

Modernizing Enrollment Management

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HIGHER ED

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A NEW ERA OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. This adage is especially true when it's applied to a prospective student's journey to enrolling at your institution. Often, their first interface with your school is the Admissions department. Making quality decisions accurately and quickly is important not only to the student experience — it can also affect future facets of institutional success, such as enrollment goals, tuition revenue, academic integrity and research opportunities.

All the while, the higher education landscape has grown more competitive. The volume of applications and transfers continues to grow. Large application pools are now the norm. And the move to hybrid and remote learning has opened up new pathways to degrees, including for nontraditional students.

This evolution in higher education can be a threat or an opportunity. Without a modern solution to outdated paper-based practices, one transcript can take an employee 20 minutes simply to key in. Considering the average ratio of staff to incoming transcripts is 1:527, it's obvious how much manual processes can bog down admissions and registrar departments. These time-intensive, error-prone methods are frustrating for staff and students alike.

[California State University East Bay](#) faced the burden of manual data entry and reviews during peak admissions periods, when intake volume can exceed 20,000 transcripts. The university implemented an intelligent capture solution that automates the initial capture and evaluation steps, extracts the relevant information, then imports it into Cal State's PeopleSoft SIS. A process that used to take up to four weeks can now be completed in one.

This is just one example why automating enrollment management processes is such a game-changer for higher education. A modern content services solution can speed admissions decision-making by:

- Automating tasks so your staff can focus on prospective and current students
- Integrating with student information systems and customer relationship management applications
- Supporting the creation of e-forms, e-signatures and student portals with little custom coding required
- Delivering an auditable access history for accountability, accessibility and compliance

In today's landscape, students have more options than ever. Highly efficient enrollment management is vital to attracting and enrolling students who are excited to begin their higher educational journey with your school. [Hyland](#) offers modern content services solutions that can help your school streamline enrollment management processes like admissions, financial aid, registrar and transcripts. That could be the edge you need to make acceptance decisions ahead of your competition and achieve your enrollment goals.

[Reach out](#) if you'd like to learn how Hyland can help your school — in admissions, across campus and beyond.



Sincerely,

Kevin Flanagan

Assistant Vice President, Sales
Hyland

Introduction

Enrollment management is changing constantly as colleges face conditions that they couldn't have predicted just a few years ago. COVID-19 accelerated many trends, but didn't actually create them. For most colleges, enrollment management is not about managing a flood of applicants, but about producing an applicant pool. That pool needs to be large enough to fill a class, and also diverse enough to meet other goals colleges have.

Colleges are working to attract students by getting them to think beyond their test scores. Colleges are expanding beyond their original campuses and building up new locations. Some colleges admit to the major, not the institution. And colleges are exploring direct admissions, in which students provide a portfolio as opposed to applying to the college.

All of these efforts have shown signs of success. But as the articles explain, there were costs associated with these plans as well. And for a college without a large endowment (which most colleges lack), a wrong move in enrollment management can lead fewer students to apply, or enroll.

The articles in this booklet cover those trends and many others. We welcome your feedback on these articles and your suggestions for future coverage.

-The Editors

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Top 3 benefits of automating transcript capture and evaluation

To meet increasingly challenging enrollment goals, many institutions today are seeking ways to better attract and enroll more transfer students. But time-consuming, manual methods for reviewing transcripts and course equivalencies often result in transfer students waiting long periods for answers on their admission status.

Students have many education options available to them, so delivering a seamless, timely transfer process can be critical as to whether a student chooses your institution over another. Automating transcript capture and evaluation can help your institution meet strategic goals by:

- Eliminating manual data entry with intelligent capture
- Expediting course evaluation and verification with automated workflows
- Consolidating data with student information system integration

It all adds up to faster, more efficient and more accurate credit evaluation decisions — and a better experience for students so they're more likely to enroll at your institution for their academic path.

For more insights on modernizing the transfer process, visit Hyland.com/Transcripts.

The Hyland logo is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page. It consists of the word "Hyland" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a square that has a green-to-teal gradient background.

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A Focus on Students, Not Their Scores

Lynn University finds that the personal focus of its admissions program works. New student enrollment is up 59 percent in the last 10 years.

By [Scott Jaschik](#) · Published August 22, 2022

New students arrived at Lynn University last week, 785 first-years and 100 transfer students. Both numbers are up from last year, when Lynn welcomed 759 freshmen and 86 transfers. Over a decade, the overall increase for new students is 59 percent, with the number of freshmen up 86 percent.

So how did Lynn increase those numbers, and keep those figures increasing despite the pandemic (which did cost Lynn students in the fall of 2020)? Despite Lynn being not well-known? Despite being located in Boca Raton, a desirable location, but still in Florida, which some admissions experts say could be undesirable for some students because of Governor Ron DeSantis, a Republican, and the laws he has been trying to pass (and enforce) against abortion and, many think, against academic freedom?

The answer is largely that Lynn believes, truly believes, in holistic admissions. And Lynn believes in not worrying too much about numbers—at least those that other colleges may rely on to measure a student's merit.

Gareth Fowles, vice president for enrollment and university advancement, said that Lynn believes in constantly getting to know better the applicants and their counselors in high schools. He's a perfect example of how Lynn recruits students. A member of Lynn's Class of 1999, he was recruited from his hometown of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, to play soccer at the university. He originally worked in advancement at Lynn, then moved to admissions and this year is in charge of both areas.

"We truly try to connect with people wherever we can," said Fowles. "That can mean at meetings of counselors, or visiting high schools and traveling all over the world."

With COVID-19, he said Lynn expanded its video offerings about everything: how to submit a competitive application, financial aid, different majors, careers for graduates, athletics, other extracurricular activities and more.

The goal is to be as specific as possible, so a student who can't visit Lynn can find out what she wants to know.

And Lynn tries to interview (some via Zoom) as many students as possible. It varies, but most years Lynn interviews about 70 percent of its applicants.

"Although we don't call them interviews," said Fowles. "We call it a conversation."

The idea of the conversation is to discover what about a student isn't revealed by his official record. "Once students get to know who we are," he said, Lynn's chances of getting the student improve.

The approach worked to reverse an enrollment decline about a decade ago, he said.

Other Factors

A number of other tactics have also contributed to Lynn's success.

Fowles pointed to Lynn's [three-year program](#), in which students who have



(Lynn University)

or earn the credits can graduate in three years. The college's tuition is not set on credits earned, so the students who choose this program generally save \$50,000.

And there's a [one-credit seminar](#) for all new students in which they explore one new book and learn about Lynn.

Lynn had been test optional since long before the pandemic. But Fowles said more students are taking advantage of that option: this year, 80 percent of students applied without submitting standardized test scores. In previous years, the figure was 60 percent.

Lynn gets between 17 and 18 percent of its students from outside the United States. But Lynn hasn't suffered, as many colleges have, from lost international students during the pandemic. Fowles thinks the reason is the location of the students' homes. The top five countries (outside of the U.S.) represented at Lynn are: Brazil, the Bahamas, Italy, Spain and Venezuela. The tilt toward Latin America is common for colleges in Florida and has served Lynn well during the pandemic.

A Focus on Students, Not Their Scores

Of course, this year it may be more difficult to recruit non-Floridians to Florida colleges. Roughly half of Lynn's students are from outside the state. Many in admissions suspect that as young women, who overwhelmingly support abortion rights, make their college choices this year, they may be reluctant to go to [states that are pushing antiabortion legislation](#). (The Supreme Court decision reversing *Roe v. Wade* happened after most students had made commitments to colleges, meaning the impact will be difficult to measure until next year.)

Fowles said, "Lynn's focus is its students and building strong relationships with high school counselors across the country. If they continue doing this and deliver a positive experience that prepares students for their futures, the admission team is confident that they will continue find success."

The Counselor Role

Fowles stressed the counselor role

in everything Lynn does to attract students.

Christopher D. Miller, director of college counseling at the Sandy Spring Friends School, in Maryland, said Lynn doesn't "feel old." (It was founded in 1962.) "Many students go to college to be a part of a long tradition, but students who look at Lynn see it as a place where they feel like they still define tradition and, more or less, continue blazing a trail."

He said Lynn also gets students "as a balanced cross-section of a small liberal arts education and an education that they see as useful and practical. More and more, students want to see that value proposition in their college experience, and Lynn does a great job at communicating what comes out on the other side."

And Miller said that Lynn benefits from its location. "Simply put, Lynn is beautiful, and it's evolving with new facilities

and community spaces to accommodate its growing student body as it continues to move beyond its reputation as a local or regional institution," he said.

Sharon Bikoundou, associate director of college counseling at the Carrollwood Day School, in Florida, attributed Lynn's success this way: "I think it is because they build genuine connections with the counselors. As I am sure you know, when the counselors love a place, they talk about it to students and families. The better they know a school, the more they can recommend it."

