

Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

2012 Recruitment Funnel Benchmarks Report for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions

Today's prospective college students are entering the recruitment funnel in different ways and moving through it at different rates, many times dependent on their enrollment status (freshman or transfer), their geographic location, the type of application they complete, the amount of admissions-related fees they pay, and whether or not they have visited campus. This report assists higher education administrators with comparing and forecasting the conversion and yield rates to expect from these factors and others. The report is based on a Web-based poll of admissions officials in the fall of 2012, in which respondents reported fall 2012 and fall 2011 funnel data. For context, funnel data from previous Noel-Levitz polls are offered for additional comparison.

Among the highlights:

- The highest median yield rate in fall 2012—63 percent—was for transfer students at four-year public institutions. This compared to 49 percent for transfer students at four-year private institutions; 38 percent for freshmen at four-year public institutions; and 29 percent for freshmen at four-year private institutions.
- Median yield rates for in-state freshmen in fall 2012 were higher than those for out-of-state freshmen and international freshmen.
- The popular “secret shopper” applicant phenomenon is still going strong but finally appears to be leveling off among freshmen at both private and public institutions. However, among transfer students at public institutions, secret shopping is now at a new record high.
- At approximately 40 percent, freshman applicants who applied using a paper application had a higher median yield rate compared to the lower 34 to 35 percent median yield for online applicants.
- The median yield rate for campus visitors from the graduating class of 2012 was 44 percent for four-year private institutions and 60 percent for four-year public institutions.
- International freshman applicants were least likely to complete the application process after starting it among more than six applicant types examined.

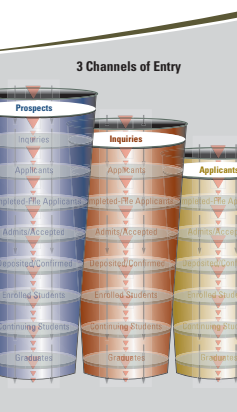
Make comparisons with peer institutions

Readers are encouraged to compare their own institution's funnel metrics to the benchmarks provided in this report from other four-year private and public institutions. Use these comparisons to:

- increase the accuracy of enrollment yield predictions;
- sharpen your recruitment strategy by more quickly identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities; and
- keep building more efficient and effective programs for recruitment and admission.

For guidance on how to use the benchmarks, please see page 17.

Don't miss the sixth point on using multiple funnels to more accurately forecast enrollment yields in the Appendix section titled "How to use the benchmarks in this report" on page 18.



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About the statistical process used in this study

All of the figures in this report are judged to be statistically significant. This determination was made by calculating a statistical confidence interval for each finding (e.g., means, medians, proportions, and other relevant test statistics) and then judging the confidence interval to be acceptably small relative to the size of the finding.

"NA" in this report indicates findings that were *not* statistically significant and hence are not available.

Definitions used in the tables throughout this report

All inquiries: This category was defined in this study as any prospective student who had contacted the institution through any source (phone, e-mail, Web site contact, sent test scores, application for admission, etc.). This included all first-contact inquiries, including students who made their first recorded contact by submitting an application.

Confirmed: Confirmation of an admitted student's intention to enroll was defined differently by each institution and may have included receipt of a tuition deposit, receipt of an acceptance fee, course registration, participation in an orientation event, attended classes on opening day, etc.

Findings color key

**4-year
private
institutions**

**4-year
public
institutions**

Fall 2012 recruitment funnel benchmarks for FTIC students

The findings in **boldface** in Tables 1 and 2 below show the latest two years of median yield rates for FTIC (first-time-in-college) students at four-year private and four-year public institutions. At four-year private institutions, these rates appear to have leveled off in the past two years, though they continue to be much lower than in 2005 and 2006. In contrast, at public universities, the median FTIC yield rates are not following a noticeable trendline.

Table 1: Four-Year Private Institutions—FTIC Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	16%	17%	15%	15%	13%	13%	14%	13%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	10%	11%	10%	10%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	64%	64%	66%	65%	71%	73%	70%	72%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	86%	86%	86%	86%	87%	87%	91%	87%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	29%	31%	29%	29%	31%	33%	35%	35%
Capture rate from deposited to enrollment	91% (Melt: 9%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	89% (Melt: 11%)

See more
“secret
shopper”
findings
on page 5

Look
beyond the
medians
at first
and third
quartile
findings
in Table
A1 of the
Appendix
on page 14.

Table 2: Four-Year Public Institutions—FTIC Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	33%	33%	35%	34%	33%	31%	28%	25%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	22%	24%	23%	21%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	66%	69%	66%	65%	66%	67%	70%	73%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	85%	81%	82%	85%	71%	74%	83%	83%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	38%	40%	41%	43%	38%	39%	42%	43%
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	95% (Melt: 5%)	95% (Melt: 5%)	93% (Melt: 7%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	93% (Melt: 7%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	92% (Melt: 8%)

As shown in the two tables above, freshman yield rates appear to be leveling off for private colleges at approximately 30 percent at the median while public universities are seeing yields of 38 to 40 percent at the median. In addition, both private and public institutions appear to gradually be reducing their melt rates. For a discussion of the inquiry-to-applicant conversion rate metrics and secret shopping, see page 5.

Transfer student funnel rates

Transfer student = A student who previously attended college at another institution prior to enrolling.

