

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

---

# SHAPING THE CLASS

---

How College Enrollment Leaders View  
the State of Admissions and Their Profession



Sponsored by:



# ARE YOUR HR & FINANCE SYSTEMS TURNING YOU INTO A



# OR ARE THEY BUILT FOR THE FUTURE?

Your HR and finance systems can't evolve. They turn analysis into a best guess. They are costly to maintain and difficult to change. But there is an alternative. A system that is built to adapt, to work in the cloud, and to be infinitely flexible. One that is cheaper and faster to deploy than yet another upgrade. Workday is your strategic edge.

we are  **workday**<sup>®</sup>

[workday.com/edu](http://workday.com/edu)

Workday and the Workday logo are registered trademarks of Workday, Inc.  
©2014 Workday, Inc. All rights reserved.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## SHAPING THE CLASS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>RECRUITING AND PAYING FOR THE CLASS OF 2018</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DEMOGRAPHY AS DESTINY FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>EMERGING ISSUES IN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>THE STATE OF THE PROFESSION</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>28</b>



*Shaping the Class: How College Enrollment Leaders View the State of Admissions and their Profession* is based on a survey conducted by Maguire Associates, Inc., was written by Jeffrey J. Selingo, contributing editor at The Chronicle of Higher Education Inc., and is sponsored by Workday and Blackboard. The Chronicle is fully responsible for the report's editorial content. Copyright © 2014.

# It's a new day.



Today's learners are active participants in their education. They've got a different take on how they want to learn, how they want to engage and what they demand from their educational experience. Traditional approaches no longer apply.

Discover new ways to attract, engage, support and retain today's learners. **Check us out at [blackboard.com/chronicle](https://blackboard.com/chronicle).**

**Reimagine Education.**

**Blackboard®**

---

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**Faced with a lackluster economy and shifting demographics, many admissions recruiters are seeing that the usual admission procedures are no longer effective.**

---

Enrollment is the lifeblood of colleges and universities. But in recent years, finding enough students to fill open seats in classrooms and empty beds in residence halls has made the job of admissions recruiters like that of a financial adviser: past performance is no guarantee of future results.

Faced with a lackluster economy and shifting demographics, many admissions recruiters are seeing that the usual admission procedures are no longer effective. Strong marketing campaigns once led to piles of applications, giving colleges maximum flexibility in allocating their financial-aid dollars to shape each fall's incoming class.

For one thing, more parents and students are now asking about return on their investment (ROI). Armed with information about the job prospects and salaries of graduates of individual institutions, families increasingly approach the college search with financial savvy, and less emotion.

At the same time, the demographic picture of the United States is rapidly changing. For every 100 18-year-olds nationally, there are only 95 4-year-olds, according to an analysis by The Chronicle of Higher Education. The Northeast and Midwest show the sharpest drop-offs.

What's more, the best-prepared and most-affluent students today have more choices about where to go to college than ever before. Stanford University economist Caroline M. Hobby has found that, because of better technology and less expensive methods of communication and transportation, student

**The best-prepared and most-affluent students today have more choices about where to go to college than ever before.**

“choices now are driven far less by distance and far more by a college’s resources and student body.” This “re-sorting” of students has meant that in the past 50 years, half of the colleges and universities in the United States have become less selective.

An extensive survey of chief enrollment executives and senior admissions officers, conducted by The Chronicle of Higher Education in July 2014, found high levels of job satisfaction but also great concern about the sustainability of the high-cost, high-discount model for higher education and the ability of their institutions to define their value in a changing marketplace.

The survey, completed by more than 400 admissions officials and enrollment managers at four-year colleges and universities, focused on their attitudes about the state of their profession, this fall’s incoming class, demographics and marketing, questions of value of a college education, and emerging issues in enrollment.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY:



### TUITION REDUCTIONS

One out of three private colleges has considered a reduction in tuition in order to attract more students. But only 5 percent have enacted such a strategy, and 17 percent have rejected the idea.



### SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

About two-thirds of private colleges and half of public institutions are experiencing a changing economic mix of students and declining regional markets of prospective students. But very few institutions, only about one in 10, have reduced their enrollment targets.