She added, "Lynn is known as a welcoming, supportive place that is quick to adjust its teaching, student life or support in general to help their student body. They have a wonderful staff that responds to counselors and students in a supportive manner versus some campuses where you can't reach a soul." ■

[Read Original Article](#) ▶▶

<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/08/22/lynn-u-gains-students-focusing-students-not-their-scores>

Trine Tries a Double Approach to Admissions

It's filling up its class with traditional-age students—and also pushing international graduate students into two other campuses.

By **Scott Jaschik** · Published August 15, 2022

Trine University is located in Angola, Ind., which isn't one of the cities or suburbs to which college students flock. Angola is a small city in the far northeast of Indiana, near rural parts of Ohio (to the east) and Michigan (to the north).

The university was founded in 1884, but until 2008, it was known as Tri-State University (and before that, as Tri-State College). It changed its name because it wanted to be clear that it was not a state university but a private institution.

Its location, and its lack of fame, may make you think it is losing students, but in fact Trine is expecting a total enrollment of more than 7,000 students this year, an increase of nearly 30 percent. And that's on top of a 17 percent increase in enrollment last year.

So how is Trine doing so well? Not because the university is wealthy; its endowment is only about \$50 million.

Trine is pursuing a strategy that involves two main parts: holding on to its traditional student body for as long as possible and building new programs to attract new sorts of students. That's certainly been tried by other colleges, sometimes with controversy over the new students that a college hasn't historically served. But in something of a twist, Trine has separate campuses for the two efforts. While the main campus remains in Angola, it has created two physical campuses (in Detroit and Phoenix) for new graduate students, most of them



Evan Gustin, right, associate dean of student affairs at Trine University, speaks to incoming students at an event this summer. (Dean Orewiler/Trine University)

from outside the United States.

Traditional Students

Kimberly Bennett, vice president for enrollment management at Trine, said the college has attracted 730 new students for its traditional residential program in Angola, compared to 699 last year. Trine projects 1,575 students will live in residential facilities on the Angola campus this fall, an increase of 50 from fall 2021.

She said it is not any one thing that has worked, but a variety of things. The college has added new sports (such as men's rugby) that have brought additional students to Trine. The university continues to see growth in health sciences programming, including "direct-entry options" that allow students

to continue seamlessly from undergraduate to graduate programs.

An overall emphasis is on the jobs students will get after they graduate.

The college boasts an almost perfect (99 percent) job-placement rate for its graduates. And word about that rate spreads. "It's word of mouth," Bennett said. "We have a very personal approach."

Trine follows up with internships for students, and that keeps job placements high, she said.

The total number of applicants for the traditional program is going up: from 3,845 for the fall of 2020 to 4,005 for the fall of 2021 and 4,450 for this fall. Most of the applicants were admitted

Trine Tries a Double Approach to Admissions

(as is the case at most colleges). The yield has been fairly constant: 22 percent in 2020 and this year, 21 percent last year.

“I think there is an enrollment cliff coming” for colleges like Trine, Bennett said. The reason is demographic changes; there are going to be fewer students of traditional college age graduating in the region from which Trine attracts students. Trine recently did new estimates of when the cliff will hit, and Bennett expects it to hit in 2026 or 2027.

Trine’s traditional enrollment will fall in a few years, but she’s determined to keep enrollment at current levels until then. Most of the (traditional) students are from Indiana, or near the state, in a part of the country where the population is decreasing. Bennett thinks that, at the same time, the university needs to explore new programs.

A major effort has gone into the Detroit and Phoenix campuses, for different kinds of students. The university expects 1,300 new graduate students, twice the number from last year. Success doesn’t come instantly, Bennett said. This is the fourth year the university has had a Detroit facility and the third year in Phoenix. The students are almost all international, and they come from all over the world—Bennett mentioned Bangladesh, India, Sweden and Latvia as countries that have sent

more than a few students. Visas have generally not been a problem, she said.

The key to success with these students is the same as with other students: jobs. The Phoenix campus offers an M.B.A. and master of science programs in engineering management, information services and business analytics.

Earl D. Brooks II, Trine’s president, said he viewed the university’s success as very much related to its emphasis on jobs. “We’ve always had a foot and been heavily involved in working with businesses and corporations,” he said.

He stressed that though the university has expanded programs for graduate students, it is also heavily focused on its main campus. In the last five years, it has spent more than \$200 million on facilities.

Following Nathan Grawe

Brooks said that the plans at Trine are the work of Trine administrators and not any consultant.

But the approach Trine is taking is in many ways consistent with the work of Nathan D. Grawe, a professor of social sciences at Carleton College. In two books published by Johns Hopkins University Press, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*, in 2018, and *The Agile College*, in 2021,

he argued that most colleges will face a drop in enrolling new students in the years ahead. But he also offered a caveat: if colleges want more students, they need to recruit the students who aren’t going to college now.

Via email, he said of Trine’s efforts, “From the end of World War II through 2013, higher education never experienced a five-year decline in enrollments. But since the peak in 2010, enrollment reductions have been persistent with each year bringing fewer students to campuses than the last. Obviously, COVID contributed to more recent enrollment losses, but even before the start of the pandemic, undergraduate enrollments had fallen 12 percent. Of course, CDC births data suggest we can expect lean markets in higher education for at least two more decades. While demographics play a role, recent declines in matriculation rates by high school graduates also raise questions about the public’s view of higher education’s value proposition. With so many challenges, it’s encouraging to see institutions responding proactively—willing to seek out new student markets, revise curricula, and develop new methods to support student success. Not all institutions will be able to offset enrollment declines with such work, but many can hope to significantly reduce resulting stresses while better fulfilling their missions. That is my hope for higher education as we confront enrollment pressures.” ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/08/15/trine-u-attracts-students-traditional-and-new-offerings>

Admissions to the Major

Some colleges, mostly large publics, admit by major. Is this system actually better for students? It depends who they are and what they study.

By **Scott Jaschik** · Published October 3, 2022

Let's say you were a star student at an Illinois high school last year. You want to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, so you check out the Princeton Review's guide. You find out that Illinois is competitive in admissions, but how competitive?

The answer actually depends on what you want to study.

To reach its class of 7,963 first-year students this fall, the university started with 63,258 applicants. It admitted 28,355 of them. That's a competitive class to be sure, admitting 45 percent of those who applied.

But let's say you want to study computer science, which was the intended major of 16 percent of the applicants. Of the 10,214 applicants, the university admitted only 7 percent of them.

Or let's say you wanted to study business, which was the first choice of more than 10 percent of all applicants. Of the 6,771 applicants, 28 percent were admitted.

But those figures are only part of the story.

For those who wanted to study agriculture and environmental studies, 43 percent were admitted. For education, the figure was 52 percent. For liberal arts and sciences, the figure was 50 percent (with considerable differences among different majors).

The School of General Studies, to which students who haven't yet declared a



(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

major can be admitted, has an admit rate of 49 percent. But students aren't guaranteed admission to all the other colleges.

These figures don't come from some leak at Illinois. Andy Borst, director of undergraduate admissions UIUC, presented them last month in Houston at the annual meeting of the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

It was a session organized by Phil Trout, a college counselor at Minnetonka High School, in Minnesota. He described a tradition at his high school of posting (with their permission) where students would be attending college. He described one student who insisted that Minnetonka announce that he had been accepted to "the Ross School." He preferred that association to the University of Michigan, home to the Stephen

M. Ross School of Business. (The real Ross School brands itself as "Michigan Ross.") Trout said he was pleased with the information shared by the research universities in three states.

Other universities at the session also presented data showing just how much more difficult it is to get into some of their programs.

The University of Minnesota–Twin Cities admitted 74 percent of the 38,030 applicants this fall. In its nursing school, the university admitted 30 percent of the 1,075 applicants. For its business school, Minnesota admitted 33 percent of the 7,675 students who applied.

Purdue University admitted 53 percent of the 68,309 students who applied for admission in the fall. But for engineering, the admit rate was 41 percent; for computer science, the admit rate was

Admissions to the Major

33 percent; for aviation, the rate was 28 percent.

For all three of these universities, there were a range of factors that went into admissions decisions, including whether students lived in the state, in some cases whether they applied early action and—of course—the quality of students' applications. But there was no doubt that it was much harder for some students to get in than it was for others.

What They Say

The University of Minnesota views admissions to a major "as a way to support students as they begin their college career," said Keri Risic, interim executive director of admission at Minnesota. "Students can continue to explore majors further as they begin their undergraduate studies."

She added that "there are multiple benefits to the student such as access to academic advising and career services

tailored to their personal and career goals and opportunity to connect with faculty and staff in their college from day one. Students can also get to know other students in their college more quickly and build community."

Illinois's Borst said, "No system is perfect, but I do appreciate our admissions process."

He said via email that the system used by Illinois "has two significant implications." They relate to the number of professors that the university is able to hire in certain departments. "One: it avoids having many talented students who can't get the classes they need to graduate on time, and two [it] helps to be efficient with time to degree."

"When an admissions office is charged with enrolling 7,000 or more students in a first-year cohort, the direct entry model helps us to align student interest with academic program capacity," Borst said. "If we admitted to the university

without regard to major, our computer science program would be almost four times (360 percent) over capacity and some of our smaller colleges would only enroll at about 75-85 percent of current enrollment levels."