The findings in **boldface** below show the latest two years of transfer student yield data for respondents in this study. For four-year private college respondents, a continued decline in transfer student yields is evident at the median—a contrast with the leveling off of median yield rates for freshmen shown earlier in Table 1 on page 3. However, for public universities, no noticeable trendline is evident for transfer student yield rates from 2007–2012, as shown in Table 4 below, similar to the findings for freshmen reported earlier. Also important to note: For four-year private institutions, the median **inquiry-to-applicant conversion rate is declining** both for inquiries overall and for an important subset of inquiries: students who inquire before making application.

Table 3: Four-Year Private Institutions—Transfer Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	44%	46%	48%	49%	43%	42%	47%	40%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	26%	30%	32%	32%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	54%	55%	56%	58%	58%	57%	59%	60%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	89%	90%	90%	90%	88%	80%	91%	90%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	49%	49%	53%	54%	54%	56%	57%	57%
Capture rate from deposited to enrollment	89% (Melt: 11%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	86% (Melt: 14%)	87% (Melt: 13%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	88% (Melt: 12%)

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Table 4: Four-Year Public Institutions—Transfer Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	74%	73%	79%	80%	72%	72%	71%	61%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	45%	58%	41%	46%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	65%	65%	64%	66%	61%	61%	66%	72%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	87%	87%	88%	88%	82%	82%	91%	87%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	63%	64%	66%	65%	63%	63%	68%	69%
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	97% (Melt: 3%)	94% (Melt: 6%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	86% (Melt: 14%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	87% (Melt: 13%)

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Similar to the findings for new freshmen, median transfer student yield rates are higher for public institutions when compared with private institutions.

Private colleges continue to see declining transfer student yield rates at the median while median transfer student yield rates at public universities followed no noticeable trendlines from 2007–2012. In addition, between 2009 and 2012, median conversion rates from inquiry to application have declined for four-year private colleges.

Secret shopping is now at a new record high among transfer students at four-year public institutions.

“Secret shopping” still going strong but may be leveling off

As shown in Tables 5 and 6 below, the latest two years of data on the secret shopper phenomenon—defined as prospective students who are unknown to an admissions office before they submit an application—indicate this popular, emerging trend is finally showing some signs of leveling off. However, among transfer students applying to public universities, these “stealth applicants” reached a new high of 62 percent.

Table 5: Four-Year Private Institutions—First-Year and Transfer Applicants Who Failed to Identify Themselves Before Applying

Median Rates	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
First-year students	31%	28%	32%	28%	27%	24%	22%	20%
Transfer students	48%	44%	51%	49%	44%	41%	42%	43%

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Table 6: Four-Year Public Institutions—First-Year and Transfer Applicants Who Failed to Identify Themselves Before Applying

Median Rates	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
First-year students	33%	34%	35%	26%	26%	23%	30%	26%
Transfer students	62%	59%	46%	39%	57%	56%	49%	47%

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As shown in the tables above, the secret shopping phenomenon is still going strong but appears to be leveling off among first-year students following an upward trend between 2005 and 2010 at private and public institutions. However, transfer students at public universities are participating at record-high levels.



Don’t let secret shoppers distort your funnel metrics

The secret shopper trend shown above has many implications for enrollment teams. For example, to more accurately forecast conversion and yield rates, many enrollment teams are now tracking separate funnel rates for those who make application before inquiry vs. those who inquire before making application, since both groups convert and yield at different rates.

The two, differing inquiry-to-applicant conversion rates shown in this report help illustrate this approach to tracking. For example, in Table 1 on page 3, the overall, aggregated, inquiry-to-applicant conversion rate rose to 16 and 17 percent at the median in 2011 and 2012. However, when secret shoppers were removed from the count, the more-precise, non-secret-shopper, inquiry-to-applicant conversion rate was just 10 or 11 percent at the median—a rate that more accurately forecasts future conversions of non-secret-shopper inquiries.

For a continued discussion of funnel metrics and changes, please see Appendix B on page 17.

Conversion, yield, and melt rates consistently vary by students' geographic locations.

Look beyond the medians at first and third quartile findings in Table A2 of the Appendix on page 15.

Funnel benchmarks for in-state, out-of-state, and international freshmen

Median, in-state freshman yield rates were higher than those of out-of-state freshmen and international freshmen for both sectors in 2012. This finding was consistent with Noel-Levitz’s earlier findings in recruitment funnel studies as shown in Tables 7 and 8 below.

Also important to note: For public universities, median yield rates on international freshmen were higher than they were for out-of-state freshmen, while the median yield rates for international and-out-of-state freshmen at private colleges were equal.

Table 7: Four-Year Private Institutions—Funnel Rates for In-State, Out-of-State, and International Freshmen

Median Funnel Rates	In-state			Out-of-state			International		
	2012	2010	2008	2012	2010	2008	2012	2010	2008
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	19%	20%	17%	11%	9%	9%	55%	48%	34%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	15%	14%	NA	7%	5%	NA	29%	21%	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	66%	65%	72%	64%	62%	69%	39%	43%	42%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	88%	86%	88%	88%	87%	87%	85%	75%	82%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	31%	32%	34%	23%	25%	24%	23%	29%	33%
Capture rate from deposited to enrollment	91% (Melt: 9%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	85% (Melt: 15%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	87% (Melt: 13%)

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Table 8: Four-Year Public Institutions—Funnel Rates for In-State, Out-of-State, and International Freshmen

Median Funnel Rates	In-state			Out-of-state			International		
	2012	2010	2008	2012	2010	2008	2012	2010	2008
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	36%	44%	36%	24%	28%	24%	NA	NA	NA
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	26%	24%	NA	13%	18%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	69%	66%	68%	66%	61%	61%	45%	36%	47%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	86%	83%	72%	84%	79%	74%	82%	79%	71%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	44%	47%	51%	27%	26%	26%	36%	35%	33%
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	95% (Melt: 5%)	93% (Melt: 7%)	96% (Melt: 4%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	96% (Melt: 4%)	85% (Melt: 15%)	84% (Melt: 16%)

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Median yield rates are higher for in-state freshmen than for international and out-of-state freshmen.

