National Association for College Admission Counseling

2011 State of College Admission

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Acknowledgments

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Preface

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) offers the *State of College Admission* each fall to describe key trends in the transition from high school to college. The 2011 edition—which covers the Fall 2010 admission cycle—marks the ninth anniversary of this report.

Introduction

The persistence of the ongoing economic downturn has, in some ways, drawn attention to the importance of higher education to providing financial opportunity and security. However, the current state of the economy also has put further strain on the already limited resources of many students and families, as well as secondary schools and colleges. Against this backdrop of economic decline and uncertainty, secondary schools and colleges are responding to the challenge of demographic changes occurring across the country. Despite an overall decrease in the number of high school graduates at the national level, some parts of the country are experiencing dramatic increases, and much of these increases are occurring among populations that traditionally have been under-served by higher education. In these regions, colleges are experiencing increased demand for access and services during a time when their own financial resources are limited. In other parts of the country, the number of high school graduates is declining more dramatically, creating a scenario in which colleges may be in competition for a more limited number of students. And, for colleges nationwide, the economic pressure creates competition for students who can afford to pay the full price of tuition, including high-income, international and/or out-of-state students, as demand for financial aid increases.

Changes in High School Student Demographics and College Choice Behaviors

After more than a decade of growth, the number of high school graduates peaked at 3.33 million in 2009. The number of graduates is expected to decline through 2014-15 and remain below 2009 levels through at least 2020-21. However, the pattern of change in high school graduates will vary widely by state and region. Projections also indicate that the racial/ethnic composition of high school graduates also will change dramatically. Between 2007-08 and 2020-21, the number of white public high school graduates will decrease by 11 percent and black graduates will decrease by 2 percent. During the same time, American Indian/Alaskan Native graduates are expected to increase by 1 percent, Hispanics by 27 percent, Asian/Pacific Islanders by 46 percent.[i]

Recent surveys of students, counselors and admission officers indicate that prospective college students are more focused on the cost of college as they consider where to apply and ultimately enroll. Students also are considering alternate paths to obtaining the credits necessary for a Bachelor's degree. For example, the popularity of dual enrollment programs has grown across the country. And, more students are considering the two-year to four-year college transfer path as a viable option due to affordability concerns since the economic recession hit.[ii]

Application Volume and Acceptance and Yield Rates

An analysis in the 2009 *State of College Admission* report using US Department of Education data showed that average acceptance rates had decreased slightly from 71 percent in 2001 to 67 percent in 2007. This change occurred during a time of steady growth both in the number of high school graduates and in the average number of applications submitted per student. Data for Fall 2010 show a slight additional decline to 65.5 percent. Although the number of high school graduates had begun to decline at this point, growth in the number of applications per student continued to increase steadily. Seventy-seven percent of Fall 2010 freshmen submitted three or more applications, and 25 percent submitted seven or more applications. In addition, a large majority of colleges (73 percent) reported increased application volume for Fall 2010 compared to Fall 2009. With few exceptions, approximately three-quarters of colleges have reported increases each year for the past decade.

The increase in the number of colleges to which students apply complicates the already difficult task that admission officers have in determining which accepted students will enroll. The average institutional yield rate for four-year colleges has shown steady decline over the past decade. The trend analysis presented in the 2009 *State of College Admission* report showed a decrease from 49 percent in 2001 to 45 percent in 2007. The average yield for the Fall 2010 admission cycle was down to 41 percent, meaning that institutions, on average, are enrolling increasingly smaller proportions of their accepted student pool. Because of the critical importance to the institution of meeting enrollment targets, colleges look for strategies to ensure that they can fill their classes.

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[i] *Projections of Education Statistics for 2020.* (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

[ii] NACAC. (2009). "Effects of the Economy on the Admission Process, 2008-09;" Inside Higher Education. (2011). "The 2011 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College & University Admissions Directors;" Dadashova, A., et al. (2011). *National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Before, During, and After the Great Recession.* National Student Clearinghouse Signature Report. Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Enrollment Management Strategies

NACAC's Admission Trends Survey results show a substantial increase in the proportion of colleges utilizing wait lists. Forty-eight percent of survey respondents indicated using a wait list for Fall 2010 compared to 39 percent in 2009. At the same time, the average proportion of students admitted off of a wait list declined from 34 percent to 28 percent. Use of a wait list is one strategy that colleges may use to mitigate the uncertainty associated with the increase in average applications per student and declining yield. However, over-utilization of the wait list strategy may complicate students' college choice process.

Survey results also suggest that Early Decision (ED) activity has declined slightly. Only 38 percent of colleges reported increases in ED applications, after several years in which nearly half reported increases. Similarly, only 36 percent reported increases in ED admissions. Numbers for Fall 2010 also indicate a much narrower gap between the ED acceptance rate compared to the overall acceptance rate at colleges with ED policies. Concerns were sparked last year when the 2009 results indicated a gap of 15 percentage points (70 percent compared to 55 percent) after three years of growth. However the gap for the Fall 2010 admission cycle was only 7 percentage points (57 percent compared to 50 percent). Unlike ED, Early Action (EA) activity continued to increase. Seventy-two percent of colleges reported increases in EA applications, and 68 percent reported increases in EA admissions.

Technology in the Admission Process

Results of NACAC's annual Admission Trends Surveys show that colleges continue to incorporate Internet and social media tools into the recruitment process at a rapid rate. The proportion of colleges that have links from their admission Web sites to their social networking sites reached 91 percent in 2010, up from 73 percent in 2009 and 39 percent in 2008. The proportion of college Web sites with current student blogs increased from 42 percent in 2007 to about 60 percent in 2009 and 2010. About 30 percent of colleges also have blogs by admission officers, online chat rooms, and online message boards available for prospective students, but use of these tools have not shown increases in recent years.

Nearly all colleges have online applications available on their Web sites. In 2010, a larger proportion (98 percent) had online applications than had downloadable applications to be submitted via mail (80 percent). Over the past several years, colleges have received a steadily increasing proportion of their applications online—85 percent in 2010, up from 80 percent in 2009, 72 percent in 2008, 68 percent in 2007, and 58 percent in 2006. Email/Internet also continues to be the most popular method by which colleges receive prospective student inquiries. Forty-three percent of colleges used their Web sites (in addition to letters) to notify applicants of their admission status, and 37 percent used email, an increase from about one-third for each method in 2009.

Technology also makes it easier for students to apply to multiple colleges, complicating the job of both secondary school counselors and admission officers. The ease of applying to multiple colleges creates disincentives for students to spend time evaluating the "fit" of their college options. And the increased application volume that results makes it more difficult for institutions to predict yield. The ease of applying online may contribute to the increase in average number of applications per student, and lead colleges to look for ways to evaluate a student's interest in the college. Admission Trends Survey results have shown an increase in recent years in the rating of both demonstrated interest and the essay as factors in the admission decision. In addition to the essay, other ways that admission officers might evaluate a student's interest in attending include campus visits, contact with the admission office, applying through Early Decision or Early Action, and recommendations.

Navigating the growing field of college information available via technology and the increased demand from colleges to submit application materials online also increases the amount of knowledge and skills that secondary school counselors must have, despite demands on their time that already strain them. The typical secondary school counseling office is only able to spend 29 percent of its time on college counseling.

Looking Ahead

Prolonged economic decline and/or uncertainty could make it more difficult for both college transition professionals and students/families to adhere to fair practices in the admission decision. As the admission landscape continues to change, NACAC will persist in its mission to maintain ethical practice and protect the rights of students, while providing professionals with the tools and training they need to effectively advise students through the college transition process.

Executive Summary

Highlights from the 2011 *State of College Admission* report include the following findings pertaining to the transition from high school to postsecondary education in the United States.

High School Graduation and College Enrollment

For more than a decade, a population wave had fueled record numbers of high school graduates. Although that growth has now peaked, enrollment in postsecondary education will continue to increase, due to slight increases in the proportion of high school students enrolling in college and growth in non-traditional aged students. Racial/ethnic minorities continue to be underrepresented among both high school graduates and college students.

- **Number of High School Graduates Has Peaked after Decade of Growth:** The number of high school graduates in the US reached a peak of 3.33 million in 2008-09 after more than a decade of steady growth. An estimated 3.28 million students graduated in 2010-11. The number of graduates will continue to decline through 2014-15, but will rebound to 3.2 million by 2017-18 and remain near that level through 2019-20. There are wide variations by state and region, and some states are experiencing substantial declines in high school graduates.

- **College Enrollment Continues at All-Time High:** As of 2009, approximately 20.4 million students were enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Total college enrollment is expected to continue increasing until at least 2020, when it is expected to reach 23 million.

- **Racial/Ethnic Minorities and Low-Income Students Underrepresented in College:** High school completion and college enrollment rates vary substantially by both race/ethnicity and income. Only 55 percent of high school completers from the lowest income quintile transitioned to college in 2009, compared to 84 percent from the highest income quintile. In 2009, black and Hispanic persons constituted approximately 34 percent of the traditional college-aged population, but they represented only about 27 percent of students enrolled in postsecondary education. Hispanics were particularly under-represented among private and four-year institutions.

Applications to College

The recent growth in applications to four-year colleges has continued, with a majority of colleges reporting an increase in application volume. On average, four-year institutions nationwide accepted approximately two-thirds of all students who applied for admission.

- **Application Growth Continues:** Most colleges (73 percent) continued to experience increases in the number of applications they received in 2010, despite a slowdown in 2009. In addition, a minority of colleges (19 percent) reported experiencing decreases, which is consistent with patterns seen since 2005. The number of applications that individual students submit continued to increase. Twenty-five percent of Fall 2010 freshman had submitted seven or more applications for admission, up from 23 percent in Fall 2009 and 22 percent in Fall 2008.

- **Online Applications Increase:** For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, four-year colleges and universities received an average of 85 percent of their applications online, up from 80 percent in Fall 2009 and 72 percent in Fall 2008.

- **Colleges Accept Two-Thirds of Applicants, on Average:** The average selectivity rate—percentage of applicants who are offered admission—at four-year colleges and universities in the United States was 65.5 percent for Fall 2010, down approximately one percentage point in comparison to Fall 2007 through Fall 2009 figures. The average institutional yield rate—percentage of admitted students who enroll—was 41 percent.

Admission Strategies: Early Decision, Early Action and Wait Lists

Though employed by a minority of institutions in the US, admission strategies like Early Decision, Early Action and wait lists are fixtures of the college admission landscape, likely due to the presence of such policies at America's most selective colleges and universities.

- **Early Decision Activity Declines; Early Action Activity Holds Steady**: The proportion of colleges that reported increases in the number of Early Decision applications in 2010 was 38 percent, down from the previous three years when about half of colleges reported increases. Thirty-six percent of colleges reported increases in ED admissions for Fall 2010, compared to 43 percent in 2008 and 65 percent in 2009.

A large majority (72 percent) of colleges reported an increase in Early Action applications and a similar proportion (68 percent) reported increases in the number of students who were admitted through Early Action.

- **At Colleges with Early Decision Policies, the Gap in Acceptance Rates between ED and Regular Decision Applicants Narrows Considerably:** For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, colleges with Early Decision policies reported a higher acceptance rate for their ED applicants as compared to all applicants (57 percent versus 50 percent). The gap between the acceptance rates is smaller than reported in recent years. For Fall 2007 through Fall 2009, it varied from 12 to 15 percentage points (70 percent versus 55 percent in 2009; 67 percent versus 54 percent in 2008; and 65 percent versus 53 percent in 2007).

- **More Colleges Use Wait Lists; Chances of Acceptance Drop:** The proportion of institutions that used wait lists for the Fall 2010 admission cycle was 48 percent, which is substantially higher than the 39 percent of colleges that reported using a wait list in 2009. Institutions accepted an average of 28 percent of all students who chose to remain on wait lists, down from 34 percent in Fall 2009.

Factors in the Admission Decision

The factors that admission officers use to evaluate applications have remained largely consistent over the past 17 years. Students' academic achievements—which include grades, strength of curriculum and admission test scores—constitute the most important factors in the admission decision.

- **Admission Offices Identify Grades, High School Curriculum and Test Scores as Top Factors:** The top factors in the admission decision were (in order): grades in college preparatory courses, strength of curriculum, standardized admission test scores, and overall high school grade point average. Among the next most important factors were the essay, student's demonstrated interest, class rank, counselor and teacher recommendations, and extracurricular activities.

- **Student Background Information:** Between 25 and 31 percent of colleges rated race/ethnicity, first generation status, high school attended, and alumni relations as at least moderately important as factors that influence how the main factors in admission decisions are evaluated.

School Counselors and College Counseling

Access to college information and counseling in school is a significant benefit to students in the college application process. For many students, particularly those in public schools, college counseling is limited at best. Counselors are few in number, often have large student caseloads and are limited in the amount of time they are able to dedicate to college counseling.

- **Student-to-Counselor Ratio:** According to data from the US Department of Education, in 2009-10, the national public school student-to-counselor ratio was 460:1, including K–12 schools. NACAC survey data indicated an average secondary school student-to-counselor ratio, including part-time staff, of 272:1.

- **Time Spent Counseling for College:** On average, public school counselors spent 23 percent of their time on postsecondary counseling in 2010, while their private school counterparts spent 55 percent of their time on college counseling.

- **College Counseling Staff:** In 2010, only 26 percent of public schools reported employing at least one counselor (full- or part-time) whose exclusive responsibility was to provide college counseling, compared to 73 percent of private schools.

The College Admission Office

College admission offices are comprised of individuals who have varied academic and professional backgrounds. Admission office requirements, expenditures and procedures vary based on the type of institution.

- **Ratio of Applicants to Admission Officers:** On average, the ratio of applications to admission officers at colleges and universities in the US was 527:1 in 2010. The average ratio at public institutions was 981:1, compared to 402:1 at private institutions.

- **Skills to Lead the Admission Office:** Previous admission experience was rated as the most important qualification. The second most important qualification was statistics/data analysis followed closely by higher education administration and marketing/public relations.

- **Cost to Recruit:** On average, colleges and universities spent about $585 to recruit each applicant for Fall 2010 admission, $806 to recruit each admitted student and $2,408 to recruit each enrolled student (when admission staff salaries and benefits were included in the admission office budget).

