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HIGHER ED

# 2018 Survey of College and University Admissions Directors

A STUDY BY INSIDE HIGHER ED AND GALLUP

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# THE 2018 *INSIDE HIGHER ED* SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS DIRECTORS

A study by Gallup and *Inside Higher Ed*



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# FOREWORD

Ensuring a sufficiently large and diverse student population is the key responsibility of college and university admissions directors and enrollment managers. Achieving this goal has become increasingly challenging, with intensifying competition for a stagnating and in some places shrinking pool of traditional-age undergraduates, doubts about the value of a degree growing, and funds for public colleges and universities in some states declining. This study addresses important questions about admissions and recruiting policies and procedures as perceived by leaders grappling with these issues.

Some of the questions this study addresses include:

- Did institutions meet their enrollment goals for the current academic year?
- Which undergraduate student populations are the focus of admissions recruitment efforts?
- How do admissions directors view Advanced Placement courses for applicants?
- Do admissions directors expect colleges to abandon requirements for SAT or ACT scores?
- How useful do admissions directors think the SAT/ACT essay exams are?
- Do admissions directors believe Asian-American applicants are held to higher standards?
- How are colleges responding to the latest challenges to affirmative action policies?
- Are colleges seeking more out-of-state students, and have their efforts been successful?
- How are colleges responding to decreases in the enrollment of international students?
- Are admissions waiting lists growing too long, and are colleges using them to avoid rejecting certain applicants?
- How did the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election affect institutions' strategies for recruiting students from certain population groups?
- How are concerns about student loan debt and the value of a college education affecting college admissions?
- What factors are affecting community college admissions?



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## SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

A majority of admissions directors say they were very concerned about meeting their school's enrollment goals for the coming academic year. Just 38 percent met their enrollment goals by the traditional May 1 end of the admission period, and less than half did so by June 1.

Other findings from the study include:

- A majority of public doctoral institution admissions directors report achieving their college's enrollment goal by May 1. Half of private college admissions directors say they met their goal by June 1, but roughly two-thirds of those at public associate and public master's/baccalaureate colleges did not.
- Admissions directors are most likely to agree their college is increasing its efforts to recruit full-time undergraduate students (81 percent) and least likely to say the same about part-time undergraduates (36 percent). Seven in 10 indicate they are increasing efforts to recruit minority students, and two-thirds are making greater attempts to recruit first-generation college students.
- In the past four years, there has been a sharp decline in the percentage of admissions directors who say their college is increasing its efforts to recruit international students, from 60 percent in 2015 to 42 percent today.
- Over that same period, there have been significant increases in the percentages saying their college is making greater attempts to recruit online students (from 41 to 54 percent) and students older than 24 (from 39 to 52 percent).
- Admissions directors by a two-to-one margin agree that they support the recent decision by eight elite private high schools to abandon the Advanced Placement program.
- Admissions directors consider International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and most honors courses to be rigorous, and widely reject the notion that students who take IB or honors courses rather than AP courses are disadvantaged in the admissions process.
- Six in 10 admissions directors strongly agree or agree high school students take too many AP courses because they think it is necessary to do so to gain college admission.
- A majority of admissions directors, 56 percent, believe the University of Chicago's decision to drop standardized test requirements for applicants will encourage other (elite) colleges to do away with their own requirements. But 7 in 10 admissions directors at colleges that have standardized test requirements disagree that the Chicago decision prompted reconsideration of their own college's policy. Three-quarters predict their college will continue to require ACT or SAT scores in 10 years.

## SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS (cont.)

- Six in 10 admissions directors strongly agree or agree that college waiting lists have become too long. Most strongly disagree or disagree that their college uses waiting lists to avoid rejecting strong applicants or those with connections to the college.
- Admissions directors remain concerned about the image of higher education, and their concerns are not subsiding. Close to 9 in 10 say higher education needs to do a better job explaining the value of earning a college degree, and two-thirds believe media reports of college graduates struggling to find adequate employment, as well as public discussion of student debt, are discouraging students from considering higher education.
- Eight in 10 admissions directors — and an even greater proportion at private institutions — say their college is losing potential applicants because of concerns about accumulating student loan debt.
- Admissions directors are largely satisfied with their institution's CRM (Customer Relationship Management) for admissions and its marketing strategy. But as many are dissatisfied as satisfied with their college's social media strategy.
- Community college admissions directors believe competition from other higher education institutions, a desire among prospective students to earn a bachelor's degree, and public discussion that degrees and certificates do not help people get ahead financially are among the reasons for enrollment struggles at their college and at two-year colleges nationally.
- The vast majority of admissions directors at two-year colleges say that prospective community college students are interested in transfer opportunities to four-year colleges. They are more positive about programs that public four-year colleges offer to encourage community college students to transfer than about programs private institutions and especially for-profit colleges offer.



# METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings from a quantitative survey research study Gallup conducted on behalf of *Inside Higher Ed*. Gallup sent invitations via email to 4,456 admissions directors and enrollment managers, with regular reminders sent throughout the July 23-Aug. 16, 2018, field period. Gallup collected 499 web surveys, yielding an 11 percent response rate. Respondents represented 229 public institutions, 259 private institutions and 11 institutions from the for-profit sector.

Total Participation, by Sector										
	All Institutions by Sector				Public			Private Nonprofit		
	All	Public	Private Non-profit	For-Profit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.	Assoc.*
Total N	499	229	259	11	55	85	85	124	113	3

\* Data not reported for these groups due to small sample size

Note: System offices and specialized institutions are categorized by sector but not by highest degree offering. Consequently, in some tables, percentages for subgroups (e.g., private doctoral/master's and private baccalaureate) may appear inconsistent with the total for the entire group (e.g., all private institutions).

Some sectors do not have data reported due to small sample sizes. Sector groupings are determined based on the 2015 Carnegie Classification for the institution.

Gallup education consultants developed the questionnaire in collaboration with Scott Jaschik and Doug Lederman of *Inside Higher Ed*. Bible colleges and seminaries with a Carnegie Classification of 24 and institutions with an enrollment of fewer than 500 students were excluded from the sample. Each institution is represented only once in the results.

The survey was an attempted census of all admissions directors or enrollment managers using the most comprehensive sample information available. Gallup statistically weighted data to correct for nonresponse, matching the obtained sample to targets for all U.S. colleges and universities from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) database. Gallup weighted the sample based on institutional control (public or private/nonprofit), four-year or two-year degree offerings, student enrollment and geographical region. Therefore, the weighted sample results can be considered representative of the views of admissions directors at colleges nationwide.

The following sections present the findings of the survey. In some cases, reported frequencies may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. "Don't know" and "Refused" responses are excluded from the results unless otherwise indicated.



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# FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT

Full-time undergraduates and minority students are two student populations colleges commonly target with recruitment efforts. Eighty-one percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that they are very likely to increase recruiting efforts this year for full-time undergraduates, and 71 percent say the same about minority students. Roughly two-thirds of admissions directors indicate their college will make greater efforts to recruit first-generation college students (67 percent) and transfer students (64 percent). Slim majorities say students recruited with merit scholarships (55 percent), online students (54 percent), out-of-state students (53 percent) and students older than 24 (52 percent) will be a focus of recruitment for their college.

Colleges are less likely to increase their focus on recruiting veterans and military personnel (45 percent), international students (42 percent), full-pay students (41 percent) and part-time undergraduates (36 percent).

The recruitment focus at community colleges differs from that at other types of institutions in many ways. Admissions directors at public associate-granting colleges are nearly as likely to say they will increase their efforts to recruit part-time undergraduates (68 percent) as they are to say the same about full-time undergraduates (70 percent). At all other types of institutions, efforts are much more focused on full-time undergraduates.

Public associate admissions directors also indicate that students older than 24 are a key recruiting target for their college, but they are less likely than admissions directors at other colleges to say they are focusing on recruiting transfer students, out-of-state students, international students, full-pay students and those recruited with merit scholarships.

