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RECRUITMENT AND YIELD STRATEGIES

Beyond the High School Graduate

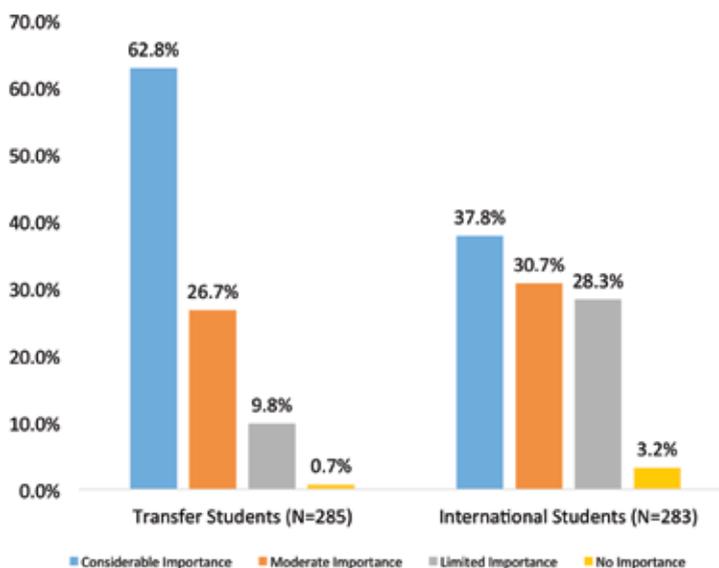
College admission offices use a variety of strategies to recruit prospective students, particularly those who would be likely to attend if admitted. At the same time that the demographics of the college-going population are changing and students are considering a variety of pathways toward a four-year degree, many colleges face increasingly difficult budget realities (see 2015 *State of College Admission Supplement: Student Demographics and Postsecondary Pathways* at www.nacac.org/soca). For these and other reasons, more colleges are broadening their recruitment efforts to bring in more transfer and international students. Although some four-year colleges have a well-established history of recruiting transfer and international students, others are just beginning to expand these populations on their campuses.

As shown in Figure 2, nearly two-thirds of Admission Trends Survey

respondents indicated that transfer students are considerably important to meeting overall recruitment goals, and only about 10 percent

reported that they had little or no importance. Almost 40 percent of colleges rated international students as considerably important to their

FIGURE 2: IMPORTANCE OF PROSPECTIVE STUDENT POPULATIONS IN MEETING INSTITUTIONAL ENROLLMENT GOALS



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2015.

enrollment goals, and another 30 percent indicated moderate importance for this group.

Recruitment Strategies by Prospective Student Group

Results of NACAC's 2015 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 used for first-time freshmen, transfer students, and international students. For US high school students, an additional five factors were each rated as considerably important by more than 50 percent of colleges. They were: hosting campus visits, outreach to high school counselors, visiting high schools, direct mail, and attending college fairs. About half of colleges also rated college visits as considerably important

MEAN NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN WHICH COLLEGES RECRUIT



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

Factor	First-Time Freshmen	Transfer	International (First-Time Freshmen)
Website	84.4%	81.9%	87.7%
Email	82.7	77.3	79.0
Hosted Campus Visit	77.0	49.6	26.3
High School Counselor	60.8	13.8	35.3
High School Visit	58.5	9.5	13.0
Direct Mail	54.6	29.2	9.4
College Fairs	52.5	29.9	20.5
Social Media	38.2	26.6	30.7
Community Based Organizations	16.9	8.6	6.4
Test-Optional Policy	13.9	8.3	9.7
Alumni	12.5	9.4	10.7
Overseas High School Visit	10.0	4.0	23.8
Conditional/Provisional Admission Program	5.1	3.8	9.6
Utilize Agents	—	—	15.9
Partnerships with Overseas Colleges	—	—	15.3
State or Regional Recruitment Consortium	—	—	8.0
Federal Government Support	—	—	13.9

— Question was only asked for international students.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2015.



