

2017 SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS DIRECTORS

A STUDY BY INSIDE HIGHER ED AND GALLUP

SCOTT JASCHIK & DOUG LEDERMAN
EDITORS, INSIDE HIGHER ED

THE 2017 INSIDE HIGHER ED SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS DIRECTORS

A study by Gallup and *Inside Higher Ed*



Inside Higher Ed

1015 18th Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036
t 202.659.9208



Gallup

901 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
t 202.715.3030

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FOREWORD

Inside Higher Ed's seventh annual Survey of College and University Admissions Directors seeks to understand how these leaders view higher education admissions and recruiting policies and issues.

Among the questions posed in the survey:

- Did institutions meet their enrollment goals for the current academic year?
- What undergraduate student populations are the focus of admissions recruitment efforts?
- Are institutions too dependent on international full-pay students? More out-of-state students?
- How does the outcome of the 2016 election affect institutions' strategies for recruiting students from certain population groups?
- What changes do admissions directors foresee for international student recruitment with President Trump in office?
- Are pathways programs for international students a key part of institutions' recruitment strategies?
- Is applicants' social media activity a factor in admissions decisions?
- To what extent do colleges seek disciplinary records of applicants, and how is this information used?
- What do admissions directors see as the future of tuition-free college programs?
- How are concerns about student debt affecting college admissions?
- Do admissions directors perceive that potential students are discouraged from applying because of questions about the value of a college education?
- How have changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid affected colleges' timelines for admissions decisions and financial aid awards?
- Do college admissions directors support adding a voluntary question on sexual orientation or gender identity to college applications?
- What factors are affecting community college admissions?

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

- A majority of admissions directors said they were very concerned about meeting their institution's enrollment goals for the coming academic year.
- About a third of senior admissions officials, 34 percent, say they reached their enrollment goals by the traditional May 1 deadline.
- Admissions directors are divided on whether free tuition programs remain a good idea to pursue. Those working at public institutions tend to favor such programs, while more than 8 in 10 private college admissions directors say a free tuition program, if passed in their state, would threaten their institution.
- Meaningfully more admissions directors than in 2016 say their institution is very likely to increase its recruitment efforts of transfer students and students older than 24.
- Only about one in three admissions directors say they met their institution's enrollment goals for the 2017-18 academic year by May 1, similar to the percentage a year ago. Public doctoral institutions once again were most likely to hit their goals.
- Admissions directors are twice as likely to agree than to disagree that U.S. colleges have become too dependent on international full-pay undergraduates and too dependent on international students from a few countries. But nearly three-quarters disagree that those statements are true of their own institutions.
- Admissions directors widely agree that President Trump's statements and policies make it more difficult to recruit international students to U.S. colleges. However, admissions directors do not foresee a decline in international enrollments at their own college.
- Roughly one in four admissions directors say their institution has a pathways program for international students, with 6 in 10 of those directors saying it is a key part of their recruitment strategy.
- Admissions directors are largely divided in their views of whether the 2016 election outcome indicates that Americans are less committed now than in the past to having more racial and ethnic minority students attend college. Three-quarters believe colleges should redouble their efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented minority groups.
- Thirty-eight percent of admissions directors say their institution has stepped up its efforts to recruit rural students since the election. Thirty percent say the same about low-income white students, but only 8 percent have stepped up efforts to recruit politically conservative students.

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS (CONT.)

- A majority of admissions directors believe applicants' social media activity should not be taken into account in admissions decisions. However, admissions directors largely support Harvard's revoking admissions offers to accepted applicants who were found to have made offensive comments on social media. Few admissions directors, 8 percent, report that their college routinely checks the social media activity of its applicants.
- Eight in 10 admissions directors say they are losing potential applicants because of concerns about student debt, including 89 percent of admissions directors at private colleges and 71 percent at public colleges.
- Admissions directors are growing increasingly concerned about the image of higher education and what that means for college admissions -- 95 percent strongly agree or agree that higher education needs to do a better job of explaining the value of a college education, up from 87 percent a year ago.
- Forty-five percent of admissions directors say colleges should ask applicants about all disciplinary matters on their record, while 40 percent favor limiting the scope of such inquiries and 15 percent think colleges should not ask for that information.
- More than 6 in 10 admissions directors say their college requests disciplinary information of college applicants, with the practice more common at private than public institutions.
- Two-thirds of admissions directors say their institution is now providing financial aid awards earlier in the admissions process cycle in response to changes in the federal financial aid process. However, the majority indicate their college is not making admissions decisions earlier in the cycle because of the change.
- Admissions directors are equally likely to agree as to disagree that the changes in the financial aid application process have led to more applications from low-income students. In last year's survey, admissions directors were much more likely to disagree than to agree that this would occur.
- Forty-two percent of admissions directors believe colleges should add optional questions about sexual orientation or gender identity on their applications.
- Community college admissions directors view improving job prospects for those without a degree or certificate as the most important reason for enrollment declines at their own institution and at two-year colleges in general.
- Community college admissions directors generally believe that public four-year colleges in their area have better programs encouraging community college students to transfer than do private nonprofit institutions and for-profit institutions.



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METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings from a quantitative survey research study that Gallup conducted on behalf of *Inside Higher Ed*. The overall objective was to understand how senior-level college and university admissions and enrollment officers view issues related to recruitment policies, admissions procedures, financial aid policies.

To achieve this objective, Gallup sent invitations via email to 3,547 admissions directors and enrollment managers, with regular reminders sent throughout the July 20-Aug. 16, 2017, field period. Gallup collected 453 web surveys, yielding a 13 percent response rate. Respondents represented 200 public institutions, 245 private institutions and eight 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 Number	453	200	245	8	54	70	68	135	89	1

*Data are 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.

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

Gallup education consultants developed the questionnaire in collaboration with Scott Jaschik and Doug Lederman of *Inside Higher Ed*. Specialty colleges, namely Bible colleges and seminaries with a Carnegie Code classification of 24, and institutions with enrollment of fewer than 500 students were excluded from the sample.

The survey is an attempted census of all admissions directors or enrollment managers using the most comprehensive sample information available. Each responding institution is represented only once in the results. If multiple respondents from the same institution completed the survey, the highest-ranking official's survey was retained.

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 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.

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 undergraduate students, transfer students and minority students are the groups that admissions directors are most likely to say they are increasing efforts to recruit this year. Eighty-four percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree their institution is very likely to increase their efforts to recruit full-time undergraduates. Seventy-four percent say the same about transfer students and 69 percent about minority students. Majorities of admissions directors also strongly agree or agree that their institution is very likely to increase efforts to attract students recruited with merit scholarships (60 percent), first-generation college students (58 percent) and out-of-state students (54 percent).

About half of admissions directors report their institution is very likely to increase efforts aimed at recruiting students older than 24 (50 percent), veterans and military personnel (50 percent), online students (48 percent), full-pay students (48 percent) and international students (47 percent). Part-time undergraduates are a subgroup that relatively few institutions appear to be targeting — 38 percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree their institution is very likely to increase efforts to admit part-time students.