Applicants who use an institution's paper application continue to yield at the highest rates

For four-year private institutions, applicants who use a campus application continue to yield at higher rates than applicants who use an application from an outside agency.

See first and third quartile findings in Table A3 of the Appendix on page 16.

In another continuing trend, the fall 2012 median yield rate for first-year, admitted students who completed a paper application was higher than the yield rate on admitted students who completed any other type of application for both private and public institutions, as shown in Tables 9 and 10 below. This finding was consistent with earlier Noel-Levitz findings in fall 2008 and fall 2006.

Of course, this just-mentioned finding does not mean that institutions should cease to offer online applications or any other type of application such as the Common Application. Noel-Levitz continues to encourage the use of various types of applications as a complement to traditional paper application forms. Rather, the findings mean that campuses should expect paper applicants to yield at a higher rate than students who apply using other types of applications. Similarly, four-year private institutions should also expect applicants using the Common Application and other outside applications (see definition below left) to yield at lower rates than applicants using an institutional application.

Table 9: Four-Year Private Institutions—FTIC Student Funnel Rates by Type of Application

Median Funnel Rates	Online Application		Paper Application		Common Application		Outside Application*	
	2012	2010	2012	2010	2012	2010	2012	2010
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	62%	60%	62%	65%	69%	75%	52%	51%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	90%	87%	87%	80%	86%	82%	85%	83%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	34%	33%	39%	36%	18%	18%	19%	19%
Capture rate from deposited to enrollment	90% (Melt: 10%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	90% (Melt: 10%)

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Table 10: Four-Year Public Institutions—FTIC Student Funnel Rates by Type of Application

Median Funnel Rates	Online Application		Paper Application		Common Application		Outside Application*	
	2012	2010	2012	2010	2012	2010	2012	2010
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	64%	69%	72%	64%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	85%	82%	89%	81%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	35%	37%	43%	47%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	93% (Melt: 7%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	95% (Melt: 5%)	NA	NA	NA	NA

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Admitted paper applicants continue to yield at higher rates than other types of applicants. In addition, at four-year private institutions, applicants using the Common Application and other outside applications are consistently yielding at lower rates than applicants using an institutional application.

* Outside applications are defined as any applications received from first-year students via an outside agency (other than Common Application) such as the Royall FastTrack application.

Out-of-state freshman applicants are more likely to abort an application process before finishing it than in-state freshman applicants for both private and public, four-year institutions.

Proportion of freshmen who don't complete the application process after starting it continues to rise for four-year private institutions

In another ongoing trend, the median percentage of freshmen applicants at four-year private institutions who didn't complete the application process after beginning the process has continued to rise for online, paper, and international applicants, based on the comparison below of 2012 data with parallel data from 2010 and earlier.

At four-year public institutions, the results for freshmen by applicant type were mixed. While the percentage of online applicants who didn't complete the application process *increased*, the percentage of paper applicants, in-state applicants, out-of-state applicants, and international applicants who didn't complete the application process *decreased*.

Table 11: Four-Year Private Institutions—Freshman Applicants Who Didn't Complete the Application Process After Starting It

Median Rates	2012	2010	2008	2006
Online FTIC, first-year applicants	31%	22%	18%	19%
Paper FTIC, first-year applicants	23%	17%	14%	11%
Common Application	15%	9%	NA	NA
Outside Application*	35%	29%	NA	NA
In-state FTIC, first-year applicants	22%	22%	15%	NA
Out-of-state FTIC, first-year applicants	26%	28%	21%	NA
International FTIC, first-year applicants	51%	40%	39%	NA
All FTIC, first-year applicants	25%	NA	NA	NA
Transfer applicants	39%	NA	NA	NA

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Table 12: Four-Year Public Institutions—Freshman Applicants Who Didn't Complete the Application Process After Starting It

Median Rates	2012	2010	2008	2006
Online FTIC, first-year applicants	18%	11%	10%	12%
Paper FTIC, first-year applicants	17%	18%	13%	10%
Common Application	NA	NA	NA	NA
Outside Application*	NA	NA	NA	NA
In-state FTIC, first-year applicants	11%	13%	9%	NA
Out-of-state FTIC, first-year applicants	14%	25%	16%	NA
International FTIC, first-year applicants	45%	50%	25%	NA
All FTIC, first-year applicants	16%	NA	NA	NA
Transfer applicants	22%	NA	NA	NA

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The proportion of freshman applicants who began an application process online but didn't finish the process has reached a new high of 30 percent at the median for four-year private institutions and 18 percent at the median for four-year public institutions.

* Outside applications are defined as any applications received from first-year students via an outside agency (other than Common Application) such as the Royall FastTrack application.

NEW!

Funnel benchmarks for visitors from the graduating high school class of 2012

New in this study, the three funnel metrics shown here were collected for visitors from the Class of 2012.

For the first time, this study examined funnel metrics for visitors from the most recent high school graduating class of seniors. Although the yield rates shown below are higher for visitors from the Class of 2012 than the yield rates shown earlier for FTIC students overall, readers should exercise caution in interpreting these findings. Why? Because in some instances, campus enrollment teams have used these higher yield rates as a positive evaluation of a campus visit program. However, students who visit campus are already *predisposed* toward enrolling, so the quality of the visit may or may not have made a difference.