He also said that the Illinois system enrolls many more minority students than it would otherwise.

"It [allows] UIUC to have 183 different admission standards, which may differ greatly between the sometimes competing priorities among the academic programs," he said. "Our recent analysis showed that if UIUC used an admit-to-university model like many other universities, rather than the direct entry model, enrollment of Hispanic and African American students would drop by almost 30 percent. That is about 450 diverse students in one first-year cohort, and almost 2,000 students over four years, who wouldn't be on our campus if we used one admission standard for all of campus." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/10/03/some-universities-admit-major>



UT Dallas tackles enrollment challenges with OnBase

A Hyland customer since 2005, UT Dallas (UTD) uses OnBase in 25 departments across campus. Its most impactful use case is in Admissions, where the software scans applications and utilizes workflows to automate acceptance decisions. Leveraging OnBase, UTD makes admit decisions less than 48 hours after receiving an application, helping the school achieve a piece of its strategic plan: To admit quality students as quickly as possible.

“Research states that when students choose a school, one of the factors is simply which one admits them first. With OnBase expediting the decision-making process on our end, we can reach best-fit applicants sooner.”

– **Brad Skiles**, Digital Content Services Manager, UT Dallas

27,000

Students

10%

Growth each year

48 hours

Time UTD takes to make admit decisions

17

Years as a Hyland customer

Discover how UTD uses Hyland solutions across 25 departments by [downloading the full case study](#).



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Bridging a Growing Divide

A new program spearheaded by the University of Wyoming seeks to prepare rural students for college and bridge a divide between far-flung communities and higher ed institutions in the state.

By [Sara Weissman](#) · Published September 29, 2022

The University of Wyoming is launching a new program focused on boosting enrollment and graduation rates among rural students in the state. Campus administrators hope the initiative builds stronger ties between higher ed institutions and rural communities in Wyoming at a time when some rural residents across the country feel ideologically distant from academic institutions and are increasingly questioning the value of a college degree.

The three-year program, called the UW High Altitude Pathway, is a partnership between the university and College for Every Student (CFES) Brilliant Pathways, an organization that runs college-access and career-readiness programming focused on low-income K-12 students in rural areas. The initiative will provide college-prep training to up to 2,000 high school students selected from 10 rural public schools, funded by a \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The students are also scheduled to tour campuses virtually and participate in a multiday stay at the University of Wyoming campus in summer 2023, where they'll take sample courses.

The program also includes training for school administrators, counselors, support staff and local community members to nurture students' college ambitions and teach them about and help them navigate the admissions process.

"This is about culture change within the schools," said Scott Thomas, the John P. "Jack" Ellbogen Dean of the Univer-



(University of Wyoming)

sity of Wyoming College of Education. "We're going to try to affect the water in each one of these schools in ways that shape the culture to a college and career orientation in those communities."

The majority of counties in Wyoming—17 out of 23—are rural, according to the [Wyoming Department of Health](#). The state has one of the lowest college enrollment rates in the country, and just over half of state residents, 52 percent, hold a college degree or certificate, according to a [news release](#) from the University of Wyoming, the only four-year public higher ed institution in the state.

Rural students nationally attend and graduate from college at lower rates than their peers. Only 30.4 percent of rural-area residents age 25 and older held an associate degree or higher in 2019, compared to 43.2 percent of

adults in cities, according to data from the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#).

Higher ed institutions have increasingly [sought to attract](#) and graduate these students. For example, Stanford University launched the Stanford Rural Engagement Network in 2018 to study and increase awareness of the challenges facing rural students, and Harvard University created its National Center for Rural Education Research Networks a year later. The Education Design Lab, an organization focused on education innovation, also started the Building Rural Innovation, Designing Educational Strategies, or BRIDGES, in 2020 to help rural community colleges create pilot programs to support their students.

Rural students face obstacles to going to college such as high rates of poverty, spotty internet access and a lack

Admissions to the Major

of reliable transportation to and from campuses that are often miles away. But there are also psychological barriers, said Dreama Gentry, the CEO of Partners for Rural Impact, a nonprofit organization focused on improving academic and career outcomes for rural students.

"In areas where you have persistent poverty and economic challenges, I think there's this lack of hope that the outcome can be any different, and I think that lack of hope is shared by the students and the parents," she said.

She noted that many rural students also see limited job prospects in their surrounding communities and don't know how college credentials could lead to those jobs.

A 'Building Distrust'

Rick Dalton, CEO of CFES Brilliant Pathways, said initiatives such as the University of Wyoming's program also come at a time when he's seen a "building distrust for higher education in rural communities," which the program seeks to address.

He believes the distrust is partially a reaction to the increasing cost of college, which is why the program will also teach students about accessing financial aid and finding other ways to pay for college. The initiative also will help students explore fields of study that could lead to well-paying careers and will give students opportunities to meet college graduates from their communities.

"It doesn't work nearly as well if I or a CFES professional goes into a school and talks," Dalton said. "But if we can get someone who they know, who has been transformed by higher education, then they certainly hear that message."

Gentry said increased political polarization nationally has worsened already strained relations between conservative-leaning rural communities and higher ed institutions viewed as liberal-dominated spaces.

Students are sometimes deterred from going to college, and staying enrolled, by parents worried about their children "being influenced by folks whose values might be different," she said.

Gentry recalled a rural high school student telling her that she expected to be judged once she got to college and that "folks were going to say, 'Well, you're from this rural place and you're going to have to believe A, B and C ... Because of where you come from, your beliefs are wrong,'" she said. When more conservative rural students "end up in a class where the professor is operating off of an acceptance that everyone in the room believes a certain thing, and they don't, it becomes a hard place for them."

Rural families also sometimes fear that their children will earn degrees that prepare them for jobs outside their hometowns and that they'll leave and won't return, Thomas said. He noted that part of building trust with students and parents is shedding light on how different kinds of programs, including

career and technical education credentials at community colleges, can help fill labor market needs in their communities.

"If you're not attending to career and technical education issues as a foundational opportunity in a program like this, you're going to be missing the boat," he said. "These sentiments run deep, and they're real."

Lisa Larson, head of the Community College Growth Engine Fund at the Education Design Lab, said she encountered this concern when she was president of Eastern Maine Community College. Nursing school graduates were relocating to Bangor for better-paying jobs, which left a local rural community with unfilled nursing positions and members of the community feeling "like they hadn't been heard" and their workforce needs had been ignored by college officials. She responded by creating a nursing program at a satellite center of the college within the community.

Larson said college leaders have to ask themselves, "What does a partnership look like to change the narrative? ... And that starts to build trust."

Thomas, the dean of education, said he'd be glad to see the new program bring more rural students to the University of Wyoming, but the goal is to expose students to the full range of academic opportunities available to them and "stoke those aspirations ... in ways that are meaningful to them and relevant to their communities." ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/09/29/new-college-prep-program-rural-wyoming-students>

Direct Admissions Takes Off

Colleges for the first time have a real alternative, and so far the new approach is getting strong reviews. But predicting yield is anyone's guess.

By **Scott Jaschik** · Published October 24, 2022

Last year was in many ways the kick-off of direct admissions in the United States. The company Concourse set up a system for students to be considered by 10 colleges in the Chicago area, all colleges with strong track records at admitting and graduating low-income students, many of whom are minority students as well. The students create profiles of themselves with their grades and what they want to study, but the students don't actually apply to a college. The colleges reach out to students they want to admit. More than 650 students were offered spots in college last year, with generous scholarships. The colleges were not among the elites of higher education, and that was not the program's intent.

This year, Concourse has 125 colleges around various cities in the United States making admission offers, said Joe Morrison, the CEO. "And there are many more in the onboarding pipeline, which is growing rapidly," he said.

Concourse was recently [purchased](#) by EAB. "We are getting inquiries daily from new institutions who want to join," said Morrison.

The Common Application has been experimenting with direct admissions as well. This year, it will have 14 colleges involved and will start sharing student portfolios with the colleges on Nov. 1. The colleges are: Augsburg, Austin Peay State, Frostburg State, George Mason, Iona, Kean, Marymount, Montclair State, New Jersey City, Stockton and Virginia Commonwealth Universities; Mercy and Utica Colleges; and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.



(Augsburg University)

Most of those colleges will go on with traditional admissions as well.

[Sage Scholars](#), a company that has worked with students on their financial aid since 1995, is moving into the direct admissions space. Sage has 26 private institutions—including Hendrix College, Milliken University, Loyola University New Orleans and Washington & Jefferson College—signed up so far.

"We are sending, this week or next, about 6,000 hard-copy letters—two different messages—to parents, as we think that the parents are going to be very involved in this process," said James B. Johnston, president of Sage.

He expects colleges to view the profiles "as a continuum, rather than a one-and-done event."

One of the colleges participating in the Sage program is Goldey-Beacom College, in Delaware.

Colleen Perry Keith, the president of Goldey-Beacom, said via email, "We have had interest from students that have come to us from Sage."