## STRATEGIES USED TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Research universities were most likely to use wait lists to meet their enrollment targets, with almost half of institutions accepting more than 100 students off the wait list. About one in three of all institutions employed “early action” (meaning students get an early response to their application but don’t have to commit to a college until May 1), or they deferred students to January enrollment (usually offered to academically weaker students because their numbers don’t count in the annual rankings).



## JOB SATISFACTION

Eight in 10 admissions officials are satisfied with their job, a level of satisfaction similar to a survey conducted by The Chronicle in 2008, before the global financial crisis. Those working at master’s-level colleges were less satisfied than their peers at doctorate- or baccalaureate-level institutions. The leading sources of dissatisfaction were lack of resources and unrealistic expectations for admissions by their leaders.



## THIS YEAR'S INCOMING CLASS

The results of the incoming class for the fall of 2014 were a mixed bag for most institutions. Public colleges and universities were more likely than private ones to report missing their goal for international students, transfer students, and yield (the share of accepted students who enroll). Meanwhile, more than one out of three private institutions struggled to meet their goals on yield, transfer students, and “full-pay” students.



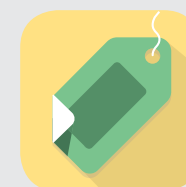
## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Half of enrollment leaders said that developing international markets was just as or more important than developing domestic markets. Some 40 percent of respondents indicated that international markets were important as a strategy to increase revenue.



## MERIT AID

Merit aid has been a strategy used increasingly over the past two decades by colleges to lure better students by offering some scholarship dollars to applicants who can afford to pay a large share of the tuition bill. Today, more than 75 percent of private colleges and some 64 percent of public institutions use merit aid to shape their classes.

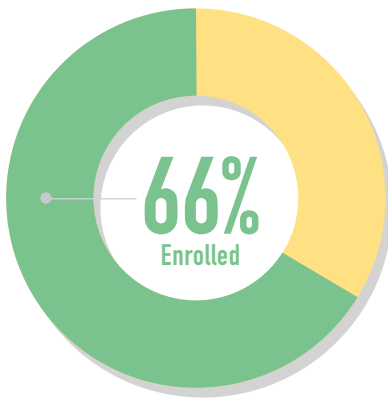


## A QUESTION OF VALUE

As families ask more questions about the value of college, admissions officials report that their institutions are most effective at proving the value of experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom, but least effective at aligning academic programs with the needs of the job market.

# INTRODUCTION

## 2013 High-School Graduates Enrolled In College



In the summer of 2013, the news that several colleges and universities significantly missed their enrollment targets for their incoming class reverberated throughout admissions circles. Had the financial calamity for colleges that everyone had been predicting for years finally arrived?

St. Mary's College of Maryland, a public liberal-arts institution, announced that it had enrolled one-third fewer students than planned. Soon afterward, its bond rating was downgraded and its president left. Loyola University New Orleans said its class was about 25 percent smaller than expected, opening a \$9.5-million hole in its budget. A survey by The Chronicle at the time found that half of small private colleges and regional public institutions either missed their enrollment goal or their budget for the year.

Admissions is like “a zero-sum game,” Kevin Crockett, chief executive of Noel-Levitz, a college consulting and marketing firm told the Wall Street Journal. “If someone is up, someone else is down, You can stumble a little when the market is growing, but when it’s contracting, the repercussions are magnified.”

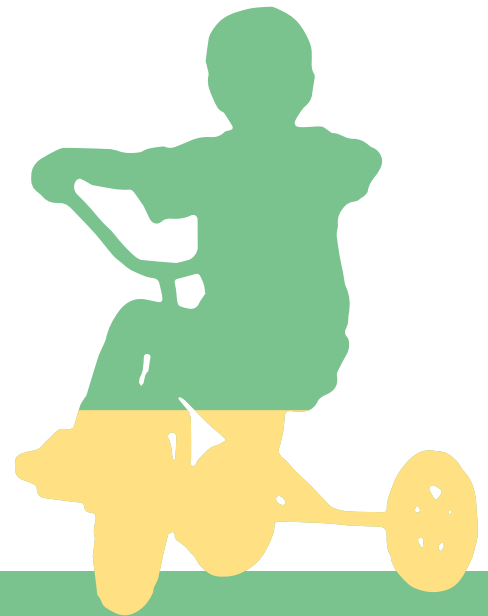
After a decade of growing enrollment, most colleges are beginning to feel the realities of changing demographics and stagnant and falling family incomes. Last fall, only 66 percent of the high-school graduating class of 2013 enrolled in college, the lowest share of new graduates to do so since 2006. Children under 18, who accounted for 36 percent of the U.S. population at the end of the baby boom, make up just 24 percent today. By 2050, they will be 21 percent of the country.