Majorities of community college and public doctoral admissions directors strongly agree that first-generation college students are a focus of recruitment for their college, compared with fewer than 4 in 10 directors at other types of colleges.

## FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT (cont.)

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement about undergraduate applicant populations.

This year at my institution, I am very likely to increase my recruitment efforts for the following populations of undergraduate applicants to my institution:

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Full-time undergraduates</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	59	54	63	63	73	47	61	71
%4	22	21	22	23	13	23	29	13
%3	14	21	7	12	12	25	6	4
%2	4	4	4	2	0	5	1	7
%1 Strongly disagree	2	0	3	0	2	0	2	5
<b>Minority students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	45	51	40	64	45	50	54	33
%4	26	23	29	23	23	23	25	40
%3	24	21	26	13	27	21	19	19
%2	4	3	4	0	4	4	1	7
%1 Strongly disagree	2	2	1	0	1	3	1	<1

## FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>First-generation college students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	43	52	35	56	36	55	38	37
%4	24	21	27	19	32	19	21	36
%3	26	21	29	23	27	19	36	22
%2	6	3	8	2	5	3	4	4
%1 Strongly disagree	2	3	<1	0	0	4	1	<1
<b>Transfer students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	37	31	40	50	54	20	56	32
%4	27	25	29	31	30	22	29	36
%3	22	24	20	17	11	28	12	26
%2	7	12	4	2	5	16	3	3
%1 Strongly disagree	7	8	7	0	0	13	1	4
<b>Students recruited with merit scholarships</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	29	22	34	37	32	13	32	46
%4	26	25	27	30	35	20	20	27
%3	24	31	18	22	25	36	22	14
%2	12	10	14	6	6	13	22	6
%1 Strongly disagree	9	12	7	6	2	17	4	7
<b>Online students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	31	25	38	27	26	25	39	37
%4	23	26	20	18	13	30	19	15
%3	20	28	10	18	25	30	17	3
%2	12	12	10	14	18	10	7	15
%1 Strongly disagree	15	9	22	23	18	5	19	30
<b>Out-of-state students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	30	23	35	41	54	9	35	36
%4	23	18	28	32	24	13	27	34
%3	23	18	25	17	16	20	28	20
%2	13	19	8	6	1	28	9	6
%1 Strongly disagree	12	21	4	4	5	30	1	4

## FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Students older than 24</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	31	37	25	22	17	45	27	19
%4	21	26	15	11	15	31	25	10
%3	27	24	30	30	37	19	29	34
%2	12	8	16	22	18	3	9	19
%1 Strongly disagree	10	6	14	15	12	3	10	18
<b>Veterans/military personnel</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	17	23	12	22	21	24	26	4
%4	28	31	25	26	33	30	20	21
%3	36	36	35	44	32	37	40	38
%2	13	5	21	8	9	4	11	28
%1 Strongly disagree	6	5	7	0	6	6	3	9
<b>International students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	20	20	19	40	25	14	30	17
%4	22	16	28	20	25	12	20	35
%3	28	31	26	26	37	30	36	24
%2	18	17	19	12	6	21	10	19
%1 Strongly disagree	12	16	8	2	6	23	4	6
<b>Full-pay students</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	20	17	23	18	26	15	26	25
%4	21	15	25	26	15	14	31	18
%3	32	39	27	41	36	39	26	30
%2	15	15	15	13	15	15	11	12
%1 Strongly disagree	11	14	10	2	9	18	6	15
<b>Part-time graduates</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	18	29	7	14	18	35	8	4
%4	18	25	12	8	9	33	17	8
%3	26	26	25	25	28	24	25	26
%2	17	9	24	24	22	4	18	29
%1 Strongly disagree	22	11	33	29	23	4	31	34



## FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT (cont.)

The rank order of these groups has been similar in past years, with full-time undergraduates always first, minority students and transfer students near the top, and part-time undergraduates always last. Some of the notable trends compared with prior years' surveys are:

- The proportion of admissions directors who strongly agree or agree that their college will increase efforts to recruit international students has fallen from 60 percent in 2015 to 50 percent in 2016 to 42 percent today.
- Admissions directors are also less likely now (41 percent) than in past years to say their college is increasing its focus to recruit full-pay students. In 2015, 51 percent agreed they were doing so.
- Since 2015, there have been 13-point increases in the percentages saying their college is increasing efforts to recruit students older than 24 (from 39 to 52 percent) and online students (from 41 to 54 percent).
- The 67 percent of admissions directors indicating their college will make greater efforts to recruit first-generation college students is up from 58 percent a year ago (and the 59 percent average for 2014 through 2017).

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# STUDENT ENROLLMENT GOALS

Most colleges are not meeting their enrollment goals by the traditional date for admissions acceptances, May 1. Thirty-eight percent of admissions directors say their college met its goal by that date, similar to the 34 percent who did so in 2017 and 37 percent in 2016. As in past years, public doctoral colleges are most likely to meet their goals by May 1, with 54 percent of admissions directors at those institutions reporting doing so this year.

Another 8 percent of all admissions directors say their college met its enrollment goals by June 1, bringing the total to 46 percent who met their goal within a month of the traditional admissions season deadline. Fifty-three percent of private college admissions directors say they met their enrollment goals by June 1. However, roughly two-thirds of community college and public master's/baccalaureate admissions directors say their college did not meet its goals by June 1.

Most admissions directors — 90 percent — say they were very (55 percent) or moderately (35 percent) concerned about reaching their institution's enrollment goals this year. Those figures are similar to results from the prior two years.

Many colleges are wrestling with issues related to the size and composition of their student bodies. Please indicate how concerned you are about each of the following:								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Did your institution meet its new student enrollment goals this year prior to May 1, 2018? Did your institution meet its new student enrollment goals this year prior to June 1, 2018?*								
% Prior to May 1, 2018	38	29	45	54	27	26	47	43
% Prior to June 1, 2018	8	8	8	2	10	8	6	7
% Not prior to June 1, 2018	54	62	47	44	63	66	47	51
Thinking back, please indicate how concerned you were about meeting your institution's new student enrollment goals this year, that is, for the 2018-2019 academic year.								
% Very concerned	55	59	52	24	62	64	53	53
% Moderately concerned	35	32	37	54	27	28	30	35
% Not too concerned	9	9	9	16	7	8	11	11
% Not concerned at all	2	1	2	6	4	0	6	0

\*Asked of those whose institution did not meet its new student enrollment goals prior to May 1, 2018

# ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Many high school students attempt to improve their college credentials, and possibly earn college credits, by taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This year, several elite private schools in the Washington, D.C., area announced their intention to cease offering AP courses. Admissions directors are twice as likely to strongly agree or agree (44 percent) that they support that decision as they are to strongly disagree or disagree (22 percent). At the same time, admissions directors acknowledge that it is easy for those schools to make such a decision given their reputations but that it would not be easy for other schools to do the same — 66 percent strongly agree or agree with this statement.

The schools' announcement has implications for college admissions, particularly in terms of how much AP courses, or a lack of them, factor into admissions decisions.

As seen on the following page, nearly three-fourths of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that students attending schools that do not offer AP courses (but do offer other advanced courses) will not be disadvantaged in the admissions process. This may stem from admissions directors' belief that honors courses and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses are rigorous.

Fifty-nine percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that most honors courses are rigorous, and 74 percent say the same about IB courses. By comparison, 70 percent say AP courses are rigorous.

Admissions directors widely reject the idea that their college favors applicants with AP courses over those with honors or IB courses — 76 percent disagree, including 51 percent who do so strongly.

Still, admissions directors do express concerns about the role AP can play in admissions. More than 6 in 10 strongly agree or agree that students take too many AP courses, thinking it is necessary for admission into college. A majority of admissions directors also strongly agree or agree that the emphasis on AP courses puts low-income students at a disadvantage in the admissions process if they attend schools with limited AP offerings.