She added that "once we began the process of screening students to offer admission, we realized the number of students from which we could choose was much larger than we anticipated. This, of course, is a wonderful problem to have, but has set us back a step as we must determine how to narrow the field of students to whom we will reach out. We want the students to whom we extend offers to know they have been carefully chosen, and are not just one of thousands who have received offers

Direct Admissions Takes Off

of the 'To Whom It May Concern' variety."

She added, "As this is a new endeavor for us, we want to start on the right foot, and we should begin extending our first offers the first week in November. We want to strike early, but not before we have developed a sensible plan that serves these students and the college well. We rolled our annual tuition back to \$13,050 (our endowment is quite large for a college our size so we fund that from endowment earnings) and offer aid on top of that so we suspect we will be an interesting and financially viable option for Sage Scholars."

Minnesota

One of the states with the most movement toward direct admissions this year is Minnesota. For the first year, Minnesota offered every high school the chance to participate—40 are participating. Over [50 colleges and universities](#)—public, private and tribally controlled, two year and four year—are opting in.

"Currently, about half of the participating high schools have sent out letters to their students," said Keith Hovis of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. "As with any new program, we are working through processes during this first round of implementation and ensuring we have all the contracts and paperwork in place. We are working closely with the remaining high schools who have not sent out letters yet and believe they should be able to send out their letters in the next few weeks. These letters provide each student with a personalized list of colleges that are proactively offering that student admittance. The student is then able

to fill out an application for the college of their choice, and we are excited to say that the application fee is waived for the application, removing one more financial barrier for the student."

Alyson Leas, director of admissions at the University of Minnesota at Crookston, which plans to seek applicants through direct admissions this year, said she's still waiting for the Office of Higher Education to send her the potential students.

But she said via email that she's thrilled with the program. "When the idea of direct admission was proposed, I think many colleges had the knee-jerk reaction of 'It will never work!' I was ecstatic, though. When you boil it down, how many of us are doing direct admissions by a different name? If a student gives an admissions counselor a copy of their transcript, that counselor can almost always tell that student right then and there whether or not they will be accepted. All the application is doing is confirming some information that can largely be found on the transcript and getting our communications team some things they'd like to know for targeting.

"Direct admissions is taking away two obstacles from students. One being those students who have already told themselves they could never get into a college and the second obstacle being having time to complete an application. We in the industry know an application (without essay) can take less than 30 minutes, but students don't know that. It's a process that's been hyped up their entire lives. This system allows them to go from 'Do I have the time to go through an application? Will

I even get in?' to 'Oh. I'm in.'"

All In at Augsburg

Augsburg University isn't waiting for the Office of Higher Education, said Robert J. Gould, vice president for strategic enrollment management.

"We are so excited about this," he said. "We're all in on direct admissions."

Most colleges start with just admitting some applicants through direct admission, keeping traditional admissions for now. But Augsburg is shifting all applications to direct admissions. The university will be in the Common App's program and the state of Minnesota's. But the college has also made it possible for anyone with a profile that's ready to let Augsburg know that they would like to be reviewed.

So far, 639 students have done so. Compared to last year, that's a 70 percent increase. Augsburg has admitted 487, compared with 150 a year ago.

Gould said the average time to respond to a student has been seven minutes. He said he's uncertain about yield this year but assumes it will be less than it has been. But he's willing to have uncertainty about yield.

Augsburg admissions counselors are shifting their time from reviewing applications to talking to those admitted about the university and what the students hope to accomplish there. Those are the discussions that motivated many of them to become admissions counselors, he said.

"It's a dream come true," Gould said. ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/10/24/direct-admissions-takes>

How Al Roker and the Faculty Helped Land Students

At SUNY Oswego, officials declared that everyone—including alumni and professors—was involved in admissions, and it worked.

By **Scott Jaschik** · Published May 23, 2022

Around the time prospective students were deciding where to enroll this year, the State University of New York at Oswego sent them some letters.

One, for those considering the communications school, was from Al Roker. “Al Roker here, SUNY Oswego Class of 1976. (Yes, I am older than your parents),” he began, before talking about his career as weather anchor and co-host of the Today show. He wrote that he attended Oswego without ever having seen it, or seen any of the Great Lakes (Oswego is on Lake Ontario). He was a first-generation student. Why Oswego? “Because they accepted me!”

But the value of his Oswego education, he wrote, was much more. “Every day ... I use what I learned at Oswego State.” He cited a late professor who was a mentor and the emphasis on “hands-on learning.” And he mentioned having returned to Oswego to co-teach a course.

Like many colleges, Oswego turned to alumni to help in the recruitment process. In addition to Roker, Oswego sent letters to potential business students from Bob Moritz, the global chair of PricewaterhouseCoopers and a member of the Class of 1985.

But Oswego also relied on alumni who are not famous. Those considering the education school heard from Rachel Edic, who graduated in 2017 and earned a master’s degree the next year. She described how her Oswego education prepared her to teach at the North Colonie Central School District in New York. She described joining clubs in addition to her courses. She



An admitted students’ day (SUNY Oswego)

also said that when she sees someone in an Oswego hoodie, “there is an instant connection.”

The letters from alumni were one part of an “everyone’s involved” approach to admissions at Oswego. Generally, the years since the pandemic hit have been tough for regional public universities (outside of California’s). Regional universities like Oswego recruit primarily in their home state, which in Oswego’s case is losing population. The declines at Oswego started before the pandemic but grew during the last two years.

There are several things to note on the chart above. First, note the size of the declines at Oswego in applications. From 2018 to 2021, applications

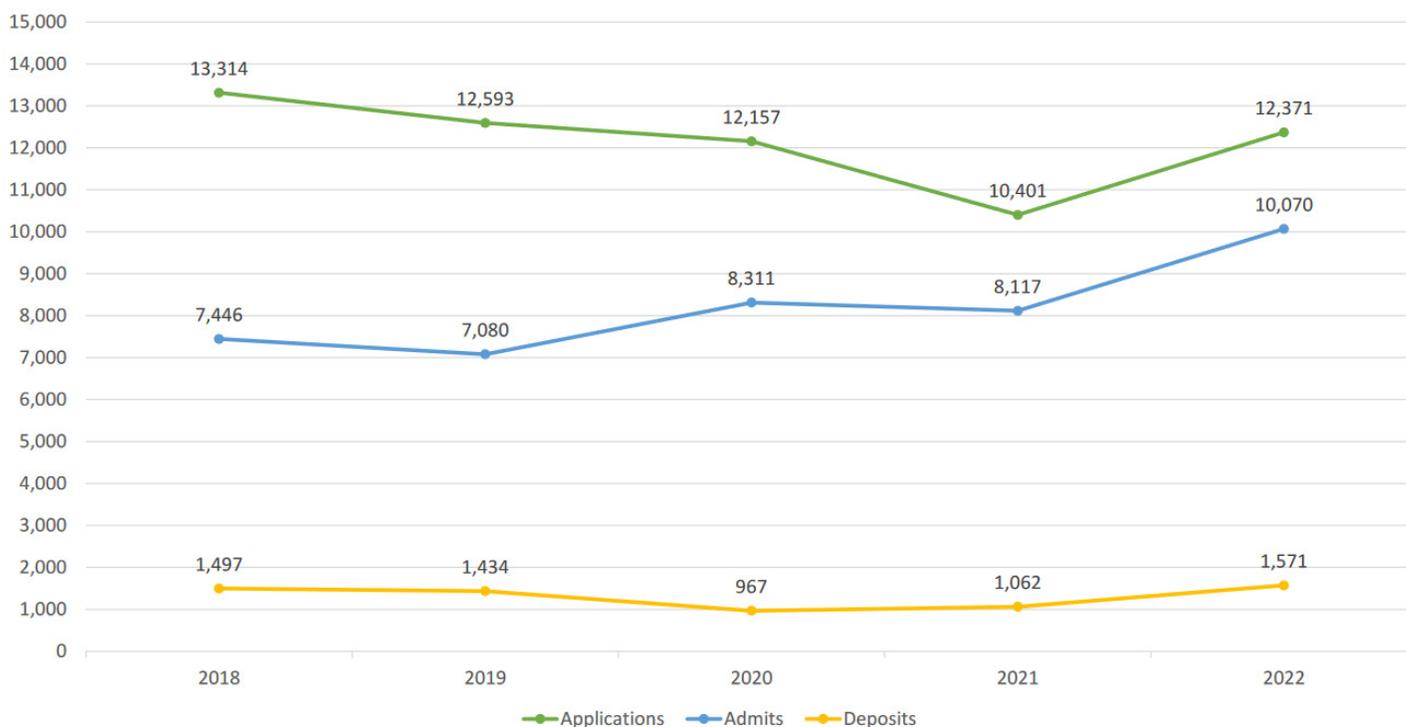
dropped from 13,314 to 10,401. Second, it’s important to note that Oswego, like most four-year colleges, admits most of those who apply. In fact, the percentage of admitted students is greater this year (81 percent) than in the recent past. The reason this year for the university’s success is the increased yield.