Introduction

NACAC's *State of College Admission 2011* report provides current and trend data on a number of factors related to college counseling in secondary schools, the activity of postsecondary admission offices and other issues of relevance to the transition from high school to college. Four main sources were used to compile the data included in the report:

- NACAC's annual Counseling Trends Survey for 2010
- NACAC's annual Admission Trends Survey for 2010
- The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2010©
- Publicly available data collected by the federal government, including data from the US Department of Education and the US Census Bureau.

NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey

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

In April 2010, NACAC distributed its annual Counseling Trends Survey to a total of 10,000 secondary schools in the United States—1,892 public and private schools that are members of NACAC and a random sample of 8,108 public high schools. The list of public high schools was identified using the US Department of Education's Common Core of Data. Each counseling department received a paper survey form that also included a link to an online survey, providing respondents with two options for completing the survey. Responses were collected through the end of June, 2010.

NACAC received a total of 1,846 responses—an 18 percent response rate. Table 1 provides a comparison of the characteristics of NACAC Counseling Trends Survey respondents to those of all public and private secondary schools in the US. NACAC survey respondents were 82 percent public, 12 percent private, non-parochial and six percent private, parochial, making the sample slightly over-representative of private, non-parochial schools and under-representative of public schools. Table 1 also shows that NACAC respondents were representative of all secondary schools in the percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch programs. However, NACAC respondent schools reported substantially larger enrollments.

NACAC's Admission Trends Survey

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

NACAC administered its 2010 Admission Trends Survey to the 1,263 four-year postsecondary institutions who were members of NACAC, which represented 65 percent of all four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title-IV institutions in the United States. The survey was administered in two parts, in order to ease the time burden for respondents. An email invitation containing a web link to the online survey was sent to a representative at each institution. Part one was administered from late-June to late-July 2010. Part two was administered from mid-October to mid-December 2010. During this time, the full

survey also was administered to all contacts who did not respond to part one. In some cases the contact for part one was no longer available at the time of the part two/full survey administration. In almost all cases, an alternate contact was identified.

NACAC received 450 responses to part one, and 330 responses to the complete survey. The response rate for the complete survey was 26 percent, which represented 17 percent of all four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title-IV institutions. As shown in Table 2, NACAC Admission Trends Survey respondents were somewhat over-representative of private colleges—with 70 percent private respondents compared to 66 percent nationally—and also tended to be larger, on average. Respondents were fairly representative of all colleges based on geographical region and average selectivity, but the private NACAC respondents tended to have lower yield rates.

Table 1. NACAC 2010 Secondary School Counseling Trends Survey respondent characteristics compared to national school characteristics

	NACAC respondents	All schools	NACAC public respondents	All public schools	NACAC private, non-parochial respondents	All private, non-parochial schools	NACAC private, parochial respondents	All private, parochial schools
Total percent of schools	**100%**	**100%**	**82.0%**	**89.3%**	**11.6%**	**3.7%**	**6.4%**	**7.1%**
Enrollment								
Mean enrollment	983	582	1,066	615	549	104	706	375
Free and reduced price lunch[1]								
Mean percent eligible	33.3	34.5	34.4	35.0	6.4	--	7.2	--

-- not available.
[1] Survey respondents were asked to indicate participation in both federal and state-sponsored programs; national data is available for the federal program only.

NOTE: All NACAC respondent data are from 2009-10. National percentages by type of school and percentage eligible for free and reduced price lunch are from 2007-08. National mean enrollment data are from 2008-09 for public schools and 2007-08 for private schools and all schools combined.

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

Digest of Education Statistics. (2010). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Tables 5, 39 and 62).

NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 2. NACAC 2010 Admission Trends Survey respondent characteristics compared to national college/university characteristics

	NACAC respondents	All colleges	NACAC public respondents	All public colleges	NACAC private respondents	All private colleges
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**29.7%**	**33.6%**	**70.3%**	**66.4%**
Enrollment						
Mean enrollment	5,296	3,696	12,377	7,667	2,553	1,680
Region						
New England	11.5%	8.7%	5.6%	6.4%	13.8%	9.9%
Middle States	21.8	20.1	15.6	17.1	24.2	21.6
South	16.7	24.4	24.4	27.8	13.8	22.7
Midwest	29.1	26.4	31.1	22.3	28.3	28.4
Southwest	3.3	7.1	5.6	11.0	2.5	5.2
West	17.6	13.3	12.8	15.4	17.5	12.2
Selectivity and Yield						
Mean Selectivity	67.4%	65.5%	69.6%	67.7%	66.7%	64.3%
Mean Yield	35.3	40.9	43.4	42.1	32.9	40.4

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

NOTE: Data for all colleges are for 2010-11. The list of colleges was drawn from the 2010-11 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Of the 1,950 total institutions, 1,571 (81 percent) provided selectivity and yield data for Fall 2010.

SOURCES: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2010-11). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Chapter 1.
High School Graduation and College Enrollment

CONTENTS

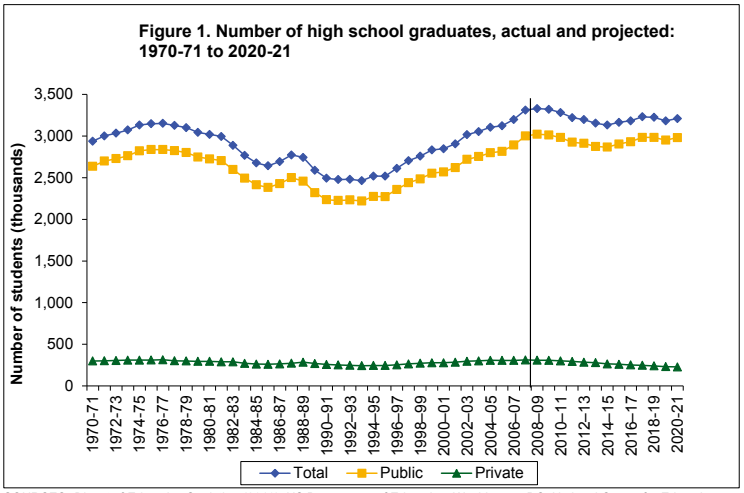
Assisting students with the transition from high school graduation to college enrollment is at the core of NACAC's mission. Students' participation in postsecondary education is becoming increasingly important for both individual success and for the economic future of the nation. In 2009, wage earners age 18 or over with a high school diploma reported mean annual earnings of only $30,627, compared to $56,665 for those with a bachelor's degree and $73,738 for those with a master's degree.[1] Over the course of a typical working life, researchers have estimated that the average bachelor's degree recipient will earn 84 percent more than a high school graduate.[2] As a group, college graduates also enjoy higher job satisfaction and are more likely to receive employer-sponsored pensions and health insurance. Other factors that are associated with increased levels of education include: lower levels of unemployment and poverty; decreased reliance on public assistance programs; healthier lifestyles; and higher levels of civic engagement, including volunteerism and voting.[3] In 2010, only 30 percent of all adults age 25 and older had obtained at least a bachelor's degree.[4]

High School Completion

Increase in High School Graduates

According to projections published by the US Department of Education, the number of high school graduates in the US reached a peak of 3.33 million in 2008-09 after more than a decade of steady growth. An estimated 3.28 million students graduated in 2010-11. The number of graduates will continue to decline through 2014-15, but will rebound to 3.2 million by 2017-18 and remain near that number through 2019-20.[5] This pattern of change in the number of high school graduates—illustrated in Figure 1—largely reflects overall changes in the high-school-aged population, rather than increases in the percentage of students completing high school. High school completion rates have increased only slightly since the mid-1990s.[6]

Figure 1. Number of high school graduates, actual and projected: 1970-71 to 2020-21



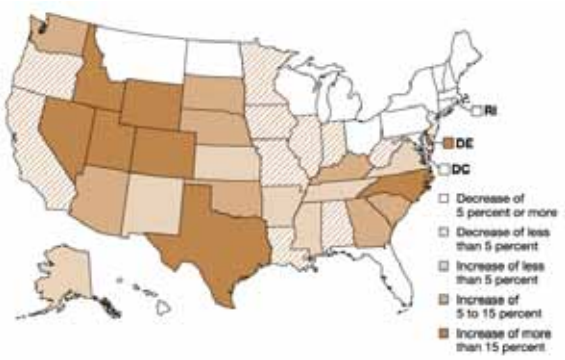
SOURCES: *Digest of Education Statistics.* (2010). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 110).

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

[1] US Census Bureau. (2010). "Educational Attainment." 2012 Statistical Abstract of the United States. (Table 232).
[2] Carnevale, A., Rose, S., and Cheah, B. (2011). *The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings.* Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce: Washington, DC.
[3] Baum, S., Ma, J., and Payea, K. (2010). *Education Pays 2010: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society.* College Board: Washington, DC.
[4] US Census Bureau. (2010). "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2010." (Table 2).
[5] *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020.* (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 12).
[6] Chapman, C., Laird, J., and KewalRamani, A. (2010). *High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2008.* US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

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

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



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

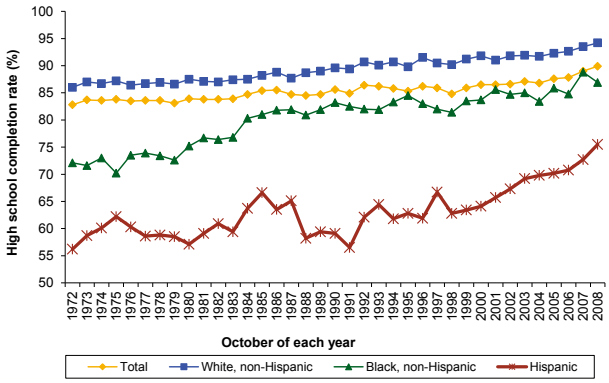
High School Completion Rates[8] by Race/Ethnicity, Income and Gender

High school completion rates vary substantially among different groups of students. For example, in 2008, 94 percent of white 18- through 24-year olds completed high school, compared to 87 percent of black and 76 percent of Hispanic youth. As shown in Figure 3, the gap between black and white students narrowed considerably between the early 1970s and mid-1980s, but has remained between five and nine percentage points since that time. The gap between white and Hispanic students has decreased slightly in the last decade, but remains near 20 percentage points.[9]

Important differences also exist among students from different income backgrounds. In 2009, the average high school completion rate among the top quartile of dependent 18- through 24-year olds was 94 percent. Students in the third quartile fared nearly as well at 90 percent, followed by 84 percent for the second quartile. However, the average graduation rate for students in the bottom quartile was only 70 percent—24 percentage points below that of students with the highest family incomes.[10]

In every year since 1976, women have completed high school at a higher rate than men. In 2008—the most recent year for which data are available—the gap was 1.2 percentage points (see Figure 4).

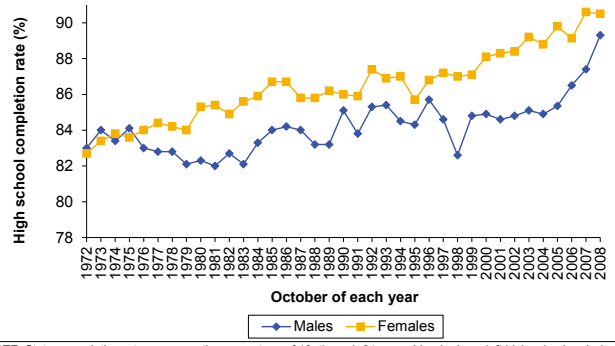
Figure 3. High school completion rates of 18- through 24-year-olds by race/ethnicity: 1972 to 2008



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

SOURCE: Chapman, C., Laird, J., and KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2008.* US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 11).

Figure 4. High school completion rates of 18- through 24-year olds by gender: 1972 to 2008



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

SOURCE: Chapman, C., Laird, J., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2008.* US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 11).

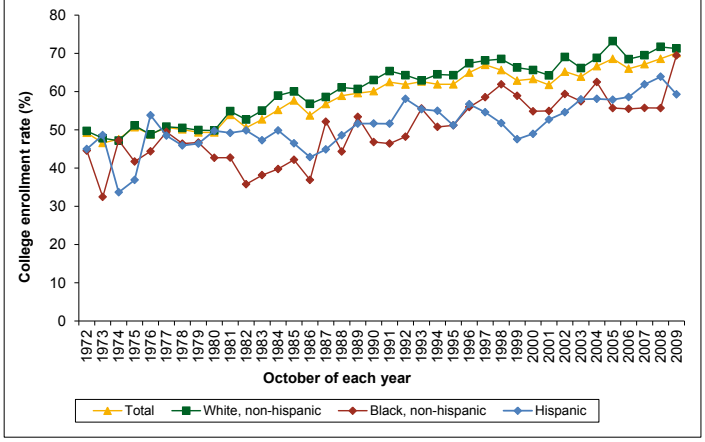
[7] *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020.* (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 15).
[8] High school completers include both diploma and GED recipients.
[9] Cataldi, E.F., Laird, J., and KewalRamani. (2010). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2008.* US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
[10] Mortenson, T. (2010). "Family Income and Educational Attainment, 1970 to 2009." *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, Number 221, November.

The Transition from High School to College

College Enrollment Rates of High School Completers

From the early 1970s to the late 1990s, the percentage of high school completers who go on to college fluctuated but also showed an overall pattern of increase, peaking at 67 percent in 1997. Since that time, the percentage has mostly hovered in the mid-60 percent range—decreasing slightly to a low of 62 percent in 2001. However, since 2006, the level has slowly increased to a new peak of 70 percent for 2009 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. College enrollment rates of recent high school completers by race/ethnicity: 1972 to 2009



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

Source: *Digest of Education Statistics*. (2010). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 209).