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT (cont.)

Recently, eight elite private high schools announced that they were dropping out of the Advanced Placement program. They said they could create better advanced courses themselves and that many students feel pressured to take AP courses over other courses or experiences that may be more meaningful. Further, those schools' leaders did not think a lack of AP courses would hurt their students in college admissions.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>I support the announcement of the eight schools to drop out of the AP program.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	22	25	19	16	16	29	13	24
%4	22	24	19	19	19	27	14	20
%3	35	31	39	25	42	29	34	42
%2	13	9	15	14	11	7	27	10
%1 Strongly disagree	9	11	7	25	11	8	12	5
<b>It was easy for the eight private high schools to drop out of the AP program given their reputations. But it would not be easy for other high schools to do so.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	34	35	34	43	43	29	34	35
%4	32	28	34	26	33	28	41	32
%3	20	19	20	17	17	20	21	21
%2	9	11	8	4	6	15	3	6
%1 Strongly disagree	5	6	4	9	1	8	2	5
<b>Students from high schools that do not offer AP courses, but offer other advanced courses, will not be disadvantaged in the admissions process.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	49	50	48	51	54	48	42	57
%4	25	22	27	20	21	22	27	30
%3	16	17	16	18	16	17	22	6
%2	7	10	4	10	7	11	7	4
%1 Strongly disagree	3	1	4	0	1	1	2	3

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>I consider AP courses to be rigorous.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	24	25	25	42	19	24	34	25
%4	46	40	52	46	54	34	52	52
%3	24	32	17	12	22	39	13	18
%2	5	3	6	0	4	4	1	4
%1 Strongly disagree	<1	<1	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>I consider IB (International Baccalaureate) courses to be rigorous.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	39	32	46	55	45	20	50	53
%4	35	31	39	32	39	26	35	35
%3	21	34	11	12	13	51	15	8
%2	4	2	4	0	2	0	0	4
%1 Strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
<b>I consider most honors courses to be rigorous.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	13	12	13	10	1	17	22	8
%4	46	49	43	33	57	48	35	43
%3	32	33	33	43	33	32	33	42
%2	7	5	9	10	5	4	10	6
%1 Strongly disagree	2	1	2	4	4	0	0	<1
<b>My college favors applicants with AP courses on their transcripts over those with honors courses or International Baccalaureate courses.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	4
%4	6	4	7	6	8	3	4	11
%3	16	13	17	14	22	10	15	18
%2	25	19	30	31	18	17	33	30
%1 Strongly disagree	51	61	43	45	50	69	46	37
<b>Many students take too many AP courses, believing that it is necessary to be admitted to college.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	28	19	34	12	16	21	22	39
%4	34	39	30	47	45	36	25	32
%3	26	29	24	23	31	30	34	23
%2	8	9	7	14	7	9	15	3
%1 Strongly disagree	4	3	5	4	1	4	5	4
<b>I am concerned that low-income students attending schools with limited AP offerings are disadvantaged in the admissions process by the emphasis on AP.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	22	24	21	20	19	25	13	16
%4	31	25	36	20	28	25	36	39
%3	23	24	23	29	31	21	29	24
%2	14	15	13	18	13	15	11	16
%1 Strongly disagree	10	13	8	14	9	14	11	5



# STANDARDIZED TESTING

Many colleges have become “test optional” in admissions, meaning they do not require applicants to submit standardized test scores from the SAT or ACT. The movement gained footing when the University of Chicago decided to drop its requirement in June. A majority of college admissions directors, 53 percent, say their institution requires applicants to submit standardized test scores. This includes just 22 percent of those at community colleges but 92 percent of those at public doctoral institutions.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Does your college require applicants to submit standardized test scores from the SAT or ACT?								
% Yes	53	43	64	92	83	22	63	76
% No	47	57	36	8	17	78	37	24

Fifty-six percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that Chicago's decision will encourage other colleges to drop standardized testing requirements; just 12 percent strongly disagree or disagree. However, admissions directors at colleges that currently have a standardized test requirement say the developments involving Chicago are not prompting a reconsideration of their own college's policy — 17 percent strongly agree or agree this has happened, while 69 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

Also, 35 percent of admissions directors at colleges requiring standardized test scores strongly agree or agree that they are open to dropping the requirement but face opposition from administrators at their college; 38 percent strongly disagree or disagree, and 27 percent are neutral.

Admissions directors share two concerns about standardized test requirements. Three-quarters agree, including 43 percent who do so strongly, that they are concerned about the persistent gaps in test scores by race and ethnicity. Sixty-two percent strongly agree or agree that the emphasis by parents and students on average test scores discourages students from applying to colleges at which they could be admitted and thrive.

## STANDARDIZED TESTING (cont.)

Average test scores discourages students from applying to colleges at which they could be admitted and thrive.  
This year, the University of Chicago joined other colleges that have in recent years dropped the requirement that applicants submit SAT or ACT scores.  
Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
The change by the University of Chicago is likely to encourage other colleges, including elite colleges, to drop standardized test requirements.								
%5 Strongly agree	17	10	23	14	12	9	25	19
%4	39	38	39	40	49	32	40	38
%3	32	39	27	34	30	43	27	31
%2	6	6	6	6	5	7	2	11
%1 Strongly disagree	6	8	4	6	4	9	6	1
The announcement by the University of Chicago is prompting my college to reconsider its standardized test score requirement.*								
%5 Strongly agree	5	4	6	4	6	n/a	6	3
%4	12	9	14	18	9	n/a	6	19
%3	14	16	13	22	20	n/a	19	12
%2	26	27	24	22	25	n/a	32	24
%1 Strongly disagree	43	44	43	34	40	n/a	37	42
I am open to dropping our college's standardized test score requirement, but administrators or faculty members at my college are opposed to doing so.*								
%5 Strongly agree	12	17	9	5	16	n/a	10	6
%4	23	24	23	25	26	n/a	16	29
%3	27	21	30	30	21	n/a	33	29
%2	20	15	22	23	16	n/a	14	25
%1 Strongly disagree	18	23	15	17	21	n/a	27	12

## STANDARDIZED TESTING (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>The persistent gaps in the average SAT and ACT scores by racial and ethnic group concern me.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	43	40	45	42	41	38	42	39
%4	32	35	31	30	38	35	38	30
%3	19	19	20	22	16	20	16	25
%2	3	2	3	4	1	2	2	5
%1 Strongly disagree	3	4	1	2	4	5	1	0
<b>The emphasis on colleges' average test scores by parents and students discourages many students from applying to colleges at which they could be admitted and thrive.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	27	25	30	19	21	25	29	25
%4	35	36	34	33	37	37	39	32
%3	27	28	26	38	31	26	23	32
%2	8	8	7	6	9	9	6	10
%1 Strongly disagree	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	1

\*Asked of those whose college requires applicants to submit standardized test scores (n=289)

n/a=Not reported due to small sample size

Admissions directors expect that most colleges will continue to require applicants to submit standardized test scores. Fifty-eight percent say it is very (13 percent) or somewhat (45 percent) likely that 10 years from now standardized test scores will be required for applicants to most U.S. colleges, as seen on the next page. Admissions directors at public doctoral institutions (73 percent) and private baccalaureate colleges (70 percent) are most inclined to believe it is likely standardized test scores will still be required at most colleges.

Admissions directors at colleges that have standardized test requirements also expect that will continue to be the case at their institution a decade from now. Seventy-six percent believe it is very (27 percent) or somewhat (49 percent) likely their college will still require students to submit standardized test scores in 10 years.