In 2020, 967 students had made a deposit to enroll by mid-May. In 2021, 1,062 students did. This year 1,571 students did, an increase of nearly 50 percent in one year. At Oswego, and at most colleges, admissions is about getting the applicant pool high enough so that an increase in yield is possible. (Oswego has the dormitory space to house all the students, so that was not a problem.) Thirty-five percent of the

How Al Roker and the Faculty Helped Land Students



Fall Semester First-Year Applied, Admitted, Deposited (as of May 11th each year)



students were members of minority groups.

At the Top

Mary C. Toale, officer in charge (SUNY language for acting president) at Oswego, said the key to the university's admissions success was "our all-in" approach. "It's the entire campus," she said.

Oswego draws students from all over New York State (in addition to a small contingent from abroad).

The university's approach is a mix of in-person and email (or other digital) events. Toale also said "very direct communication with parents" is important.

Also key was a three-week period when no fees were charged for applications.

Oswego received 3,000 during that time period.

Another big emphasis was on going to students and parents, especially in New York City. Toale said she thought of recruitment not just being of students, "but the recruitment of families."

She said materials were addressed to students, but with the idea that many parents would be reading them as well.

And for students who wanted, there were free bus trips to Oswego. (Oswego is near the southeast corner of Lake Ontario, north of Syracuse.)

Oswego also changed the timing of its acceptance letters and its financial aid awards. Acceptance letters are now under rolling admissions and start in November. Aid letters are also coming out in November and December in-

stead of January or February.

Scott Furlong, provost and vice president for academic affairs and enrollment, said summer melt is an issue, but the university is continuing to accept applicants to make up for any losses. At its heaviest impact, summer melt has cost Oswego up to 10 percent of students who committed to attend. He also said a range of programs linking the incoming students to current students are designed to minimize the impact of summer melt.

The Faculty Role

Faculty members and deans of academic subjects were also recruited to help.

Kristin Croyle, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, said she was thrilled to help in part because she arrived in 2019 (before the pandemic), so

How Al Roker and the Faculty Helped Land Students

this was the first admissions cycle in which she could participate. She traveled for events in New York City and on Long Island. (She said the deans focused on the longer trips, as faculty members needed to be on campus for classes.)

Parents and students were interested in college costs, of course, but parents especially wanted to know about students' prospects for internships and jobs after graduation.

Murat Yasar, associate professor of history, traveled to Rochester and also participated in campus lunches for students who had been admitted.

He found that careers were a regular topic with parents. Many parents were reassured that most history majors do not go on to graduate school in history but work for businesses or in education. While most people in academe know that, it was news to many he spoke to.

Yasar also found that because of his

“

Al Roker here,
SUNY Oswego Class of 1976.
(Yes, I am older than your parents),” he began,
before talking about his career as weather anchor
and co-host of the Today show. He wrote that
he attended Oswego without ever having seen it,
or seen any of the Great Lakes (Oswego is on Lake
Ontario). He was a first-generation student.

Why Oswego? “Because
they accepted me!!

”

participation, it seemed to dawn on parents that faculty members are very involved with their students.

Kelly Roe, professor and chair of graphic design at Oswego, said parents asked questions about mental health

issues in addition to career questions.

Roe said that faculty members were happy to contribute to the effort, viewing it as a way to assure that they will continue to have jobs teaching a range of courses. “It’s a win-win,” Roe said. ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/05/23/how-suny-oswego-had-great-year-recruiting-new-students>



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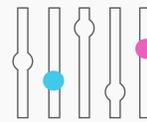
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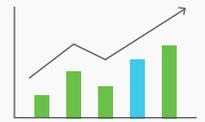
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Survey: College Admissions Due for a Digital Upgrade

Colleges' digital outreach to prospective students via social media, text messages and email has proven effective, a new report says. But many admissions professionals struggle to extract stories from imperfect data.

By **Susan D'Agostino** · Published October 10, 2022

"The pandemic really pushed us into an era where we realized the necessity of technology," Cassie Cunningham, assistant director of admissions at the University of Akron, said of her institution's efforts to adjust its communications strategy for engaging prospective students.

Today, many colleges have favorite digital channels for communicating with prospective students, including those that elevate social media (70 percent), text/SMS (67 percent) and email marketing (63 percent), according to a new survey of 150 university leaders published by Mongoose, a company focused on college and university admissions and communications. Such outreach has proven effective, these leaders say. But many struggle to extract stories from data produced by imperfect platforms and to communicate the return on investment that digital admissions tools deliver.

For example, an enhanced text messaging program helped the University of Akron cool summer melt—students who commit but do not show up—according to the study. Many of the text messages required only a thumbs-up or thumbs-down emoji in response. But that immediacy and spontaneity made a difference, Cunningham said.

"With frequent texting, we could continue to build that relationship and check in with the new class more often and in a more direct way than through email, which often slips through the cracks," Cunningham said.

While admissions professionals understand the value of digital tools for



(PeopleImages/Getty Images)

engaging prospective students, more than one-third of the survey respondents (36 percent) struggle to communicate their return on investment to college budget officials. The same percentage also struggles to clarify that digital admissions tools are often not one-size-fits-all.

"It can be challenging when the person who will ultimately use the digital tool doesn't have a seat at the table in prioritizing budget," Mike Kochczynski, Mongoose client engagement manager, said. "They are the ones who can identify what methods and features are most effective."

Nearly all (90 percent) of the survey respondents who use customer relationship management systems, student information systems or enterprise resources planning platforms are frustrated. More than half (57 percent) find relying on their marketing or IT departments for data reporting difficult. Even so, those data often tell an incomplete story—a shortcoming some attribute to the platforms.

While customer relationship management systems are "a practical and powerful broadcast tool to ably handle outgoing messages en masse, they can create roadblocks in one-to-one

Survey: College Admissions Due for a Digital Upgrade

communication and accessing individual incoming replies—especially via text,” the report stated.

When evaluating a digital admissions communication strategy, two-fifths (40 percent) of the executives who responded to the survey prioritized the total cost of ownership. More than one-third (34 percent) were primarily concerned with gaining a competitive advantage. Approximately one-quarter prioritized enabling business goals (26 percent), saving staff time (25 percent) or easing the burden of implementation (24 percent).

“Any large-scale [customer relationship management] or [enterprise resources planning] system requires a significant monetary investment—not just in short-term initial costs, but in onboarding fees and multiyear contracts,” Kochczynski said.

Many (42 percent) of the higher ed executives who responded to the survey continue to view email as the most effective digital admissions communications tool. Still, half expect that their



It can be challenging when the person who will ultimately use the digital tool doesn't have a seat at the table in prioritizing budget. They are the ones who can identify what methods and features are most effective.



institutions' websites will be upgraded to include chat bots or webchats in the 2022–23 academic year. That approach may be more egalitarian, according to Kochczynski.

“First-gen students might not be as savvy to know to go to a specialty website like College Confidential or Reddit,

and they might not have a peer group in the know,” Kochczynski said, “That means they can miss out on insider information about the college admissions process, so it's huge to have schools investing in their website and other outreach to make it easier for students and their families to seek advice and news.” ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/10/10/survey-digital-engagement-prospective-college-students>

How to (and How Not to) Recruit Minority Students

At NACAC meeting, educators share tips for how colleges can land a diverse student body. And others caution about what not to do.

By **Scott Jaschik** · Published September 26, 2022

HOUSTON—How can a college recruit more minority students? The answer seems to frustrate many colleges, whose leaders say they want more diversity on their campuses. Also frustrated are the people (many of them minority professionals themselves) tasked with coming up with ideas for how to recruit more students. At a panel here, at the annual meeting of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, four of those individuals explained their perspectives. They said their efforts need more money and more support from top levels of the administration. But they also said that the strategies that work are known and can succeed (at least if the Supreme Court doesn't outlaw them).

Amethyst Black, associate director of admissions for access and inclusion at Rice University, set up the conversation as being about BIPOC students: Black, Indigenous and people of color. She said the term was most used in the summer of 2020, when anger over police violence against Black people (George Floyd was murdered that May) merged with anger over campus issues for many people. Of course, this was also the time when many people were not on a campus due to the pandemic.

But Black stressed that colleges have no choice but to take BIPOC recruitment seriously. White students are themselves becoming a minority (among high school graduates), she said. Any college leader should care, she said.

Justin Childs, admissions coordinator at Florida International University, then talked about the impact of COVID-19.



(Northwestern University)

While many colleges lost minority enrollments, he said the real impact will come due to the lost enrollments (of all students, but especially minority students) in elementary and secondary schools. These students are much less likely to enroll in any college, he said.

Miya Walker, director of admission at Agnes Scott College, in Georgia, then reviewed challenges that can deter BIPOC students from enrolling, including a lack of funds (or a sense that there is no money for them) and geographic challenges. She said it can “be challenging” to recruit to Southern states when political leaders make decisions that do

not appeal to young people. “The political landscape matters,” she said.

