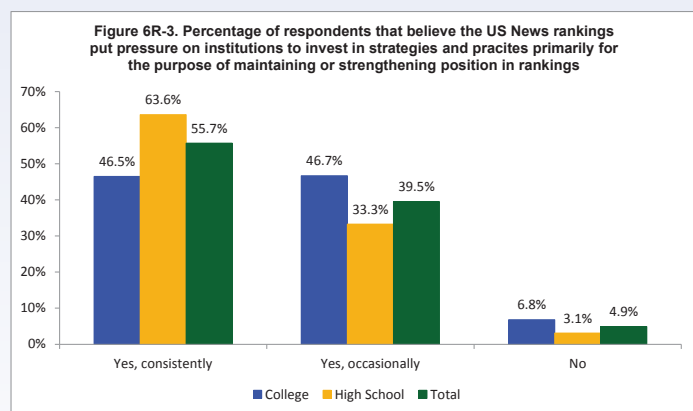
² Yield rates are no longer used in the *U.S. News* rankings formula.

More than 300 NACAC members offered comments on this question in addition to their multiple choice responses. The most common themes in the open ended responses add substance to the general belief institutions and schools are pressured to make programmatic changes in efforts to improve their rankings. Common themes included:

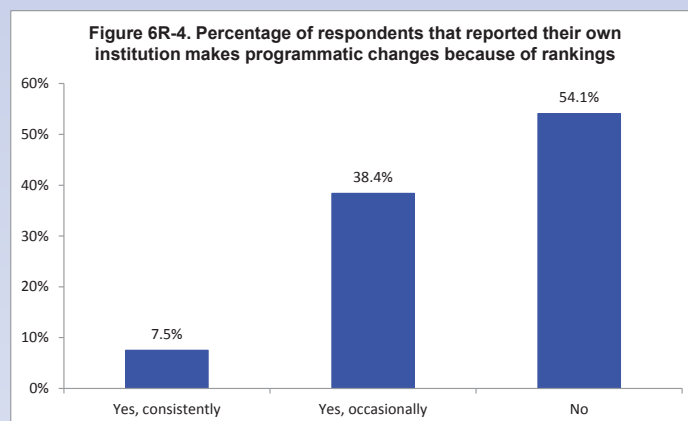
- **Manipulating numbers**—Many members believe that schools manipulate the data that is used to calculate the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, especially admit and yield rates,² with wait lists, fast-track applications and Early Decision programs.
- **Outside pressure**—Members commonly reported being pressured by their institution's presidents, trustees and faculty to adopt strategies that would increase their rank.
- **Benefits**—Some members argued that the pressure to improve rankings can benefit schools, colleges and students by encouraging policies that improve certain student-centered features, including retention rate and class size.

In contrast to the data shown in Figure 6R-3, 54.1 percent of NACAC members representing colleges reported that their particular institutions do not make any programmatic changes based on the rankings, as seen in Figure 6R-4. Because the *U.S. News & World Report* high school rankings are less prominent and influential than the college rankings, only responses from NACAC members representing colleges are discussed for this question.³

Very few NACAC college members (7.6 percent) report that their institutions consistently “make programmatic changes at least in part because of their influence on the rankings.” Over one-third of college respondents (38.4 percent) report that their particular institutions do so occasionally. Comparing Figures 6R-3 and 6R-4 yields an interesting contrast. College respondents’ beliefs that institutions are “gaming” the rankings generally seems to apply to other colleges, whereas they are less likely to perceive their own institution as manipulating the process.



SOURCE: NACAC Ad Hoc Committee on US News & World Report Rankings Survey, 2010

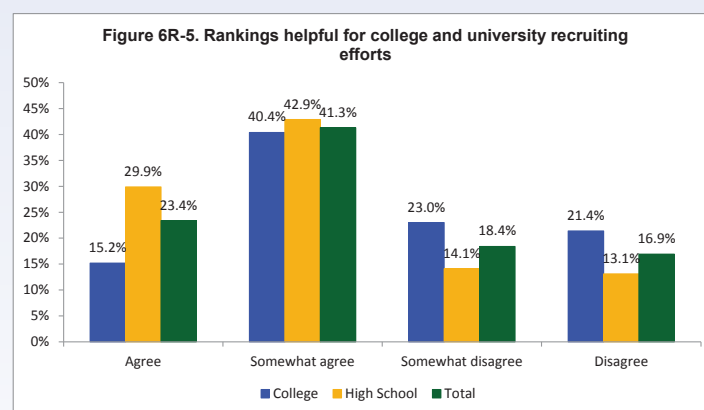


SOURCE: NACAC Ad Hoc Committee on US News & World Report Rankings Survey, 2010

USEFUL TO COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY RECRUITING EFFORTS?