## STANDARDIZED TESTING (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>How likely do you think it is that, 10 years from now, standardized test scores will be required for applicants to most U.S. colleges?</b>								
% Very likely	13	16	11	22	11	17	13	12
% Somewhat likely	45	36	54	51	41	30	48	58
% Not very likely	29	31	26	20	31	33	30	21
% Not likely at all	13	17	9	6	17	20	9	8
<b>How likely do you think it is that, 10 years from now, standardized test scores will be required for applicants to my college?*</b>								
% Very likely	27	32	25	36	27	n/a	29	21
% Somewhat likely	49	44	53	36	42	n/a	47	58
% Not very likely	14	16	13	20	22	n/a	18	12
% Not likely at all	9	8	10	9	9	n/a	6	10

\*Asked of those whose college requires applicants to submit standardized test scores (n=289)

n/a=Not reported due to small sample size

In 2005, the SAT and ACT added essay portions to their exams. Those portions of the exams are no longer required of test takers, and an increasingly smaller number of colleges require applicants to submit essay scores. Admissions directors do not have positive opinions of the ACT and SAT essay portions.

As seen on the following page, 12 percent strongly agree or agree, while 65 percent strongly disagree or disagree, that they value the insights they gain on applicants from the SAT essay score. Opinions are similar about the ACT essay score (13 percent strongly agree or agree, and 62 percent strongly disagree or disagree).

A total of 79 percent of admissions directors agree, including 50 percent who agree strongly, that there are better ways to evaluate applicants' writing abilities than the ACT or SAT essay scores. One such way, recently adopted by Princeton University, is to require applicants to submit a graded high school paper. Fifty-one percent strongly agree or agree, while 20 percent strongly disagree or disagree, that a graded high school essay gives more insight into writing abilities than SAT or ACT essay exam scores.

## STANDARDIZED TESTING (cont.)

Each year, millions of high school students complete the essay portions of the SAT and ACT exams. About two dozen U.S. colleges require applicants to take the essay portion of those exams. Princeton, Harvard, Yale and Stanford universities are among the colleges that have recently dropped the requirement. Princeton will now require applicants to submit a graded high school paper as part of its application.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>I value the insights I gain on applicants from the SAT essay score.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	2	0	4	0	0	n/a	3	1
%4	10	8	11	3	10	n/a	13	10
%3	23	27	20	13	12	n/a	20	18
%2	23	25	21	31	23	n/a	23	20
%1 Strongly disagree	42	40	44	53	54	n/a	41	51
<b>I value the insights I gain on applicants from the ACT essay score.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	3	2	3	0	0	n/a	3	0
%4	10	10	11	7	11	n/a	11	11
%3	25	25	25	10	12	n/a	24	24
%2	21	25	17	32	23	n/a	18	15
%1 Strongly disagree	41	37	44	52	54	n/a	43	50
<b>I believe there are better ways than the ACT or SAT essay scores to evaluate applicants' writing abilities.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	50	43	57	52	47	40	52	62
%4	29	34	25	22	38	35	36	18
%3	17	16	17	19	12	17	10	19
%2	3	5	1	5	3	6	2	1
%1 Strongly disagree	1	2	<1	2	0	2	0	<1
<b>Requiring students to submit a graded high school paper with their application provides more insight into student writing abilities than ACT or SAT essay scores.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	18	14	21	6	24	13	20	18
%4	33	32	33	28	28	35	31	35
%3	29	33	27	47	31	31	28	28
%2	12	11	13	11	6	13	13	16
%1 Strongly disagree	8	9	7	8	12	8	8	2

n/a=Not reported due to small sample size

## STANDARDIZED TESTING (cont.)

Given their generally negative opinions of the SAT and ACT writing exams, it is not surprising that three-quarters of admissions directors say the essay portions should be dropped from those exams. This includes 89 percent of admissions directors at public doctoral institutions and 85 percent of those at private baccalaureate colleges.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Do you think the essay portions should be dropped from the ACT and SAT exams?								
% Yes, should be dropped	76	69	81	89	78	64	76	85
% No, should not be dropped	24	31	19	11	22	36	24	15



# AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The use of affirmative action programs in college admissions has long been controversial. A prominent challenge today is a lawsuit alleging that Harvard University's admissions policies are biased against Asian-American applicants.

Forty-six percent of admissions directors believe that some colleges hold Asian-American applicants to higher standards than other students. This percentage is slightly higher than those found in the 2015 (43 percent) and 2016 (42 percent) surveys. In the current survey, half of admissions directors at public four-year institutions believe Asian-American applicants are held to higher standards.

When asked about the situation at their own college, 39 percent of admissions directors say that Asian-American students who are admitted to their college generally have higher grades and test scores than other applicants. That is higher than the 31 percent who said the same in 2016, when the question was last asked.

Admissions directors at public four-year colleges are slightly more likely than those at two-year public colleges or private colleges to say Asian-American applicants to their college typically have better grades and test scores than other applicants do.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>As you may know, some Asian-American groups have alleged that Asian-American applicants are held to higher admission standards than all other students. Based on what you know or have heard, Do you believe that some colleges are holding Asian-American applicants to higher standards?</b>								
% Yes	46	46	44	52	50	42	43	45
% No	54	54	56	48	50	58	57	55
<b>At your college, do Asian-American applicants who are admitted generally have higher grades and test scores than other applicants?</b>								
% Yes	39	41	39	47	48	35	38	42
% No	61	59	61	53	52	65	62	58

The current survey also asked about the implications of the Harvard lawsuit. As seen on the following page, 49 percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that the lawsuit is engendering significant distrust among Asian-American students and their families in the admissions process at competitive colleges; 13 percent strongly disagree or disagree this is occurring.

Also, half of admissions directors strongly agree or agree, and 18 percent strongly disagree or disagree, that the Harvard case could lead to new legal attacks on the ability of colleges to consider race in admissions.

Defenders of Harvard's practices assert that the university, like many institutions, makes decisions based on holistic evaluations of applications and not just on grades and test scores. More than three-quarters of admissions directors, 77 percent, strongly agree or agree that the public does not understand the concept of holistic admissions; 43 percent strongly agree.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (cont.)

As you may know, Harvard University is facing a lawsuit over allegations that it discriminates against Asian-American applicants in admissions. Documents released by the plaintiffs demonstrate that Asian-American applicants score higher than other groups on academic measures, but many appear to be rejected because of rankings of their personalities or because they are not legacies or athletes.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>The public discussion about Harvard has created significant distrust among Asian-American applicants and their families in the admissions process at competitive colleges.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	13	13	13	9	22	11	15	16
%4	36	32	37	44	45	24	45	40
%3	39	45	35	34	25	56	30	30
%2	11	8	13	3	8	8	8	14
%1 Strongly disagree	2	2	1	9	0	1	2	1
<b>I am concerned that the lawsuit against Harvard will lead to new legal attacks on the ability of colleges to consider race in admissions.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	20	17	23	16	17	17	28	21
%4	30	27	33	44	29	21	29	33
%3	32	36	30	28	35	39	29	31
%2	10	13	8	9	13	14	6	12
%1 Strongly disagree	8	7	6	2	6	9	7	3
<b>The public does not understand the concept of holistic admissions.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	43	48	41	51	51	45	36	36
%4	34	30	36	36	31	29	47	33
%3	17	13	19	13	6	15	14	26
%2	6	9	4	0	9	10	3	6
%1 Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (cont.)

The plaintiffs in the Harvard lawsuit criticize the university's use of legacy status as a factor in admissions. Admissions directors are more inclined to disagree (45 percent) than to agree (25 percent) that taking legacy status into account is appropriate. Private college admissions directors are more likely than those at public colleges to say legacy status is an appropriate factor to consider in admissions decisions.