College Enrollment Rates by Race/Ethnicity, Income, Gender, and High School Characteristics

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

Even more dramatic differences are seen among high school completers of different income backgrounds. High school completers age 16 through 24 who are from the highest family income quintile transitioned to postsecondary education at a rate of 84 percent in 2009. Students from the middle 60 percent of family incomes continued to college at a rate of 67 percent. Only 55 percent of high school completers from the lowest income quintile enrolled in a two- or four-year college the fall following high school graduation in 2009.[11]

Results of NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey provide further evidence of this pattern. Counselors at schools with the highest proportion of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRPL)—a proxy for family income—reported much lower four-year college enrollment rates and total college enrollment rates for their graduates. Counselors at schools with more students in the FRPL program had slightly higher enrollment rates at two-year colleges.[12] In addition, students who graduated from private high schools were much more likely to enroll in postsecondary education immediately after high school than students from public high schools, and they were about twice as likely to enroll in four-year colleges. However, they were less likely to enroll in two-year colleges (see Table 3).[13]

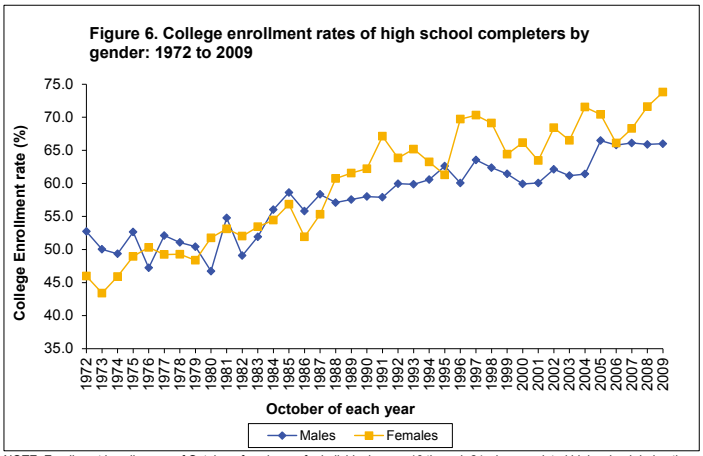
Table 3. Mean college enrollment rates of high school graduates at Counseling Trends Survey respondent schools: 2010

	Four-year institutions	Two-year institutions	Total college enrollment rate
Total	**56.7**	**26.1**	**82.1**
Control			
Public	48.1	30.6	78.7
Private	94.6	4.6	98.8
Private non-parochial	96.2	3.1	98.9
Private parochial	91.7	7.4	98.6
Enrollment			
Fewer than 500 students	54.6	27.0	80.2
500 to 999	60.0	23.3	82.7
1,000 to 1,499	58.2	25.5	83.4
1,500 to 1,999	53.6	28.6	82.1
2,000 or more	55.0	30.0	85.0
Free and reduced price lunch			
0 to 25% of students eligible	60.2	26.6	86.5
26 to 50%	42.0	32.5	74.1
51 to 75%	38.4	33.1	71.5
76 to 100%	35.6	29.7	65.3
Students per counselor			
100 or fewer	66.7	19.6	84.9
101 to 200	62.7	22.9	84.8
201 to 300	57.7	25.5	82.8
301 to 400	49.8	30.4	79.7
401 to 500	47.7	31.3	77.6
More than 500	45.4	32.1	76.9

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

Gender differences in transition rates also have emerged since the late 1980s. Since this time, women have enrolled in college at a higher rate than men in almost every year. The gender gap in college enrollment reached a peak of 10 percentage points in 2004. After narrowing considerably over the next few years, the gap grew to six percentage points in 2008 and eight percentage points in 2009 (see Figure 6).

[11] *The Condition of Education*. (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table A-21-1).
[12] Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL and: total college attendance rate (-.396), four-year college attendance rate (-.444), two-year college attendance rate (.177), $p < .01$
[13] Correlation between private school status and: total college attendance rate (.415), four-year college attendance rate (.666), two-year college attendance rate (-.552), $p < .01$



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

SOURCE: *Digest of Education Statistics.* (2010). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 208).

College Enrollment

In 2009—the most recent year for which data are available—20.4 million students were enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Of that total, 14.8 million (73 percent) were enrolled in public institutions and 12.9 million (63 percent) were enrolled in four-year institutions. Due to changes in both the number of high school graduates and the rate at which they enroll in college, the total number of students enrolled in postsecondary education has increased steadily over the past 35 years. Most of that growth has been at public institutions. The total number of college students is expected to continue increasing at least through 2020. Total enrollment increased 43 percent from 1995 to 2009 and is projected to increase an additional 13 percent between 2009 and 2020.[14]

College Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Income and Gender

Under-representation of certain groups in postsecondary education is a direct consequence of the different rates of high school completion and transition to college discussed earlier in the chapter. Although minority enrollment in postsecondary education has become slightly more reflective of the national population, some minority groups are still under-represented. In 2009, black and Hispanic persons constituted approximately 34 percent of the traditional college-aged population, but they represented only about 27 percent of students enrolled in postsecondary education. Hispanics were particularly under-represented among private and four-year institutions. Asian/Pacific Islanders were somewhat over-represented in all sectors of higher education, with the exception of private, two-year institutions, compared to their population share (see Table 4). However, a study conducted by the US Government Accountability Office highlighted important differences among subgroups of this population.[15] In addition, more women than men have been enrolled in college for more than 35 years, and Department of Education projections indicate that this gender gap will continue to widen until at least 2020.[16]

Table 4. Share of enrollment in postsecondary education by race/ethnicity in comparison with age 18 through 24 population share: 2009

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native
Percent of population age 18 through 24	**60.7**	**15.5**	**18.2**	**4.4**	**1.3**
Percent of racial/ethnic group enrolled in postsecondary education					
Total	62.3	14.3	12.5	6.5	1.0
Control					
Public	62.4	13.1	13.6	6.9	1.1
Four-year	65.6	11.6	10.3	7.0	1.0
Two-year	58.8	14.7	17.2	6.7	1.2
Private	62.2	17.5	9.4	5.7	0.8
Four-year	63.5	16.7	8.5	5.8	0.8
Two-year	46.8	26.8	20.3	4.1	1.2
Type					
Four-year or higher	64.8	13.7	9.6	6.5	0.9
Two-year	58.1	15.3	17.4	6.6	1.2

NOTE: Percent of population share figures do not include persons who reported more than one race. Includes not-for-profit institutions only. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic origin.

SOURCES: *Digest of Education Statistics.* (2010). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 236).

Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2009. (2010). US Census Bureau, Washington DC: Population Division. (Table 4).

[14] *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020.* (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 20); *Digest of Education Statistics.* (2010). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 198).
[15] *Information Sharing Could Help Institutions Identify and Address Challenges Some Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Students Face.* (2007). US Government Accountability Office: Washington, DC.
[16] *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020.* (2011). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 20); *Digest of Education Statistics.* (2010). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. (Table 208).

Chapter 2. Applications to College

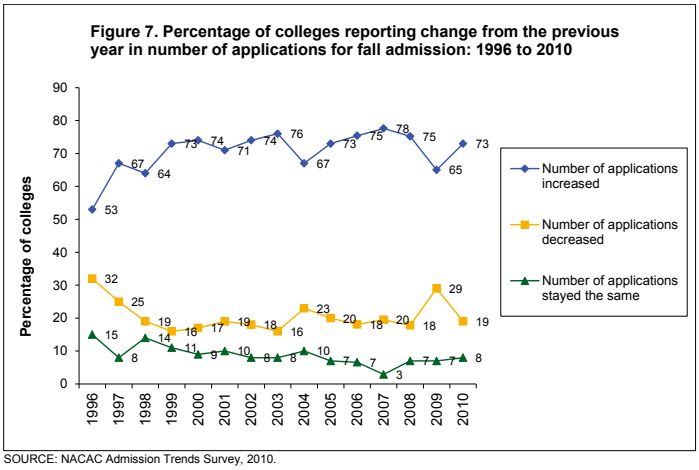
CONTENTS

Application Change Over Time

Results of NACAC's 2010 Admission Trends Survey indicate that most colleges (73 percent) experienced an increase in the number of applications they received compared to Fall 2009. For most of the past five years, approximately three-quarters of colleges have reported increases in applications, with the exception of 2009, when only 65 percent experienced increases (see Figure 7).

The application increases documented in recent years are due in part to the increased number of high school graduates—which peaked with the 2009 graduating class—but also to an increase in the number of applications each student submits (see Chapter 1). Seventy-seven percent of Fall 2010 freshmen applied to three or more colleges, an increase of 16 percentage points over the last 20 years. The percentage of students who submitted seven or more applications reached 25 percent in 2010 (see Figure 8).

Figure 7. Percentage of colleges reporting change from the previous year in number of applications for fall admission: 1996 to 2010



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Selectivity and Yield

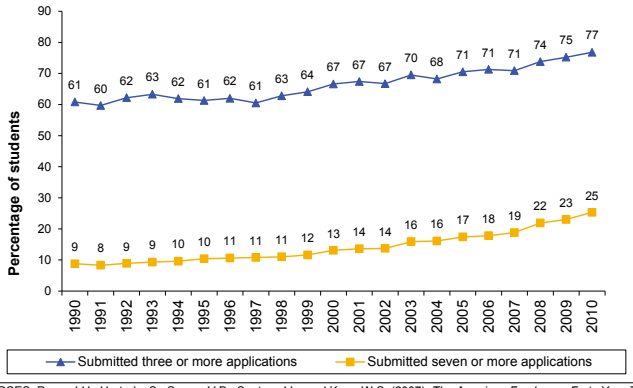
Selectivity

Selectivity is defined simply as the proportion of applicants who are offered admission, and is usually expressed as a percentage—(number of acceptances/number of applications) x 100. Higher selectivity is equated with lower acceptance rates (i.e. a relatively small number of applicants are admitted). The selectivity rates of US postsecondary institutions range from acceptance of fewer than 10 percent to more than 90 percent of applicants. Although the mainstream media tends to focus on the most selective colleges, the average acceptance rate across all four-year institutions in the US is approximately two-thirds (65.5 percent), according to most recent data. This acceptance rate is down one percentage point after holding steady for the past few years—66.5 percent in Fall 2009, 66.1 percent in Fall 2008, and 66.7 percent in Fall 2007. In addition, for Fall 2010, private institutions reported slightly lower acceptance rates than public institutions (see Table 5).[17]

Institutions that accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants are generally considered to be the most selective. On average,

[17] Correlation between acceptance rate and private control (-.081), $p < .01$

Figure 8. Percentage of students submitting three or more and seven or more college applications: 1990 to 2010



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

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

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

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

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

this group of colleges and universities receives many more applications per institution when compared to their less selective counterparts (see Table 6). These institutions also are much more likely to offer the Early Decision application option and to maintain a wait list, in part to manage the increased application volume (see Chapter 3).

However, as Table 6 also shows, the most selective colleges as a group received only 35 percent of all applications for Fall 2010 admission, and they represented only 20 percent of all full-time, first-year undergraduate students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities. Most students (69 percent) were enrolled in institutions with selectivity rates between 50 and 85 percent.

Table 5. Mean selectivity and yield rates by institutional characteristics: Fall 2010

	Selectivity	Yield
Total	**65.5**	**40.9**
Control		
Public	67.7	42.1
Private	64.3	40.4
Enrollment		
Fewer than 3,000 students	66.3	42.8
3,000 to 9,999	63.7	37.1
10,000 or more	64.3	38.4
Selectivity		
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	35.9	41.4
50 to 70 percent	61.2	36.7
71 to 85 percent	77.1	38.2
More than 85 percent	93.5	56.3
Yield		
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	63.4	22.5
30 to 45 percent	64.8	36.8
46 to 60 percent	68.5	52.6
More than 60 percent	69.3	82.8

NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2010–11 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. Institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Of the 1,950 total institutions, 1,571 (81 percent) provided selectivity and yield data.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2010-11). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Yield

An institution's yield rate is defined as the percentage of admitted students who decide to enroll—(number of enrollments/number of admitted students) x 100. From an institutional perspective, yield is a very important statistic. Admission office staffs conduct sophisticated analyses to predict yield rates in order to ensure that they will fill their freshman classes with students who are a good fit for their institutions. Admission officers also engage in a variety of outreach efforts to enhance the likelihood that students will attend their institutions.

Table 6. Applications and enrollment by selectivity: Fall 2010

Selectivity	National share of institutions	Average number of applications per institution	National share of applications	National share of full-time, first-year students enrolled
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	19.8%	8,745	34.7	20.3
50 to 70 percent	37.1	5,139	38.3	40.5
71 to 85 percent	28.4	3,738	21.3	28.5
More than 85 percent	14.8	1,918	5.7	10.7

NOTE: The list of colleges was drawn from the 2010-11 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using the online IPEDS Data Center. Institutions were selected using the following criteria: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, and Title IV-participating. Of the 1,950 total institutions, 1,571 (81 percent) provided selectivity and yield data for Fall 2010.

SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2010-11). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

For the Fall 2010 freshman class, the average yield rate among four-year colleges and universities was 41 percent, meaning that fewer than half of all students admitted to a given institution accepted those offers of admission (see Table 5). The average yield rate has declined steadily in recent years from 45.0 percent in Fall 2007 to 43.8 percent in Fall 2008 and 42.9 percent in Fall 2009. As shown in Figure 8, students are applying to an increasing number of institutions, on average. Consequently, the admission office's task of predicting yield rates and obtaining target enrollment numbers is more complex.

The Admission "Interface"

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

Online Applications

For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, four-year colleges and universities received an average of 85 percent of their applications online, up from 80 percent in Fall 2009 and 72 percent in Fall 2008. Enrollment size was directly related to the proportion of applications received online. More selective institutions and those with lower yield rates also received higher percentages of online applications compared to their counterparts (see Table 7).[18] The association with yield rate suggests that the ease of applying online may translate into more applications that are not likely to result in enrollments.

How Students Approach Colleges

Students use a variety of media to contact colleges about admission; however, email/Internet is the most popular. For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, colleges reported that 40 percent of all admission inquiries were received via email/Internet. College fairs were the second most prevalent at 15 percent, followed by written sources and high school visits (13 and 12 percent, respectively) (see Figure 9). Telephone calls were the least utilized means of contacting colleges.