The recruitment focus at community colleges differs from that at other types of institutions in many ways. Admissions directors at public associate-degree institutions are far more likely than those at other colleges to say they are increasing efforts to recruit students older than 24 and part-time undergraduates, and far less likely to say the same about transfer students, students recruited with merit scholarships, out-of-state students and international students.

Public doctoral institution admissions directors are most likely to say their institution is giving greater attention to recruiting minority students. They also are likely (along with community college admissions directors) to increase efforts aimed at first-generation college students and (along with private college admissions directors) to increase attempts to recruit international students.

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.
Full-time undergraduates								
%5 Strongly agree	58	51	64	64	63	46	60	69
%4	26	30	22	21	21	33	27	18
%3	12	14	10	12	4	19	10	7
%2	4	4	3	2	12	2	1	4
%1 Strongly disagree	1	<1	1	2	0	0	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.
Transfer students								
%5 Strongly agree	48	36	59	63	52	25	59	63
%4	26	27	26	21	27	28	26	21
%3	15	22	9	10	8	29	10	10
%2	7	11	4	4	4	15	3	1
%1 Strongly disagree	4	5	3	2	10	4	1	4
Minority students								
%5 Strongly agree	38	42	35	63	25	43	41	35
%4	31	32	31	27	48	28	26	32
%3	25	20	30	8	11	24	31	29
%2	5	6	4	2	15	5	2	3
%1 Strongly disagree	<1	<1	<1	0	1	0	0	1
Students recruited with merit scholarships								
%5 Strongly agree	34	23	41	43	36	10	34	44
%4	26	23	29	22	30	22	32	28
%3	24	25	22	23	9	35	25	20
%2	10	17	5	4	22	16	7	4
%1 Strongly disagree	7	12	3	8	4	17	3	5
First-generation college students								
%5 Strongly agree	30	38	24	45	27	41	25	23
%4	28	31	25	18	32	35	26	31
%3	33	23	43	27	25	21	42	39
%2	7	7	7	10	15	4	7	5
%1 Strongly disagree	1	<1	1	0	2	0	1	2
Out-of-state students								
%5 Strongly agree	33	21	44	39	38	9	38	45
%4	21	18	22	37	27	11	31	20
%3	23	23	23	20	18	26	25	26
%2	14	22	6	4	12	31	5	5
%1 Strongly disagree	10	16	4	0	5	23	1	4

FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT (CONT.)

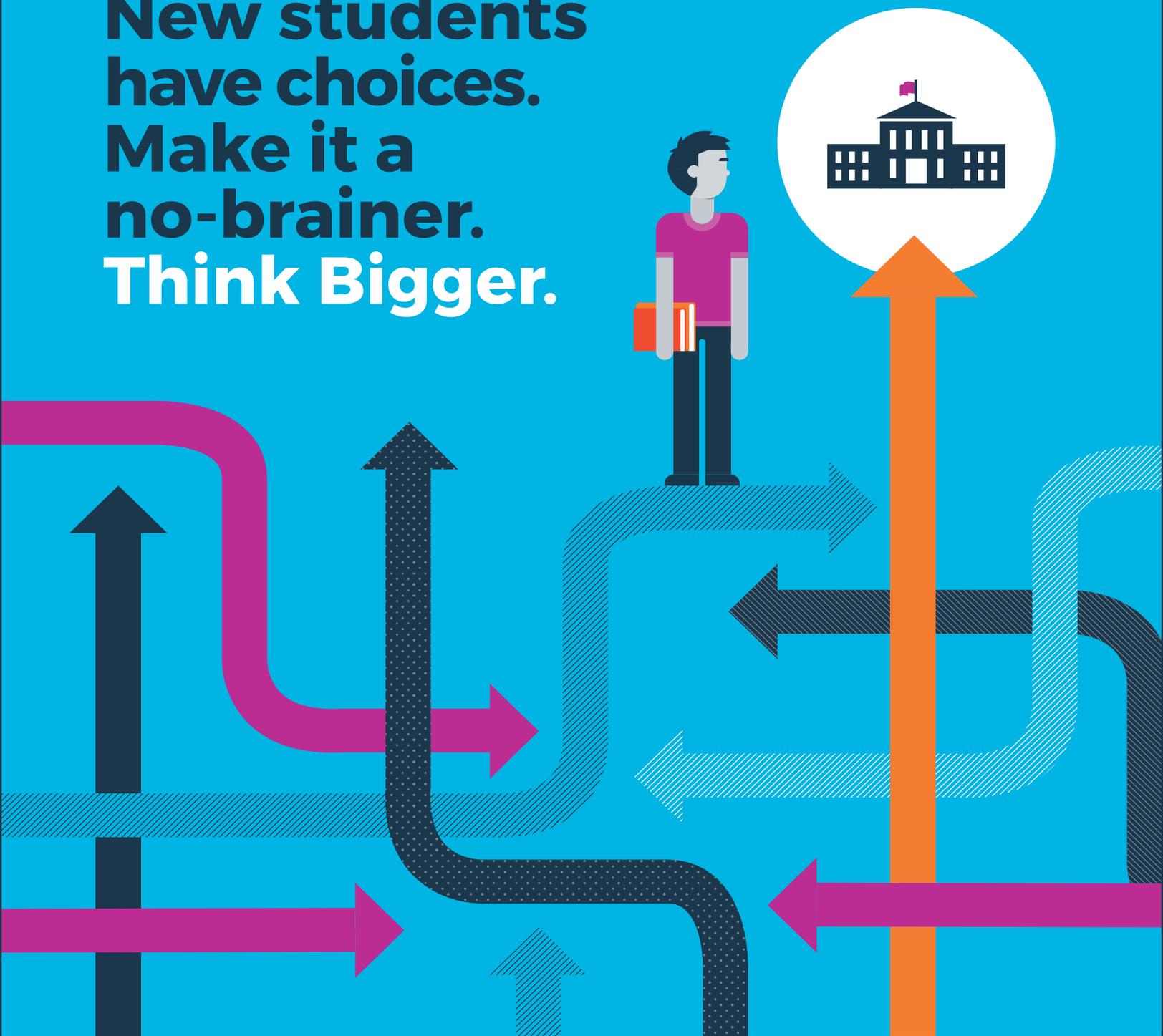
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Students older than 24								
%5 Strongly agree	28	32	25	7	21	40	22	21
%4	22	29	14	21	19	33	15	10
%3	29	26	31	33	28	26	35	26
%2	9	7	11	24	14	2	8	18
%1 Strongly disagree	13	6	19	14	17	<1	20	25
Veterans/Military personnel								
%5 Strongly agree	18	21	16	12	13	26	22	9
%4	32	34	29	39	35	31	23	37
%3	36	36	35	39	36	37	42	25
%2	11	6	15	4	5	7	11	20
%1 Strongly disagree	4	3	5	6	11	0	1	10
Online students								
%5 Strongly agree	29	28	29	25	20	30	26	28
%4	19	25	13	20	17	29	14	9
%3	25	33	14	20	32	36	19	15
%2	7	6	9	11	10	4	12	5
%1 Strongly disagree	21	8	35	23	21	2	28	44