As the IHEP report notes, “[t]he use of rankings by postsecondary institutions has contributed to their popularity.”⁴ Indicative of the complex relationship between rankings and institutions, the diversification of distinctions conferred by *USNWR* has had the double-edged effects of addressing (albeit only partly) concerns about a one-sized-fits all ranking and affording more institutions the opportunity to promote their rankings to the public.

The majority of NACAC members agreed with the statement, “*U.S. News* rankings are useful to college and university recruiting efforts.” Colleges were relatively evenly divided on this question, as 55.6 percent either somewhat agreed or agreed and 44.4 percent either somewhat disagreed or disagreed. Nearly 73 percent of high school counselors, on the other hand, either somewhat agreed or agreed that the rankings are useful to college and university recruiting efforts (Figure 6R-5).



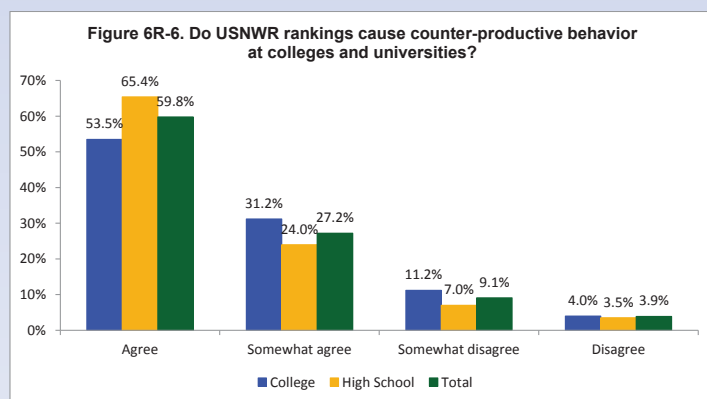
SOURCE: NACAC Ad Hoc Committee on US News & World Report Rankings Survey, 2010

³ The high school member responses for the question regarding the promotion of rankings were as follows: 6.7 percent consistently make changes based on the rankings, 20.4 percent occasionally make changes based on the rankings, and 72.9 percent do not make any changes based on the rankings.

⁴ Sponsler, 2009.

DO RANKINGS ENCOURAGE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR WITHIN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES?

An overwhelming majority of the survey respondents (87 percent) either “somewhat agree” or “agree” that the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings encourage counter-productive behavior within colleges and universities. High school respondents were most likely to either “agree” or “somewhat agree” (89.4 percent) that rankings cause counterproductive behavior at colleges and universities, though college respondents were similarly inclined (84.7 percent either agreed or somewhat agreed).



COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

“College rankings have evolved over time to adapt to concerns about their methods and their meaning,” said Peter Caruso, Associate Director for Campus Development and Staff Programming at Boston College and Chair of the NACAC Ad Hoc Committee on *U.S. News & World Report* Rankings. “We have reached another juncture where concerns about the ways in which rankings are compiled and presented justify further change in the rankings.” Caruso and his fellow committee members issued a series of recommendations for the *U.S. News & World Report* undergraduate rankings and for NACAC.

Specifically, the Committee recommended that *U.S. News & World Report*—

- Remove the “class rank” and “standardized testing” metrics from rankings methodologies in favor of factors that measure student satisfaction and engagement.
- Reduce the weight of the reputational survey.
- Encourage emphasis on fit through customized rankings.
- Continue to evolve rankings methodologies through the association’s communication channels.

The Committee further recommended that NACAC—

- Develop professional education resources for members about rankings.
- Work with education publishers and data outlets to encourage development of do-it-yourself lists for consumers.