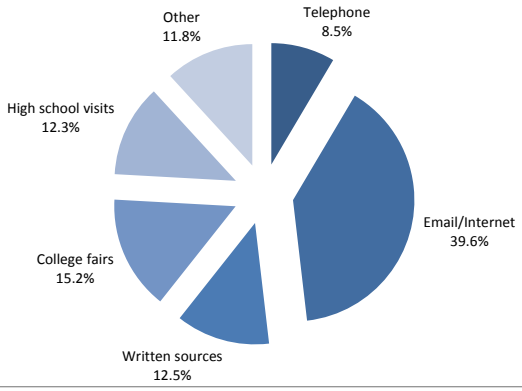
Table 7. Mean percentage of applications received online by institutional characteristics: 2010

	Mean percentage of online applications
Total	**84.7**
Control	
Public	84.1
Private	84.8
Enrollment	
Fewer than 3,000 students	82.7
3,000 to 9,999	85.9
10,000 or more	93.0
Selectivity	
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	94.0
50 to 70 percent	83.1
71 to 85 percent	82.9
More than 85 percent	81.0
Yield	
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	89.4
30 to 45 percent	85.2
46 to 60 percent	76.7
More than 60 percent	72.4

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

In comparison to private institutions, public colleges and universities reported receiving more student inquiries through both high school visits (16 percent versus 11 percent) and telephone calls (10 percent versus 8 percent). Yield rate was associated positively with inquires through phone calls and high school visits.[19]

Figure 9. How institutions received admission inquiries from prospective students: 2010



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

[18] Correlation between percent of online applications and: enrollment (.196), selectivity (.256), yield (-.235), $p < .01$

[19] Correlation between public college status and: inquiries from high school visits (.244), $p < .01$; telephone calls (.113), $p < .05$; Correlation between yield rate and: inquiries from telephone (.220), high school visits (.262), $p < .01$

College Admission Web Sites

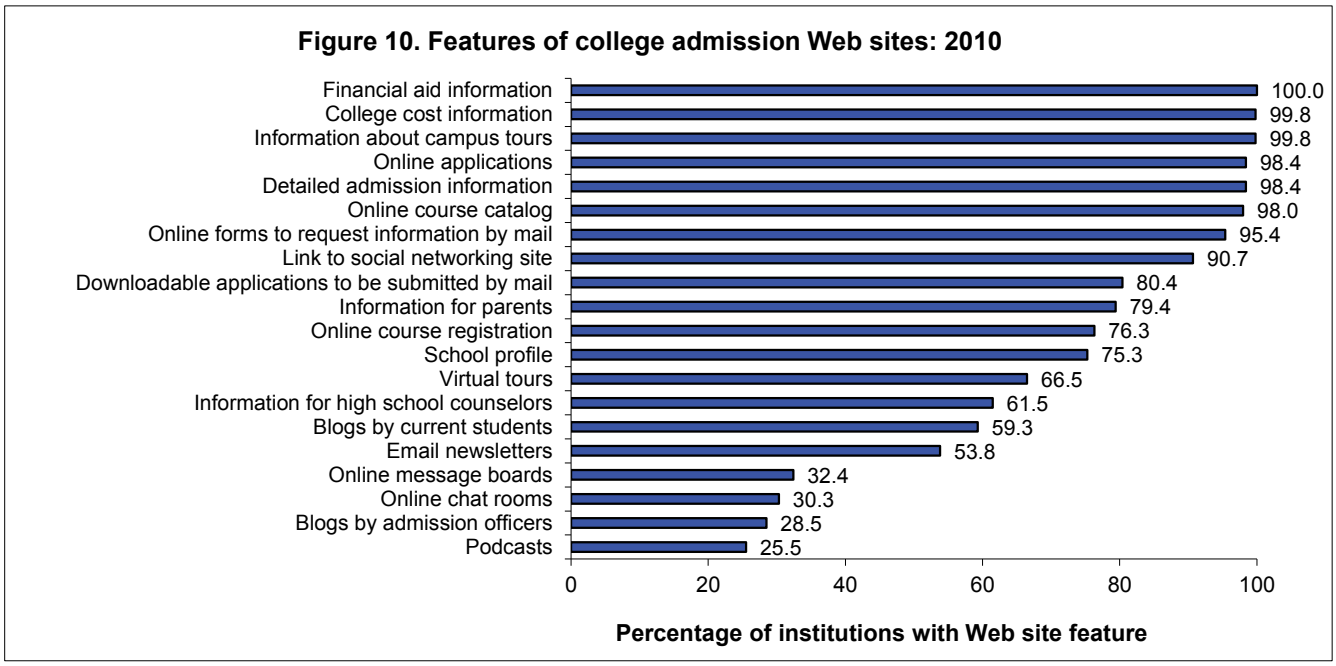
Many institutions post admission-related information and services on their Web sites, making it easier for students to learn about and apply to their institutions. All or nearly all institutions have certain features, including detailed admission information, information about campus tours, college cost and financial aid information, online course catalogs, online forms allowing prospective students to request information via mail, online applications and links to social networking sites (see Figure 10). In 2010, 79 percent of colleges and universities reported offering information on their Web sites that is tailored to parents of prospective students. A majority (62 percent) reported that they offer information intended for high school counselors.

Results of recent Admission Trends Surveys indicate that colleges' integration of social media tools continues to grow rapidly. In 2010, 91 percent of respondents reported that they provide links to their colleges' social networking sites (up from 39 percent in 2008 and 73 percent in 2009), and 59 percent reported offering blogs by current students. Some colleges and universities also have blogs by admission officers (29 percent), podcasts (26 percent) and online message boards (32 percent) (see Figure 10).

How Colleges Notify Students of the Admission Decision

Mailing letters is the standard practice for colleges and universities to notify students of admission decisions. Nearly all institutions that responded to NACAC's 2010 Admission Trends Survey reported mailing letters (99 percent). However, colleges do use other means, in addition to letters, to contact students about admission decisions. For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, 43 percent allowed applicants to check their admission status on the college's Web site, and 37 percent contacted students by email.

Figure 10. Features of college admission Web sites: 2010



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Nearly half (46 percent) notified students by phone. Though not specified on the survey, it is likely that most of these institutions notify a sub-set of accepted students by phone rather than the entire group. Only three percent of colleges reported notifying students by text message.

Public colleges were much more likely than private colleges to allow prospective students to check their admission status on the Web site (65 percent versus 33 percent), and private institutions were more likely to notify students by phone (54 percent versus 25 percent). Larger colleges also were more likely to use the Web site for admission notification, while both smaller and less selective colleges were more likely to use phone calls.[20]

Cost of Applying to College

According to results of the College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges 2010,© 90 percent of four-year, not-for-profit colleges had an application fee, which averaged $40. Larger institutions and more selective colleges tended to have higher fees, as did those with lower yield rates (see Table 8).[21] Of those institutions charging application fees, 84 percent waived them for students with financial need.[22] Private colleges were somewhat more likely than public colleges to waive fees (88 versus 77 percent), as were more selective institutions and those with lower yield.[23]

Gender Trends in College Applications

According to US Department of Education data, females, on average, comprised 56 percent of applicants to four-year colleges for Fall 2010 admission. They comprised 56 percent of accepted students and 56 percent of enrolled students. The average acceptance rates for male and female applicants were nearly identical (64.9 percent versus 65.2 percent, respectively).[24]

Table 8. Percentage of institutions with application fees and fee waivers and mean application fee amounts by institutional characteristics: 2010

		For those institutions that have application fees:	
	Percentage of institutions with application fee	Mean application fee amount	Percentage of institutions allowing fee waiver for financial need
Total	**89.7%**	**$40.12**	**84.4**
Control			
Public	92.0	39.33	76.9
Private	88.6	40.53	88.3
Enrollment			
Fewer than 3,000 students	88.5	37.93	90.9
3,000 to 9,999	90.4	42.01	84.1
10,000 or more	97.5	45.29	85.8
Selectivity			
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	93.0	47.15	92.4
50 to 70 percent	89.6	38.15	88.6
71 to 85 percent	90.0	37.34	87.7
More than 85 percent	88.1	38.76	72.1
Yield			
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	89.7	42.73	96.1
30 to 45 percent	91.8	39.92	92.3
46 to 60 percent	96.0	37.04	77.6
More than 60 percent	82.0	36.55	67.3

SOURCE: College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2010.© Data presented here include four-year, not-for-profit institutions only.

[20] Correlation between using Web site for admission notification and: enrollment (.372), $p < .01$; Correlation between using phone for admission notification and: enrollment (-.328), selectivity (-.270), $p < .01$

[21] Correlation between application fee amount and: enrollment (.134), selectivity (.198), yield (-.147), $p < .01$

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

[23] Correlation between waiving application fee and: private status (.238), selectivity (.177), yield (-.341), $p < .01$

[24] Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) online Data Center. (2010-11). US Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Only colleges meeting the following criteria were included: US location, four-year, not-for-profit, baccalaureate degree-granting, Title IV-participating.

Chapter 3. Admission Strategies

CONTENTS

Definitions of Early Decision and Early Action

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

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

Prevalence of Early Decision, Early Action and Wait Lists

Twenty-two percent of respondents to NACAC's 2010 Admission Trends Survey offered Early Decision and 30 percent offered Early Action. Private colleges were much more likely than publics to offer Early Decision policies. More selective colleges were more likely to offer Early Decision, and colleges with lower yield rates were more likely to offer Early Action (see Table 9).[25] For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, 48 percent of institutions reported using a wait list. Both institutions with higher selectivity and those with lower yield rates were more likely to have maintained a wait list (see Table 9).[26]

Table 9. Percentage of institutions with Early Decision, Early Action and wait lists by institutional characteristics: 2010

	Early Decision	Early Action	Wait list
Total	**21.6%**	**30.4%**	**47.7%**
Control			
Public	7.1	24.3	42.9
Private	26.3	32.4	49.3
Enrollment			
Fewer than 3,000 students	23.2	29.3	37.1
3,000 to 9,999	21.7	36.2	63.3
10,000 or more	11.1	27.8	50.0
Selectivity			
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	63.3	29.2	89.8
50 to 70 percent	11.6	32.8	43.5
71 to 85 percent	15.3	29.4	34.1
More than 85 percent	0.0	26.1	23.9
Yield			
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	26.4	42.9	57.5
30 to 45 percent	18.5	18.9	40.2
46 to 60 percent	5.7	17.1	25.7
More than 60 percent	*35.7*	*28.6*	*50.0*

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

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Early Decision in Depth

About 38 percent of colleges reported increases in the number of Early Decision applications. This rate of increase is smaller than those reported in the

[25] Correlation between offering Early Decision and: selectivity (.451), $p < .01$; Correlation between offering Early Action and: yield (-.215), $p < .01$
[26] Correlation between maintaining a wait list and: selectivity (.434), yield (-.184), $p < .01$

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Restrictive Early Action (REA)** is the application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Institutions with Restrictive Early Action plans place restrictions on student applications to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate these restrictions in their Early Action policies and agreements with students. Students who are admitted under Restrictive Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1.[27]

[27] NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP). Available online at: http://www.nacacnet.org/AboutNACAC/Policies/Pages/default.aspx

Table 10. Percentage of colleges reporting change from the previous year in the number of Early Decision applications and the number of students admitted Early Decision: Fall 2000 to Fall 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of colleges reporting change in ED applications											
Increased	58%	58%	53%	43%	37%	58%	63%	49%	49%	47%	38%
Stayed the same	27	29	28	33	18	24	12	19	18	26	25
Decreased	15	13	17	24	45	18	25	31	33	28	38
Percentage of colleges reporting change in students admitted ED											
Increased	--	--	42	30	29	48	47	36	43	65	36
Stayed the same	--	--	41	44	22	31	16	32	26	30	38
Decreased	--	--	18	26	49	21	38	32	32	5	26

-- Data are not available

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2000 through 2010.

previous three years when about half of the colleges reported increases. A comparable 36 percent of colleges reported an increase in the number of students admitted through Early Decision. This is substantially lower than the 65 percent of schools who reported increases in 2009. Thirty-eight percent reported decreases in the number of Early Decision applicants, and 26 percent reported decreases in Early Decision admits (see Table 10).[28]

Early Decision applicants represent only a small portion of the total applicant pool at colleges that have ED policies. Only 12 percent of all applications for Fall 2010 admission to ED colleges were received through Early Decision. As expected, colleges with Early Decision policies reported a higher acceptance rate for their ED applicants as compared to all applicants (57 percent versus 50 percent). However, this gap is substantially smaller than that measured over the past several years. For Fall 2007 through Fall 2009, it varied from 12 to 15 percentage points (70 percent versus 55 percent in 2009; 67 percent versus 54 percent in 2008; and 65 percent versus 53 percent in 2007). Given the binding nature of Early Decision policies, the average yield rate for Early Decision admits was 87 percent, substantially higher than the average yield rate for all students admitted to ED colleges (34 percent) (see Table 11).

Table 11. Key statistics for Early Decision colleges: Fall 2010

	Mean
Mean percentage of all applications received at ED colleges through Early Decision	12.4%
Mean percentage of Early Decision applications accepted (ED selectivity rate)	57.3
Mean overall selectivity rate for institutions with Early Decision	49.8
Mean percentage of admitted ED students who enrolled (ED yield rate)	86.5
Mean overall yield rate at ED colleges	34.4

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 12. Percentage of colleges reporting change from the previous year in the number of Early Action applications and the number of students admitted Early Action: Fall 2000 to Fall 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of colleges reporting change in EA applications											
Increased	73%	65%	72%	68%	56%	80%	70%	81%	65%	74%	72%
Stayed the same	19	27	21	22	7	6	18	7	16	7	12
Decreased	8	8	7	10	37	14	12	13	19	19	15
Percentage of colleges reporting change in students admitted EA											
Increased	--	--	53	53	48	73	57	72	60	73	68
Stayed the same	--	--	35	36	15	7	24	13	24	15	21
Decreased	--	--	9	11	37	20	20	15	16	13	11

-- Data are not available.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2000 through 2010.

[28] Results of the survey do not indicate the magnitude of these changes.

Table 13. Key statistics for Early Action colleges: Fall 2010

	Mean
Mean percentage of all applications received at EA colleges through Early Action	43.7%
Mean percentage of Early Action applications accepted (EA selectivity rate)	66.3
Mean overall selectivity rate for institutions with Early Action	66.9
Mean percentage of admitted EA students who enrolled (EA yield rate)	32.8
Mean overall yield rate at EA colleges	30.2

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 14. Percentage of institutions reporting change from the previous year in the number of students placed on the wait list: Fall 2000 to Fall 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Increased	48%	40%	48%	52%	--	49%	47%	56%	50%	47%	42%
Stayed the same	29	34	32	34	--	25	26	23	25	17	30
Decreased	23	21	16	14	--	26	27	21	25	37	28

-- Data are not available.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2000 through 2010.

Table 15. Mean percentage of students admitted off the wait list: Fall 2010

	Mean percentage admitted
Total	**28.0%**
Control	
Public	34.7
Private	26.2
Enrollment	
Fewer than 3,000 students	29.4
3,000 to 9,999	26.5
10,000 or more	20.0
Selectivity	
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	11.1
50 to 70 percent	34.2
71 to 85 percent	35.1
More than 85 percent	*55.3*
Yield	
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	25.9
30 to 45 percent	27.3
46 to 60 percent	*43.5*
More than 60 percent	*18.6*

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

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Early Action in Depth

Results of the 2010 Admission Trends Survey indicate sustained levels of Early Action activity. A large majority (72 percent) of colleges reported an increase in Early Action applications and a similar proportion (68 percent) reported increases in the number of students who were admitted through Early Action (see Table 12).[29]

Forty-four percent of applications to colleges that had Early Action admission policies were received through Early Action (see Table 13). These colleges reported a nearly identical acceptance rate for EA applicants in comparison to the overall applicant pool (66 percent versus 67 percent). Unlike Early Decision, Early Action did not provide a significant benefit to institutions in terms of yield rates. For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, EA colleges reported a very similar yield rate for EA applicants compared to the overall applicant pool (33 percent versus 30 percent).