She focused on “belonging,” which many minority students say is important, and an environment that colleges strive to create. “What does this look like in admissions?” she asked.

Walker said belonging is present when financial aid is plentiful enough for BIPOC students, and that doesn't mean large loans.

She said that campus visits matter, and she sees it as key to include a parent in any “fly-in” program. Parents are

How to (and How Not to) Recruit Minority Students

being asked to trust that their children will be safe in (in Agnes Scott's case) the Atlanta area, she said. Many parents don't have a strong sense of the city, or of cities generally, Walker said.

"It takes money to do these things," she said. "It takes representation." Walker said those who work in the field need to be willing to change jobs if they aren't receiving the support they need.

What Forms of Communication?

Ian W. McLean, senior assistant director of admissions at Northwestern University, said he has seen programs for parents make a real difference. And for many Latino families, those programs need to be offered in Spanish in addition to English.

"Families are listening in on those Zoom calls," he said.

Childs said, "Communication is key."

"Snapping a picture of some BIPOC students on a flyer isn't going to make it anymore," he said.

Minority students need to hear from other minority students about a college, warts and all, he said. And those students "need to come from the community" from which the student being recruited also comes, he said.

The issue of communication comes up when reading students' submissions as well, Walker said.

She described an admissions officer reading an application from a student

and classifying the student as African American. But what if the student was the offspring of a Jamaican mother and a Haitian father? This situation raised the issue of whether an admissions officer has the context of a student.

"Knowing what you are reading is necessary and imperative," she said.

What About Implicit Bias?

Another session at the NACAC meeting dealt with implicit bias on letters of recommendation. The speakers at this session did not, as some have, argue for the elimination of letters of recommendation in the college application process. Those who have done so have noted that counselors and teachers at most public high schools are responsible for many more students than at private high schools, so letters impose unpaid work on them and indirectly hurt their students.

Rather, the counselors spoke of the implicit bias that shapes what teachers and counselors say, even in cases where they are not trying to hurt a student's chances.

At the beginning of the sessions, Alyson Tom, associate director of college counseling at the Castilleja School, in California, told a story about a recent visit she made with her 2.5-year-old to see a new doctor. She described getting help with finding the doctor's office. There were receptionists, nurses and a physician. She told the story without identifying anyone by gender or race and asked those in attendance whether they had made any assumptions.

She contrasted that story with a real letter she saw from a teacher in a previous job. The letter, and many like it, described an Asian applicant as "quiet."

Tom urged those in attendance to avoid words like "quiet" or saying that a Black student was very "articulate," with the implication that this is somehow unusual.

Moira Poe, senior associate director of undergraduate admissions at Yale University, said that admissions officials like to talk about "holistic admissions" without thinking about "how we read the profile."

With admissions officers looking for context, every word matters, she said.

She said that, when discussing implicit biases, it's important to remember that everyone has them.

Tom said one way to fight implicit bias is to take the time to really think about the students one is reviewing.

But she is not sure awareness alone will work. She suggested looking at all the reviews one writes. If men's reviews are longer than women's reviews, as they typically are, that's a problem.

And she suggested an "audit" of reviews. Counselors may want to ask a fellow counselor to read their reviews, looking for bias. Or counselors may want to read the reviews a teacher writes.

Tom stressed that these moves were a way to reflect the reality that too many students are hurt by bias in reviews. ■

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2022/09/26/how-colleges-can-better-recruit-minority-students>

The Mindset List

Marist College releases annual list of what freshmen know (and what they don't know).

By **Scott Jaschik** · Published September 12, 2022

LeBron James and Hillary Clinton are important figures to incoming first-year college students, according to [the latest mindset list](#) released by Marist College.

The list is designed to help those in academe adjust their perspective to that of the new freshmen. Marist took over the annual project from Beloit College in 2019. The Marist list is prepared by Tommy Zurhellen, associate professor of English; Vanessa Lynn, assistant professor of criminal justice; and Joyce Yu-Jean Lee, assistant professor of art and digital media.

Their list said the Class of 2026 “is exploring” a range of disciplines. They follow, verbatim.

Sports communication: The Class of 2026 has always known LeBron James as the most recognizable sports icon on the planet. LeBron James entered the NBA in 2003, and in 2004, the year many of the Class of 2026 were born, his jersey topped the best-seller list for the first time; in 2022, James’s jersey still tops the list.

Political science: For incoming students, Hillary Clinton has always had a more significant role in American politics than Bill Clinton. Although older Americans may think of Hillary Clinton as primarily first lady from the 1990s, incoming students born in 2004 only know her as a United States senator, secretary of state and contemporary presidential candidate.

Computer science: Created in 2004, Facebook has been active for the en-



(Marist College)

tire lives of the Class of 2026. Although Facebook is only 18 years old, many incoming students already see the social media platform as outdated, preferring newer platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

Ethics: Incoming students are the first generation in 50 years who must include their own reproductive rights as part of their overall college decision. The recent Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* will affect so many decisions for young women, who currently make up 59 percent of college students in America.

Global studies: The Class of 2026 will be the first since the “duck and cover” generation of the Cold War to live with the real possibility of world war and

global conflict. The Russian invasion of Ukraine echoes the experiences of growing up during the Cold War, but today’s digital technology makes the images of war much more visceral.

Environmental science: The debate on climate change is over. Incoming students are now the first generation faced with the omnipresent reality to actually effect change to combat global warming. Greta Thunberg has set the stage for youth activism; now, incoming students are part of a new generation increasingly demanding legal reforms to improve future generations’ lives.

Diversity, equity and inclusion: The Class of 2026 is the first cohort in recent memory for whom knowledge

The Mindset List

about a diverse country and world is actually regressing. Thirty-five states have recently introduced and/or passed legislation to either ban or censor teaching about race, sexual orientation, gender identity and American history in schools.

Public health: Incoming students are still recovering from the mental health impact of COVID and COVID fatigue. Mental health has been an issue for some time, but the Class of 2026 is still recovering from the effects of the pandemic on their mental health.

Education: The Class of 2026 is the first to realistically see the possibility of canceling or reducing student debt. The Biden administration has publicly announced its determination to tackle the rise of crippling student debt. Will they get results? ■



Incoming students are now the first generation faced with the omnipresent reality to actually effect change to combat global warming. Greta Thunberg has set the stage for youth activism; now, incoming students are part of a new generation increasingly demanding legal reforms to improve future generations' lives.



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Ethical College Admissions: Is It Time for a New Paradigm?

Jim Jump considers the problems and potential solutions facing higher education admissions.

By **Jim Jump** · Published June 27, 2022

Last week I had the opportunity to serve as keynote speaker at the Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling conference in Hershey. It was the first time in three years that PACAC had been able to meet in person, and it was more like a homecoming or family reunion than a conference. It was good to see old friends and make new ones.

My keynote address was titled “Professional Ethics: Endangered Species?” and I explored some themes I have previously written about and presented on. Quite frankly, after nearly 10 years of writing “Ethical College Admissions” I often worry that I am rehashing previous posts.

While researching my presentation I realized that I had done the keynote 11 years ago at a different PACAC event, the August admission workshop. For that meeting I was asked to talk about the future of our profession, and I mentioned five big issues:

- Demographic change
- Economic uncertainty
- Delivery of college counseling
- Changing admission landscape
- The future of college admissions and college counseling as a profession

All of those issues are still relevant, but what is more noteworthy is what I didn’t (and probably couldn’t) anticipate. I couldn’t have dreamed that the National Association for College Admission Counseling would be inves-

tigated by the Department of Justice for potential antitrust violations. I didn’t foresee the Varsity Blues scandal. It never occurred to me that within 10 years we would live through a global pandemic. And I didn’t anticipate the political climate and social unrest that led on one hand to the Black Lives Matter movement and on the other to red state attempts to return to the 1950s.

During my speech I talked primarily about professional ethics, but I also talked about how COVID has highlighted the urgent need for attention to mental health and wellness. I suspect that we will be dealing with the fallout for at least a decade as students who lost opportunities for learning and for normal emotional development during the pandemic cycle through the educational system. That is both a college counseling issue and also an issue for colleges once students enroll.

The question for the college admissions profession is whether the college admissions process as presently constituted contributes to the stress and mental health issues felt by today’s students.

The admission process we have today is nearly 100 years old. In his history of admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton Universities, The Chosen, sociologist Jerome Karabel talks about college admission “paradigms” (my word, not his).

A century ago colleges looked for the “best student.” Admission was based on purely academic preparation, with

the old College Board exams resembling today’s Advanced Placement exams, measuring what content a student knew.

In the 1920s colleges moved to a second admissions paradigm, “best graduate.” Karabel argues that the rationale for the change was that the “best student” paradigm produced too many Jewish students. Today one of the arguments made by Students for Fair Admissions in its lawsuits against Harvard and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is that Asian American students are discriminated against in the way Jewish students were a century ago.