Financial Aid and Admission

Given growing college costs, reduced real income for the middle class in the US and increasing pressures on colleges to meet bottom-line budgetary needs, NACAC commissioned research in 2008 to gain insight into the use of need-blind admission and financial aid strategies at colleges and universities. In previous decades, NACAC maintained a binding standard that member institutions would adhere to need-blind admission. During the 1990s, as many colleges faced critical budget shortages, NACAC members agreed that need-blind admission was a ‘best practice,’ but hesitated to restrict options that some colleges may rely on for their economic survival. NACAC leaders sought information about this practice during the economic downturn during the last decade. In response, the association conducted survey research and commissioned a paper by Donald Heller, then-professor of Education and Senior Scientist at Penn State University, entitled, “Financial Aid and Admission: Tuition Discounting, Merit Aid and Need-aware Admission.”

FINANCIAL NEED IN THE ADMISSION PROCESS

Responding institutions were asked about their use of financial need in their admission processes. While there are differences in how the term “need-blind” is interpreted, the survey provided a standard definition:

“Colleges and universities that are need-blind admit candidates on the basis of academic and personal criteria. They agree not to use financial need as a consideration in selecting students. Need-conscious institutions are those that apply, or hold the option of applying, candidates’ financial need as a consideration in the admission of any portion of the applicant pool.”

Institutions responded overwhelmingly that they practiced need-blind admission. Ninety-three percent of public institutions and 81 percent of privates indicated that admission is conducted need-blind throughout the entire process. An additional 6 percent of private colleges indicated their admission process is need-blind until May 1, but it then reverts to a need-conscious policy. Only 2 percent of public institutions and 10 percent of privates indicated that they were need conscious through the entire admission cycle.⁵

The colleges and universities were asked whether the use of financial need in the admission process had been reviewed recently. As shown in Table 6R-1, private institutions were more likely to have conducted this review, with 36 percent of them indicating a review had been conducted at some point in the last three years or was currently underway at the time the survey was completed. A quarter of the public institutions had conducted such a review. The institutions were also asked if they anticipate a change to their admission policy with respect to consideration of financial need in the near future (either switching from need-blind to need-conscious or vice-versa); only 2 percent of public institutions and 5 percent of private institutions anticipated a change, with most of this small number indicating a switch from a need-blind process to a need-conscious one.

DETERMINATION OF FINANCIAL NEED AND AID PACKAGING

The majority of both public and private institutions use federal methodology—a formula developed by the US Department of Education based on the laws passed by Congress regarding federal financial aid policy—for determining the financial need of the student and her eligibility for aid. Eighty-one percent of public institutions and 53 percent of private institutions reported that they used federal methodology. Another 3 percent of private institutions (and no public institutions) reported that they used institutional methodology, a formula created by the College Board. Fourteen percent of public institutions and 39 percent of private institutions reported that they used a combination of the two for determining need.

The survey respondents were asked if their institutions provided financial aid packages that met 100 percent of demonstrated need for every admitted student. Thirty-two percent of public institutions were able to make this commitment, while 60 percent did not. Only 18 percent of private institutions met full need, while 77 percent were unable to do so. Institutions that did not meet full demonstrated need of all students were asked which types of students were likely to not receive a full aid package (Table 6R-2). Most institutions indicated that they applied “gapping”—admitting students, but not meeting their financial need—to all categories of students, while 34 percent of private institutions (but no public institutions) reported that they targeted gapping at less academically talented students.

The colleges and universities in the survey were asked whether they ever admitted students through a need-blind admission policy, but then denied aid to any students with financial need. Only 4 percent of public institutions and 5 percent of private institutions reported that they did this; 90 percent of each group indicated that they did not utilize such a policy. The great majority of institutions also reported that they utilize a financial aid waitlist, with 86 percent of public and 88 percent of private institutions indicating so.

Some colleges and universities award different financial aid packages depending upon the desirability of the student they are trying to enroll, a practice known as “differential packaging.” Fifteen percent of the public institutions reported they practiced differential packaging, while 79 percent indicated they did not. Private institutions were more likely to employ differential packaging, with 63 percent reporting that they used the policy and 31 percent indicating they did not.

The institutions were asked what criteria were used for determining to whom differential packaging would be applied. Table 6R-3 summarizes the responses for institutions that reported they did use this policy. The most popular criterion indicated for differential packaging was academic merit, with approximately 9 out of 10 of both public and private institutions indicating this response. Other forms of talent, such as musical or artistic talents, were the second most common criterion for private institutions. For public institutions, however, the income level of the student was the second most common criterion used for differential packaging.