FOCUS OF RECRUITMENT (CONT.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Full-pay students								
%5 Strongly agree	25	19	30	19	21	18	24	30
%4	23	23	22	39	18	21	22	17
%3	28	29	28	33	28	30	34	29
%2	16	20	13	7	14	24	12	14
%1 Strongly disagree	8	9	7	2	19	7	7	10
International students								
%5 Strongly agree	25	17	31	42	20	10	31	38
%4	22	16	28	23	24	11	31	24
%3	24	17	29	16	17	16	25	34
%2	17	28	7	14	22	34	10	4
%1 Strongly disagree	13	22	5	4	18	29	3	1
Part-time undergraduates								
%5 Strongly agree	19	31	9	8	8	42	10	9
%4	19	28	11	11	15	36	10	16
%3	22	22	21	32	39	16	20	14
%2	19	12	25	17	25	6	26	21
%1 Strongly disagree	21	7	34	32	13	0	35	41

In past years' surveys, full-time undergraduates have consistently ranked at the top when admissions directors are asked which groups will receive increased recruiting efforts. Minority students and transfer students have ranked second and third each year. However, the percentage expending greater efforts to attract transfer students is up from 65 percent last year to 74 percent this year. There has been a similar increase in the percentage of admissions directors making greater efforts to recruit students older than 24 (from 41 percent last year to 50 percent currently).

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STUDENT ENROLLMENT GOALS

Most admissions directors – 85 percent – say they were very (55 percent) or moderately (30 percent) concerned about reaching their institution’s enrollment goals this year. Only a third – 34 percent – say their institution met its enrollment goals by May 1, the traditional end of the admissions period.

These levels are similar to what they were in the 2016 survey, when 84 percent were very or moderately concerned about reaching their institution’s enrollment goals and 37 percent had met their enrollment goals by May 1.

This year, public doctoral institution admissions directors, at 59 percent, are most likely to report having met their enrollment goals by May 1 – the only group above the majority level. About 4 in 10 private doctoral or master’s institution admissions directors report being successful in hitting their enrollment targets. Fewer than 3 in 10 admissions directors at public master’s or baccalaureate institutions or community colleges reached their goals by May 1.

Consistent with their greater success in hitting enrollment targets, admissions directors at public doctoral institutions expressed relatively less concern about meeting their goals. Just 25 percent of public doctoral institution admissions directors said they were very concerned about meeting their goals. That compares to more than 6 in 10 admissions directors at public master’s or baccalaureate, public associate, or private baccalaureate colleges expressing such a high degree of concern.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master’s/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master’s	Bacc.
Thinking back, please indicate how concerned you were about meeting your institution’s new student enrollment goals this year, that is, for the 2017-18 academic year:								
% Very concerned	55	55	56	25	62	62	48	62
% Moderately concerned	30	29	30	42	23	27	33	25
% Not too concerned	12	14	11	25	11	10	14	13
% Not concerned at all	3	3	3	8	4	1	5	1
Did your institution meet its new student enrollment goals this year prior to May 1, 2017?								
% Yes	34	32	36	59	22	27	43	35
% No	66	68	64	41	78	73	57	65

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS

One way that colleges have sought to keep enrollment levels up is to recruit international students. Admissions directors are twice as likely to agree than to disagree that U.S. colleges have become too dependent on international full-pay undergraduates, including those from a limited number of countries.

Specifically, 45 percent strongly agree or agree and 21 percent strongly disagree or disagree that U.S. colleges have become too dependent on international full-pay undergraduates over the past decade. Majorities of admissions directors at public four-year colleges agree this is the case.

Also, 47 percent of all admissions directors strongly agree or agree, while 16 percent strongly disagree or disagree, that American colleges have become too dependent on international students from a few countries, such as China and India. Sixty-five percent of admissions directors affiliated with public doctoral institutions, and 56 percent of those at private doctoral or master's institutions, agree with this idea.

Most admissions directors do not think their own institution has become too reliant on full-pay undergraduates from other countries (81 percent strongly disagree or disagree) or that their institution has become too dependent on international students from a few countries (74 percent strongly disagree or disagree). Public doctoral institution admissions directors are least likely to disagree with both statements. In fact, a majority of admissions directors at public doctoral colleges, 51 percent, strongly agree or agree their college has become too dependent on international students from a few countries.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS (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.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
During the last decade, U.S. colleges have become too dependent on international full-pay undergraduates.								
%5 Strongly agree	16	18	15	27	26	12	11	14
%4	29	27	30	40	30	20	34	25
%3	34	30	37	22	32	29	34	40
%2	15	17	14	11	10	22	14	17
%1 Strongly disagree	6	8	5	0	2	17	6	5
U.S. colleges have become too dependent on international students from a few countries, such as China and India.								
%5 Strongly agree	17	13	20	33	16	4	17	25
%4	30	26	33	32	27	27	39	23
%3	36	35	37	29	48	28	32	38
%2	11	18	7	6	9	25	8	8
%1 Strongly disagree	5	7	4	0	0	16	3	6
During the last decade, my college has become too dependent on international full-pay undergraduates.								
%5 Strongly agree	4	4	5	11	4	2	5	5
%4	4	3	4	11	5	0	3	0
%3	10	9	11	24	8	6	18	8
%2	23	21	25	22	19	18	22	30
%1 Strongly disagree	58	63	55	33	63	73	52	57
My college has become too dependent on international students from a few countries, such as China and India.								
%5 Strongly agree	6	7	5	19	11	2	6	2
%4	9	9	9	32	11	2	18	2
%3	11	5	15	13	5	3	15	14
%2	24	21	25	20	26	17	22	33
%1 Strongly disagree	50	57	46	16	46	75	40	49

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS (CONT.)

The survey asked admissions directors to speculate on the future of international student enrollments. Over all, more admissions directors strongly disagree or disagree (43 percent) than strongly agree or agree (31 percent) that they anticipate a decline in the number of international students at their college in the years ahead. Private and public institution admissions directors differ on this question. More public institution directors agree (46 percent) than disagree (35 percent) that a decline in international enrollments will likely occur at their institution. In contrast, by 48 percent to 20 percent, more private college directors disagree than agree that fewer international students will enroll at their college in the near future.

Admissions directors are divided in their views of whether their college will need to offer financial incentives to maintain international enrollments. Forty-one percent strongly agree or agree and 39 percent strongly disagree or disagree that their institution will need to offer non-need-based aid (or more non-need-based aid) to international students in the years ahead to maintain international enrollments.

A majority of private college institution admissions directors believe their college will need to offer such aid to keep international enrollments up, while a majority of public institution admissions directors disagree. That is mainly because community college admissions directors (which tend to recruit few international students and typically offer little to no non-need-based aid) overwhelmingly disagree; those at public four-year colleges are divided.