About one in four admissions directors say their college takes legacy status into account in admissions, including 42 percent of private college admissions directors and 6 percent of public college admissions directors. A slight majority of private baccalaureate admissions directors say their college takes legacy status into account. About one in 10 admissions directors at public four-year colleges do so as well.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Legacy status is an appropriate factor in admissions.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	7	5	8	4	8	4	6	5
%4	18	11	24	9	17	7	27	29
%3	29	22	34	34	29	17	44	37
%2	21	25	19	29	14	29	8	19
%1 Strongly disagree	24	37	15	24	31	42	14	10

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>At your college, is legacy status a factor in admissions?</b>								
% Yes	26	6	42	11	13	3	46	53
% No	74	94	58	89	87	97	54	47

Admissions directors at colleges that take legacy status into account are, as would be expected, much more inclined to say it is an appropriate factor than are those whose college does not consider legacy status. For admissions directors at colleges that consider legacy status, 45 percent strongly agree or agree that it is appropriate, and 11 percent strongly disagree or disagree, as seen on the next page. In contrast, a majority of admissions directors at colleges that do not take into account legacy status disagree rather than agree, by 62 percent to 15 percent.

Admissions directors at colleges that consider legacy status also express greater concern about future attacks on the ability of colleges to consider race in admissions, and they believe the Harvard case is sowing distrust in admissions among Asian-Americans.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (cont.)

	College Considers Legacy Status	College Does Not Consider Legacy Status
<b>Legacy status is an appropriate factor in admissions</b>		
% Strongly agree/Agree	45	15
% Strongly disagree/Disagree	11	62
<b>Discussion about Harvard case is creating distrust in admissions process among Asian-Americans</b>		
% Strongly agree/Agree	67	39
% Strongly disagree/Disagree	8	17
<b>Concerned that Harvard lawsuit will lead to new legal attacks on ability to consider race in admissions</b>		
% Strongly agree/Agree	69	40
% Strongly disagree/Disagree	13	21
<b>Public does not understand the concept of holistic admissions</b>		
% Strongly agree/Agree	83	73
% Strongly disagree/Disagree	4	8

In July, just before the survey began, the Trump administration announced it was withdrawing guidance previously issued by the Obama administration about the use of race in admissions decisions. The practical effect of that withdrawal will be negligible, according to admissions directors. Fully 95 percent of admissions directors say the Trump administration's actions have not led to any changes in how their college considers race in admissions and financial decisions.

In July, the Trump administration withdrew guidance issued under the Obama administration about how colleges could consider race in admissions and other decisions. The Trump administration's actions have:								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Made my college much more cautious about considering race in admissions and financial aid decisions	2	0	4	0	0	0	7	0
% Made my college slightly more cautious about considering race	2	1	4	2	1	0	2	6
% Not led to any changes in how my college considers race in admissions and financial aid decisions	95	99	92	98	99	100	91	94

# OUT-OF-STATE ADMISSIONS

Some colleges, particularly public colleges, have made greater efforts in recent years to recruit out-of-state students. Out-of-state students are charged higher tuition at public colleges, and that extra revenue can help offset declines in public funding from state legislatures. However, the approach can be controversial, as state taxpayers and politicians may view the state's higher education institutions as public goods that should primarily benefit state residents.

Fifty-eight percent of admissions directors say their college has sought more out-of-state students in recent years, continuing a modest decline from 66 percent in 2016 and 63 percent last year.

Roughly 8 in 10 admissions directors at public doctoral (80 percent), public master's/baccalaureate (81 percent) and private baccalaureate (76 percent) institutions say their college has sought more out-of-state students in recent years.

The vast majority of admissions directors at colleges that have sought more out-of-state students say their efforts have been successful (81 percent) and have not attracted political or public scrutiny (94 percent). Public institution admissions directors are less likely than private institution directors to say their college's efforts have been successful (75 percent vs. 86 percent, respectively) and are more likely to say they have attracted scrutiny.

As you may know, in recent years some public institutions have significantly increased their admission of out-of-state students.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private	
	All	Public	Private	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
In recent years, has your college sought more out-of-state students?								
% Yes	58	54	61	80	81	40	50	76
% No	42	46	39	20	19	60	50	24
Have your college's efforts to seek more out-of-state students been successful?*								
% Yes	81	75	86	94	63	n/a	91	83
% No	19	25	14	6	37	n/a	9	17
Is your college facing political or public scrutiny over admitting more out-of-state students?*								
% Yes	6	15	0	31	10	n/a	0	1
% No	94	85	100	69	90	n/a	100	99

\*Asked only of respondents whose institutions have sought more out-of-state students (n=266)

n/a=Not reported due to small sample size

## OUT-OF-STATE ADMISSIONS (cont.)

Just under half of admissions directors, 48 percent, strongly agree or agree that out-of-state students are essential to their college because of their tuition revenue. That sentiment is understandably much stronger among private college admissions directors (57 percent) than among those at public colleges (40 percent, with 34 percent disagreeing).

A majority of public institution admissions directors – 54 percent -- disagree that their institution would decrease out-of-state admissions if their state legislature provided more funds for higher education. Twenty-four percent agree. These attitudes are stable compared with prior years' surveys.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Out-of-state students are essential to my college for their tuition revenue.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	29	26	32	50	39	16	37	34
%4	19	14	25	14	23	10	26	27
%3	21	27	16	25	23	28	21	12
%2	13	18	8	4	6	26	7	11
%1 Strongly disagree	17	16	18	6	8	20	9	16
<b>If my state legislature provided more funds, my institution would be likely to decrease out-of-state admissions.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	11	14	7	18	18	12	2	12
%4	8	10	7	11	22	5	15	1
%3	17	22	12	25	20	22	14	13
%2	19	22	16	29	11	24	10	17
%1 Strongly disagree	45	32	59	16	29	37	59	56



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS

U.S. colleges are a desired destination for many foreign students, but international student enrollment has declined the past two years. Fifty-seven percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that they are concerned about maintaining the same number of international students at their college in the years ahead. Seventy-four percent of public doctoral admissions directors express this concern.

Further, 74 percent of admissions directors agree — including 52 percent who strongly agree — that the policies and rhetoric of the Trump administration have made it more difficult to recruit international students.

The survey asked admissions directors about ways to address declining international student enrollment. They see pathways programs as important to keeping international student enrollment up. However, they are less positive about using scholarships or commission-paid agents to maintain adequate international enrollment.

Fifty-seven percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree, while 12 percent strongly disagree or disagree, that pathways programs will become more important to U.S. higher education in the current environment.

Admissions directors are divided on whether their college will need to increase scholarships to international students to maintain enrollment levels; 42 percent strongly agree or agree that it will, and 37 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

By 44 percent to 39 percent, admissions directors are slightly more likely to disagree than to agree they are more open to using commission-paid agents to recruit international students. Public college admissions directors are less inclined to use such agents than are private college admissions directors, mostly because community college admissions directors disagree they would rely on them.

As you may know, the number of new international students in the U.S. dropped this year. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>I am concerned about maintaining the same number of international students in the years ahead that my college has attracted in recent years.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	36	35	35	48	45	27	40	36
%4	21	23	20	26	14	26	22	24
%3	21	18	23	15	22	18	20	21
%2	13	16	10	9	9	20	13	8
%1 Strongly disagree	10	8	11	2	10	9	6	11
<b>The policies and rhetoric of the Trump administration have made it more difficult to recruit international students.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	52	56	48	60	63	53	59	47
%4	22	23	22	27	24	21	20	20
%3	17	9	23	9	7	10	16	23
%2	4	5	3	4	2	7	2	4
%1 Strongly disagree	6	7	5	0	5	9	3	7

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Pathways programs will become more important to U.S. higher education in the current environment.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	21	21	19	22	28	19	19	20
%4	36	40	35	33	46	39	41	36
%3	31	28	33	24	21	32	33	36
%2	6	7	4	10	3	8	2	1
%1 Strongly disagree	6	4	9	12	2	2	6	8
<b>My college will need to increase scholarships to international students to maintain enrollment levels</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	22	16	25	26	17	12	29	23
%4	20	19	22	24	32	7	17	30
%3	21	19	22	28	31	8	31	14
%2	18	17	16	12	10	25	9	19
%1 Strongly disagree	19	28	15	10	9	48	15	14
<b>The current challenges in international recruitment make me more open to using commission-paid agents in recruiting.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	18	14	20	14	27	7	24	19
%4	21	18	24	19	31	12	27	27
%3	16	18	15	26	21	16	15	17
%2	10	12	9	14	8	14	11	10
%1 Strongly disagree	34	38	32	28	14	52	24	27

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS (cont.)