Table 6R-1. Institutions reporting review of need-blind admission policies

	Public institutions	Private institutions	All institutions
Currently under review	1.9%	5.8%	4.7%
Reviewed in the last year	16.8	20.7	19.6
Reviewed in the past three years	6.5	9.1	8.4
Not reviewed recently	64.5	55.6	58.1
No response	10.3	8.7	9.2

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2007

Table 6R-2. Institutions reporting students likely not to receive 100 percent of demonstrated need

	Public institutions	Private institutions	All institutions
All students	78.1%	61.3%	65.2%
Less academically qualified students	0.0	34.0	26.1
Students not in a targeted group the institution wished to attract	4.7	14.2	12.0

NOTE: Includes only those institutions who indicated they did not meet the full financial need of all admitted students. Institutions could indicate more than one category of students.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2007

Table 6R-3. Percentage of institutions using criteria for differential packaging

	Public institutions	Private institutions	All institutions
Alumni relationship	6.3%	17.8%	16.8%
Athletic ability	31.3	28.2	28.4
Academic merit	87.5	93.1	92.6
Ethnicity	18.8	35.1	33.7
Gender	6.3	5.8	5.8
Geographic area	31.3	25.9	26.3
First generation	18.8	19.0	19.0
Income level (low, middle)	62.5	36.8	39.0
Talent (i.e., musical, artistic, etc.)	25.0	52.3	50.0

NOTE: Includes only those institutions who indicated they utilize differential packaging. Institutions could indicate more than one criterion.

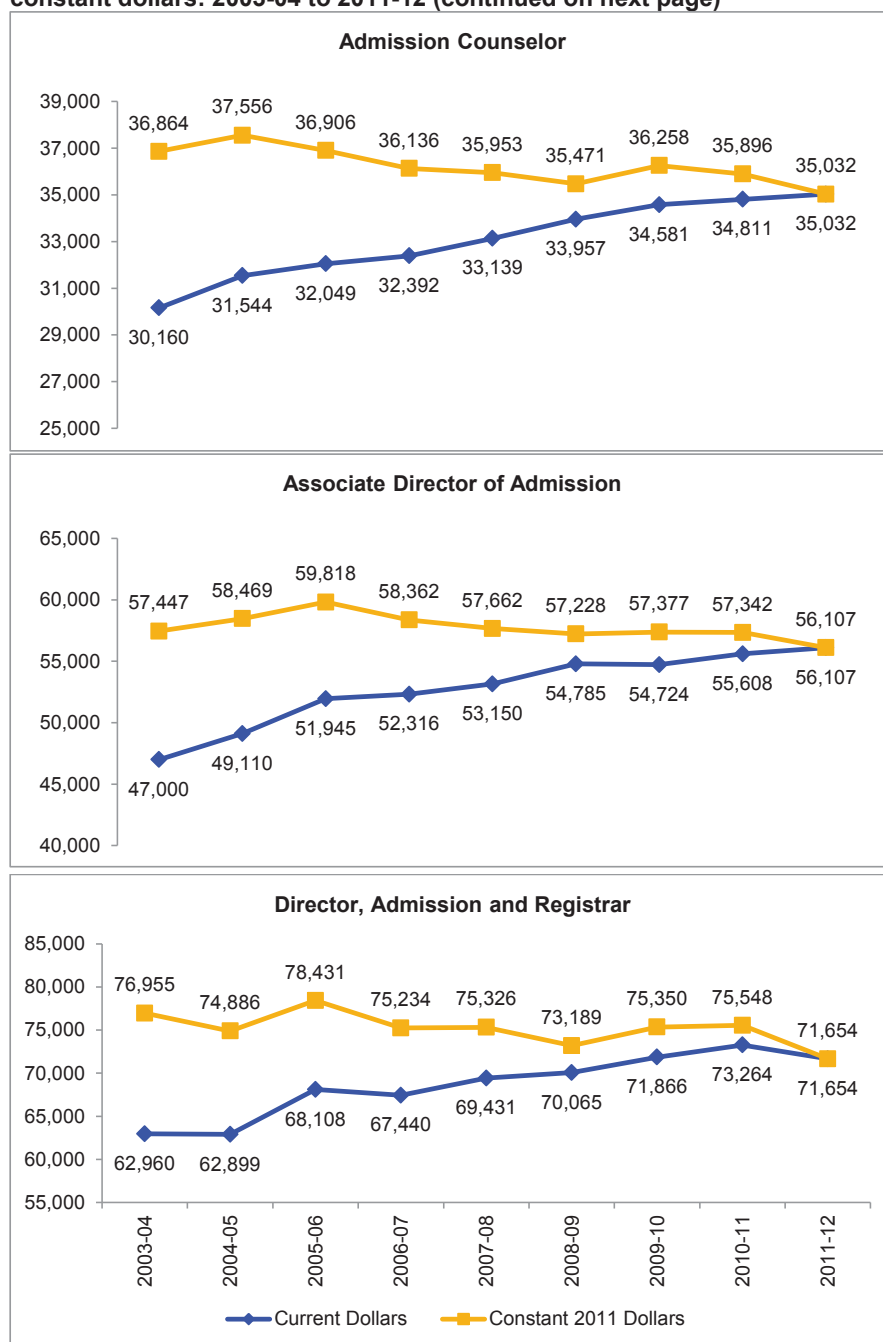
SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2007