This new reality requires a different approach to admissions by most colleges and universities. A study released earlier this year by the Parthenon Group, a consulting company, found that the traditional process that institutions use to define their student market by demographics “is no longer sufficient in providing college leaders with the strategic understanding they need.” Instead, they need to understand the motivations and mindsets of prospective students. A survey of those students by Parthenon found wide variation in why students go to college and what they expect out of it.

It’s against that backdrop that enrollment and admissions officials are trying to redefine their jobs and strategies for the future. This brief attempts to inform those discussions. It is based on a survey of chief enrollment managers and senior admissions officers that explores their attitudes about the state of the admissions and enrollment profession, this year’s incoming class, demographics and marketing, questions of value, and emerging issues in enrollment.

Children under 18, who accounted for 36% of the U.S. population at the end of the baby boom, make up just 24% today.



**FOR EVERY 100  
18-YEAR-OLDS  
NATIONALLY,  
THERE ARE ONLY  
95 4-YEAR-OLDS.**



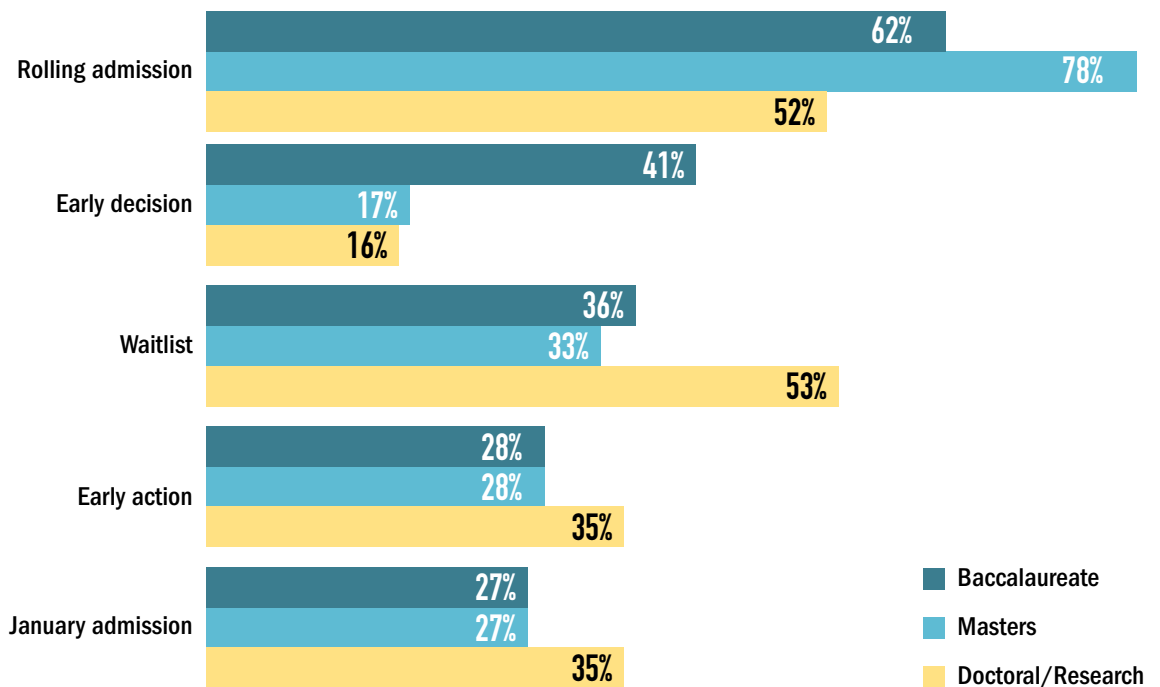
# RECRUITING AND PAYING FOR THE CLASS OF 2018

One out of three students today transfers at least once before earning a bachelor's degree.

Since the housing crash of 2008 and the subsequent recession, admissions officers have been living in an age of uncertainty. In the face of the unknown, colleges have taken different paths in their approaches to recruitment.