About 3 in 10 admissions directors say their college currently has a pathways program, similar to what has been measured in surveys since 2014. The incidence of pathways programs is typically highest at public doctoral institutions.

Twenty-three percent of admissions directors at institutions lacking such a program (equivalent to 16 percent of all admissions directors) say their college is considering implementing a pathways program.

As you may know, pathways programs for international students — often run by an outside provider or a separate office within an institution — are a combination of academic coursework and English-language coursework designed to prepare international students for degree programs in the United States.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private	
	All	Public	Private	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Does your institution currently have a pathways program?</b>								
% Yes	29	33	24	65	36	26	23	26
% No	71	67	76	35	64	74	77	74
<b>Are you considering implementing a pathways program at your institution?*</b>								
% Yes	23	26	20	n/a	33	25	32	10
% No	77	74	80	n/a	67	75	68	90

\*Asked of those who indicated their institution does not have a pathways program (n=244)

n/a=Not reported due to small sample size

# COMPETITIVE ADMISSIONS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Increased out-of-state and international admissions are two factors making it harder for qualified students, including in-state students, to get into some of the top public universities in the country. Fifty-three percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that they are worried about the trend toward some public universities becoming as competitive in admissions as elite private institutions; 25 percent strongly disagree or disagree. Public doctoral university admissions directors are more likely to disagree (49 percent) than to agree (37 percent) they are worried about this trend.

As seen on the following page, a majority of admissions directors, 58 percent, strongly agree or agree that the increased competitiveness of public universities threatens to impede efforts to admit diverse student bodies. Seventeen percent strongly disagree or disagree.

When asked to evaluate two possible approaches to ensure greater access to public universities, admissions directors take a favorable view of guaranteeing admissions to students who complete certain requirements at community colleges, but are divided about greatly reducing out-of-state admissions at colleges that reject many qualified in-state applicants.

Fifty-seven percent strongly agree or agree, and 19 percent strongly disagree or disagree, that public flagship universities that turn away many qualified applicants should guarantee admissions to students who meet certain requirements at community colleges. Admissions directors at public associate colleges are especially supportive of this proposal, with 79 percent voicing agreement.

Meanwhile, 32 percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree and 38 percent strongly disagree or disagree that public flagships turning away many qualified in-state residents should reduce out-of-state admissions to below 10 percent. Public doctoral college admissions directors are more than three times as likely to disagree (60 percent) than to agree (17 percent) with that proposal.

## COMPETITIVE ADMISSIONS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES (cont.)

In recent years, admissions to public universities — especially but not exclusively to state flagships — has become much more competitive. In California and other states, students with top grades and test scores report being rejected by top public universities in their state that a few years ago would have admitted such applicants.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private	
	All	Public	Private	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>I worry about the trend of some public universities becoming as competitive in admissions as elite private institutions.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	22	23	21	12	17	27	26	16
%4	31	32	31	25	31	34	33	28
%3	22	23	20	14	27	24	19	27
%2	16	13	18	28	13	11	13	21
%1 Strongly disagree	9	9	9	21	12	5	10	8
<b>The increased competitiveness of public universities threatens efforts to admit diverse student bodies at those institutions.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	27	25	30	16	22	28	30	29
%4	31	33	30	32	45	30	40	25
%3	25	26	25	24	16	31	18	28
%2	12	9	14	12	8	8	7	16
%1 Strongly disagree	5	7	2	16	8	3	5	1
<b>Public flagships turning away many qualified applicants should guarantee admission to students who meet certain requirements at community colleges for one or two years.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	31	45	17	22	28	55	14	21
%4	26	24	29	24	27	24	42	18
%3	24	21	27	33	27	16	25	32
%2	11	5	16	9	8	3	12	20
%1 Strongly disagree	8	6	11	13	10	1	8	10
<b>Public flagships that are turning away many qualified in-state residents should bring out-of-state admissions down to below 10%.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	15	17	12	6	16	20	19	9
%4	17	17	18	11	16	20	29	16
%3	29	29	29	23	23	35	23	41
%2	19	13	24	13	16	12	14	24
%1 Strongly disagree	19	23	16	47	29	13	16	11

# WAITING LISTS

Waiting lists offer colleges a chance to fill their classes if substantial numbers of accepted students decline to enroll — and offer applicants a chance to attend the college if a spot opens up. There are concerns that waiting lists, from which relatively few applicants gain admission, give false hope to applicants. Some news reports suggest waiting lists are growing increasingly long at colleges.

Six in 10 admissions directors strongly agree or agree that college waiting lists have grown too long, with 18 percent disagreeing.

Not all colleges use waiting lists, and when asked about their college's waiting list practices, between 38 and 52 percent of admissions directors said the questions did not apply to them or gave no opinion. Fifteen percent of admissions directors responding to the waiting list questions say the size of their waiting list in the most recent academic year exceeded more than 20 percent of the number of admitted applicants, with private institutions tending to have longer waiting lists than public institutions. For most institutions, 84 percent, the waiting list totals 20 percent or less of the number of admitted applicants.

Admissions directors generally confirm that wait-listed students rarely gain admission. Indeed, 15 percent of admissions directors who answered the question say their college has not admitted any wait-listed applicants in recent years. Most of the rest, 68 percent, say less than 5 percent of wait-listed applicants were eventually admitted.

**Many applicants and counselors report that greater numbers of applicants than in the past are being placed on admissions waiting lists at a wide range of higher education institutions. Some colleges place more students on waiting lists than the total number of students they enroll in a first-year class.**

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>In the most recent admissions year, my institution's waiting list equaled:</b>								
0% to 20% of the number of admitted applicants	84	95	79	85	94	n/a	72	81
21% to 50% of the number of admitted applicants	8	4	11	12	6	n/a	16	6
More than 50% of the number of admitted applicants	7	1	10	3	0	n/a	12	14
<b>In recent years, my college has admitted from the waiting list:</b>								
No students	15	18	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	24
More than 0% but less than 5% of my college's first-year class	68	65	70	n/a	n/a	n/a	87	55
More than 5% of my college's first-year class	17	17	17	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	21

n/a=Not reported due to small sample size

## WAITING LISTS (cont.)

Admissions directors who employ waiting lists largely dismiss the idea that their college uses these lists partly to avoid rejecting strong applicants as well as those with connections to the college. As seen on the following page, 54 percent strongly disagree or disagree and 32 percent strongly agree or agree that their college uses waiting lists to avoid rejecting strong applicants. More than three-quarters, 77 percent, strongly disagree or disagree their college uses waiting lists to avoid rejecting applicants with connections to the college; 15 percent strongly agree or agree their institution does so.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>College waiting lists have grown too long.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	32	30	34	27	31	32	27	32
%4	29	32	25	24	29	36	27	31
%3	21	25	20	30	20	25	26	16
%2	13	10	15	13	15	7	13	13
%1 Strongly disagree	5	3	6	5	4	0	8	8
<b>My college uses waiting lists in part to avoid rejecting strong applicants.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	10	18	8	7	14	n/a	14	6
%4	22	23	22	14	15	n/a	21	12
%3	14	14	15	18	11	n/a	17	13
%2	13	13	14	25	11	n/a	8	14
%1 Strongly disagree	41	33	42	36	50	n/a	40	55
<b>My college uses waiting lists to avoid rejecting applicants who have connections to the college.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	6	14	3	11	4	n/a	5	5
%4	9	5	10	7	6	n/a	8	11
%3	9	6	10	7	10	n/a	17	12
%2	21	16	23	28	22	n/a	10	20
%1 Strongly disagree	56	59	54	48	58	n/a	61	53

# IMAGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Admissions directors continue to harbor concerns about the image of higher education, and these concerns do not appear to be subsiding.