⁵ Throughout this narrative, the difference between 100 percent and the sum of the responses indicated represents those institutions that did not respond to the question. For example, 3 percent of private institutions (100% – 81% – 6% – 10% = 3%) did not respond to this question. Missing responses will be shown in tables, where sums may not equal to 100 percent due to rounding.

Chapter 6

Appendix

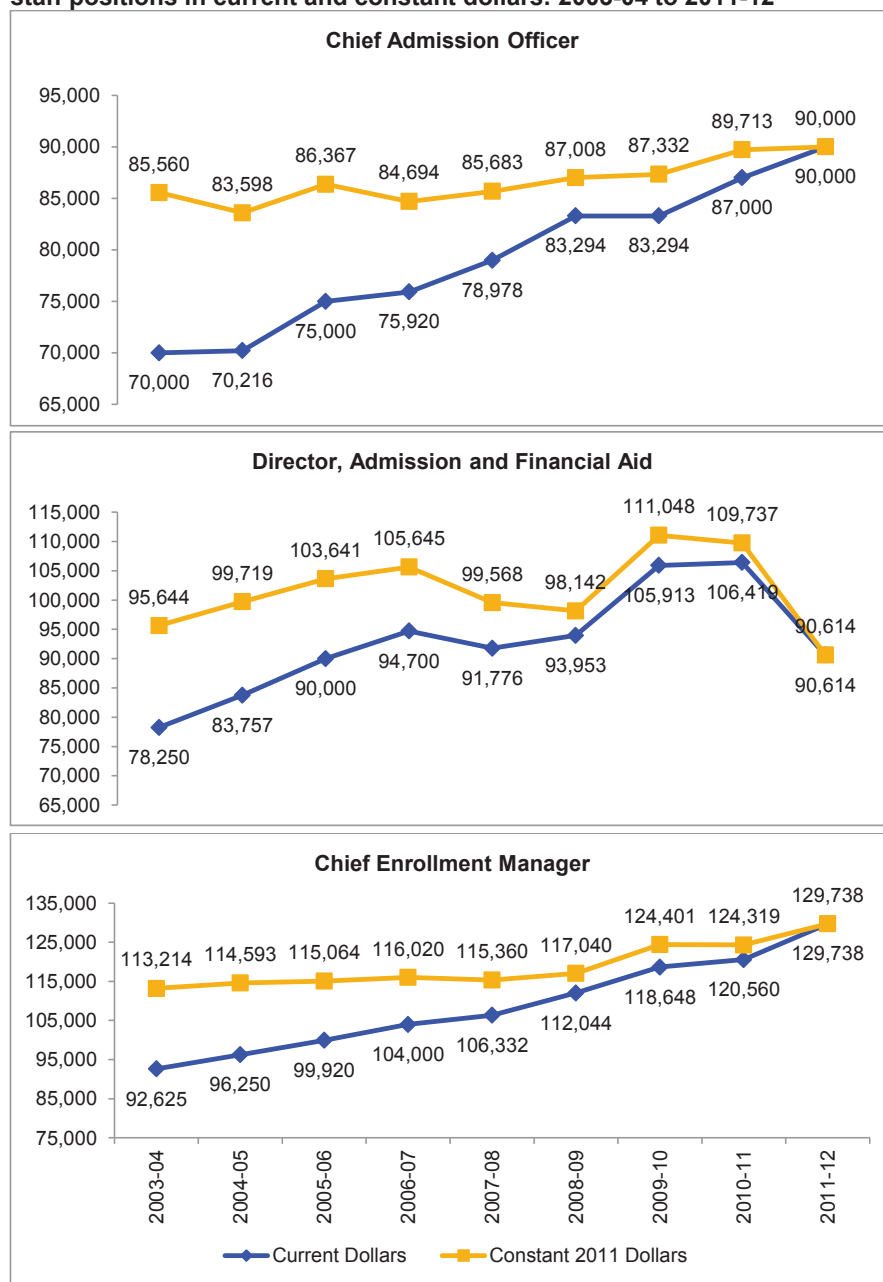
Figure 6A-1. Median salary of admission staff positions in current and constant dollars: 2003-04 to 2011-12 (continued on next page)