Admissions directors at all types of colleges agree that President Trump's policies and statements make it more difficult to recruit international students. Three-quarters of admissions directors strongly agree or agree Trump's actions will discourage international students from attending U.S. colleges, while 9 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS (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.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
I anticipate a decline in the number of international students at my college in the years ahead.								
%5 Strongly agree	14	22	9	23	24	19	9	5
%4	17	24	11	32	22	23	14	12
%3	27	20	32	23	26	17	35	31
%2	29	21	34	13	25	21	26	42
%1 Strongly disagree	14	14	14	9	3	21	16	10
To maintain international enrollments, I anticipate that my college will offer non-need-based aid (or more non-need-based aid) to international students in the years ahead.								
%5 Strongly agree	15	6	21	15	8	0	19	16
%4	26	15	32	28	27	5	31	36
%3	19	13	23	17	27	1	23	31
%2	12	15	11	17	13	17	13	7
%1 Strongly disagree	27	51	13	23	26	77	14	10
The statements and policies of President Trump make it more difficult to recruit international students.								
%5 Strongly agree	45	48	44	58	33	51	42	45
%4	31	28	33	20	42	24	29	33
%3	14	17	11	14	21	17	15	8
%2	6	4	8	6	4	4	7	11
%1 Strongly disagree	3	3	4	2	0	4	7	3

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PATHWAYS PROGRAMS (CONT.)

Some U.S. colleges have a pathways program to help ensure international students can succeed. Such programs combine English-language proficiency instruction with academic coursework. Twenty-eight percent of admissions directors report their college has a pathways program, including 47 percent of those at public doctoral institutions and 40 percent of those at private doctoral or master's institutions. Only 16 percent of admissions directors at private baccalaureate colleges say their institution has a pathways program.

A majority of admissions directors at institutions that have a pathways program, 63 percent, say it is a key part of their applicant recruitment strategy.

Roughly one in four admissions directors working at institutions without a pathways program, 26 percent, indicate their college is considering implementing such a program.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Does your institution currently have a pathways program?								
% Yes	28	33	24	47	34	26	40	16
% No	72	67	76	53	66	74	60	84
Is your pathways program a key part of your applicant recruitment strategy?*								
% Yes	63	70	58	n/a	n/a	n/a	48	n/a
% No	37	30	42	n/a	n/a	n/a	52	n/a
Are you considering implementing a pathways program at your institution? **								
% Yes	26	23	26	n/a	n/a	25	39	25
% No	74	77	74	n/a	n/a	75	61	75

*Asked only of respondents who indicated their institution has a pathways program (n=123)

**Asked only of respondents who indicated their institution does not have a pathways program (n=217)

n/a: Not reported due to small sample size



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OUT-OF-STATE ADMISSIONS

In addition to trying to recruit students from outside the U.S., colleges often seek students from other states, who pay higher tuition, to fill their classes. Sixty-three percent of admissions directors say their institution has sought more out-of-state students, including roughly 9 in 10 of those at public four-year institutions. While community colleges focus primarily on local students, 31 percent say they have sought more out-of-state students. At least 7 in 10 private college admissions directors say their institution has sought more out-of-state students.

Most admissions directors whose college has sought more out-of-state students say their efforts have been successful and noncontroversial. Eight in 10 admissions directors who have attempted to recruit more out-of-state students report succeeding in their efforts. Only 9 percent say their efforts have resulted in greater political or public scrutiny, but that includes close to 40 percent of those at public doctoral institutions.

As you may know, in recent years some public institutions have significantly increased their admission of out-of-state students, including international students.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
In recent years, has your college sought more out-of-state students?								
% Yes	63	54	71	91	86	31	81	70
% No	37	46	29	9	14	69	19	30
Have your college's efforts to seek more out-of-state students been successful?*								
% Yes	81	73	86	88	71	59	89	84
% No	19	27	14	12	29	41	11	16
Is your college facing political or public scrutiny over admitting more out-of-state students?*								
% Yes	9	22	1	39	5	n/a	1	0
% No	91	78	99	61	95	n/a	99	100

*Asked only if respondents whose institutions have sought more out-of-state students (n=251)

n/a: Not reported due to small sample size

OUT-OF-STATE ADMISSIONS (CONT.)

Admissions directors are more likely to strongly agree or agree (49 percent) than to strongly disagree or disagree (31 percent) that out-of-state students are essential to their college for their tuition revenue. This includes 65 percent of admissions directors at private colleges but only 34 percent of those at public institutions. However, admissions directors at public four-year institutions are much more likely than those at public two-year institutions to say that out-of-state tuition is essential to their college. Public doctoral institution admissions directors' responses are similar to those of private college admissions directors.

Although increased enrollment of out-of-state students could be a response to reductions in state funds for higher education, admissions directors do not think greater public funding would do much to decrease out-of-state admissions. Admissions directors are three times more likely to strongly disagree or disagree (65 percent) than to strongly agree or agree (21 percent) that out-of-state admissions would decrease if their state legislature provided more funds. This could reflect that the need for out-of-state students is driven by other factors, such as regional variation in the pool of potential college students.

Majorities of admissions directors at two-year public colleges (54 percent) and four-year public institutions (60 percent) do not believe increased state funding would decrease out-of-state enrollment.

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.
Out-of-state students are essential to my college for their tuition revenue.								
%5 Strongly agree	27	14	40	38	20	7	40	43
%4	22	20	25	35	30	9	30	21
%3	19	18	20	13	17	21	19	24
%2	10	15	6	9	16	17	6	3
%1 Strongly disagree	21	33	9	6	17	46	5	9
If my state legislature provided more funds, my institution would be likely to decrease out-of-state admissions.								
%5 Strongly agree	10	16	2	16	20	10	1	2
%4	11	15	7	18	9	15	9	1
%3	15	15	16	6	11	21	17	14
%2	28	28	26	39	38	23	29	31
%1 Strongly disagree	37	26	50	21	22	31	44	51

IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FOR ADMISSIONS

President Trump's victory in the 2016 election surprised most political observers who underestimated the appeal of his campaign. His election also raised questions about Americans' commitment to diversity and inclusion, two ideals promoted widely in higher education.

Admissions directors are divided in their views of whether Trump's election indicates Americans are less committed now than in the past to increasing the number of racial and ethnic minority students who attend college. Thirty-nine percent strongly agree or agree this is the case, while 33 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

Regardless of their perceptions of Americans' commitment to increasing diversity on campus, admissions directors overwhelmingly agree that higher education needs to redouble its efforts to recruit and retain students from under-represented minority groups. Seventy-four percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree with this statement; only 4 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

Trump's campaign held especially strong appeal to rural and lower-income white voters, and his election raised questions about whether such groups are being overlooked by government policies and marginalized by cultural and societal changes. Admissions directors are more likely to strongly agree or agree (36 percent) than to strongly disagree or disagree (22 percent) that the election suggests that colleges — especially elite colleges — should recruit more students from rural areas. More than 4 in 10 admissions directors at public doctoral institutions (44 percent) and a majority of directors at public two-year colleges (51 percent) agree the election indicates that colleges should recruit more rural students.

Admissions directors are less likely to endorse the idea that the election outcome suggests colleges should recruit more lower-income white students. Twenty-eight percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree, while 29 percent strongly disagree or disagree. Community college admissions directors are most supportive of this notion. In contrast to their views about rural students, public doctoral admissions directors are much less inclined to say the election outcome suggests colleges should recruit more lower-income white students (28 percent).