Instead, for the most meaningful comparisons, readers are encouraged to compare their own yield rates for Class of 2012 visitors with their institution's yield rates for Class of 2011 visitors and earlier, as well as with the metrics below for their institution type.

Table 13: Four-Year Private Institutions—Fall 2012 Funnel Rates for Visitors From the High School Graduating Class of 2012 (Seniors)

Median Funnel Rates	Visitors from Class of 2012
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	65%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	89%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	43%

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Table 14: Four-Year Public Institutions—Fall 2012 Funnel Rates for Visitors From the High School Graduating Class of 2012 (Seniors)

Median Funnel Rates	Visitors from Class of 2012
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	70%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	89%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	60%

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As shown in the two tables above, respondents in this study reported conversion and yield rates for visitors from the Class of 2012, allowing readers of this report to benchmark their own success with Class of 2012 visitors.

See first and third quartile findings in Table A4 of the Appendix on page 16.

NEW!

At the median, deposit fees are running about four times higher than application fees at four-year public institutions and between five to six times higher at four-year private institutions.

Admissions-related fees and fee waivers

Another first-time set of findings from this study appears below. As shown in Tables 15 and 16, more four-year public institutions than four-year private institutions (90 percent vs. 71 percent) require application fees. In addition, more four-year public institutions than four-year private institutions (28 percent vs. 18 percent) require acceptance fees. However, the reverse is true for deposit fees, with many more four-year private institutions requiring this fee than four-year public institutions (87 percent vs. 25 percent).

Also important to note: Reducing or waiving the application fee appears to be a popular practice among private and public institutions that require an application fee. In addition, a significant minority of the institutions that require a deposit fee waive or reduce this fee in some circumstances, including 41 percent at four-year private institutions at the median and 22 percent of four-year public institutions at the median.

Table 15: Four-Year Private Institutions: 2012 Admissions-Related Fees and Fee Waivers

Fee Statistics	Application fee?	Deposit fee that applies to tuition?	Acceptance fee that does not apply to tuition?
YES, we have this fee	71%	87%	18%
YES, we have this fee <i>and</i> we waive or reduce it in some circumstances	64%	41%	8%
Fee amounts among those that have the fee:			
Median	\$35.00	\$200.00	\$150.00
First quartile	\$25.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Third quartile	\$45.00	\$275.00	\$262.50

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Table 16: Four-Year Public Institutions: 2012 Admissions-Related Fees and Fee Waivers

Fee Statistics	Application fee?	Deposit fee that applies to tuition?	Acceptance fee that does not apply to tuition?
YES, we have this fee	90%	25%	28%
YES, we have this fee <i>and</i> we waive or reduce it in some circumstances	61%	22%	11%
Fee amounts among those that have the fee:			
Median	\$42.50	\$175.00	\$137.50
First quartile	\$28.75	\$125.00	\$95.00
Third quartile	\$50.00	\$225.00	\$300.00

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As shown in the tables above, the most widely used fee among four-year private institutions is the deposit fee, while the most widely used fee among four-year public institutions is the application fee.

NEW!

Funnel benchmarks by application fee amount

Also new this year, a first-time set of findings from this study shows funnel benchmarks by application fee amount for the last two years, 2011 and 2012.

As might be expected, Table 17 below and Table 18 on the next page show that private and public institutions that charge no application fee consistently see lower yield rates at the median than their private and public institution counterparts that charge an application fee of more than \$0 but less than \$35. However, a less-expected finding also evident is that the lowest yield rates of all are being seen by institutions that charge the highest application fees (\$35 and up), especially among private institutions. Although this finding may at first seem counterintuitive, the lower admit rate for the latter group indicates that these are selective institutions. Hence, these institutions are most likely working with highly qualified applicants who have more options for their college choice, resulting in lower yields.

Table 17: Four-Year Private Institutions—Fall 2012 and Fall 2011 First-Year Student Funnel Rates by Application Fee Amount, Including Institutions That Do Not Charge an Application Fee

Median Funnel Rates	2012 First-Year Students			2011 First-Year Students		
	No Application Fee	Application Fee > \$0.00 and < \$35.00	Application Fee ≥ \$35.00	No Application Fee	Application Fee > \$0.00 and < \$35.00	Application Fee ≥ \$35.00
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	16%	17%	15%	15%	18%	17%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	11%	10%	10%	11%	10%	12%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	64%	66%	61%	63%	67%	62%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	87%	91%	83%	84%	91%	84%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	26%	35%	24%	29%	35%	24%
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	94% (Melt: 6%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	92% (Melt: 8%)
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	22%	28%	26%	23%	26%	27%
Percentage of students not identifying themselves before application	31%	32%	30%	27%	32%	26%

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For four-year private and public institutions, yield rates vary significantly by application fee, as shown in the table above and the table on the following page, with the highest yields being seen by institutions that charge an application fee of more than \$0 but less than \$35.

Table 18: Four-Year Public Institutions—Fall 2012 and Fall 2011 First-Year Student Funnel Rates by Application Fee Amount, Including Institutions That Do Not Charge an Application Fee

Median Funnel Rates	2012 First-Year Students			2011 First-Year Students		
	No Application Fee	Application Fee > \$0.00 and < \$35.00	Application Fee ≥ \$35.00	No Application Fee	Application Fee > \$0.00 and < \$35.00	Application Fee ≥ \$35.00
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	48%	27%	35%	51%	29%	37%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	37%	16%	25%	34%	17%	25%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	49%	66%	67%	42%	71%	69%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	78%	88%	81%	73%	89%	80%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	35%	44%	34%	39%	46%	36%
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	99% (Melt: 1%)	96% (Melt: 4%)	93% (Melt: 7%)	100% (Melt: 0%)	97% (Melt: 3%)	95% (Melt: 5%)
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	31%	23%	10%	40%	23%	12%
Percentage of students not identifying themselves before application	58%	45%	31%	54%	51%	33%

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Similar to the findings for four-year private institutions, the yield rates for four-year public institutions show the highest yields are being seen by institutions that charge an application fee of more than \$0 but less than \$35.