Chapter 6

Appendix

Figure 6A-1 (continued from previous page). Median salary of admission staff positions in current and constant dollars: 2003-04 to 2011-12



SOURCE: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). (2011-12). *Mid-Level Administrative and Professional Salary Survey and Administrative Compensation Survey*.

NOTE: Current dollar figures from CUPA-HR. CUPA-HR switched from weighted to un-weighted salary figures beginning in 2006-07. The 2010 constant dollar figures were calculated by NACAC using the Consumer Price Index annual averages provided by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Methodology

Four main sources were used to compile the data included in the report:

- NACAC's annual Counseling Trends Survey for 2002-2011
- NACAC's annual Admission Trends Survey for 2002-2011
- The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2003-2012®
- Publicly available data collected by the federal government, including data from the US Department of Education and the US Census Bureau.

NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect information from secondary school counselors and counseling departments about their priorities and work responsibilities, particularly in relation to their roles in helping students transition to college; their students' academic options and experiences; and their practices in communicating with students, parents and colleges.

In April 2011, NACAC distributed its annual Counseling Trends Survey to a total of 10,000 secondary schools in the United States—1,892 public and private schools that are members of NACAC and a random sample of 8,108 public high schools. The list of public high schools was identified using the US Department of Education's Common Core of Data. Each counseling department received a paper survey form that also included a link to an online survey, providing respondents with two options for completing the survey. Responses were collected through the end of June, 2011.

NACAC received a total of 1,928 responses—a 19 percent response rate. Table M-1 provides a comparison of the characteristics of NACAC Counseling Trends Survey respondents to those of all public and private secondary schools in the US. NACAC survey respondents were 78 percent public, 14 percent private, non-parochial and 8 percent private, parochial, making the sample slightly over-representative of private, non-parochial schools and under-representative of public schools. Table M-1 also shows that NACAC respondents were representative of all secondary schools in the percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch programs. However, NACAC respondent schools reported substantially larger enrollments.

The Counseling Trends Survey has been administered using different procedures in the past. In 2002, the survey was mailed to NACAC member schools only. Beginning in 2003, the survey was mailed to a combination of NACAC members and a random selection of US high schools (selected from the US Department of

Table M-1. NACAC 2011 Secondary School Counseling Trends Survey respondent characteristics compared to national school characteristics

	NACAC respondents	All schools	NACAC public respondents	All public schools	NACAC private, non-parochial respondents	All private, non-parochial schools	NACAC private, parochial respondents	All private, parochial schools
Total percent of schools	100%	100%	78.3%	89.9%	13.8%	3.3%	8.0%	6.8%
Enrollment								
Mean enrollment	892	593	967	607	574	102	706	369
Free and reduced price lunch[†]								
Mean percent eligible	45.0	47.5	47.1	47.5	9.5	--	8.4	--

-- not available.

[†] Survey respondents were asked to indicate participation in both federal and state-sponsored programs; national data is available for the federal program only.