Wait Lists in Depth

According to results of NACAC's annual Admission Trends Surveys, the percentage of institutions that used wait lists for the Fall 2010 admission cycle was 48 percent, up from 39 percent for the Fall 2009 admission cycle and 35 percent for Fall 2008. Forty-two percent of colleges and universities reported increases from Fall 2009 in the number of students who were placed on wait lists (see Table 14). Thirty-seven percent reported increases in the number of students admitted off of wait lists, and 36 percent reported decreases.[30]

Institutions reported placing an average of 10 percent of all applicants on the wait list for the Fall 2010 admission cycle, and an average of 54 percent of wait-listed students opted to remain on the wait list. Institutions admitted an average of 28 percent of all students who chose to remain on wait lists, down from 34 percent in Fall 2009. As expected, chances of being admitted off the wait list were lower at more selective colleges. On average, only 11 percent of wait-listed students were ultimately admitted from the group of most selective colleges (see Table 15).[31]

[29] Results of the survey do not indicate the magnitude of these changes.
[30] Results of the survey do not indicate the magnitude of these changes.
[31] Correlation between percent of students admitted off the wait list and: selectivity (-.482), $p < .01$

Chapter 4. Factors in the Admission Decision

CONTENTS

Factors in the Admission Decision: 2010 Summary

- Grades in college preparatory courses and strength of curriculum were considered by colleges to be the top factors in the admission decision, followed closely by admission test scores and grades in all courses. About 83 percent of all colleges and universities rated grades in college prep courses as "considerably important," followed by 66 percent for strength of curriculum, 59 percent for admission test scores, and 46 percent for grades in all courses.

- A second set of factors—essay or writing sample, teacher and counselor recommendations, extracurricular activities, class rank, and student's demonstrated interest—were most often rated as moderately important. No more than half of colleges rated these factors in the low to no importance range. For many colleges, these factors provide additional information about students' academic performance and interests, as well as their personal qualities.

- The student interview and subject test scores (AP, IB) can add further depth to the admission application. Admission officers consider these factors as supplemental to the main academic factors, and as such, rated them with low to moderate importance. In addition, about one-third of colleges indicated that they do not consider interviews and one-quarter do not consider subject test scores. They are used by some colleges to provide information for comparing candidates with similar academic qualifications.

- SAT II scores, state graduation exam scores, portfolios, and work were among the lowest rated factors in admission decisions for 2010. A large majority of institutions rated these factors with limited or no importance. SAT II scores are primarily used in highly selective admission, and they are often used for placement rather than admission decisions.

Table 16 shows a complete overview of the relative importance of factors in the admission decision in 2010.

Table 16. Percentage of colleges attributing different levels of importance to factors in the admission decision: 2010

Factor	Considerable importance	Moderate importance	Limited importance	No importance
Grades in college prep courses	83.4%	12.3%	2.7%	1.6%
Strength of curriculum	65.7	25.7	4.7	3.9
Admission test scores (SAT, ACT)	59.3	29.4	7.0	4.3
Grades in all courses	46.2	42.1	10.2	1.6
Essay or writing sample	26.6	33.0	22.9	17.6
Student's demonstrated interest	23.0	30.9	26.6	19.5
Class rank	21.8	37.2	25.9	15.0
Counselor recommendation	19.4	45.0	23.1	12.4
Teacher recommendation	19.0	44.2	24.5	12.3
Subject test scores (AP, IB)	9.6	32.4	32.6	25.3
Interview	9.2	22.7	33.0	35.2
Extracurricular activities	7.4	42.3	35.1	15.2
Portfolio	5.9	12.9	32.9	48.2
SAT II scores	5.3	11.8	24.9	58.0
State graduation exam scores	4.2	14.0	28.5	53.4
Work	1.9	20.3	47.2	30.6

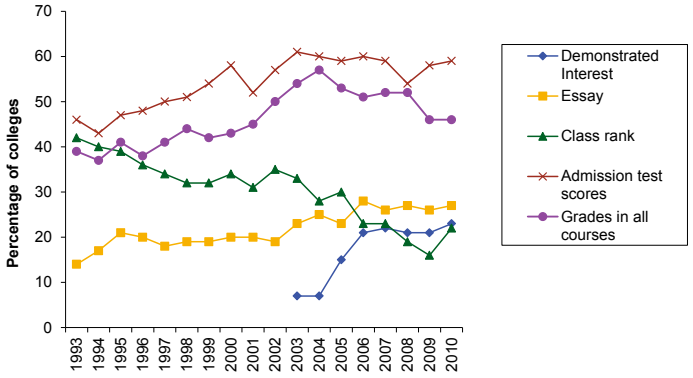
SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Factors in Admission: Change Over Time

Table 17 illustrates how the percentage of colleges rating factors in the admission decision as considerably important has changed over time, from 1993 to 2010. Academic performance in college prep courses has been consistently rated as the top factor in admission decisions over this 17-year time frame, with about 80 percent of colleges rating it as considerably important. The importance of other factors, such as teacher and counselor recommendations, the student interview, and extracurricular activities also has remained relatively unchanged.

Those factors that have shown the most change are illustrated in Figure 11. The importance of admission test scores showed an overall increase through 2000. Since 2003, the proportion of colleges rating it as considerably important has leveled off to around 60 percent. Similarly, grades in all courses increased in importance from 1993 to 2004, but has declined again in more recent years. The proportion of colleges rating demonstrated interest as considerably important increased dramatically between 2003 (when it was first measured) and 2006, but has since held at just over 20 percent. The factor showing the largest decline in importance is class rank. For Fall 2010, 22 percent of colleges rated it as considerably important, down from 42 percent in 1993.

Figure 11. Factors showing the most change in percentage of colleges rating as "considerably important": 1993 to 2010



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 17. Percentage of colleges attributing *considerable importance* to factors in the admission decision: 1993 to 2010

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

-- Data are not available.

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

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

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 1993 through 2010.

Factors in Admission by Institutional Characteristics

The following section highlights differences among various types of institutions. Nearly all institutions attributed some level of importance to each of the factors discussed below, and the relative importance of factors did not differ widely. With few exceptions, colleges viewed four factors—grades in college prep courses, strength of curriculum, admission test scores, and overall grade point average—as the top four factors in the admission decision. However, the institutional characteristics determined, to some extent, the way each factor in the admission process was rated. For a complete comparison of institutions by selected characteristics, see Table 18.

Public and Private Institutions

Differences between public and private institutions reveal that in many ways, private college admission is more "holistic" than public college admission. Private colleges considered a broader range of factors in the admission decision, which is likely due, in large part, to differences in application volume. Admission officers at public institutions were responsible for reading an average of nearly 2.5 times more applications for Fall 2010 admission than their counterparts at private institutions (see Chapter 6).

- Private colleges assigned greater importance than public colleges to many factors other than the top four, including the essay/writing sample, the interview, counselor and teacher recommendations, extracurricular activities, work, SAT II scores, the portfolio, and demonstrated interest.

- Public colleges assigned greater importance than privates to admission test scores.[32]

Institutional Enrollment

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

- Smaller colleges attributed more importance than larger colleges to the essay/writing sample, interview, counselor and teacher recommendations, demonstrated interest, and state graduation exam scores.

- Larger colleges attributed greater importance to strength of curriculum and admission test scores.[33]

Table 18. Percentage of colleges attributing *considerable importance* to factors in the admission decision by institutional characteristics: 2010 (continued on next page)

	Grades in college prep courses	Strength of curriculum	Admission test scores	Grades in all courses	Essay/ writing sample	Demonstrated interest	Class rank	Counselor rec.
Total	**83.4%**	**65.7%**	**59.3%**	**46.2%**	**26.6%**	**23.0%**	**21.8%**	**19.4%**
Control								
Public	80.4	67.8	73.2	43.5	10.9	16.9	25.0	7.4
Private	84.3	64.9	53.8	47.7	33.0	25.4	20.2	24.4
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	83.3	55.5	51.0	43.9	35.9	26.1	17.9	22.9
3,000 to 9,999	85.9	79.7	64.1	46.9	21.9	22.2	28.1	18.8
10,000 or more	92.7	75.6	65.9	48.8	14.6	7.3	31.7	14.6
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	96.0	94.0	54.0	59.2	48.0	22.0	34.0	52.0
50 to 70 percent	84.8	66.7	55.2	32.8	19.4	28.8	19.4	16.4
71 to 85 percent	91.5	58.5	61.0	49.4	25.6	19.5	23.2	15.9
More than 85 percent	75.6	41.9	57.8	55.6	29.5	22.2	17.8	6.7
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	94.1	75.2	47.6	49.0	32.4	16.5	20.4	24.3
30 to 45 percent	88.0	62.6	64.1	46.7	28.3	22.0	26.1	20.7
46 to 60 percent	77.1	45.7	71.4	47.1	25.7	34.3	20.0	14.3
More than 60 percent	*69.2*	*61.5*	*46.2*	*46.2*	*23.1*	*46.2*	*38.5*	*30.8*

[32] Correlations between private college status and attribution of importance in admission: essay/writing sample (.328), interview (.393), counselor recommendation (.355), teacher recommendation (.356), extracurricular activities (.324), demonstrated interest (.222), portfolio (.180), SAT II scores (.117), work (.145), admission test scores (-.176), $p < .01$

[33] Correlations between enrollment and attribution of importance in admission: interview (-.360), teacher recommendation (-.205), counselor recommendation (-.193), demonstrated interest (-.191), $p < .01$; essay (-.146), state graduation exams (-.127), admission test scores (.136), strength of curriculum (.157), $p < .05$

Institutional Selectivity Level

More selective institutions tended to place greater emphasis on many of the factors. Because applicants to the most selective institutions often have similarly high grades and test scores, these colleges need more information with which to evaluate each applicant. As a result, their admission process is more "holistic," like that of private and smaller colleges. However, they still reviewed far more applications for the Fall 2010 admission cycle relative to their staff size in comparison to less selective institutions (see Chapter 6).

- More selective colleges attributed greater importance to strength of curriculum and grades in college prep courses in comparison to their less selective counterparts.
- Institutions that accepted fewer applicants also placed more emphasis on many factors outside of the top four. These factors included the essay, class rank, teacher and counselor recommendations, extracurricular activities, work, and portfolios.
- The more selective institutions also placed more emphasis on subject test scores (AP and IB) and SAT II scores.[34]

Institutional Yield Rate

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

- Institutions with higher yield rates attributed less importance to grades in college prep courses and strength of curriculum compared to institutions with lower yield rates. The most likely cause of this finding is the behavior of high-yield, non-selective colleges, which accept almost all of the students who apply and enroll large numbers as a result.
- Institutions with higher yield rates also attributed lower importance to some of the other factors, including the essay/writing sample, teacher and counselor recommendations, and extracurricular activities.
- Institutions with high yield rates attributed more importance to subject test scores (AP, IB).[35]

Table 18 (continued from previous page). Percentage of colleges attributing *considerable importance* to factors in the admission decision by institutional characteristics: 2010

	Teacher rec.	Subject test scores (AP, IB)	Interview	Extracurricular activities	Portfolio	SAT II scores	State graduation exam scores	Work
Total	**19.0%**	**9.6%**	**9.2%**	**7.4%**	**5.9%**	**5.3%**	**4.2%**	**1.9%**
Control								
Public	7.4	7.5	2.7	2.7	4.1	3.4	6.1	0.7
Private	23.8	10.3	12.0	9.1	6.9	6.0	3.2	2.6
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	23.2	8.4	14.6	7.6	5.8	4.5	3.8	1.9
3,000 to 9,999	12.5	14.1	7.9	9.4	3.2	6.3	3.2	3.1
10,000 or more	12.2	10.0	0.0	4.9	0.0	7.3	2.5	0.0
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	51.0	24.0	18.8	24.0	10.6	20.4	4.3	6.0
50 to 70 percent	11.9	9.1	10.4	3.0	1.5	4.5	3.0	1.5
71 to 85 percent	12.3	3.7	8.5	4.9	0.0	1.2	4.9	0.0
More than 85 percent	8.9	6.8	6.7	8.9	8.9	2.3	2.3	0.0
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	21.6	6.9	9.8	7.8	3.0	2.0	3.0	1.0
30 to 45 percent	17.4	9.9	6.6	12.0	3.3	7.6	3.3	2.2
46 to 60 percent	14.3	11.4	14.3	5.7	2.9	11.4	2.9	0.0
More than 60 percent	*33.3*	*30.8*	*38.5*	*7.7*	*15.4*	*16.7*	*15.4*	*7.7*

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

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

[34] Correlations between selectivity and attribution of importance in admission: essay (.225), extracurricular activities (.292), strength of curriculum (.335), work (.319), class rank (.203), SAT II scores (.393), teacher recommendation (.336), counselor recommendation (.342), subject test scores (.318) $p < .01$; portfolio (.143), grades in college prep courses (.139), $p < .05$

[35] Correlations between yield and attribution of importance in admission: strength of curriculum (-.203), grades in college prep courses (-.253), extracurricular activities (-.185), teacher recommendation (-.166), counselor recommendation (-.179), $p < .01$; subject test scores (.140), essay (-.146), $p < .05$

Top Factors In-Depth

Grades and Strength of Curriculum

As previously discussed, grades in college prep courses, strength of curriculum and grades in all courses—in that order—are among the top factors that colleges consider in making admission decisions (along with admission test scores, which rank third). Although overall GPA serves as an indicator of a student's academic success in high school, strength of curriculum—and particularly grades in college prep courses—are better indicators of a student's likelihood of succeeding in college.[36] College prep courses—which include Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment, and other advanced coursework—are designed to approximate college-level work. Therefore, participation in a college prep curriculum and performance in the courses can indicate to college admission officers both motivation and ability to succeed in postsecondary education. In fact, results of two major research studies show that students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum are much more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than those who complete less rigorous curricula.[37]