NEW!

Funnel benchmarks by deposit fee amount for four-year private colleges

For four-year private colleges, the final set of findings from this study show funnel benchmarks by deposit fee amount for the last two years, 2011 and 2012, in Table 19 below. (Note that deposit fee funnel data are not available for public universities due to the smaller number of public institution respondents who reported charging deposit fees, as shown on page 10.)

Like the findings for application fees shown on pages 11 and 12, the findings for deposit fees show that private institutions that charge no deposit fee consistently see lower yield rates at the median than their counterparts that charge a mid-range deposit fee (in this case, more than \$0 but less than \$200). Also consistent with the findings for application fees, institutions that charge the highest deposit fees are seeing lower yield rates than institutions that charge mid-range deposit fees. The latter finding is likely again due to the fact that the institutions charging the highest deposit fees are selective institutions working with highly qualified applicants who have more options for their college choice, resulting in lower yields.

Table 19: Four-Year Private Institutions—Fall 2012 and Fall 2011 First-Year Student Funnel Rates by Deposit Fee Amount, Including Institutions That Do Not Charge a Deposit Fee

Median Funnel Rates	2012 First-Year Students			2011 First-Year Students		
	No Deposit Fee	Deposit Fee > \$0.00 and < \$200.00	Deposit Fee ≥ \$200.00	No Deposit Fee	Deposit Fee > \$0.00 and < \$200.00	Deposit Fee ≥ \$200.00
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	15%	17%	15%	16%	17%	16%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	10%	12%	10%	13%	11%	12%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	67%	60%	65%	67%	61%	64%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	89%	88%	85%	92%	86%	84%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	28%	32%	29%	31%	35%	28%
Capture rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	94% (Melt: 6%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	94% (Melt: 6%)	94% (Melt: 6%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	92% (Melt: 8%)
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	21%	32%	22%	24%	31%	23%
Percentage of students not identifying themselves before application	30%	31%	31%	28%	25%	27%

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Yield rates for private institutions vary significantly by deposit fee, as shown in Table 19 above, with the highest yields being seen by institutions that charge a deposit fee of more than \$0 but less than \$200.

Appendix A: First and third quartile findings

This section lists the findings from Tables 1-14 of this study with the first and third quartiles for each finding.

Table A1: Recruitment Funnel Ratios With First and Third Quartile Data for FTIC First-Year Students and Transfer Students at Four-Year Private and Public Institutions

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Private				Four-Year Public	
		First-Year Students Fall 2012	First-Year Students Fall 2011	Transfer Students Fall 2012	Transfer Students Fall 2011	First-Year Students Fall 2012	First-Year Students Fall 2011
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	Median	15.6%	16.6%	43.6%	45.5%	32.7%	32.5%
	First Quartile	10.2%	10.1%	31.5%	32.7%	24.3%	23.5%
	Third Quartile	23.8%	21.5%	60.3%	62.2%	41.9%	44.8%
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	Median	10.3%	11.3%	26.4%	29.7%	21.9%	23.7%
	First Quartile	6.6%	7.4%	17.3%	17.2%	15.1%	16.2%
	Third Quartile	16.0%	15.8%	37.3%	40.8%	30.7%	34.9%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	Median	63.8%	63.7%	54.2%	54.5%	65.6%	68.6%
	First Quartile	52.2%	52.9%	43.4%	44.0%	54.0%	55.6%
	Third Quartile	70.9%	71.8%	62.3%	62.5%	76.0%	75.4%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	Median	85.9%	86.0%	89.4%	90.2%	84.6%	81.0%
	First Quartile	78.0%	78.1%	80.1%	82.5%	68.1%	66.3%
	Third Quartile	94.3%	94.6%	96.9%	95.9%	90.3%	90.8%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	28.9%	30.7%	49.2%	49.4%	38.0%	40.1%
	First Quartile	20.3%	20.7%	43.7%	44.1%	32.4%	33.7%
	Third Quartile	38.4%	39.4%	55.9%	57.7%	44.2%	46.0%
Melt rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	Median	8.6%	8.8%	11.2%	11.5%	4.7%	4.6%
	First Quartile	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%
	Third Quartile	14.5%	14.5%	17.9%	17.6%	9.2%	9.5%
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	Median	24.8%	25.5%	38.5%	39.9%	15.7%	15.9%
	First Quartile	17.2%	16.6%	29.4%	29.9%	7.9%	8.4%
	Third Quartile	36.2%	35.2%	49.2%	47.2%	27.5%	30.3%
Percentage of students not identifying themselves before application	Median	30.7%	27.5%	48.3%	44.2%	32.7%	34.2%
	First Quartile	22.3%	19.3%	35.8%	28.5%	27.2%	23.1%
	Third Quartile	38.9%	40.0%	65.8%	61.2%	49.9%	53.6%

Transfer student breakdowns at the first and third quartile are available for public institutions upon request.