NOTE: All NACAC respondent data are from 2011. National percentages by type of school and percentage eligible for free and reduced price lunch are from 2009-10. National mean enrollment data are from fall 2009 for public schools, private schools and all schools combined.

SOURCES: Keigher, A. (2009). *Characteristics of Public, Private, and Bureau of Indian Education Elementary and Secondary Schools in the United States: Results from the 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Survey* (NCES 2009-321). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 1).

Digest of Education Statistics. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Tables 5, 39 and 63 45).

NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2011.

Education's Common Core of Data). The total number of surveys mailed grew from 2,755 in 2003 to 10,000 in 2006 as NACAC's membership and research capacity grew. With the exception of 2009, a total of 10,000 surveys have been mailed since 2006. In 2009, all NACAC members and all public high schools (totaling 16,599) were included in the survey, but half of the schools received only a postcard with a link to the online version of the survey. Because the response rate to the online only survey was very low (fewer than 3 percent), this procedure was abandoned for subsequent administrations.

In the past 10 years, private schools and schools with large enrollment have been slightly over-represented among Counseling Trends Survey respondents.

NACAC's Admission Trends Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect information from college admission offices about application volume; the use of various enrollment management strategies, including wait lists, Early Decision and Early Action; the importance of various factors in the admission decision; and admission office functions, staff, budget and operations.

NACAC administered its 2011 Admission Trends Survey to the 1,347 four-year postsecondary institutions who were members of NACAC, which represented 68 percent of all four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title-IV institutions in the United States. The survey was administered online, in order to ease the time burden for respondents. An email invitation containing a web link to the survey was sent to a representative at each institu-

tion. The survey was administered from mid-November 2011 to early January 2012. From mid-February to mid-March 2012, the survey was re-issued to those from the original sample that had not yet responded in order to improve response rate.

NACAC received 369 total responses to the survey. The response rate for the survey was 27 percent, which represented 19 percent of all four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title-IV institutions. As shown in Table M-2, NACAC Admission Trends Survey respondents were somewhat over-representative of private colleges—with 73 percent private respondents compared to 60 percent nationally—and also tended to be larger, on average. Respondents were fairly representative of all colleges based on geographical region and average selectivity, but the private NACAC respondents tended to have lower yield rates.

Admission Trends Survey procedures differed slightly in previous years. In 2002 through 2004, the survey was mailed to all NACAC postsecondary members, including two-year institutions. In 2005, the survey was distributed to all four-year institutions in the United States plus two-year NACAC members. The proportion of two-year institutions in the sample of respondents ranged from seven to eleven percent for the 2002 through 2005 survey years. In 2006 through 2008 the survey was distributed to all four-year, not-for-profit, degree-granting, Title IV-participating institutions in the US. Starting in 2009, the survey was distributed only to four-year NACAC members. Since 2002, private institutions have been slightly over-represented among Admission Trends Survey respondents compared to postsecondary institutions nationally, and survey respondents have also had somewhat larger enrollments, on average.

Table M-2. NACAC 2011 Admission Trends Survey respondent characteristics compared to national college/university characteristics

	NACAC respondents	All colleges	NACAC public respondents	All public colleges	NACAC private respondents	All private colleges
Total	100%	100%	30.0%	26.1%	70.0%	73.9%
Enrollment						
Mean enrollment	5,918	3,601	14,677	7,667	2,219	1,680
Region						
New England	11.6%	9.9%	5.8%	9.5%	14.4%	10.0%
Middle States	19.8	18.0	17.3	15.1	19.8	19.1
South	19.3	24.9	26.0	28.3	16.9	23.6
Midwest	28.1	29.7	26.9	27.0	29.2	30.6
Southwest	5.8	7.0	6.7	12.0	5.3	5.2
West	15.5	10.5	17.3	8.0	14.4	11.4
Selectivity and Yield						
Mean Selectivity	65.9%	63.8%	66.5%	66.0%	65.3%	63.0%
Mean Yield	36.3	38.0	47.2	42.6	31.7	36.4

New England: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island
 Middle States: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
 South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia
 Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
 Southwest: Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
 West: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming

NOTE: Data for all colleges are for 2011-12. The list of colleges was drawn from the 2011-12 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Of the 1,967 total institutions, 1,243 (63 percent) provided selectivity and yield data for Fall 2011.

SOURCES: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2011.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2011-12). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.