Two-thirds of admissions directors (66 percent) agree that media reports of underemployed or unemployed college graduates have discouraged students from considering higher education. The same percentage of directors agree that public discussion of student debt also discourages prospective students. Both percentages are essentially unchanged from a year ago.

Slightly fewer admissions directors, but still a majority (58 percent), say public discussion of student debt discourages students from considering their college. These attitudes are also unchanged from a year ago, but more hold this view than did so in 2016 (47 percent). Private college admissions directors (78 percent) are more than twice as likely as public college admissions directors (32 percent) to agree that student debt discussion is discouraging students from considering their college.

Fewer admissions directors than in the past strongly agree or agree that students and parents of prospective students understand the value of a liberal arts education. Just 7 percent agree that parents understand the value and 5 percent say students do. Two years ago, 15 percent thought parents understood the value of a liberal arts education and 12 percent thought students did.

Admissions directors are most likely to agree that higher education needs to do a better job of explaining the value of earning college degrees. Eighty-seven percent agree with this statement. Agreement is down from 95 percent last year, but the same as in 2016. A majority of admissions directors strongly agree that higher education needs to better explain the value of earning a degree.



# IMAGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (cont.)

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about higher education.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Higher education needs to do a better job of explaining the value of earning college degrees.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	56	52	60	50	60	49	64	59
%4	31	35	29	44	30	35	29	30
%3	11	12	10	6	8	14	5	11
%2	1	1	1	0	0	2	2	0
%1 Strongly disagree	<1	<1	0	0	2	0	0	0
<b>Media reports of college graduates who are unemployed or underemployed have discouraged students from considering higher education.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	29	25	32	13	21	28	36	27
%4	37	37	38	35	45	36	34	47
%3	23	25	22	39	19	24	19	17
%2	9	11	7	13	12	11	7	8
%1 Strongly disagree	2	1	2	0	3	1	3	1
<b>Public discussion of student debt has discouraged students from considering higher education generally.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	32	28	34	19	25	32	34	39
%4	34	34	35	40	34	33	33	35
%3	23	24	24	30	23	23	27	20
%2	7	10	5	6	17	9	6	2
%1 Strongly disagree	3	3	2	4	1	3	1	4
<b>Public discussion of student debt has discouraged students from considering my college.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	28	13	39	11	14	14	33	39
%4	30	19	39	23	27	16	41	40
%3	20	31	11	36	30	31	16	7
%2	17	26	10	23	23	28	9	12
%1 Strongly disagree	6	10	2	6	7	11	2	2
<b>Parents of prospective students understand the value of a liberal arts education.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	2	3	1	0	2	4	1	1
%4	5	8	3	7	8	8	5	3
%3	30	30	29	33	29	31	26	27
%2	42	36	47	39	36	37	45	45
%1 Strongly disagree	21	23	20	22	26	22	22	24
<b>Prospective students understand the value of a liberal arts education.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	1
%4	4	6	4	2	6	6	7	2
%3	26	32	21	29	27	34	26	19
%2	42	38	46	44	34	39	39	41
%1 Strongly disagree	26	24	28	23	32	22	26	37

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FOR ADMISSIONS

The last admissions cycle saw some colleges rethink their recruiting strategies in response to Donald Trump's unexpected victory in the 2016 presidential election. Among the issues the election raised are whether certain segments of the population are being overlooked and whether Americans as a whole are committed to the same ideals that academe is.

Admissions directors are more inclined to agree (38 percent) than to disagree (26 percent) that colleges should recruit more students from rural areas. They are divided as to whether colleges should recruit more low-income white students (35 percent agree and 36 percent disagree they should). They tend to oppose the idea that colleges with overwhelmingly liberal student bodies should recruit more politically conservative students, including through the use of affirmative action (22 percent agree they should, 47 percent disagree). Public college admissions directors are more open than private college admissions directors to making efforts to recruit members of these subgroups.

Thirty-nine percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree and 33 percent strongly disagree or disagree that the election outcome indicated Americans are less committed to racial diversity than in the past. They think colleges need to redouble their efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented groups — 73 percent agree with this idea, 44 percent strongly so.

**In the last admissions cycle, some colleges announced new recruitment goals to address concerns that higher education was out of touch with certain segments of society in light of the results of the 2016 presidential election.**

**Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.**

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>The election outcome indicated that colleges — especially elite colleges — should recruit more students from rural areas.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	17	19	15	18	14	21	19	13
%4	21	22	20	18	35	17	13	27
%3	36	37	35	42	28	40	31	32
%2	15	9	20	8	14	7	25	19
%1 Strongly disagree	11	13	10	13	10	14	12	8
<b>The election outcome indicated that colleges — especially elite colleges — should recruit more lower-income white students.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	13	13	13	11	11	15	13	14
%4	22	31	14	26	29	33	12	21
%3	30	29	30	32	28	27	31	32
%2	21	13	26	13	16	12	26	21
%1 Strongly disagree	15	14	16	18	15	13	18	13

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FOR ADMISSIONS (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Colleges with overwhelmingly liberal student bodies should increase recruiting efforts, including using affirmative action, for conservative students.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	7	7	7	6	4	8	9	8
%4	15	19	12	8	15	24	12	8
%3	31	30	32	36	23	30	24	42
%2	19	13	23	19	14	12	24	24
%1 Strongly disagree	28	31	25	31	45	26	30	18
<b>The election outcome suggested that Americans are less committed than they were in the past to increasing the number of racial and ethnic minority students who attend college.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	16	16	16	17	18	15	21	19
%4	23	24	21	15	18	28	34	13
%3	29	30	28	34	34	29	19	35
%2	18	12	22	17	17	9	13	20
%1 Strongly disagree	15	17	12	17	13	18	13	13
<b>Higher education needs to redouble its efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented minority groups.</b>								
%5 Strongly agree	44	43	46	43	42	42	47	44
%4	29	35	25	32	34	36	32	22
%3	21	17	24	19	20	15	17	31
%2	3	2	4	4	3	2	4	2
%1 Strongly disagree	3	3	1	2	1	4	0	2

# STUDENT DEBT

The vast majority of admissions directors, 83 percent, believe their institution is losing potential applicants due to concerns about accumulating student loan debt. More than 9 in 10 private college admissions directors believe debt concerns are discouraging applicants from applying, compared with 68 percent of public college admissions directors.

Average student loan debt for college graduates now exceeds \$30,000. Three-quarters of admissions directors believe debt below that level is a reasonable amount for students to accumulate, with most regarding a debt of \$10,000 to less than \$20,000 (21 percent) or \$20,000 to less than \$30,000 (38 percent) as appropriate. The percentage of admissions directors who believe student debt of \$30,000 or more is reasonable has been stable at near 25 percent in recent years.

As has been the case in prior surveys, private college admissions directors' opinions about reasonable debt differ from those of directors at public colleges. Private college admissions directors (36 percent) are three times more likely than public college admissions directors (12 percent) to say student debt of \$30,000 or more is reasonable.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Do you think that your institution is losing potential applicants due to concerns about accumulating student loan debt?</b>								
% Yes	83	68	94	78	77	64	93	96
% No	17	32	6	22	23	36	7	4
<b>In your opinion, what is a reasonable amount of load debt from all sources for an undergraduate student to accumulate over a four-year period?</b>								
% No amount of loan debt is reasonable	2	3	1	4	2	4	0	1
% Under \$5,000	4	8	0	0	3	11	1	0
% \$5,000 to less than \$10,000	9	19	2	2	11	25	1	3
% \$10,000 to less than \$20,000	21	25	20	31	23	25	21	19
% \$20,000 to less than \$30,000	38	33	43	46	50	24	46	44
% \$30,000 to less than \$40,000	14	7	19	13	10	5	16	25
% \$40,000 to less than \$50,000	8	4	12	4	3	4	14	3
% \$50,000 or more	3	1	5	0	0	2	1	5

# MARKETING STRATEGY AND INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION

When evaluating three key elements of their college's outreach to prospective applicants, admissions directors are most positive about their college's CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and least positive about its social media strategy. Seventy percent of admissions directors say they are satisfied with their college's CRM for admissions. Slightly less, 62 percent, are satisfied with their college's marketing strategy for admissions. But only about half, 49 percent, are satisfied with their college's social media strategy.