Table A2: Recruitment Funnel Ratios With First and Third Quartile Data for In-State vs. Out-of-State vs. International FTIC First-Year Students for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions, Fall 2012

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Private			Four-Year Public		
		In-State First-Year Students	Out-of-State First-Year Students	International First-Year Students	In-State First-Year Students	Out-of-State First-Year Students	International First-Year Students
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	Median	18.9%	11.1%	55.4%	36.1%	23.9%	NA
	First Quartile	13.9%	5.9%	29.7%	26.7%	8.5%	NA
	Third Quartile	30.8%	17.4%	80.7%	57.7%	44.0%	NA
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (not counting inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application)	Median	14.5%	7.4%	28.6%	26.4%	12.8%	NA
	First Quartile	11.6%	4.2%	11.9%	20.8%	5.5%	NA
	Third Quartile	24.7%	12.2%	69.8%	42.7%	28.0%	NA
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	Median	66.3%	63.7%	38.8%	69.3%	65.8%	45.2%
	First Quartile	55.2%	52.3%	25.8%	59.3%	53.6%	30.9%
	Third Quartile	73.8%	70.7%	57.1%	80.9%	76.3%	64.3%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	Median	87.5%	87.8%	84.6%	85.9%	83.5%	81.6%
	First Quartile	74.8%	76.9%	64.6%	71.4%	69.2%	70.2%
	Third Quartile	94.9%	93.5%	100.0%	94.3%	93.1%	92.8%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	31.3%	22.9%	23.1%	43.8%	27.1%	36.0%
	First Quartile	22.3%	15.8%	15.9%	34.8%	19.5%	27.4%
	Third Quartile	40.4%	31.1%	47.2%	50.4%	33.5%	73.3%
Melt rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	Median	8.9%	11.2%	14.8%	5.2%	8.0%	3.6%
	First Quartile	5.1%	4.8%	0.0%	2.0%	0.8%	0.0%
	Third Quartile	16.0%	19.7%	26.2%	7.5%	14.1%	15.0%
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	Median	21.8%	25.6%	50.9%	10.9%	13.6%	45.0%
	First Quartile	15.0%	17.8%	27.2%	4.9%	5.6%	19.5%
	Third Quartile	33.6%	36.7%	63.5%	22.1%	42.2%	65.0%

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Note that no figures are available for public institutions for the Common Application or other outside applications due to the smaller number of public institution respondents who reported outside application data.

* Outside applications are defined as any applications received from first-year students via an outside agency (other than Common Application) such as the Royall FastTrack application.

Table A3: Recruitment Funnel Ratios With First and Third Quartile Data for FTIC First-Year Students by Type of Application for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions, Fall 2012

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Private				Four-Year Public	
		Your Institution's Online Application	Your Institution's Paper Application	Common Application	Another Outside Agency's Application*	Your Institution's Online Application	Your Institution's Paper Application
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	Median	61.8%	61.7%	69.3%	51.9%	64.2%	72.3%
	First Quartile	46.6%	46.8%	57.5%	35.5%	51.2%	47.0%
	Third Quartile	69.5%	74.8%	79.9%	64.7%	76.1%	80.5%
Admit rate from application to admit (completed applications only)	Median	90.0%	87.0%	86.0%	84.8%	84.8%	89.2%
	First Quartile	77.9%	73.1%	71.7%	70.4%	69.5%	52.7%
	Third Quartile	94.7%	94.6%	94.9%	94.1%	93.3%	93.7%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	34.0%	38.6%	17.8%	18.7%	34.6%	42.7%
	First Quartile	27.9%	24.6%	15.6%	14.7%	31.3%	34.2%
	Third Quartile	44.8%	44.5%	24.9%	28.1%	44.8%	53.5%
Melt rate from deposited/confirmed to enrollment	Median	10.1%	9.5%	9.2%	10.0%	7.3%	11.6%
	First Quartile	5.9%	2.4%	5.0%	0.0%	2.3%	5.3%
	Third Quartile	18.1%	22.7%	15.8%	19.4%	17.9%	29.3%
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	Median	30.5%	23.0%	14.9%	35.0%	18.3%	17.0%
	First Quartile	21.7%	13.4%	10.6%	20.8%	6.6%	6.4%
	Third Quartile	39.1%	40.0%	24.2%	46.2%	31.6%	26.6%

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Table A4: Recruitment Funnel Ratios With First and Third Quartile Data for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions for Visitors From the High School Graduating Class of 2012 (Seniors)

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Private	Four-Year Public
Conversion rate from inquiry to application (all inquiries)	Median	64.9%	69.5%
	First Quartile	56.8%	57.9%
	Third Quartile	74.0%	79.3%
Admit rate from application to admit (all applications)	Median	89.0%	88.6%
	First Quartile	81.7%	80.5%
	Third Quartile	91.9%	94.4%
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	42.6%	59.8%
	First Quartile	35.8%	48.5%
	Third Quartile	52.3%	67.8%

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Appendix B: How to use the benchmarks in this report

This report has continued Noel-Levitz's longstanding research into recruitment funnel conversion and yield rates. As the benchmarks in this report have shown, today's prospective students are entering the recruitment funnel in different ways and moving through it at uneven rates, resulting in conversion and yield rates that vary depending on factors such as the student's geographic location, the type of application they complete, the amount of admissions-related fees they pay, and whether or not they have visited campus. To help navigate this swirling environment, we recommend the following:

- 1. Continue to collect and use funnel data to predict enrollment despite the limitations of these data.** Even though the environment is changing and funnel metrics are evolving, admissions funnel data remain one of the best resources available to project enrollment. By tracking your institution's historic conversion rates at each stage of the admissions cycle and for each type of applicant, you can better predict where your future enrollment will end up as each day and week of the admissions cycle unfolds.
- 2. Fine-tune your enrollment predictions by comparing your admissions funnel data to the data in this report, including to the data in Appendix A.** To do this, place the benchmarks in this report alongside your institution's own trend data to test and confirm any trends that you are seeing in your prospective students' behaviors.
- 3. Sharpen your admissions strategy by using the benchmarks to more quickly identify strengths and challenges/opportunities, and keep building more efficient and effective programs for student recruitment and admission.** For example, in places where you see that your funnel rate is significantly lower than a given benchmark, you may find that you need to initiate new activities aimed at raising your rate. Or, in cases where you see that your rate is above a given benchmark, you may decide to build on that area as a particular strength of your admissions/recruitment/marketing program.
- 4. Explore the influence of your admissions fees on your conversion and yield rates.** In some cases, changing the amount of a fee (higher or lower), or changing the types of admissions fees that students must pay, can lead to increased enrollments. If you see that your institution's fees are significantly higher or lower than a given benchmark, consider testing a different fee level to see if it improves your results (be sure to track the change all the way through the funnel).
- 5. Explore the influence of your visit days on your conversion and yield rates.** If you aren't doing so already, we encourage you to compare the visitor benchmarks in this report to your own rates for converting visitors to applicants, your own yield rates on visitors, etc. Tracking visitors separately is an excellent practice, because doing so allows you to test the impact of any improvements you may be able to make in the ways you attract and host/inform students and parents who visit.

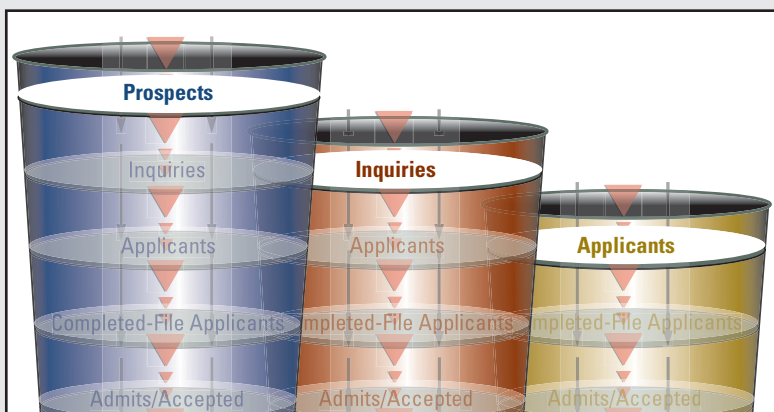
A recruitment funnel, defined:

A predictive set of metrics for forecasting enrollment yields. The funnel captures the rates of movement of prospective students toward enrollment at key intervals, such as the percentage of admitted students who enroll. Although it is changing, the recruitment funnel paradigm continues to help enrollment teams accurately forecast enrollment yields just as well or better than any other system of metrics.

6. **Use multiple funnels.** As this report has demonstrated, different types of students convert and yield at different rates, so it is no longer possible to use a “one-size-fits-all” funnel. We recommend that most four-year public and private campuses should, at minimum, be using separate funnels for traditional-age freshmen, transfers, in-state, out-of-state, international, and paper vs. online applicants. In addition, separate funnels should be used for those who enter at the application stage (secret shoppers) vs. those who enter at the inquiry stage.
7. **Set more realistic enrollment goals based on multiple funnels.** By using multiple funnels and knowing what to expect based on your institution’s past trend data and the benchmarks in this report, your enrollment team should be able to set more realistic goals and subgoals for the populations you are targeting, including goals for specific funnel conversion rates.
8. **Take your funnels to the next level.** External benchmarks cannot explain everything that is happening. Because your institution’s students are unique, it’s important to keep tracking and finding unique factors that influence your institution’s funnel rates, based solely on your institution’s trend data even where outside benchmarks are unavailable. While this evaluation process may sound time-consuming, the payoff is often worthwhile as it allows institutions to more accurately predict enrollment for each term. For example, consider tracking the enrollment likelihood of your applicant and admitted pools each year compared to the enrollment likelihood of previous years’ pools through such means as predictive modeling, the numeric order in which your applicants listed your institution when registering for the FAFSA or the ACT, and the financial needs and academic credentials of this year’s pools compared to previous years’ pools.
9. **Beware the fundamental limitations of the funnel model.** Secret shoppers do not enter the funnel prior to applying. This trend has many implications for reframing college admissions programs, including: 1) the need to treat a portion of the applicant pool similarly to how you would treat inquiries, 2) the need to place greater emphasis on purchased names as a way to identify prospective students, and 3) the need to develop new metrics, such as the percentage of purchased names who enroll and the percentage of non-secret-shopper inquiries who apply.

Three channels of entry

Here is one important way the funnel is changing.



Prospective students enter the recruitment funnel at different times and in different ways. For example, “secret shoppers” enter the funnel when they apply.

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Responding institutions

Representatives from 162 four-year colleges and universities participated in Noel-Levitz's 2012 national electronic poll of fall 2012 enrollment and recruitment funnel rates. The poll was e-mailed to enrollment and admissions officers at accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions. Respondents included 124 four-year private institutions and 38 four-year public institutions. The poll was completed between October 2 and October 23, 2012. Below is a list of institutions that participated.

Four-year private institutions

Note: Any participating two-year private colleges are included among the four-year private institutions.

