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CHAPTER 2 RECRUITMENT AND YIELD STRATEGIES

Recruitment Strategies by Prospective Student Group

Results of NACAC's 2017–18 Admission Trends Survey indicate that many of the recruitment methods used for traditional domestic high school students are also useful with other populations. For example, contacting students through email and engaging with them through the institution's website were the most important recruitment strategies that colleges and universities use for first-time freshmen, transfer students, and international students. For high school students, an additional four factors were each rated as considerably important by at least 50 percent of colleges. They were: hosting campus visits, outreach to parents and high school counselors, high school visits, and college fairs. More than

half of colleges (57 percent) also rated campus visits as considerably important in recruiting transfer students (see Table 4). A variety of other strategies were used with both transfer and international recruitment, but only email and website were rated very highly as recruitment tools.

Survey respondents reported that they actively recruited in nine countries, on average. For the purpose of the survey, "active recruitment" was defined as engaging in recruitment activities that involve either maintaining an in-country office/staff presence or periodic staff travel to students' home countries (e.g., attending education fairs, making high school visits, or conducting site visits with international student recruitment agents). The number of countries also increased with selectivity.¹

(A complete breakdown of how colleges rated various recruitment strategies by population can be found in Appendix Tables B.1 to B.3.)

Early Decision

Twenty-one percent of respondents to NACAC's 2017–18 Admission Trends Survey offered Early Decision (ED). Private colleges were more likely than public institutions to offer Early Decision policies (30 percent compared to 6 percent), as were selective colleges.² More than half (52 percent) of the most selective colleges (those accepting fewer than 50 percent of applicants) had an Early Decision application option. (See Appendix C for a detailed description of Early Decision and Early Action policies.)

Early Decision applicants represent only a small portion of the total applicant pool at colleges that have

¹ Correlation (Pearson's R) acceptance rate and number of countries (.317), $p < .01$.

² Chi-squared test for Early Decision policy and: institution type ($X^2(1) = 41.5$, $\Phi = .293$), $p < .001$; Correlation (Spearman's Rho) for Early Decision policy and acceptance rate (-.321), $p < .001$.

TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING “CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE” TO VARIOUS RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES, BY PROSPECTIVE STUDENT POPULATION: 2017–18

Factor	First-Time Freshmen	Transfer	International (First-Time Freshmen)
Email	87.5	79.4	84.1
Website	85.0	82.8	85.6
Hosted Campus Visit	81.3	56.8	29.5
Parents	64.4	25.7	42.0
High School Counselor	63.8	15.2	31.8
High School Visit (in the US)	58.8	12.8	8.6
College Fairs	49.7	24.0	18.2
Direct Mail	48.1	24.4	7.2
Social Media	44.4	30.6	33.6
Text Messaging	37.8	31.8	19.7
Online Advertising	29.1	23.5	16.2
Community Based Organizations	20.1	8.7	7.9
Test-Optional Policy	18.2	5.0	9.4
Alumni	14.5	10.3	11.2
High School Visit (Outside the US)	9.8	2.9	26.7
Community College Outreach/Partnerships	9.7	55.4	10.2
Conditional/Provisional Admission Program	7.9	6.2	8.5
Articulation Agreements with Community Colleges	7.6	50.6	8.1
International Student Recruitment Agents	—	—	15.1
Partnerships with International Colleges/Universities	—	—	19.5
State or Regional Recruitment Consortium	—	—	5.7
Federal Government Support	—	—	6.3
Foreign Government Support	—	—	12.1
Pathways Programs	—	—	12.1

—Question was only asked for international students.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2017–18.



52%

OF SELECTIVE COLLEGES
OFFERED EARLY DECISION

ED policies. Only 5 percent of applications for Fall 2017 admission to ED colleges were received through Early Decision. The proportion of applications received through ED increased with the admission selectivity rate and yield rate.³

As expected, colleges with Early Decision policies reported a higher acceptance rate for their ED applicants as compared to all applicants (62 percent versus 51 percent). Given the binding nature of Early Decision policies, the average yield rate for Early Decision admits was 88 percent, substantially higher

than the average yield rate for all students admitted to ED colleges (26 percent) (see Table 5). Colleges with lower total yield rates tended to admit a greater percentage of their ED applicants compared to those with higher yield rates.⁴ More selective colleges tended to have higher ED yield rates.⁵

Between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017, colleges reported an average increase of 4 percent in the number of Early Decision applicants and 5 percent in ED admits. In a prior survey, colleges also had reported increases in ED applications and ED admits between



46%

OF COLLEGES WITH LOW
YIELD RATES OFFERED
EARLY ACTION

Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 (6 percent and 6 percent, respectively).