The survey also asked if colleges should attempt to increase political diversity on campus by recruiting more conservative students, especially at colleges with overwhelmingly liberal student bodies. Admissions directors largely reject this notion — 50 percent strongly disagree or disagree, while just 13 percent strongly agree or agree.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FOR ADMISSIONS (CONT.)

Some pundits and college officials said that the results of the 2016 presidential election raised questions for higher education.

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.
Higher education needs to redouble its efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented minority groups.								
%5 Strongly agree	37	43	34	48	29	46	32	32
%4	37	43	32	37	59	41	39	34
%3	21	12	29	9	12	13	22	31
%2	3	1	4	4	0	1	5	2
%1 Strongly disagree	1	1	2	2	0	0	3	2
The election outcome suggests that Americans are less committed than they were in the past to increasing the number of racial and ethnic minority students who attend college.								
%5 Strongly agree	12	9	14	19	7	8	9	9
%4	27	35	21	24	24	40	21	26
%3	28	25	30	18	30	28	31	29
%2	19	17	21	28	14	17	18	25
%1 Strongly disagree	14	14	14	11	25	7	20	11
The election outcome indicates that colleges – especially elite colleges – should recruit more students from rural areas.								
%5 Strongly agree	12	17	9	15	9	22	13	8
%4	24	25	23	29	8	29	18	25
%3	42	41	43	35	60	34	41	50
%2	14	13	14	16	9	15	14	15
%1 Strongly disagree	8	4	11	5	14	0	14	3

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.
The election outcome indicates that colleges — especially elite colleges — should recruit more lower-income white students.								
%5 Strongly agree	10	13	7	18	5	17	12	7
%4	18	19	17	10	14	25	11	19
%3	43	36	49	47	35	33	44	52
%2	14	15	14	15	19	14	17	16
%1 Strongly disagree	15	18	13	10	27	12	16	6
Colleges with overwhelmingly liberal student bodies should increase recruiting efforts, including using affirmative action, for conservative students.								
%5 Strongly agree	5	7	4	5	4	9	5	2
%4	8	9	8	8	2	10	7	2
%3	37	36	38	36	31	39	35	47
%2	25	23	25	27	23	22	26	21
%1 Strongly disagree	25	25	25	24	41	20	27	29

The survey asked admissions directors to report what has happened at their college since the election. Thirty-eight percent say their college has stepped up its recruitment of students from rural areas, including majorities of public doctoral and public two-year-college admissions directors. Slightly less, 30 percent, say their college has stepped up its recruitment of low-income white students, with the rate roughly twice as high among public as among private institution admissions directors (41 percent to 22 percent, respectively). Just 8 percent of admissions directors say their college has stepped up recruitment of conservative students, including 13 percent of those at public two-year colleges and 13 percent of those at private baccalaureate institutions.

One in seven admissions directors say reports of racial incidents on college campuses since the election have made it more difficult to recruit minority students to their college. This includes 4 in 10 admissions directors at public doctoral institutions.

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.
My college has stepped up recruitment of students from rural areas.								
% Yes	38	52	28	56	38	55	24	34
% No	62	48	72	44	62	45	76	66
My college has stepped up recruitment of low-income white students.								
% Yes	30	41	22	40	44	41	25	20
% No	70	59	78	60	56	59	75	80
My college has stepped up recruitment of conservative students.								
% Yes	8	9	8	3	5	13	5	13
% No	92	91	92	97	95	87	95	87
Reports of racial incidents on many college campuses have made it more difficult to recruit minority students to my college.								
% Yes	14	14	14	41	6	12	7	16
% No	86	86	86	59	94	88	93	84

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADMISSIONS DECISIONS

Admissions directors generally reject the idea that social media activity should factor into admissions decisions, but they believe Harvard University was correct to revoke admissions offers to students who had posted offensive comments on a social media website. Fifty-seven percent of admissions directors strongly disagree or disagree that admissions officers should check applicants' social media activity and factor that information into admissions decisions; just 14 percent strongly agree or agree. Admissions directors at public four-year institutions are especially likely to believe social media activity should not factor into admissions decisions.

Nevertheless, 60 percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that Harvard was correct to revoke the admissions offers for students who posted offensive comments. Just 18 percent strongly disagree or disagree. Private institution admissions directors (68 percent) are more likely than public institution admissions directors (48 percent) to agree with Harvard's actions.

As in the Harvard example, many colleges may not routinely check social media activity but could become aware of it through other means. Admissions directors do not show a clear consensus on whether colleges should take into account bigoted comments applicants make that the college learns about from other sources. Forty-two percent strongly agree or agree and 34 percent strongly disagree or disagree that colleges should take such information into account. Again, private college admissions directors (54 percent) are more open to the idea of using such information in admissions decisions than are their public institution peers (27 percent).

As you may know, this spring Harvard University revoked admissions offers to some accepted applicants after it discovered they had participated in a Facebook discussion group full of offensive, bigoted comments. 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.
Harvard was correct to revoke those admissions offers.								
%5 Strongly agree	30	22	36	23	26	19	43	28
%4	30	26	32	33	29	26	28	40
%3	22	25	20	17	25	23	17	21
%2	12	17	9	9	17	21	8	9
%1 Strongly disagree	6	9	3	17	3	11	4	3
Admissions officers should check on the social media accounts of applicants and use that information in admissions decisions.								
%5 Strongly agree	4	4	5	2	0	4	7	1
%4	10	11	9	0	3	17	8	8
%3	30	20	39	18	26	16	39	39
%2	27	31	23	37	29	32	26	24
%1 Strongly disagree	30	35	25	43	42	31	21	28

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADMISSIONS DECISIONS (CONT.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
If colleges that do not check on applicants' social media activity learn that an applicant made bigoted comments on social media, they should factor that into admissions decisions.								
%5 Strongly agree	17	12	22	9	15	13	23	23
%4	25	15	32	35	20	9	35	35
%3	24	20	27	22	32	16	20	27
%2	19	26	14	16	10	36	15	10
%1 Strongly disagree	15	27	5	18	23	26	7	5

Relatively few admissions directors indicate their college has factored social media activity into decisions to reject or revoke an admission offer. Just 9 percent say their college has done this at least once over the past two years, while 73 percent say their college has not done this and 18 percent are unsure. Public doctoral (24 percent) and private baccalaureate (20 percent) admissions directors are most likely to report rejecting or revoking an offer because of an applicant's social media activity. The occurrence has been rare (or nonexistent) at public master's or baccalaureate and public associate colleges, according to admissions directors at those types of institutions.