49%

OF SELECTIVE COLLEGES OFFERED EARLY DECISION

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

The mean number of countries in which colleges recruit is 9.6, and the average number increased with both enrollment size and selectivity.¹ For example, colleges with fewer than 3,000 students recruited in an average of 7.3 countries, compared

to 14.6 at colleges enrolling 10,000 or more students. Colleges that accept fewer than 50 percent of all applicants recruit internationally in an average of 16.4 countries.

Early Decision

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

Twenty-one percent of respondents to NACAC's 2015 Admission Trends Survey offered Early Decision (ED). Private colleges were more likely than public institutions to offer



41%

OF COLLEGES WITH LOW YIELD RATES OFFERED EARLY ACTION

Early Decision policies (29 percent compared to 7 percent), as were selective colleges. (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 ED policies. Only 6 percent of all applications for Fall 2015 admission to ED colleges were received through Early Decision. As expected, colleges with Early Decision policies reported a higher acceptance rate for their ED applicants as compared to all

TABLE 5: KEY STATISTICS FOR EARLY DECISION COLLEGES

	N	Mean Percent
Applications Received through Early Decision	99	6.1%
Early Decision Selectivity Rate	97	61.8
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	114	51.4
Early Decision Yield Rate	66	86.5
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	114	26.2

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2015.

NOTE: Chi-squared tests revealed statistically significant associations and weak correlations between Early Decision and: Control ($X^2(1) = 44.2$, $p < .001$; $\phi = .25$, $p < .001$); Enrollment ($X^2(2) = 21.2$, $p < .001$, $V = .2$, $p < .001$); Selectivity ($X^2(3) = 61.5$, $p < .001$; $V = .34$, $p < .001$).

¹ An independent one-way ANOVA found a significant difference in the number of countries where institutions actively recruit international students by total full-time undergraduate enrollment size ($F(2)=6.1$, $p < .001$) and selectivity ($F(3)=3.3$, $p < .05$).

applicants (62 percent versus 51 percent). Given the binding nature of Early Decision policies, the average yield rate for Early Decision admits was 87 percent, substantially higher than the average yield rate for all students admitted to ED colleges (26 percent) (see Table 5). Between Fall 2014 and Fall 2015, colleges reported average increases of 10 percent in the number of Early Decision applicants and 11 percent in ED admits.

Early Action

Thirty-three percent of four-year colleges offered Early Action plans, according to results of the 2015 Admission Trends Survey. Colleges with lower yield rates were more likely to offer Early Action.

For Fall 2015, 40 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 (73 percent versus 66 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 (see Table 6). The number of Early Action applications and the number of students accepted through EA each increased by 7 percent, on average, from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015.

Wait Lists

For the Fall 2015 admission cycle, 39 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 31 percent), as were those with lower acceptance rates.²

Institutions reported placing an average of 16 percent of all applicants on a wait list for the Fall 2015 admission cycle, and an



THE MOST SELECTIVE COLLEGES ADMITTED ONLY 12 PERCENT OF WAIT-LISTED STUDENTS

average of 41 percent of wait-listed students opted to remain on the wait list. Institutions admitted an average of 32 percent of all students who chose to remain on wait lists. Selective colleges were least likely to admit students from a wait list.³ Between Fall 2014 and Fall 2015, the average number of students offered a wait list position increased by 16 percent, and the number of students admitted from a wait list increased by 41 percent.

TABLE 6: KEY STATISTICS FOR EARLY ACTION COLLEGES

	N	Mean Percent
Applications Received through Early Action	105	40.2%
Early Action Selectivity Rate	100	72.9
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	173	66.0
Early Action Yield Rate	95	25.8
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	173	25.1

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2015.

NOTE: Chi-squared tests revealed a statistically significant association and weak correlation between Early Action and Yield ($X^2(3) = 19.8$, $p < .001$; $V = .20$, $p < .001$).

² Chi-squared tests revealed a statistically significant association and weak correlation between Wait List and Selectivity ($X^2(3) = 86.2$, $p < .001$; $V = .41$, $p < .001$).

³ The Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in the mean percentage of students admitted off the wait list and selectivity ($X^2(3) = 3.7$, $p < .05$).