Private college admissions directors are much more satisfied than public college admissions directors with their college's CRM (80 percent vs. 57 percent, respectively), mostly because of lower satisfaction levels among community college admissions directors. There are modest differences by sector in satisfaction with the institution's marketing strategy, but public and private college admissions directors are equally satisfied with their college's social media strategy.

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following?								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Your college's CRM for admissions</b>								
% Satisfied	70	57	80	78	67	49	73	82
% Dissatisfied	30	43	20	22	33	51	27	18
<b>Your college's marketing strategy for admissions</b>								
% Satisfied	62	56	68	69	59	52	70	69
% Dissatisfied	38	44	32	31	41	48	30	31
<b>Your college's social media strategy for admissions</b>								
% Satisfied	49	48	50	59	52	45	60	43
% Dissatisfied	51	52	50	41	48	55	40	57

When asked to describe how their college is organized, 66 percent say it is organized as one main college, while 34 percent say their institution is organized into multiple divisions. Those whose institution has multiple divisions are equally likely to say it has one centralized admissions office as to say it has separate offices for each division.

## MARKETING STRATEGY AND INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION (cont.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<b>Which better describes the structure of your institution?</b>								
<b>Are admissions at your institution centralized in one office or operated separately for the different divisions?*</b>								
% One main college	66	72	62	19	52	90	34	80
% Multiple divisions for graduate, undergraduate and professional programs, with one centralized admissions office	17	14	19	39	20	7	34	7
% Multiple divisions for graduate, undergraduate and professional programs, with separate admissions offices	17	14	19	41	28	3	32	13

\*Asked of those whose institution has multiple divisions

Satisfaction with marketing efforts is generally similar regardless of how the institution is organized.

	One main college	Multiple divisions, one centralized admissions office	Multiple divisions, separate admissions offices
% Satisfied, CRM for admissions	71	65	73
% Satisfied, marketing strategy for admissions	61	66	65
% Satisfied, social media strategy for admissions	47	53	55

# COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community college enrollments continue to decline. Admissions directors at community colleges see several reasons for enrollment struggles at two-year colleges, including competition from other colleges for students, a desire among prospective students to earn four-year degrees, insufficient marketing and concerns about the payoff of a college degree.

When asked whether each of nine possible factors contributes to enrollment struggles at community colleges across the U.S., more than 8 in 10 community college admissions directors say that competition from nonprofit colleges and universities (84 percent) and from for-profit colleges (81 percent) is a factor. Slightly fewer believe students' desire to earn a bachelor's degree (79 percent), insufficient marketing (78 percent), and public discussion that college degrees and certificates do not help students get ahead financially (77 percent) are factors in the recent trends in community college enrollment.

Majorities of community college admissions directors also think student fears of borrowing (67 percent) and reputations for poor degree completion rates (63 percent) are responsible for enrollment struggles at two-year institutions. Smaller percentages believe tuition rates (45 percent) and a lack of desirable programs (44 percent) are contributing to the trend.

Many community colleges continue to struggle with enrollment. Please indicate whether you think each of the following is or is not a factor in struggles with enrollment at community colleges nationally.*	
	% Yes, is a factor
Competition from nonprofit colleges and universities	84
Competition from for-profit colleges	81
Prospective students want to go to colleges where they can earn bachelor's degrees	79
Insufficient marketing	78
Public discussion that college degrees and certificates do not help people get ahead economically	77
Student fears of borrowing	67
Reputation for poor degree completion rates	63
Tuition rates	45
Lack of desirable programs	44

\*Asked of admissions directors at public associate colleges (n=67)

Community college admissions directors generally see the same factors contributing to enrollment struggles at their own institution. They are somewhat less likely to say insufficient marketing (71 percent, compared with 78 percent nationally) and reputations for poor degree completion rates (50 percent, compared with 63 percent) contribute to enrollment struggles at their own college.

## COMMUNITY COLLEGES (cont.)

Please indicate whether each of the following is or is not a factor in struggles with enrollment at your community college.\*

	% Yes, is a factor
Competition from nonprofit colleges and universities	87
Competition from for-profit colleges	81
Public discussion that college degrees and certificates do not help people get ahead economically	80
Prospective students want to go to colleges where they can earn bachelor's degrees	76
Insufficient marketing	71
Student fears of borrowing	68
Reputation for poor degree completion rates	50
Tuition rates	46
Lack of desirable programs	44

\*Asked of admissions directors at public associate colleges (n=67)

Enrollment declines have been especially steep in recent years at for-profit colleges. Community college admissions directors are more inclined to agree (37 percent) than to disagree (26 percent) that their institution has gained some of those who might have gone to a for-profit institution in the past. Thirty-six percent are neutral, giving a response of "3" on the five-point rating scale.

Community colleges have clear opinions about the deregulation of for-profit colleges under the Trump administration. Seventy-eight percent agree they are concerned about this, including 61 percent who strongly agree. Just 13 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about for-profit institutions.\*

**As many for-profit colleges have seen enrollments drop, my community college has gained some of those who might have gone to a for-profit in the past.**

%5 Strongly agree	5
%4	32
%3	36
%2	17
%1 Strongly disagree	9

**I am concerned about decreased regulation of for-profits under the Trump administration.**

%5 Strongly agree	61
%4	17
%3	9
%2	4
%1 Strongly disagree	9

\*Asked of admissions directors at public associate colleges (n=67)



## COMMUNITY COLLEGES (cont.)

For some students, an associate degree is the ultimate goal. But many other community college students plan to continue their education at a four-year institution. Nearly 9 in 10 community college admissions directors agree that prospective students at their college are interested in opportunities to transfer to four-year institutions, including 69 percent who strongly agree.

Admissions directors at two-year colleges are most positive about prospective transfer programs at public colleges and least positive about those at for-profit colleges. Eighty-six percent of community college admissions directors agree —53 percent strongly— that local public institutions have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer. Six in 10 strongly agree or agree that local private institutions have good programs, but only 24 percent say the same about for-profit colleges. In fact, a majority strongly disagree or disagree that local for-profit colleges have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.

Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about transfer students.*	
<b>Many prospective students at my community college are interested in opportunities to transfer to four-year institutions.</b>	
%5 Strongly agree	69
%4	22
%3	9
%2	0
%1 Strongly disagree	0
<b>Public institutions in my area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.</b>	
%5 Strongly agree	53
%4	33
%3	14
%2	0
%1 Strongly disagree	0
<b>Private institutions in my area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.</b>	
%5 Strongly agree	28
%4	34
%3	29
%2	4
%1 Strongly disagree	6
<b>For profit institutions in my area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.</b>	
%5 Strongly agree	10
%4	14
%3	24
%2	20
%1 Strongly disagree	32

\*Asked of admissions directors at public associate colleges (n=67)

# INSTITUTION AND PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age?	Overall %
Younger than 30	1
30 to 39	24
40 to 49	37
50 to 59	23
60 to 69	14
70 and older	<1

WHAT PROPORTION OF THE APPLICANTS FOR FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS DO YOU TYPICALLY ADMIT TO YOUR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY?	Overall %
Less than 20%	7
20% to less than 50%	14
50% or more	79

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