Eight percent of admissions directors say admissions officers at their college routinely check the social media activity of applicants. Admissions directors at private baccalaureate colleges, at 16 percent, are the most likely to report checking social media activity.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Over the last two years, about how many times, if any, has your college factored in social media activity in decisions to reject or revoke an admission offer?								
% 0 / My college has not done this in the last two years	73	75	72	63	85	75	75	68
% One time	4	1	7	8	0	0	4	13
% Two or three times	2	2	3	10	3	0	5	2
% Four or more times	3	1	4	6	0	0	6	5
% Don't know	18	21	14	12	12	25	9	13
At your college, do admissions officers routinely check the social media activity of applicants?								
% Yes	8	2	13	6	2	2	7	16
% No	92	98	87	94	98	98	93	84

STUDENT DEBT

Eighty percent of admissions directors, similar to the percentages found in the 2014-2016 surveys, believe their institution is losing potential applicants due to concerns about accumulating student loan debt. Private college admissions directors (89 percent) continue to be more likely than public college admissions directors (71 percent) to say this.

When asked what is an appropriate level of debt to accumulate toward a four-year degree, most admissions directors give a figure of less than \$30,000 – roughly the national average for recent graduates – with the most common levels being \$10,000 to less than \$20,000 (24 percent) or \$20,000 to less than \$30,000 (36 percent). The percentage of admissions directors who believe student debt of \$30,000 or more is reasonable has been stable at around 25 percent in recent years, including 25 percent this year.

Private college admissions directors are more likely to endorse higher debt levels – 36 percent think debt of \$30,000 or more is reasonable, compared with 10 percent of those at public institutions.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Do you think that your institution is losing potential applicants due to concerns about accumulating student loan debt?								
% Yes	80	71	89	85	76	63	88	85
% No	20	29	11	15	24	37	12	15
In your opinion, what is a reasonable amount of loan debt from all sources for an undergraduate student to accumulate over a four-year period?								
% No amount of loan debt is reasonable	3	6	0	2	2	9	0	0
% Under \$5,000	3	7	1	3	11	6	1	1
% \$5,000 to less than \$10,000	9	17	2	12	7	23	3	1
% \$10,000 to less than \$20,000	24	31	19	21	33	31	17	27
% \$20,000 to less than \$30,000	36	28	42	51	39	19	40	41
% \$30,000 to less than \$40,000	17	9	23	8	8	10	33	23
% \$40,000 to less than \$50,000	5	1	8	2	0	1	5	4
% \$50,000 or more	3	0	5	0	0	0	1	3

FREE TUITION PROGRAMS

Growing concerns about the cost of college have led many political leaders, primarily Democrats, to propose free tuition programs. This year, amid some expectations that free tuition would lose momentum with a Republican president in office, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed into law free tuition legislation for residents of that state.

Admissions directors are divided on the issue of free tuition, largely along public vs. private lines. Overall, 37 percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree and 34 percent strongly disagree or disagree that free public higher education remains a good idea to pursue. Fifty percent of public institution admissions directors support the idea of free public higher education, while 46 percent of private institution admissions directors do not. Community college admissions directors are the most supportive, at 57 percent.

Regardless of whether they work at a public or private institution, admissions directors largely agree that the idea of free tuition poses a threat to private higher education. Sixty-six percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that free tuition programs threaten private higher education; just 20 percent disagree. Eighty-three percent of private institution admissions directors view free tuition as a threat to private higher education.

A similar 85 percent of private institution admissions directors strongly agree (63 percent) or agree (22 percent) that free tuition would threaten their own institution if their state passed such a program.

Admissions directors also largely perceive that free tuition proponents are not adequately considering how the programs will be funded in the future. Seventy-five percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that proponents are not paying sufficient attention to long-term financing issues, while just 10 percent strongly disagree or disagree. Eighty-six percent of private college admissions directors and 64 percent of public institution admissions directors strongly agree or agree that long-term financing issues are not getting enough attention.

FREE TUITION PROGRAMS (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.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Free public higher education remains a good idea to pursue.								
%5 Strongly agree	12	18	7	4	20	22	11	2
%4	25	32	19	32	19	35	15	18
%3	29	32	28	30	36	29	28	33
%2	18	13	21	23	16	11	19	25
%1 Strongly disagree	16	5	25	11	9	3	27	21
Proponents of free tuition programs are not paying sufficient attention to long-term financing issues.								
%5 Strongly agree	46	32	59	47	31	30	50	67
%4	29	32	27	32	38	29	37	21
%3	14	21	9	15	23	22	12	6
%2	5	8	2	3	5	9	1	4
%1 Strongly disagree	5	7	3	2	2	10	1	2
The idea of free public tuition poses a threat to private higher education.								
%5 Strongly agree	39	19	57	20	22	18	52	63
%4	27	29	26	29	35	25	29	19
%3	14	20	9	27	30	15	9	14
%2	13	21	5	17	11	26	5	3
%1 Strongly disagree	7	12	3	7	1	16	5	2
Free public tuition, if adopted in my state, would pose a threat to my institution.*								
%5 Strongly agree	n/a	n/a	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	57	68
%4	n/a	n/a	22	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	18
%3	n/a	n/a	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	6
%2	n/a	n/a	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	5
%1 Strongly disagree	n/a	n/a	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	3

*Asked only of admissions directors at private, nonprofit institutions (n=208)

IMAGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education has come under increased scrutiny amid questions of whether the rapidly increasing price of college is worth the payoff after graduation. Admissions directors appear concerned about the image of higher education these days and the implications of the image concerns on enrollment numbers. And their attitudes are significantly more pessimistic than a year ago.

Fully 95 percent of admissions directors strongly agree (59 percent) or agree (36 percent) that higher education needs to do a better job of explaining the value of a college education, up from 87 percent a year ago. Roughly two-thirds of admissions directors now strongly agree or agree that media reports of unemployed or underemployed college graduates (67 percent, up from 56 percent a year ago) and public discussion of student debt (64 percent, up from 54 percent) discourage students from considering higher education.

Fifty-eight percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree that public discussion of student debt has discouraged students from considering their college. This includes 78 percent of admissions directors at private colleges. Last year, 47 percent of all admissions directors indicated their institution was losing applicants because of debt concerns.

Admissions directors also doubt that prospective students, or parents of prospective students, understand the value of a liberal arts degree. Sixty-four percent strongly disagree or disagree that parents understand the value of a liberal arts degree, up from 49 percent a year ago. And 69 percent now strongly disagree or disagree that students understand the value of a liberal arts degree. A year ago, 56 percent said the same.