Early Action

Thirty-six percent of four-year colleges offered Early Action (EA) plans, according to results of the 2017–18 Admission Trends Survey. Private colleges were more likely than publics to have Early Action application options (40 percent compared to 28 percent, respectively). Colleges with lower yield rates also were more likely to offer Early Action.⁶ Forty-six percent of colleges with

TABLE 5. KEY STATISTICS FOR EARLY DECISION COLLEGES: FALL 2017

	N	Mean Percent
Applications Received through Early Decision	88	4.7
Early Decision Selectivity Rate	89	62.3
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	99	50.7
Early Decision Yield Rate	75	87.9
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	85	25.8

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2017–18.

³ Correlation (Pearson's R) for percent of apps received through ED and: acceptance rate (.690); yield rate (.502), $p < .01$.

⁴ Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional yield rate and ED acceptance rate (-.447), $p < .01$.

⁵ Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional selectivity rate and ED yield (.392), $p < .01$.

⁶ Chi-squared test for Early Action policy and: institution type ($X^2(1) = 6.8$, $\Phi = .119$), $p < .01$; Correlation (Spearman's Rho) for Early Action policy and institutional yield rate (.272), $p < .001$.

yield rates lower than 30 percent used Early Action.

For Fall 2017, 44 percent of applications to colleges that had Early Action admission plans were received through EA. Similar to the pattern with Early Decision, colleges with Early Action accepted a greater proportion of EA applicants when compared to the overall applicant pool (74 percent versus 64 percent). Unlike Early Decision, Early Action did not provide a significant benefit to institutions in terms of yield rates. The average yield rate for EA admits was nearly identical to that of the overall applicant pool (22 percent and 23 percent, respectively) (see Table 6).

From Fall 2016 to Fall 2017, the number of Early Action applications increased by 9 percent and the number of students accepted through EA increased by 10 percent, on average. Colleges also had reported average increases in EA applications

and EA admits between Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 (15 percent and 16 percent, respectively).

Wait Lists

For the Fall 2017 admission cycle, 40 percent of institutions reported using a wait list. Private institutions were more likely than public colleges and universities to maintain a wait list (43 percent compared to 33 percent), as were those with lower acceptance rates.⁷ Seventy-five percent of the most selective institutions (accepting fewer than half of all applicants) maintained a wait list.

Institutions reported placing an average of 10 percent of all applicants on the wait list for the Fall 2017 admission cycle, and an average of 50 percent of waitlisted students opted to remain on the wait list. Colleges with lower acceptance rates placed a greater proportion of students on wait lists, on average.⁸



THE MOST SELECTIVE COLLEGES ADMITTED ONLY 14 PERCENT OF WAITLISTED STUDENTS

Institutions admitted an average of 25 percent of all students who chose to remain on wait lists. Selective colleges were least likely to admit students from a wait list.⁹ Only 14 percent of students who accepted a wait list spot at the most selective colleges (those accepting fewer than half of all applicants) were ultimately admitted. The average number of students offered a position on a wait list increased by 12 percent between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 and by 16 percent between Fall 2015 and Fall 2016.

TABLE 6. KEY STATISTICS FOR EARLY ACTION COLLEGES: FALL 2017

	N	Mean Percent
Applications Received through Early Action	91	43.2
Early Action Selectivity Rate	88	73.6
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	161	64.1
Early Action Yield Rate	92	22.1
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	155	23.2

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2017–18.

⁷ Chi-squared test for wait list policy and: institution type ($X^2(1) = 5.1$, $\Phi = .102$), $p < .05$; Correlation (Spearman's Rho) for wait policy and institutional acceptance rate ($-.344$), $p < .001$.

⁸ Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional acceptance rate and percentage of applicants waitlisted ($-.471$), $p < .01$.

⁹ Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional acceptance rate and percentage admitted from wait list ($.424$), $p < .01$.