The “best graduate” paradigm led to many of the admissions conventions we rely on today. Admission became “holistic” rather than purely academic, with essays, activities and recommendation letters becoming part of the admissions process. While I believe in the concept of holistic admission, the addition of those factors made applying to college resemble applying to a private club. At the same time the SAT supplanted the old College Board exams, purported at the time to be a measure of aptitude, as venerable Northeast colleges and universities sought to become more national in their student bodies and find “diamonds in the rough.”

The third, current paradigm is what might be called “best class.” Whereas once upon a time colleges admitted well-rounded students, today they are looking for a well-rounded class. Highly selective colleges are crafting a class

Ethical College Admissions: Is It Time for a New Paradigm?

rather than admitting deserving individuals, and students are admitted based on how they help the institution meet its strategic goals. We give lip service to student-centered admission, but what we have is really institution-centered admission.

Is It Time for a Fourth Paradigm?

Given what we know about adolescent growth and development and concerns about access and mental health, is it time for a fourth paradigm?

There has already been considerable debate about the future role of standardized admission testing. The admissions world has become largely test optional, and in some cases test blind. Is that a temporary change or the new normal? Was MIT's resumption of requiring testing a harbinger or an outlier?

I suspect the latter. I may be wrong (it wouldn't be the first time), but I don't see the testing industry rebounding to be as important as it once was. The Ivies and near-Ivies that admit fewer than 10 percent of applicants can get away with requiring testing, but will students bother to apply to colleges with test requirements when there are lots of test-optional choices? That is particularly true for colleges that recruit heavily in California, where both the University of California and the California State University systems are no longer considering test scores as part of their admissions processes. Are colleges willing to see a decline in applications in exchange for requiring test scores?

The testing debate raises broader philosophical questions about the value

of test scores. How much predictive value does testing add to a student's transcript? Are standardized tests engines of equity and access, as argued by test advocates, or do they measure economic privilege rather than academic readiness? How do we account for test prep, the existence of which makes identical scores mean not the same thing? Do we worship the false precision of test scores? And do we measure what we value or value what we can measure?

Testing may not be the only part of the admissions process up for debate and reconsideration. An Inside Higher Ed article earlier this year asked whether letters of recommendation were fair or even outdated given the inequality in school college-going cultures and counseling loads.

So what might a fourth college admissions paradigm look like? At the risk of showing once again my command of the obvious, here are some guiding principles to consider.

The college admissions process should measure readiness for the college experience. Anything that we ask students to do should be predictive of success in college, and we should evaluate carefully the hurdles we expect applicants to clear. What information is essential to admission? Earlier this week a college dean admitted that some of the information requested on the application is only relevant for students once they enroll rather than for admission.

The college search should encourage discernment and self-understanding. Thinking about and applying to college

is part of a larger journey for students, a journey that should produce a better understanding of who they are, what they care about and what they want from their lives.

Applying to college should be a "Goldilocks" process—not too easy, not too hard, just right.

The admission process should be student-centered rather than institution-centered.

There is one more guiding principle that will be much more difficult to achieve. That is the idea that the admissions process should serve as a bridge from adolescence to adulthood, a rite of passage. Taking the SAT and ACT and writing personal essays does not quite compare to rites of passage in other cultures such as young Maasai warriors killing a lion (although that rite of passage seems to have evolved due to a shortage of lions in the Serengeti, from 200,000 a century ago to fewer than 30,000 today). The psychologist Michael Thompson has called the college admissions process a "failed" rite of passage, in that it provides the ordeal without the catharsis.

The bridge-to-adulthood goal may be a pipe dream. Given what we know about brain development, it may be unrealistic to expect high school students to have the self-knowledge or life skills that I wish the college process required. I'm not ready to concede that point, and that doesn't mean that the aspiration is not valid.

Is it time to rethink the college admissions process we have? Can we develop a better paradigm? ■

Jim Jump is the academic dean and director of college counseling at St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Va. He has been at St. Christopher's since 1990 and was previously an admissions officer, women's basketball coach and philosophy professor at the college level. Jim is a past president of the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

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Ethical College Admissions: Should Colleges Admit Students Who Haven't Applied?

Some have started to do so, especially for low-income students. Jim Jump considers the issues.

By [Jim Jump](#) · Published October 17, 2022

Should a student be admitted to college without ever applying to college? Until recently that question would have seemed absurd, perhaps even a joke. But the idea of having to apply for admission has become the newest front in the debate about whether we need a new college admissions paradigm.

Back in the summer I wrote a column suggesting that it may be time to re-think some of the conventions of the admissions process, many of which date back nearly a century. There has already been considerable debate about the role of standardized admission tests, with the pandemic strengthening and emboldening the test-optional movement and some colleges, such as the University of California system, abandoning the consideration of test scores altogether. It seems unlikely that college admission offices will ever worship at the altar of standardized testing the way they once did.

While testing has received the most attention, it is not the only piece in the admissions process that is receiving scrutiny. The legality of race-based admission preferences to achieve diversity will be determined by the Supreme Court. Last spring there were several voices arguing that reliance on letters of recommendation needs to be rethought, as they advantage students who are already advantaged by attending schools with low student-counselor ratios and cultures where college advising is the primary responsibility for counselors, rather than an afterthought. I have to admit that during the month of October I find the idea of getting rid of recommendation letters particularly appealing. More recently, a

report argued that colleges should give less credence to calculus as an expectation for applicants.

Is the next big thing making “applicants” an outdated term? Probably not, but there is a movement afoot to change the relationship, and maybe even the power dynamics, between colleges and prospective students.

Several weeks ago, during the National Association for College Admission Counseling conference in Houston, the marketing and enrollment services vendor [EAB announced that it had acquired Concourse](#). Concourse is one of several players trying to develop a direct admissions process, where students wouldn't apply to college but would rather post academic and personal profiles that would be reviewed by admission officers at partner colleges, resulting in admission and financial aid offers. Concourse aims to be “flipping the script on traditional admissions.” EAB's purchase of Concourse suggests that direct admission is not a whim and that there is money to be made.

In 2021, EAB and Concourse worked together on a pilot program, Greenlight Match, where first-generation and low-income students in the Chicago area created free profiles on the Concourse platform, generating offers of admission and aid from eight partner colleges. An EAB press release about the acquisition of Concourse reported that more than 650 students received nearly 2,000 admission offers and more than \$135 million in scholarships and financial aid. The plan is to expand Greenlight Match to benefit 13,000

students next year by adding six other cities—Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York and Philadelphia. Concourse has also had a similar arrangement for international students.

Is this the future of college admission? It's hard to imagine that elite, selective colleges will abandon requiring students to complete applications for admission. But direct admission is an interesting idea that may work for students lacking access to savvy college counseling and colleges struggling to expand their outreach.

But is it a good idea? Answering that question requires determining what the college admissions process should represent.

I have always believed that the college search and application processes should be part of a larger journey of self-understanding and discernment, where a student has the opportunity and obligation to determine who they are and what they want from life. The students are going to live with the consequences of their college choice, so they should be the ones taking ownership of the decision.

I recognize that may be aspirational, and perhaps even delusional. Several loyal “ECA” readers have argued that it is ridiculous to expect teenagers to determine the right college fit, that they lack the maturity, self-knowledge and experience to do so. I don't want to believe that, but will also be the first to admit that I may be either a Pollyanna or a dinosaur. I also recognize that I have worked mostly with students

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from privileged backgrounds and that a different kind of admissions process may better serve students from families where going to college is not easy or even expected.

Is this truly a radical change, or is it an instance of college admission catching up with changes in technology? I remember when we moved in a very short period of time from paper to online applications and how strange that felt. Now I wouldn't know how to deal with a paper application. We now have apps that have changed how dating and job hunting take place. Should admission be any different?

Is dating an appropriate metaphor for the college admissions process? We can certainly argue that applying for

college is similar to dating. Curated applications resemble dating profiles designed to create an image that may be an idealized portrayal of reality to impress colleges with more suitors than spaces on their dance card. The vast majority of colleges that are not highly rejective spend millions of dollars on marketing and tuition discounts to get students to swipe right. Will platforms like Concourse make that mating dance simpler and less costly for all involved?

I will be interested in seeing how well Concourse and its competitors work as they move beyond pilot programs. The promise is that direct admission is also more equitable admission, but it is too early to tell whether tuition-driven colleges struggling for survival will

seek out students from economically deprived backgrounds or make direct admission offers primarily to students who help them meet their revenue objectives. I hope the latter is not the case. If platforms like Concourse can connect students with colleges more effectively and equitably than the current admissions process, that would be a welcome change, or at least addition.

Is it time to flip the admissions script? I have always believed that applying to college and college admission should be Goldilocks processes, neither too hard nor too easy. The current application process seems too hard and unwieldy, but direct admission seems too easy. Can we devise an application process that's just right? ■

Jim Jump is the academic dean and director of college counseling at St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Va. He has been at St. Christopher's since 1990 and was previously an admissions officer, women's basketball coach and philosophy professor at the college level. Jim is a past president of the National Association for College Admission Counseling.

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Reckoning With the Great Resignation

Ken Anselment writes that admissions offices face unique challenges with staffing and personnel.