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.
Higher education needs to do a better job of explaining the value of earning college degrees.								
%5 Strongly agree	59	51	66	56	62	43	67	67
%4	36	43	29	40	31	51	29	28
%3	4	5	3	2	7	6	3	4
%2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
%1 Strongly disagree	<1	<1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Media reports of college graduates who are unemployed or underemployed have discouraged students from considering higher education.								
%5 Strongly agree	25	22	27	19	15	24	27	30
%4	42	41	42	46	47	39	37	36
%3	21	22	21	24	28	22	18	26
%2	10	11	9	11	7	11	16	8
%1 Strongly disagree	2	3	1	0	4	4	3	0

IMAGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (CONT.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Public discussion of student debt has discouraged students from considering higher education generally.								
%5 Strongly agree	24	25	24	24	21	24	26	29
%4	40	36	42	42	39	34	39	35
%3	24	27	22	26	33	26	16	29
%2	10	8	12	9	3	11	17	7
%1 Strongly disagree	2	4	1	0	3	5	2	0
Public discussion of student debt has discouraged students from considering my college.								
%5 Strongly agree	22	11	32	7	13	8	30	28
%4	36	25	46	36	41	19	42	51
%3	21	25	17	29	21	24	19	16
%2	9	13	5	18	15	12	9	4
%1 Strongly disagree	12	26	1	9	10	37	1	1
Parents of prospective students understand the value of a liberal arts education.								
%5 Strongly agree	1	2	1	0	2	2	1	1
%4	9	3	14	4	3	2	9	19
%3	26	30	21	18	19	40	33	15
%2	49	47	51	60	40	47	47	54
%1 Strongly disagree	15	17	13	18	36	9	10	11
Prospective students understand the value of a liberal arts education.								
%5 Strongly agree	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
%4	7	4	9	5	4	5	5	11
%3	23	23	23	29	14	27	32	22
%2	50	52	48	43	47	54	44	51
%1 Strongly disagree	19	19	18	23	35	12	19	14

APPLICANT DISCIPLINARY RECORDS

Many U.S. high schools release disciplinary records to colleges, and it is common for colleges to take disciplinary records into account when deciding on applications for admission. Most admissions officers (63 percent) say their institution seeks information on applicants' disciplinary and legal background. This includes 80 percent of admissions directors at private colleges and 41 percent of those at public institutions. Much of that difference is explained by the low percentage of public two-year colleges (20 percent) seeking disciplinary information, but even four-year public institutions are less inclined than private institutions to seek that information.

Among institutions that gather disciplinary records, 22 percent of admissions directors say their college is reconsidering the practice, and half say their admissions officers receive special training on how to evaluate disciplinary information.

Regardless of what their own college does, 45 percent of admissions directors say institutions should ask applicants about all disciplinary and legal infractions. Nearly as many, 40 percent, favor significantly limiting the scope of what institutions may ask applicants about, such as only recent incidents or only violent incidents. Just 15 percent say colleges should not ask any questions about applicants' disciplinary history.

Private institution admissions directors favor a more expansive approach to disciplinary records than public institution directors do. A majority of those working at private colleges, 54 percent, say colleges should ask about all disciplinary or legal infractions. Only 34 percent of public college admissions directors agree. Rather, public college admissions directors tend to favor limiting the types of disciplinary information made available to admissions officers.

APPLICANT DISCIPLINARY RECORDS (CONT.)

As you may know, some colleges are considering applicants' high school disciplinary records in the admissions process.								
	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Does your college seek information, either from applicants or their high schools, on whether applicants have a disciplinary or legal record?								
% Yes	63	41	80	73	75	20	85	93
% No	37	59	20	27	25	80	15	7
Is your college reconsidering whether such information is an appropriate criterion?*								
% Yes	22	26	21	31	22	n/a	16	23
% No	78	74	79	69	78	n/a	84	77
Are admissions officers at your institution provided with special training on how to evaluate disciplinary or legal information?*								
% Yes	50	52	49	55	51	n/a	58	52
% No	50	48	51	45	49	n/a	42	48
What, if anything, do you think institutions should ask about recent disciplinary or legal infractions?								
% Institutions should not ask any questions about applicants' disciplinary or legal infractions.	15	21	11	11	5	30	7	2
% Institutions should significantly limit the scope of disciplinary or legal infractions that they ask applicants about [for example: only recent incidents or violent incidents].	40	46	35	43	34	48	45	34
% Institutions should ask all applicants to report all disciplinary or legal infractions.	45	34	54	45	61	22	49	65

*Asked of those whose colleges seek applicants' disciplinary records (n=254)

PRIOR-PRIOR YEAR

Last year, the federal government made changes to key dates in the financial aid application process to better align it with the college admissions application process. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now available three months earlier (October instead of January), and as a result, families are allowed to enter financial information from the most recent completed tax year — usually two years ago, or the prior-prior year.

To date, prior-prior year has not led to a major shift in when colleges make admissions decisions, but it has sped up their awarding of financial aid. By 51 percent to 38 percent, admissions directors are more likely to strongly disagree or disagree than to strongly agree or agree that their college is making admissions decisions earlier in the admissions cycle because of prior-prior year.

But two-thirds — 68 percent — strongly agree or agree that their college is now providing financial aid awards earlier in the cycle. Public institutions appear to be less inclined than private institutions to be making admissions decisions earlier in light of prior-prior year. Solid majorities of both private and public institution admissions directors indicate they are providing financial aid awards earlier in the process than they used to.

Regardless of when they are making decisions, 43 percent of admissions directors strongly agree or agree and 44 percent strongly disagree or disagree that their college has changed, or plans to change, key dates in their admissions process in response to prior-prior year. Private college admissions directors are more likely than public college admissions directors to say their college is changing, or planning to change, key dates.

As many admissions directors strongly agree or agree (35 percent) as strongly disagree or disagree (33 percent) that their college is receiving more applications from low-income students, earlier in the year, because of prior-prior year. In last year's survey, admissions directors were asked to predict whether their college would get more applications from low-income students, and they were largely skeptical. Forty-six percent strongly disagreed or disagreed this would happen, while 18 percent strongly agreed or agreed.

This year, a majority (59 percent) strongly disagree or disagree they are receiving more applications from students needing little or no financial aid because of prior-prior year; 19 percent strongly agree or agree.

PRIOR-PRIOR YEAR (CONT.)

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is now available earlier, in October rather than January. As such, applicants are able to use income information from two-year-old completed tax returns rather than sometimes incomplete information from the previous year. Proponents believe that this change, known as “Prior-Prior Year,” will encourage more low-income students to apply to college and for financial aid. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following items.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
My college is making admissions decisions earlier in the next admissions cycle because of prior-prior year.								
%5 Strongly agree	22	17	27	11	23	17	22	31
%4	16	11	18	16	22	4	20	14
%3	11	13	10	6	8	18	7	15
%2	18	20	16	23	12	21	24	12
%1 Strongly disagree	33	39	29	44	35	40	26	27
My college is making financial aid awards earlier in the next admissions cycle because of prior-prior year.								
%5 Strongly agree	38	30	45	42	39	24	52	39
%4	30	35	26	32	37	36	30	27
%3	11	11	10	4	9	15	6	17
%2	11	17	7	18	9	15	5	6
%1 Strongly disagree	10	8	11	4	6	10	6	11
My college has changed or plans to change one or more key dates in our admissions process (anything from when applications are available to the final submission deadline) as a result of prior-prior year.								
%5 Strongly agree	23	18	27	17	30	11	28	23
%4	20	17	22	23	8	19	25	27
%3	12	17	9	8	23	12	6	15
%2	17	17	17	23	20	15	15	13
%1 Strongly disagree	27	31	25	28	19	43	27	22

PRIOR-PRIOR YEAR (CONT.)