A study of the transcripts of high school graduates in 2009 conducted by the US Department of Education indicated that students took more credits, completed more challenging curricula, and earned higher GPAs in high school than previous cohorts. Compared to the class of 1990, graduates in 2009 earned over three additional credits (about 420 instruction hours) during their high school careers, and the proportion of graduates failing to complete a standard high school curriculum fell from 60 percent in 1990 to 25 percent in 2009.[38] The study also showed that students with a more rigorous curriculum scored higher on the math and science National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams. This finding confirms the connection between strength of curriculum and academic performance. Although all students showed gains in credits earned, rigor of curriculum, GPA, and NAEP scores, the study found consistent gaps between different racial/ethnic groups. Black and Hispanic students consistently scored lower on NAEP exams than Asian/Pacific Islander and white students who completed a similarly challenging curriculum.[39]

Table 19. Percentage of schools that offer college preparatory curricula and mean percentage of 11th and 12th graders enrolled by school characteristics: 2010

	Advanced Placement (AP)		International Baccalaureate (IB)		Enriched curriculum		Dual enrollment	
	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled	% of schools that offer	Mean % enrolled
Total	**81.3%**	**28.1%**	**4.6%**	**24.6%**	**82.8%**	**43.3%**	**78.9%**	**14.5%**
Control								
Public	79.2	22.4	4.8	18.3	81.4	38.1	88.8	14.4
Private	90.8	50.8	4.0	54.6	89.0	65.4	33.7	15.3
Private non-parochial	86.6	56.4	3.9	72.9	87.1	68.1	24.4	15.2
Private parochial	98.3	41.6	4.3	25.4	92.3	60.9	50.4	15.4
Enrollment								
Fewer than 500 students	59.2	28.6	0.8	53.0	68.7	44.4	76.0	19.8
500 to 999	89.1	28.0	3.0	44.4	86.2	44.2	76.2	13.7
1,000 to 1,499	96.8	28.0	5.2	16.9	92.2	42.6	80.1	10.1
1,500 to 1,999	98.9	26.9	9.3	15.7	97.1	40.6	88.0	9.7
2,000 or more	97.5	27.7	17.0	14.6	94.4	41.3	87.7	10.3
Free and reduced price lunch								
0 to 25% of students eligible	87.7	29.2	4.9	20.7	87.7	42.8	84.4	13.1
26 to 50%	73.6	18.0	3.8	22.7	78.1	34.6	90.3	15.6
51 to 75%	70.7	17.8	5.4	20.8	76.6	34.3	89.4	13.3
76 to 100%	66.3	21.2	1.0	20.0	61.5	37.2	84.5	15.5
Students per counselor								
100 or fewer	64.6	36.4	2.1	17.5	74.8	53.5	61.0	21.1
101 to 200	78.9	30.5	3.8	28.3	80.5	45.7	69.8	15.2
201 to 300	84.8	29.0	4.0	27.1	85.1	42.4	83.0	14.9
301to 400	87.0	22.7	6.5	22.8	86.0	38.8	90.6	12.2
401 to 500	85.5	25.5	7.0	16.4	83.6	42.0	84.4	13.4
More than 500	69.1	25.1	1.3	3.0	76.5	41.2	75.3	13.3

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

[36] Sixty-nine percent of respondents to NACAC's 2010 Counseling Trends Survey reported that they weight students' high school GPAs to account for course difficulty.
[37] U.S. General Accounting Office. (2003). *College Completion: Additional Efforts Could Help Education with Its Completion Goals* (GAO 03-568). Washington, DC.; Adelman, C. (2006). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.
[38] A standard high school curriculum includes at least four credits of English and three credits each of social studies, mathematics and science.
[39] Nord, C., et.al. (2011). *The Nation's Report Card: America's High School Graduates* (NCES 2011-462). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

One reason for the gap observed in the High School Transcript Study may be that students across the nation do not have equal access to college preparatory curricula. According to results of NACAC's 2010 Counseling Trends Survey, there were important differences among types of schools in both college prep offerings and average enrollments in those curricula (see Table 19). For example, private high schools were more likely than public high schools to have offered AP and enriched curricula. Private high schools also reported higher enrollments, on average, in these curricula as well as in IB courses. Public high schools were much more likely to offer dual enrollment, but no significant difference was found in the percentage of students enrolled.[40]

In addition, larger schools were more likely than smaller schools to offer all four types of college prep curricula, but smaller schools had a slightly greater proportion of students enrolled in dual enrollment courses (see Table 19).[41]

Schools with higher percentages of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch programs (FRPL) were less likely to offer AP, IB, and enriched curricula. The average enrollments in AP and enriched curricula courses were also lower for schools with more students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (see Table 19).[42]

Results of the College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges 2010© show the average number of high school course units (years of study) that colleges required and recommended for students interested in attending their institutions. On average, colleges required the most years of study in English (3.9), academic electives (3.3) and math (3.0). There were some small differences between the required and recommended number of course units based on institutional characteristics. For example, public colleges, on average, had a higher number of both required and recommended course units for math in comparison to private colleges (see Table 20).[43]

Institutions with higher selectivity levels required more total academic and foreign language units. They also recommended a greater number of foreign language, math and science course units than their less selective counterparts (see Table 20).[44] These data do not indicate the level of coursework that colleges required or recommended, which also are likely to differ by institution type.

Table 20. Mean number of high school course units required and recommended by colleges: 2010 (continued on next page)

	Total academic units		History		English		Foreign language	
	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.
Total	**16.1**	**18.5**	**1.6**	**2.2**	**3.9**	**3.9**	**2.0**	**2.4**
Control								
Public	16.3	18.8	1.5	2.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.4
Private	15.9	18.3	1.7	2.2	3.9	3.9	2.1	2.4
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	16.0	18.4	1.7	2.2	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.4
3,000 to 9,999	16.2	19.1	1.6	2.4	3.9	4.0	2.1	2.6
10,000 or more	16.2	18.8	1.4	2.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.6
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	16.6	18.4	1.7	2.3	3.9	4.0	2.2	2.9
50 to 70 percent	16.2	18.9	1.6	2.2	4.0	3.9	2.0	2.5
71 to 85 percent	15.9	18.6	1.6	2.2	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.3
More than 85 percent	15.2	17.9	1.6	2.1	3.9	3.9	2.0	2.2
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	16.1	18.9	1.7	2.3	4.0	4.0	2.1	2.7
30 to 45 percent	16.2	18.9	1.6	2.1	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.5
46 to 60 percent	16.2	18.9	1.5	2.3	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.3
More than 60 percent	15.5	16.9	1.7	1.9	3.8	3.8	2.2	2.3

[40] Correlation between private high school status and mean percentage of students enrolled in college prep curricula: AP (.532), IB (.520), enriched curriculum (.405), $p < .01$
[41] Correlation between enrollment and offering college prep curricula: AP (.171), IB (.214), enriched curriculum (.134), dual enrollment (.063), $p < .01$; Correlation between enrollment and mean percentage of students enrolled in college prep curricula: dual enrollment (-.098), $p < .01$
[42] Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL and offering college prep curricula: AP (-.194), enriched curriculum (-.205), $p < .01$; IB (-.057), $p < .05$; Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL and mean percentage of students enrolled in college prep curricula: AP (-.286), enriched curriculum (-.168), $p < .01$
[43] Correlation between public college status and: required math course units (.263), recommended math course units (.226), $p < .01$
[44] Correlation between selectivity and course units required: total (.119), foreign language (.150), $p < .01$; Correlation between selectivity and course units recommended: foreign language (.276), math (.156), science (.150), $p < .01$

Standardized Admission Test Scores

As reported earlier in this chapter, standardized admission test score ranked as the third most important factor in admission decisions. Nearly ninety percent of colleges placed considerable or moderate importance on this factor (see Table 16). According to the College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges 2010,© an average of 59 percent of enrolled students submitted SAT scores for Fall 2010 admission, and 53 percent submitted ACT scores. Students enrolled in more selective institutions were more likely to have submitted SAT scores and less likely to have submitted ACT scores in comparison to those enrolled in less selective institutions.[45] More freshmen submitted ACT scores and fewer submitted SAT scores at institutions with higher yield rates (see Table 21).[46]

Studies conducted by ACT and the College Board (creator of the SAT) showed an increasing proportion of high school graduates taking each of the exams, relative stability regarding student exam performance, and substantial and persistent gaps between different racial/ethnic groups. About 1.62 million (49 percent) 2011 high school graduates took the ACT and nearly 1.65 million (about 50 percent) took the SAT while in high school.

Table 21. Mean percentage of first-year students who submitted standardized test scores by institutional characteristics: 2010

	SAT	ACT
Total	**59.0**	**52.8**
Control		
Public	60.5	55.0
Private	58.2	51.6
Enrollment		
Fewer than 3,000 students	58.5	50.5
3,000 to 9,999	65.9	50.2
10,000 or more	63.8	56.2
Selectivity		
Accept less than 50 percent of applicants	69.3	45.3
50 to 70 percent	61.5	51.4
71 to 85 percent	55.5	55.2
More than 85 percent	49.4	59.0
Yield		
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	70.6	43.0
30 to 45 percent	59.7	54.1
46 to 60 percent	52.2	57.8
More than 60 percent	45.0	63.7

SOURCE: The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2010.© Data presented here include four-year, not-for-profit institutions only.

This represents an increase of 25 percent in the number of ACT takers since 2007 and an increase of nearly 48 percent in the number of SAT takers since 2001. These increases are most likely due to population growth and greater proportions of students attending college.

Table 20 (continued from previous page). Mean number of high school course units required and recommended by colleges: 2010

	Math		Academic elective		Social studies		Science	
	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.	Req.	Rec.
Total	**3.0**	**3.4**	**3.3**	**3.3**	**2.3**	**2.7**	**2.5**	**3.1**
Control								
Public	3.1	3.7	3.1	3.1	2.4	2.9	2.6	3.3
Private	2.8	3.3	3.5	3.4	2.3	2.7	2.4	3.0
Enrollment								
Fewer than 3,000 students	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.3	2.3	2.7	2.4	3.0
3,000 to 9,999	3.1	3.7	3.4	3.5	2.4	2.9	2.6	3.3
10,000 or more	3.1	3.8	2.6	2.5	2.4	3.0	2.6	3.3
Selectivity								
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	2.9	3.6	3.3	3.1	2.4	2.6	2.5	3.2
50 to 70 percent	3.0	3.4	3.3	3.3	2.3	2.8	2.5	3.1
71 to 85 percent	2.9	3.4	3.1	3.4	2.3	2.8	2.4	3.0
More than 85 percent	2.9	3.2	3.8	3.3	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.8
Yield								
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.4	2.3	2.9	2.5	3.2
30 to 45 percent	3.0	3.5	3.4	3.0	2.4	2.8	2.6	3.2
46 to 60 percent	3.1	3.4	3.3	2.9	2.4	2.7	2.6	3.1
More than 60 percent	3.0	3.3	3.6	3.9	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.9

SOURCE: The College Board Annual Survey of Colleges 2010.© Data presented here include four-year, not-for-profit institutions only.

[45] Correlation between institutional selectivity and percentage of enrolled students who submitted test scores: SAT (.198), ACT (-.141), $p < .01$

[46] Correlation between institutional yield and percentage of enrolled freshmen who submitted test scores: SAT (-.265), ACT (.235), $p < .01$

Mean scores on both the ACT and SAT have remained relatively stable over the past ten years. Mean critical reading scores on the SAT dipped slightly (from 506 in 2001 to 497 in 2011), which may be a result of an eight percentage point increase in the proportion of exam takers with a first language other than English. Significant gaps in exam performance among different racial and ethnic groups have remained consistent as well. White and Asian students have consistently scored higher on both the SAT and ACT than their Hispanic, American Indian and black peers. The gap between white or Asian student scores and Hispanic or American Indian student scores was approximately 50-70 points on the critical reading and mathematics sections of the SAT and four points on the composite ACT. The gap between mean scores of white or Asian students and mean scores of black students was about 100 points on each section of the SAT and five composite ACT points for each of the high school graduating classes from 2007 through 2011.[47]

Student Characteristics as Contextual Factors

NACAC's 2010 Admission Trends Survey asked colleges to indicate how various student characteristics may influence how the main factors in admission are evaluated. These student characteristics included race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, state or county of residence, high school attended, alumni relations, and ability to pay.[48] As shown in Table 22, institutions attributed relatively little importance to these student characteristics, even as contextual factors. However, they did have some influence on how the main admission factors were evaluated. Between 25 and 31 percent of colleges rated race/ethnicity, first generation status, high school attended, and alumni relations as at least moderately important.