Abilene Christian University (TX)
Allegheny College (PA)
Alma College (MI)
Andrew College (GA)
Asbury University (KY)
Augustana College (IL)
Aurora University (IL)
Ave Maria University (FL)
Biola University (CA)
Bob Jones University (SC)
Bryan College (TN)
Buena Vista University (IA)
Cairn University (PA)
Capital University (OH)
Cardinal Stritch University (WI)
Centre College (KY)
Cleveland Chiropractic College (KS)
Coe College (IA)
College for Creative Studies (MI)
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (MN)
College of Saint Rose, The (NY)
Colorado Christian University (CO)
Columbia College (SC)
Concordia College (MN)
Concordia University Chicago (IL)
Concordia University Texas (TX)
Cornerstone University (MI)
Crown College (MN)
Curry College (MA)
Davenport University (MI)
Delaware Valley College (PA)
Dillard University (LA)
Dominican University of California (CA)
Dordt College (IA)
Eastern Nazarene College (MA)
Eastern University (PA)
Elmira College (NY)
Felician College (NJ)
Flagler College (FL)
Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH)
Franklin and Marshall College (PA)
Geneva College (PA)
Gordon College (MA)
Goucher College (MD)
Greensboro College (NC)
Guilford College (NC)
Holy Family University (PA)
Hope International University (CA)
Houston Baptist University (TX)
Illinois Institute of Technology (IL)
Indiana Institute of Technology (IN)
Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)
Iowa Wesleyan College (IA)
Jacksonville University (FL)
Judson University (IL)
Juniata College (PA)
Kettering College of Medical Arts (OH)
Keuka College (NY)
Keystone College (PA)
Lancaster Bible College (PA)

Lawrence Technological University (MI)
Lesley University (MA)
LeTourneau University (TX)
Lycoming College (PA)
Lynn University (FL)
MacMurray College (IL)
Marist College (NY)
Marquette University (WI)
Marylhurst University (OR)
McPherson College (KS)
Methodist College of Nursing (IL)
Milligan College (TN)
Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (WI)
Mississippi College (MS)
Mount St. Mary's University (MD)
Mount Vernon Nazarene University (OH)
New York Institute of Technology (NY)
Northwestern College (IA)
Northwestern College (MN)
Oklahoma Baptist University (OK)
Oral Roberts University (OK)
Ottawa University (KS)
Otterbein University (OH)
Paul Smiths College (NY)
Philadelphia University (PA)
Point University (GA)
Post University (CT)
Regent University (VA)
Rhodes College (TN)
Rockhurst University (MO)
Rocky Mountain College (MT)
Saint Louis University (MO)
Schreiner University (TX)
Seattle University (WA)
Shenandoah University (VA)
Simpson University (CA)
Southern Adventist University (TN)
Southwest Baptist University (MO)
Spring Arbor University (MI)
St. John Fisher College (NY)
St. Norbert College (WI)
Suffolk University (MA)
Texas Christian University (TX)
Texas Wesleyan University (TX)
Transylvania University (KY)
Tulane University (LA)
University of Dallas (TX)
University of Denver (CO)
University of Findlay, The (OH)
University of Saint Joseph (CT)
University of Sioux Falls (SD)
University of St. Francis (IL)
University of the Arts, The (PA)
University of the Ozarks (AR)
University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (PA)
Valparaiso University (IN)
Warner Pacific College (OR)
Wartburg College (IA)
Webster University (MO)
Whitworth University (WA)
William Jessup University (CA)
Wisconsin Lutheran College (WI)
Wofford College (SC)
York College of Pennsylvania (PA)

Four-year public institutions

Arizona State University (AZ)
Auburn University (AL)
Auburn University at Montgomery (AL)
California State University - Dominguez Hills (CA)
Colorado State University (CO)
Delta State University (MS)
East Tennessee State University (TN)
Eastern Connecticut State University (CT)
Eastern Kentucky University (KY)
Emporia State University (KS)
Evergreen State College, The (WA)
Illinois State University (IL)
James Madison University (VA)
Metropolitan State University (MN)
Michigan Technological University (MI)
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MN)
Missouri University of Science and Technology (MO)
Missouri Western State University (MO)
Montana State University - Billings (MT)
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC)
Northern Michigan University (MI)
Ohio State University Main Campus, The (OH)
Oklahoma State University (OK)
Southern Oregon University (OR)
Tennessee Technological University (TN)
Texas Tech University (TX)
Towson University (MD)
University of Houston - Victoria (TX)
University of Memphis, The (TN)
University of Missouri - Saint Louis (MO)
University of South Carolina Aiken (SC)
University of South Carolina Columbia (SC)
University of Southern Mississippi (MS)
University of Texas - Pan American (TX)
University of Vermont (VT)
West Texas A & M University (TX)
Western Illinois University (IL)
Westfield State University (MA)

Questions about this report?

We hope you found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions or would like additional information about the findings, please contact Noel-Levitz at 1-800-876-1117 or ContactUs@noellevitz.com. In addition, please contact us if you would like a complimentary telephone consultation to discuss your recruitment funnel with a Noel-Levitz expert.

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A trusted partner to higher education, Noel-Levitz focuses on strategic planning for enrollment and student success. Our consultants work side by side with campus executive teams to facilitate planning and to help implement the resulting plans.

For more than 20 years, we have conducted national surveys to assist campuses with benchmarking their performance. This includes benchmarking marketing/recruitment and student success practices and outcomes, monitoring student and campus usage of the Web and electronic communications, and comparing institutional budgets and policies. There is no charge or obligation for participating, and responses to all survey items are strictly confidential. Participants have the advantage of receiving the findings first, as soon as they become available.

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