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
My college is receiving more applications from low-income students, earlier in the year, than was the case before prior-prior year.								
%5 Strongly agree	8	9	8	14	14	6	6	8
%4	27	32	24	28	31	36	33	19
%3	31	30	33	29	26	30	25	42
%2	22	20	24	17	25	19	27	20
%1 Strongly disagree	11	10	11	12	4	9	9	12
My college is receiving more applications from families who need little or no financial aid than was the case before prior-prior year.								
%5 Strongly agree	5	6	4	5	13	3	6	4
%4	14	16	12	26	17	15	16	13
%3	22	26	20	23	24	24	18	22
%2	31	29	33	28	21	30	39	27
%1 Strongly disagree	28	24	31	19	25	27	21	33

SEXUAL ORIENTATION ON COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Colleges have long asked applicants to state their demographic characteristics – such as race, gender or family background – on applications to help track various student populations on campus. More recently, colleges have included optional questions on sexual orientation or gender identity. A majority of admissions directors, 58 percent, do not think higher education institutions should include such a question on applications; 42 percent support adding it. Opinions are unchanged from last year’s survey but remain higher than the 33 percent measured in the 2015 survey and the 29 percent in the 2014 survey.

	All Institutions by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
<i>In your opinion, should higher education institutions add a voluntary question on their admissions application about sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>								
% Yes	42	41	44	42	49	40	45	41
% No	58	59	56	58	51	60	55	59

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community colleges as a whole have been suffering enrollment declines in recent years. The survey asked admissions directors at two-year colleges to indicate how important each of five factors is in explaining this decline. The vast majority of community college admissions directors, 89 percent, say improving employment prospects for those without college degrees or certificates is a very important or important factor, including 56 percent who say it is very important.

Seventy-seven percent each cite insufficient marketing compared with competing institutions and a lack of academic programs in fields students want as very important or important factors. Fewer community college admissions directors – but still majorities – see cost of attendance (66 percent) and increasing competition from four-year colleges offering sub-baccalaureate programs (58 percent) as reasons behind the declines in community college enrollment.

Many community colleges have been reporting enrollment declines in recent years. Please indicate how important each of the following factors are in explaining this decline nationally.	
Improving employment prospects for those without college degrees or certificates*	
% Very important	56
% Important	33
% Marginally important	9
% Not important	2
Insufficient marketing compared with for-profit higher education and other sectors*	
% Very important	45
% Important	32
% Marginally important	15
% Not important	9

*Asked only of respondents at two-year institutions (n=54)

COMMUNITY COLLEGES (CONT.)

Many community colleges have been reporting enrollment declines in recent years. Please indicate how important each of the following factors are in explaining this decline nationally.	
Lack of academic programs in fields that students want*	
% Very important	30
% Important	47
% Marginally important	17
% Not important	6
Cost of attendance*	
% Very important	45
% Important	21
% Marginally important	27
% Not important	7
More competition from four-year colleges offering sub-baccalaureate programs*	
% Very important	36
% Important	22
% Marginally important	35
% Not important	7

*Asked only of respondents at two-year institutions (n=54)

More than 8 in 10 community college admissions directors, 84 percent, say their own institution has suffered enrollment declines in the past two years. The reasons admissions directors give for the declines at their own institution largely mirror those they give to explain the declines nationally. Improving employment prospects is their leading explanation, with insufficient marketing also ranking highly, and cost of attendance and more competition from sub-baccalaureate programs at four-year institutions viewed as lesser factors. One major difference is that community college admissions directors are far less likely to cite a lack of academic programs that students want as a very important or important factor (48 percent) in their own institution's declining enrollment than to believe it is a key factor in community college enrollment declines nationwide (77 percent).

Has your institution suffered enrollment declines in the past two years?*	
% Yes	84
% No	16

COMMUNITY COLLEGES (CONT.)

Please indicate how important each of the following factors are in explaining the enrollment decline at your institution.	
Improving employment prospects for those without college degrees or certificates*	
% Very important	55
% Important	36
% Marginally important	10
% Not important	0
Insufficient marketing compared with for-profit higher education and other sectors*	
% Very important	35
% Important	39
% Marginally important	21
% Not important	5
Cost of attendance**	
% Very important	24
% Important	31
% Marginally important	28
% Not important	17
More competition from four-year colleges offering sub-baccalaureate programs**	
% Very important	23
% Important	29
% Marginally important	36
% Not important	11
Lack of academic programs in fields that students want**	
% Very important	17
% Important	31
% Marginally important	40
% Not important	12

*Asked only of respondents at two-year institutions (n=54)

COMMUNITY COLLEGES (CONT.)

Slightly more than half of community college admissions directors (55%) say their institution is spending more on recruitment and marketing efforts than it did two years ago. This includes 56 percent of those who say their college has suffered enrollment declines in the past two years.

A year ago, 49 percent of all two-year college admissions directors indicated they were spending more on marketing.

Is your institution spending more on recruitment and marketing efforts than it was spending two years ago?*	
% Yes	55
% No	45

*Asked only of respondents at two-year institutions (n=54)

Community college enrollment declines may be stemmed, to some degree, by enrollment declines at for-profit colleges, as those institutions may compete for some of the same students. Forty-three percent of community college admissions directors strongly agree or agree that their college has gained some of those students who might have gone to a for-profit institution in the past; 29 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

Most community college admissions directors (85 percent) strongly agree or agree they are concerned about decreased regulation of for-profits under the Trump administration; just 5 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES (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 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	2
%4	41
%3	28
%2	24
%1 Strongly disagree	5
I am concerned about decreased regulation of for-profits under the Trump administration.*	
%5 Strongly agree	50
%4	35
%3	11
%2	5
%1 Strongly disagree	0

*Asked only of respondents at two-year institutions (n=54)

Community college admissions directors widely agree that prospective students at their college are interested in transferring to four-year institutions. Ninety-five percent strongly agree or agree this is the case, including a majority of 52 percent who strongly agree.

But community college admissions directors have differing opinions about the quality of transfer programs at four-year colleges in their area. Ninety percent strongly agree (56 percent) or agree (34 percent) that public institutions in their area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer. Less, 70 percent, strongly agree or agree that local private institutions have good transfer programs. Only 25 percent believe for-profit institutions in their area have good programs encouraging community college students to transfer; 44 percent strongly disagree or disagree.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES (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 transfer students.	
Many prospective students at my community college are interested in opportunities to transfer to four-year institutions.*	
%5 Strongly agree	52
%4	43
%3	5
%2	0
%1 Strongly disagree	0
Public institutions in my area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.*	
%5 Strongly agree	56
%4	34
%3	6
%2	0
%1 Strongly disagree	4
Private institutions in my area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.*	
%5 Strongly agree	20
%4	50
%3	21
%2	6
%1 Strongly disagree	2
For-profit institutions in my area have good programs to encourage community college students to transfer.*	
%5 Strongly agree	5
%4	20
%3	31
%2	33
%1 Strongly disagree	11

*Asked only of respondents at two-year institutions (n=54)

INSTITUTIONAL AND PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age?	Overall %
Younger than 30	1
30 to 39	21
40 to 49	36
50 to 59	27
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%	6
20% to less than 50%	16
50% or more	78

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