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

- Private colleges were more likely to attribute some level of importance to gender, race/ethnicity, alumni relations, and ability to pay in comparison to public colleges. Not surprisingly, public colleges rated state or county of residence more highly.[49]

- Larger colleges rated first-generation status and state or county of residence as having more influence, while smaller colleges rated ability to pay, alumni relations, and gender more highly.[50]

- More selective institutions attributed more influence to almost all of the student contextual factors, including race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, state or county of residence, high school attended, and alumni relations.[51]

- Institutions with lower yield rates also attributed somewhat more importance to some of the student characteristics, including race/ethnicity, high school attended, and alumni relations.[52]

Table 22. Percentage of colleges attributing different levels of importance to the influence of student characteristics on the evaluation of factors in the admission decision: 2010

	Considerable importance	Moderate importance	Limited importance	No importance
Race/ethnicity	5.1	23.6	20.5	50.8
First-generation status	4.5	24.5	26.3	44.7
High school attended	4.5	26.8	31.1	37.7
State or county of residence	3.7	16.0	26.8	53.4
Gender	4.1	10.2	21.1	64.6
Alumni relations	3.1	22.4	34.9	39.6
Ability to pay	1.9	9.6	16.4	72.1

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

[47] ACT. (2011). *The Condition of College & Career Readiness: 2011*. Iowa City, IA: ACT; College Board. (2011). *SAT Trends Report*. New York: The College Board.
[48] In surveys prior to 2006, race/ethnicity, state or county of residence, alumni relations, and ability to pay were listed along with the other factors.
[49] Correlation between private college status and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: gender (.194), race/ethnicity (.137), alumni relations (.286), ability to pay (.227), state or county of residence (-.185), $p < .01$
[50] Correlation between enrollment and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: state or county of residence (.207), ability to pay (-.213), $p < .01$; first-generation status (.134), gender (-.155), alumni relations (-.146), $p < .05$.
[51] Correlation between selectivity and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: race/ethnicity (.363), gender (.354), first-generation status (.330), state or county of residence (.225), alumni relations (.169), $p < .01$; high school attended (.131), $p < .05$.
[52] Correlation between yield and influence in evaluation of admission decision factors: high school attended (-.178), alumni relations (-.176), $p < .01$; race/ethnicity (-.142), $p < .05$

Chapter 5.
School Counselors and College Counseling

CONTENTS

College Counseling Defined

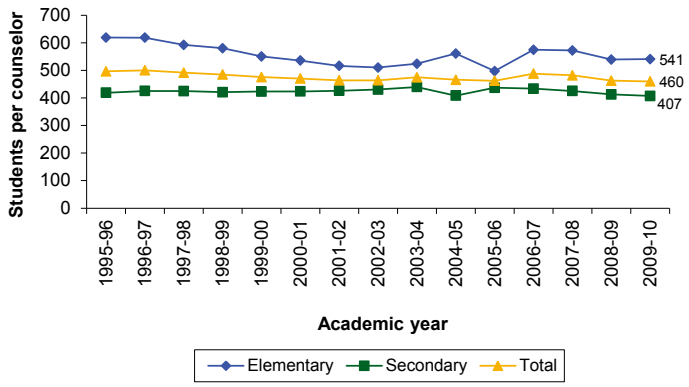
NACAC's "Statement on Precollege Guidance and Counseling and the Role of the School Counselor" defines precollege counseling as generally including activities that help students: 1) pursue the most challenging curriculum that results in enhanced postsecondary educational options; 2) identify and satisfy attendant requirements for college access; and 3) navigate the maze of financial aid, college choice and other processes related to college application and admission.[53] Assisting students in reaching their full potential requires the cooperative efforts of school administrators, teachers, community representatives, government officials, parents, and the students themselves, as well as a trained staff of school counselors who are able to facilitate student development and achievement. Of particular importance to student success is access to a strong precollege guidance and counseling program that begins early in the student's education. Counselors can be significant assets in the college admission process. Students face additional challenges without strong counselors to help them, which can make the college application and admission process more difficult.

Student-to-Counselor Ratios

According to US Department of Education data, in 2009-10 each public school counselor (including elementary and secondary) had responsibility for 460 students, on average. Counselors at secondary schools had slightly smaller caseloads, serving an average of 407 students. Moreover, these ratios have changed very little over the past 14 years (see Figure 12).[54]

Results of NACAC's 2010 Counseling Trends Survey, which includes private schools, indicated a high school student-to-counselor ratio, including part-time staff, of 272:1, on average. NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey also asked respondents to report the number of counselors at their schools based on the extent to which college counseling is part of their job responsibilities, allowing for the calculation of a student-to-college counselor ratio. For 2010, the average student-to-college counselor ratio was 333:1, including part-time counselors (see Table 23).[55]

Figure 12. Public school student-to-counselor ratios by school level: 1995-96 to 2009-10



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

SOURCE: Common Core of Data Build a Table. (1995-96 to 2009-10). US Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

[53] National Association for College Admission Counseling. (1990). "Statement on Precollege Guidance and the Role of the School Counselor." Available at: www.nacacnet.org/AboutNACAC/Policies/Pages/default.aspx.
[54] In this case secondary is defined as grades 6 through 12.
[55] The student-to-college counselor ratio is based on both the total number of counselors who exclusively provide college counseling for students and the total number who provide college counseling among other services for students. As such, it overestimates the focus on college counseling.

Variation in Student-to-Counselor Ratios

According to NACAC's 2010 Counseling Trends Survey, public schools had higher student-to-counselor ratios than their private counterparts.[56] Public school counselors were responsible for about 70 more students, on average (see Table 23). In addition, 73 percent of private schools reported that they had at least one counselor (full- or part-time) whose sole responsibility was to provide college counseling for students, compared to only 26 percent of public schools. Larger schools also tended to have higher ratios for both total counselors and college counselors (see Table 23).[57]

Table 23. Mean student-to-counselor ratios and student-to-college counselor ratios by school characteristics: 2010

	Mean number of students per counselor	Mean number of students per college counselor
Total	**272**	**333**
Control		
Public	285	338
Private	215	310
Private non-parochial	215	312
Private parochial	215	305
Enrollment		
Fewer than 500 students	218	247
500 to 999	277	353
1,000 to 1,499	279	335
1,500 to 1,999	297	390
2,000 or more students	425	540
Free and reduced price lunch		
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	272	320
26 to 50%	287	327
51 to 75%	301	402
76 to 100%	237	309

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

US Department of Education data show that public school student-to-counselor ratios also varied widely from state to state. In 2009-10, some states had exceedingly high student-to-counselor ratios including Arizona (815:1), California (810:1), and Minnesota (771:1). See Table 24 for the public school student-to-counselor ratios for all states.

Table 24. Public school student-to-counselor ratios, by state: 2009-10

State	Students	Counselors	Students per counselor
US Total	**49,373,307**	**107,564**	**459**
Alabama	748,889	1,856	404
Alaska	131,661	308	428
Arizona	1,077,831	1,322	815
Arkansas	480,559	1,425	337
California	6,263,449	7,734	810
Colorado	832,368	2,126	392
Connecticut	563,985	1,087	519
Delaware	126,801	279	455
District of Columbia	69,433	338	205
Florida	2,634,522	5,826	452
Georgia	1,667,685	3,670	454
Hawaii	180,196	646	279
Idaho	276,299	618	447
Illinois	2,104,175	3,155	667
Indiana	1,046,661	1,941	539
Iowa	491,842	1,241	396
Kansas	474,489	1,081	439
Kentucky	680,089	1,528	445
Louisiana	690,915	1,942	356
Maine	189,225	626	302
Maryland	848,412	2,407	352
Massachusetts	957,053	2,215	432
Michigan	1,649,082	2,498	660
Minnesota	837,053	1,086	771
Mississippi	492,481	1,116	441
Missouri	917,982	2,589	355
Montana	141,807	469	303
Nebraska	295,368	809	365
Nevada	428,947	870	493
New Hampshire	197,140	849	232
New Jersey	1,396,029	4,183	334
New Mexico	334,419	837	400
New York	2,766,052	6,653	416
North Carolina	1,483,397	3,856	385
North Dakota	95,073	291	327
Ohio	1,764,297	3,698	477
Oklahoma	654,802	1,727	379
Oregon	582,839	1,079	540
Pennsylvania	1,786,103	4,710	379
Rhode Island	145,118	391	371
South Carolina	723,143	1,854	390
South Dakota	123,713	330	375
Tennessee	972,549	2,825	344
Texas	4,850,210	11,105	437
Utah	582,793	820	711
Vermont	92,431	444	208
Virginia	1,245,340	3,912	318
Washington	1,035,347	2,050	505
West Virginia	282,662	740	382
Wisconsin	872,436	1,924	453
Wyoming	88,155	481	183

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

Counseling Department Priorities and "Time on Task"

Counseling Department Priorities

On NACAC's 2010 Counseling Trends Survey, respondents were asked to rank order the importance of four main counseling department goals. As shown in Table 25, "helping students with their academic achievement in high school" was ranked as the highest priority of counseling departments, followed closely by "helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education." "Helping students with personal growth and development" and "helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school" were ranked third and fourth, respectively.

High schools differed in how they ranked the priorities of their counseling departments. For example, public schools ranked "helping students with their academic achievement in high school" as the top priority while private schools ranked "helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education" as most important. Public schools also ranked "helping students plan and prepare for their work roles

[56] Correlation between public school status and: student-to-counselor ratio (.125), $p < .01$

[57] Correlation between enrollment and: student-to-counselor ratio (.226), student-to-college counselor ratio (.226), $p < .01$

Table 25. Mean ranking of counseling department responsibilities by school characteristics: 2010 (1 = most important)

	Help students plan and prepare for postsecondary education	Help students with their academic achievement in high school	Help students with personal growth and development	Help students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school
Total	**2.0**	**1.7**	**2.8**	**3.5**
Control				
Public	2.1	1.7	2.8	3.4
Private	1.4	2.2	2.6	3.8
Private non-parochial	1.3	2.3	2.6	3.8
Private parochial	1.6	2.0	2.6	3.9
Enrollment				
Fewer than 500 students	1.9	1.9	2.8	3.4
500 to 999	2.0	1.8	2.7	3.6
1,000 to 1,499	2.1	1.6	2.7	3.6
1,500 to 1,999	2.0	1.5	2.9	3.6
2,000 or more	1.9	1.5	2.9	3.6
Free and reduced price lunch				
0 to 25% of students eligible	2.0	1.6	2.8	3.6
26 to 50%	2.1	1.7	2.9	3.3
51 to 75%	2.2	1.7	2.9	3.2
76 to 100%	2.1	1.6	3.0	3.3
Students per counselor				
100 or fewer	1.9	1.8	2.8	3.5
101 to 200	1.9	1.9	2.7	3.5
201 to 300	2.0	1.7	2.7	3.5
301 to 400	2.0	1.7	2.9	3.5
401 to 500	2.1	1.5	2.9	3.5
More than 500	2.1	1.7	2.8	3.5

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 26. Mean percentage of time that counseling staffs spent on various tasks by school characteristics: 2010

	Postsecondary admission counseling	Choice and scheduling of high school courses	Personal needs counseling	Academic testing	Occupational counseling and job placement	Teaching	Other non-guidance activities
Total	**28.7%**	**22.1%**	**19.2%**	**13.4%**	**6.6%**	**4.8%**	**5.2%**
Control							
Public	22.8	24.3	21.1	14.3	7.5	4.6	5.4
Private	55.2	12.3	11.0	9.4	2.4	5.7	4.1
Private non-parochial	60.2	10.7	7.5	8.9	1.7	6.7	4.3
Private parochial	46.3	15.1	17.3	10.3	3.6	3.8	3.7
Enrollment							
Fewer than 500 students	29.6	17.7	17.8	14.9	6.5	7.1	6.4
500 to 999	31.7	21.2	18.7	13.4	6.2	4.1	4.6
1,000 to 1,499	27.2	24.7	21.6	11.7	7.2	3.1	4.4
1,500 to 1,999	24.0	27.9	19.9	12.9	6.2	4.0	5.1
2,000 or more	25.2	30.3	19.8	11.6	6.6	2.7	3.8
Free and reduced price lunch							
0 to 25 percent of students eligible	27.3	23.7	21.3	12.5	6.9	3.8	4.6
26 to 50%	20.8	24.4	20.6	15.3	7.4	5.4	6.0
51 to 75%	21.7	24.1	18.4	17.1	7.8	4.6	6.3
76 to 100%	23.3	22.3	18.5	15.0	8.4	5.5	7.0
Students per counselor							
100 or fewer	37.7	15.8	15.9	12.3	5.6	7.5	5.3
101 to 200	32.3	19.2	19.4	11.6	6.7	5.5	5.3
201 to 300	29.2	22.2	19.9	13.2	6.5	4.5	4.6
301 to 400	23.0	26.3	19.3	15.4	6.7	4.0	5.3
401 to 500	23.7	25.7	19.3	14.5	6.4	4.5	6.0
More than 500	29.2	22.0	17.0	15.1	7.2	3.6	5.9

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010

after high school" more highly than their private school counterparts.[58] Counselors at lower-income schools—as defined by the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL)—ranked "helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school" slightly higher than those at higher-income schools, and they gave a slightly lower rank to "helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education" (see Table 25).[59]

Time on Task

Most counselors have a variety of job responsibilities in addition to college counseling. Results of NACAC's survey showed that in 2010, high school counseling staffs spent an average of only 29 percent of their time on postsecondary admission counseling. Counselors in public schools reported spending only 23 percent of their time on college counseling, compared to 55 percent for private school counselors. Counselors at higher-income schools also spent more time on postsecondary counseling compared to their counterparts at lower-income schools (see Table 26). In addition, counselors at schools with lower student-to-counselor ratios spent more time on postsecondary counseling.[60]

Counselor Activities Related to College Counseling

Counselors engage in a variety of activities to assist students with the process of applying to college. As shown in Figure 13, the most frequent activities for 2010 included individual meetings with students to discuss postsecondary admission options and hosting college representatives. Forty-one percent of counselors also reported that they frequently engaged in actively representing students to college admission offices, and 39 percent reported frequently reviewing student applications.