By **Ken Anselment** · Published November 1, 2022

While I was in Houston for the 2022 National Association for College Admission Counseling conference, I saw in person what we have been reading about and—for many on college campuses—living with for the past 12 to 15 months: the Great Resignation's impact on college admissions offices.

I started the week speaking at a pre-conference gathering of about 70 admission professionals representing colleges from all over the map geographically and reputationally. Most of them had been in the admission profession at least eight years and fully one-third of them for 12 or more years. The foremost higher ed challenge on their minds, according to a live poll we deployed, was the Great Resignation, which finished a full car length ahead of the demographic cliff.

Curious about how they were feeling, I asked them to generate a word cloud with the prompt "What is a word (or two or three) that describes how you feel now that this admission cycle is underway?"

Right in the middle of the cloud, in the largest letters, were "tired," "stressed" and "overwhelmed."

When asked what sort of turnover they had seen over the past year in their admissions offices, only 3 percent reported that they had retained their entire staff, with another 19 percent indicating "typical attrition."

On the other hand, nearly 60 percent indicated their staff turnover was "way more than usual."

Even more significant was how the attendees described their own status as they head into this recruitment cycle: fewer than half chose "I'm good. Not going anywhere if I can help it." As for the rest? A slight majority of them suggested they might leave higher ed completely.

Bookending the week in Houston was a Saturday morning conference session called "Where Did All Our Colleagues Go? Looking Beyond the Great Resignation," where I joined two of my colleagues at the table in front of a full room of fellow admission professionals to answer the question posed by the title. (In one of those "you can't make this up" moments, we had to recruit a new member to our panel shortly before the conference because one of the original members had just announced they were leaving their university post to move into a higher ed-adjacent space and—because they're a high-integrity person—thought it best not to have their institution send them to the conference.)

A pre-NACAC survey we administered for the aforementioned panel session revealed that, across the higher ed sector, admission positions are harder than ever to fill due to shallow or dry talent pools at every level of hiring, from entry to senior level. As we heard from our survey respondents and the 100 or so attendees in the room with us, not only has it become increasingly difficult to fill open positions, but the profession is losing talent at the chief enrollment officer level. Many of those next in line—directors, associate directors and the like—are reconsidering



(Yutthana Gaetgeaw/Getty Images)

whether they want to continue in their own roles, much less ascend to the next level.

We've had a lot of tough moments in the admission profession. Just the past few years have given us: an anti-trust case lodged against NACAC by the Department of Justice; an admissions scandal made for (and in) Hollywood; an increasingly inverse relationship between the cost of college and public confidence in higher ed's value; and, of course, a pandemic.

There are more tough moments to come, thanks to continued political polarization, a mercurial economy, challenging demographics and a Supreme Court interested in revisiting yet another case that most thought would be a settled matter.

Yet, amid all these challenges, the Great Resignation feels like a different

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kind of crisis.

When we hear “crisis,” we might hear our high school lit teacher instructing us that it’s a turning point in the story.

Etymologists might dig a bit deeper into the origins of “crisis” to emerge with something containing more agency.

It’s a moment to choose.

Times for a Different Approach?

For this season’s premiere episode of the Admissions Leadership Podcast (the ALP), I interviewed five senior enrollment leaders, asking for their insights about the Great Resignation: Adrienne Amador Oddi, vice president for strategic enrollment and communications at Queens University of Charlotte, N.C.; Heath Einstein, dean of admission at Texas Christian University; Marie Bigham, founder and executive director of ACCEPT and co-founder and co-CEO of Accelerated Equity Insights; Rick Clark, associate vice provost of undergraduate enrollment and executive director of admission at Georgia Tech; and Tony Sarda, director of undergraduate admissions at St. Mary’s University (Tex.).

At the outset, my guests determined that calling it a “resignation” may be missing the point.

“I feel like ‘resignation’ sort of short-sells people’s engagement with what they want. I feel like this was more of a great contemplation for all of us,” Rick Clark. “The pandemic was a blessing of pause. Slowing down, pulling back and evaluating, ‘What do we really want?’”

What we really want, it turns out, is an elevated value of the profession itself, one where institutions not only recognize the importance of recruiting students (most already do), but the immense value represented by the people who do the recruiting. When you consider the sheer size of most institutions’ budgets represented by new

student revenue—and the annually recurring revenue of students who stay at the institution—it is obvious why institutions invest substantially in their recruiting functions.

However, while colleges may already devote considerable resources to the operating budgets of the recruiting effort—the things that are done to recruit, select and enroll a class—there remains significant work to be done with the labor budgets of the recruiting effort—the people who do the things to recruit, select and enroll a class.

It starts with better compensation, of course. Einstein noted that the average salary for an entry-level admissions counselor had only increased about \$6,000 (unadjusted for inflation) from what his compensation looked like 20 years ago. (He wasn’t alone in that observation.) It is also time, as all of us in the Zoom room acknowledged, for an end to what Einstein called the “mission tax,” the notion that, because it is in the service of students, the intrinsic value of the work should supersede the value of the compensation.

Beyond compensation, there is also the matter of work-life balance, something that may seem out of reach for professionals in a career whose days, nights and weekends are often not their own. Better compensation may mitigate some of that, but the past two years of working from home and hybrid work have changed people’s understanding of—and expectations for—how, where and when work can be done, and when to take a break.

How can institutions—especially resource-constrained institutions—improve the compensation and work-life balance for their recruiting teams?

It’s time to break some habits.

Before Refilling, Rethink

Admissions offices can be high-turnover organizations, presenting super-

visors with many moments to recruit and hire new employees to replace those who have left.

In a position of having to fill vacancies on more than half her staff over the past year, Oddi found herself in a real-life version of the thought experiment “If you had to build a recruitment operation from scratch, would you build it the same way?”

She didn’t.

She analyzed what the university needed and built a team structure that allowed for more nimbleness, more regionally based employees, a mix of fully in-office and hybrid positions, as well as cross-university collaborations. “We’ve got a whole group of people from advancement and enrollment, all Slate experts, in the same suite now,” she says. “That kind of synergy across different divisions is really exciting.”

She also chose not to fill every open position, instead reconsidering the work that needed to be done, and resizing the team by hiring fewer FTEs and using some of the extra budget to reward those who stayed, including addressing some pay shortcomings for mid- and senior-level positions.

The result? “Our university has experienced a resurgence instead of resignation. You can feel people lifted here.”

Before Resuming, Re-Evaluate

When there are fewer people to do the work that has always been done in an admissions office, you have a choice: keep doing everything you have been doing, or pause and evaluate what really needs to be done to achieve your goals. In the process, you may be able to identify ways to create more capacity for your team.

The next step is harder but essential: resist the urge to fill that capacity with something else. Instead use it as a

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way to create more time and energy for your team.

Clark's team at Georgia Tech pulls out three whiteboards to identify and categorize their current work according to three mission-based C's: mission critical (what must be done), mission complementary (what they'd like to do if they were fully staffed) and mission compromised (what they have been doing that they could or should stop doing).

This exercise is most effective if you have established a pattern of storing, tracking and measuring data on your office's efforts—on- and off-campus programming, high-touch outreach activities, visibility-raising engagements—and deciding the degree to which they fit into the mission-based C's.

Admissions offices often fall victim to narratives around various initiatives feeling like they're valuable, which is why they stay in the mix. But what do your data tell you? Leverage your CRM with your planning so you can identify your programs on a low to high effort-and-impact matrix. Maximize those with high impact; reconsider

those with low impact.

Before Retrenching, Reframe

Upon noting that he had lost some members of his team to other offices on campus, where pay was more attractive and the demands more manageable, Sarda observed, "We train people to be Swiss Army knives—to be not just admission practitioners, but higher ed practitioners." He added, "What if we flipped the script at universities? Imagine if admissions were the place where people aspire to work."

Bigham took the thinking one step further. While acknowledging those brass-ring jobs like Goldman Sachs or McKinsey, where people clamor to get in, sprint hard for a few years and leverage that opportunity to have their choice of jobs, she noted that admissions prepares people for so many things as well—sales, operations, fundraising, administration, consulting—and said, "What would happen if we understood our role in that?"

She envisions a world where college admission offices hire entry-level counselors—with substantially better

pay, of course—and, through intentional training, career laddering and mentoring, show them the pathways not just up and through the admissions or enrollment profession, but up and out into other sectors of higher ed, whether it's retention, coaching, development work or operations. Admissions may become the farm team for higher ed, "but the pipeline goes through you."

We need not be resigned to the Great Resignation as an inexorable force. This crisis is an opportunity for enrollment leaders—and their campus partners—to reconsider and re-establish the work, and, perhaps, evolve from this moment of reckoning with a different-looking and more sustainable profession.

Earlier, when I described the word cloud that my colleagues generated to express their feelings now that the recruiting season is in full swing, I left out one word, just as large as the gloomier sentiments, which was poking through the middle of the cloud like a ray of sunshine.

"Hopeful." ■

Ken Anselment is vice president for enrollment management at RHB.

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