



# 6 Major Trends in College and University Admissions

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**Many four-year colleges and universities are seeking to keep application growth on the rise by recruiting a greater number of transfer and international students.**

According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling's 12th annual State of College Admission report, which examines the transition from high school to postsecondary education, many higher education institutions are reaching out to transfer and international students in order to sustain continued growth in applications.

## More international students

Additionally, many institutions are taking steps to enroll a greater number of students from other countries. The fact that 45 percent of private high schools and 4 percent of public high schools actively recruit international students has been a major help, as they often stay in the U.S. to pursue higher education.



## More transfer students

Of the four-year colleges and universities surveyed, 58 percent indicated that the importance of recruiting transfer students will increase over the next three years, while less than 2 percent of schools stated the opposite. While the average acceptance rate of transfer students (62.6 percent) was slightly below the acceptance rate of freshman (64.7 percent) in fall 2013, 54 percent of transfer applicants who were admitted ultimately enrolled, compared to only 33 percent of the admitted freshman.

One of the primary reasons for schools reaching out to these diverse groups (which are featured for the first time in this year's report) stems from the plateau of high school graduation rates in the U.S., which grew for about 20 years before peaking in 2011-12.

**"The landscape of higher education is changing, and that is prompting colleges and universities to look for new ways to serve students,"** said Jeff Fuller, NACAC president and director of student recruitment at the University of Houston.

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## Partnering with community colleges

So how exactly are four-year colleges and universities attracting more transfer students? Allying with community colleges seems to be a major strategy. According to the survey, 80 percent of institutions reported partnerships with community colleges, with an additional 70 percent holding recruitment events on community college campuses.

From a more general standpoint, though, interest in attending college has remained consistent or even grown at a steady pace, in part thanks to the greater attention from transfer and international applicants.

## A boost in online applications

For 10 of the past 15 years, more than 70 percent of colleges reported annual increases in the number of applications they received, a side-effect of the 10 percent increase of freshman who submitted seven or more applications between 2008 and 2013. Also, online applications are now the norm, with 92 percent of four-year colleges and universities receiving their applications online, which has increased continuously from 85 percent in Fall 2011 and 89 percent in Fall 2012.

## Selectivity still matters

Given this increase, many colleges have also begun admitting a higher rate of the growing number of applicants. The average selectivity rate at four-year colleges for Fall 2013 was 64.7 percent, reversing a slight but steady decline from 69.6 percent in 2003 to 63.9 percent in fall 2012. Early Decision and Early Action applications and admissions continue to increase as well.

As is likely expected, though, a student's high school test grades and the general rigor of their courses remain the **most important factor in college admission decisions**. This is followed by standardized test scores, high school class rank, and demonstrated interest in attending.

## Two-year and for-profit enrollment decreases

Finally, while enrollment at public four-year and private, not-for-profit, four-year institutions increased, enrollment in two-year public and for-profit colleges decreased as the overall number of students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions fell from 21 million students in 2010 to 20.6 million in 2012. The report notes that this could be due to the fact that black and Hispanic persons remain under-represented while additionally, only 52 percent of high school completers from the lowest income quintile transitioned to college in 2012, compared to 82 percent from the highest income quintile.

Long term projections from the U.S. Department of Education indicate, however, that the total number of college students is expected to gradually increase from 2013 through 2023 to 23.8 million, including an increase in the number of international students from about 4.5 million to more than 7 million.

For an even more in-depth analysis of the State of College Admission, take a look at the NACAC's full report.

[http://www.nxtbook.com/ygsreprints/NACAC/2014SoCA\\_nxtbk/#/0](http://www.nxtbook.com/ygsreprints/NACAC/2014SoCA_nxtbk/#/0)



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