There are variations in the extent to which students at different types of schools benefit from these services. For example, counselors at private schools engaged more frequently than those at public schools in most of these activities.[61] Counselors at larger schools spent more time meeting with parents.[62] Counselors at lower-income schools engaged less frequently in individual meetings with students, meetings with parents, electronically communicating with

[58] Correlation between public school status and ranking of: "helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education" (-.325), "helping students with their academic achievement in high school" (.233), "helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school" (.184), $p < .01$

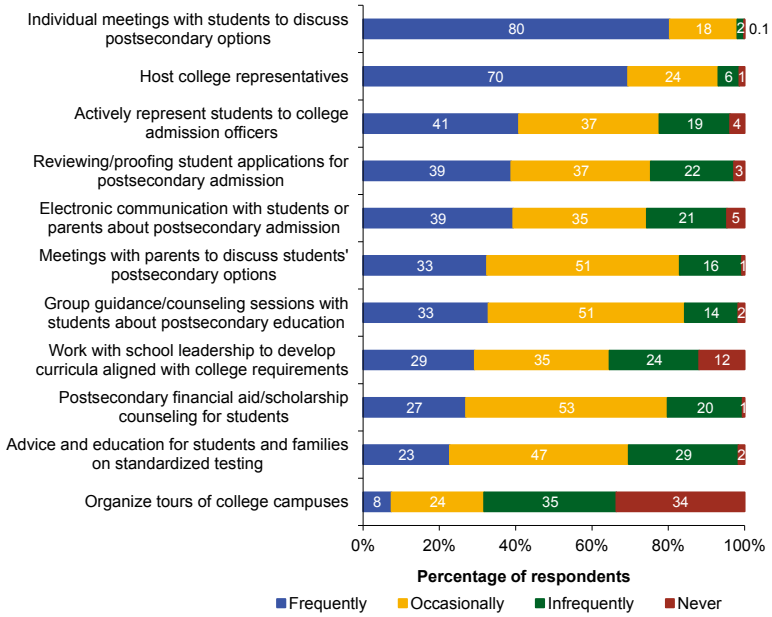
[59] Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL and ranking of: "helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school" (.185), "helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary education" (-.100), $p < .01$

[60] Correlation between percent of time spent on postsecondary counseling and: private school status (.673), percent eligible for FRPL (-.209), student-to-counselor ratio (-.109), $p < .01$

[61] Correlation between private school status and frequency of: group meetings with students (.194), individual meetings with students (.183), meetings with parents (.302), electronic communication with students and parents (.352), testing assistance (.326), application assistance (.263), hosting college reps (.139), actively representing students (.287), developing curricula (.109), $p < .01$

[62] Correlation between enrollment and frequency of: meeting with parents (.079), $p < .01$

Figure 13. How frequently counselors engaged in activities related to postsecondary admission counseling: 2010



SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 27. Percentage of secondary schools that require college counselors to participate in professional development: 2010

	Percentage of schools that require professional development
Total	**24.5%**
Control	
Public	20.2
Private	44.2
Private non-parochial	43.3
Private parochial	46.0
Enrollment	
Fewer than 500 students	21.3
500 to 999	26.5
1,000 to 1,499	27.1
1,500 to 1,999	23.7
2,000 or more	28.9
Free and reduced price lunch	
0 to 25 percent of	23.2
26 to 50 percent	17.4
51 to 75 percent	27.6
76 to 100 percent	23.7
Students per counselor	
100 or fewer	30.3
101 to 200	30.2
201 to 300	24.7
301 to 400	19.1
401 to 500	19.7
More than 500	18.5

SOURCE: NACAC Counseling Trends Survey, 2010.

students or parents, test advising, representing students, and hosting college representatives. However, counselors at lower-income schools provided counseling on financial aid options and organized tours of college campuses *more* frequently than those at higher-income schools.[63]

Professional Development and Compensation

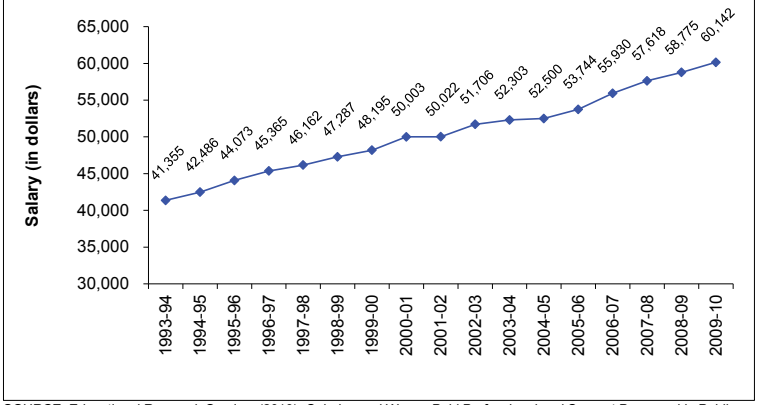
Professional Development on College Counseling

In 2010, 25 percent of high schools reported that counselors responsible for college counseling were required to participate in professional development related to postsecondary counseling. As shown in Table 27, private high schools were much more likely than publics to require professional development of counselors (44 percent versus 20 percent).

Compensation

According to the Educational Research Service, the mean public school counselor salary has increased steadily over the past 16 years. In the 2009-10 school year, the mean salary for a public school counselor was $60,142, up from $41,355 in 1993-94 (see Figure 14).[64]

Figure 14. Mean public school counselor salary: 1993-94 to 2009-10



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

[63] Correlation between percent eligible for FRPL and frequency of: individual meetings with students (-.151), meeting with parents (-.249), electronic communications with students and parents (-.269), hosting college reps (-.098), test advising (-.180), representing students (-.098), organizing campus tours (.262), financial aid counseling (.170), $p < .01$

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

Chapter 6.
The College Admission Office

CONTENTS

Admission Office Staff

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

Ratio of Applications to Admission Officers

As shown in Chapter 2, nearly three-quarters of colleges (73 percent) reported increases in the number of applications they received, resulting in high application loads for admission officers. For the Fall 2010 admission cycle, colleges reported that the average admission officer was responsible for reading 527 applications (see Table 28).

The burden of large application volume was particularly prevalent at certain types of institutions. For example, admission officers at public institutions were responsible for reading nearly 2.5 times more applications than their counterparts at private institutions. Admission officers at larger colleges and those at more selective institutions also had to contend with higher application volumes (see Table 28).[65]

Table 28. Mean number of applications per admission officer by institutional characteristics: 2010

	Applications per admission officer
Total	**527**
Control	
Public	981
Private	402
Enrollment	
Fewer than 3,000 students	324
3,000 to 9,999	699
10,000 or more	1,219
Selectivity	
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	809
50 to 70 percent	595
71 to 85 percent	426
More than 85 percent	297
Yield	
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	521
30 to 45 percent	551
46 to 60 percent	499
More than 60 percent	*499*

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

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Table 29. Median salary of admission staff by institutional budget quartiles: 2010-11

	Median salary	Median salary by institutional budget			
		Lowest quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Highest quartile
Admission Counselor	$34,811	$32,140	$34,449	$35,492	$37,940
Associate Director, Admission	55,608	44,218	49,537	57,992	66,032
Director, Admission and Registrar	73,264	63,585	70,492	73,028	96,435
Director, Admission and Financial Aid	106,419	68,818	79,561	139,968	102,732
Chief Admission Officer	87,000	64,700	76,600	92,442	108,588
Chief Enrollment Management Officer	120,560	91,035	114,000	136,046	149,264

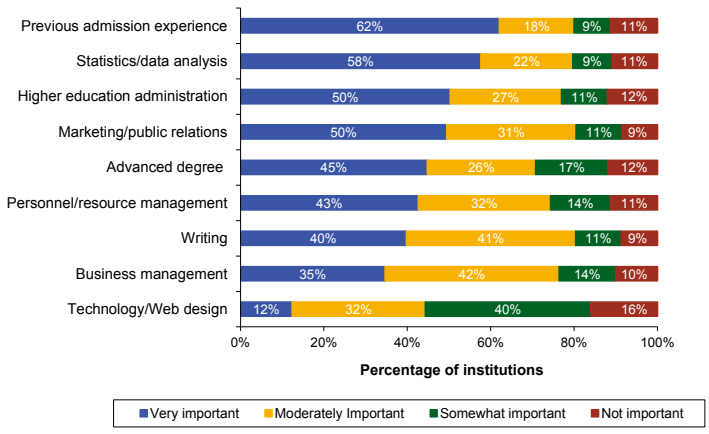
SOURCE: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. (2010-11). *Mid-Level Administrative and Professional Salary Survey* and *Administrative Compensation Survey*.

[65] Correlation between application-to-admission officer ratio and: public college status (.514), enrollment (.681), selectivity (.392), $p < .01$

Compensation

Table 29 shows the median salaries for various admission positions according to results of an annual salary survey conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). Salaries for all positions vary according to the institutional budget, but they vary most widely for higher-level positions. For example, an admission counselor earned $34,811, on average, in 2010-11, and this salary varied only slightly by the institutional budget quartile. The median salary for a chief admission officer was $87,000, and this salary ranged from $64,700 at institutions in the lowest budget quartile to $108,588 at institutions in the highest budget quartile. Chief enrollment managers earned the highest median salary in 2010-11 at $120,560.

Figure 15. Institutional ratings of the importance of various qualifications for the position of chief enrollment officer: 2010



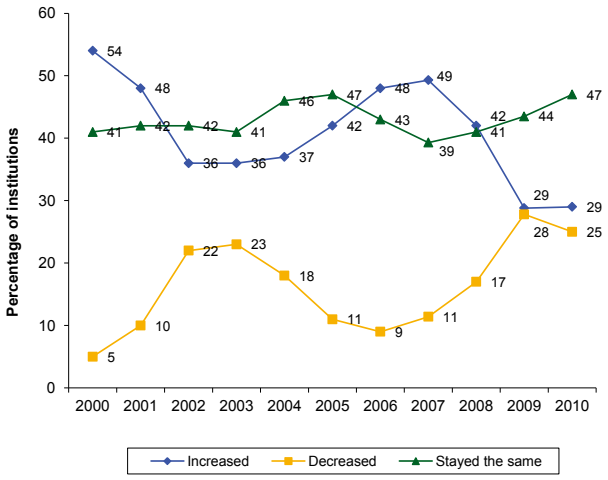
SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

Professional Qualifications for Chief Enrollment Officers

The job of a college admission officer involves attracting students to apply to the institution, evaluating applications and attempting to enroll students who have received offers of admission. The admission process, though different at each school, has attained a level of standardization that enables admission officers to move between institutions and apply similar practices. Figure 15 shows how colleges rated the importance of various skills to the position of chief enrollment officer in 2010. Previous admission experience was rated as the most important qualification. The second most important skill was statistics/data analysis followed closely by higher education administration and marketing/ public relations.

Different types of institutions rated most of the chief enrollment officer skills in very similar ways. However, there were a few interesting variations by institutional characteristics. For example, public institutions considered having an advanced degree to be more important than their private counterparts and more selective colleges placed less value on technology and Web design skills compared to less selective institutions.[66]

Figure 16. Percentage of institutions reporting change from the previous year in the admission office budget: 2000 to 2010



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Surveys, 2000 through 2010.

Budget and Cost to Recruit

Admission office budgets include funds to cover expenses such as staff salaries and benefits, publications and mailings to prospective and admitted students, staff travel for recruitment and yield-related purposes, application printing and processing, Web site maintenance and enhancements, and other activities conducted by the admission department or third-party contractors. The proportion of colleges reporting decreases in their admission office budgets was 25 percent in 2010, comparable to the 28 percent reported in 2009. In addition, only 29 percent of colleges reported a budget increase for 2010 and 2009, down from 42 percent in 2008 (see Figure 16). Forty-seven percent reported no change.

Cost to Recruit

NACAC's 2010 Admission Trends Survey asked institutions to report their total fiscal budget for the Fall 2010 admission cycle. The survey also asked institutions to report the total number of applicants, accepted students and enrolled students,

[66] Correlation between public college status and importance of chief enrollment officer skills: advanced degree (.155), $p < .01$; Correlation between college selectivity and importance of chief enrollment officer skills: technology/web design (-.135), $p < .05$

allowing for the calculation of "cost to recruit" figures.[67] In an effort to measure cost to recruit as accurately as possible, the survey also asked institutions to report what categories of expenses were included in the total admission budgets they provided. The percentage of institutions that included each of the expense categories were as follows:

- admission staff salaries (69 percent)
- admission staff benefits (53 percent)
- staff travel expenses for recruitment/yield (99.5 percent)
- expenses for participation in college fairs and other recruitment/yield events (99.5 percent)
- publication expenses (89 percent)
- payments made to third party contractors for admission or recruitment/yield services (89 percent)

Table 30 shows 2010 cost to recruit figures for two sets of respondents: 1) those who included all expense categories except for staff salaries and benefits in their total admission budgets; and 2) respondents who included all of the expense categories, *including* staff salaries and benefits in their total admission budgets.[68]

For the 2010 admission cycle, an average college admission office spent $280 in recruitment and office costs for each student who applied, $437 for each student who was admitted and $1,397 for each student who enrolled. When staff salaries and benefits were included, the average cost to recruit figures were $585 per applicant, $806 per accepted student and $2,408 per enrolled student (see Table 30).

As shown in Table 30, costs to recruit varied widely among different types of institutions. The following examples refer to cost to recruit figures which included staff salaries and expenses.

- Private colleges spent approximately two times as much as public colleges to recruit both applicants and admitted students, and three times as much to recruit enrolled students for Fall 2010.[69]
- In comparison to the largest colleges (10,000 or more students), the smallest colleges (fewer than 3,000 students) spent between three and four times as much to recruit each applicant, admitted student and enrolled student.[70]
- On average, less selective colleges spent more to recruit applicants.[71]

Table 30. Mean cost to recruit per applicant, admitted student and enrolled student: 2010

	Respondents who excluded staff salaries and benefits from the total admission budget			Respondents who included all expense categories in the total admission budget		
	Mean cost per applicant	Mean cost per admitted student	Mean cost per enrolled student	Mean cost per applicant	Mean cost per admitted student	Mean cost per enrolled student
Total	**$279.69**	**$437.31**	**$1,396.79**	**$585.29**	**$805.80**	**$2,407.73**
Control						
Public	*59.75*	*95.14*	*264.64*	348.73	449.22	987.01
Private	300.64	469.90	1,504.61	690.99	965.12	3,042.52
Enrollment						
Fewer than 3,000 students	303.08	466.79	1,518.16	806.70	1,059.74	3,151.96
3,000 to 9,999	*182.15*	*346.00*	*1,070.14*	422.39	649.89	2,015.74
10,000 or more	*46.77*	*76.18*	*197.05*	*208.36*	*349.69*	*906.71*
Selectivity						
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	*196.73*	*487.20*	*1,563.40*	*464.48*	*832.00*	*2,259.02*
50 to 70 percent	*229.20*	*402.96*	*1,155.30*	386.76	616.99	1,954.84
70 to 85 percent	323.76	447.50	1,448.61	579.98	853.68	2,566.80
More than 85 percent	*351.44*	*378.86*	*1,349.51*	823.13	891.62	2,663.53
Yield Rate						
Enroll fewer than 30 percent of admitted students	238.97	326.00	1,448.18	533.22	693.61	2,765.83
30 to 45 percent	310.20	557.19	1,392.72	542.99	764.69	2,055.09
46 to 60 percent	*449.20*	*566.91*	*1,271.18*	*677.29*	*915.01*	*2,448.37*
More than 60 percent	--	*217.80*	*1,079.54*	*1,049.26*	*1,711.24*	*2,552.39*

-- Mean could not be provided, as cell included only one institution.

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

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2010.

[67] Each cost to recruit figure is obtained by dividing the total admission budget by the respective pool of students (applicants, admitted students and enrolled students).
[68] Sixteen percent of respondents reported data that allowed the calculation of a cost to recruit figure that included all categories *except for* staff salaries and benefits. Twenty-five percent of respondents reported data that allowed the calculation of a *full budget* cost to recruit figure. All cost to recruit figures were then trimmed five percent due to extreme outliers.
[69] Correlation between private college status and cost to recruit (full budget): applicant (.336), admitted student (.381), enrolled student (.587), $p < .01$
[70] Correlation between enrollment and cost to recruit (full budget): applicant (-.439), admitted student (-.381), enrolled student (-.486), $p < .01$
[71] Correlation between selectivity and cost to recruit (full budget): applicant (-.281), $p < .05$