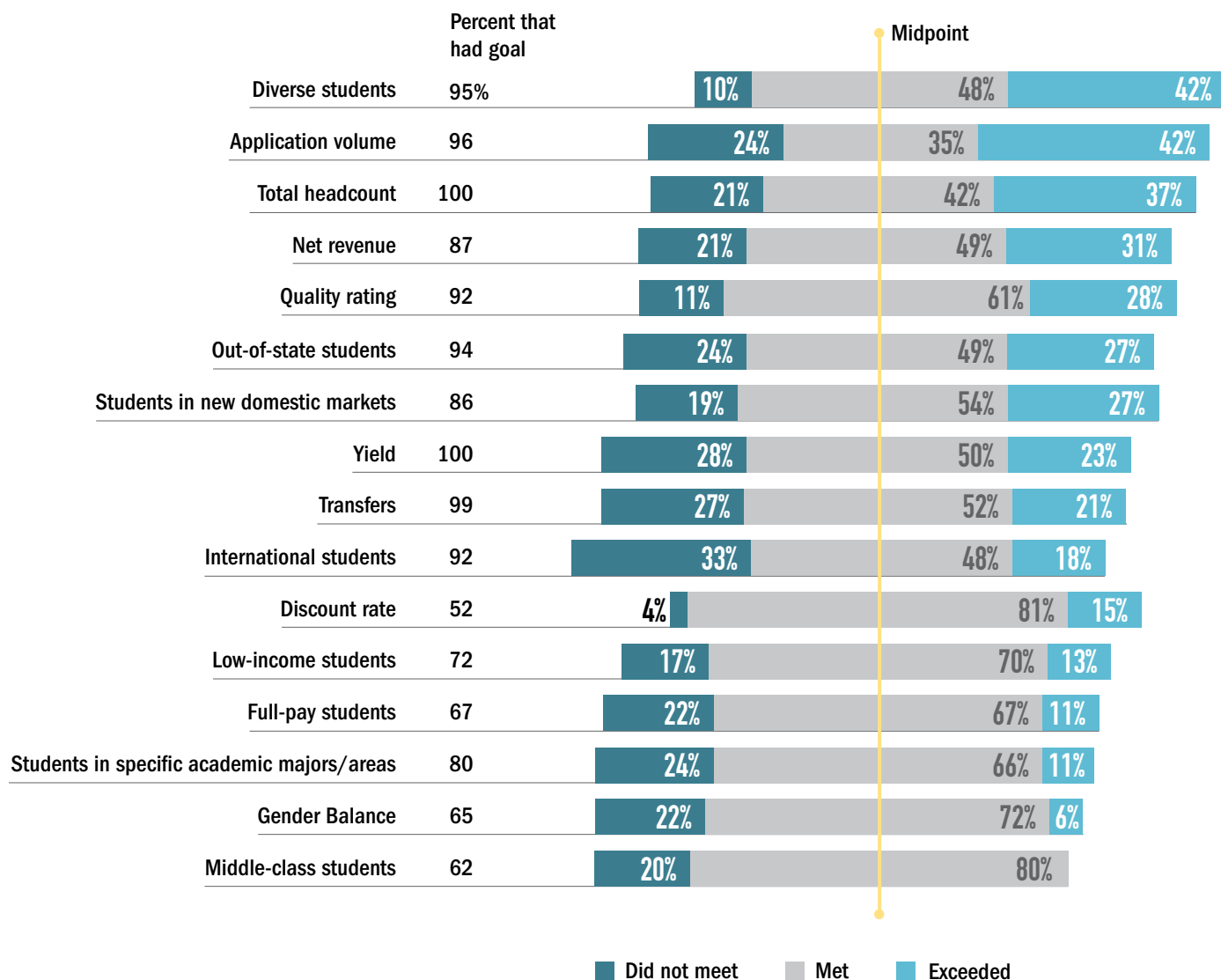
Some institutions increased their discount rate, while a few lowered their enrollment goals and others slashed their tuition rates. Many others started early decision programs to lock in part of their incoming class well before the traditional May 1 date, when accepted students typically must decide where they are going to college. Figure 1 shows the varying degree to which colleges employ different practices to manage their admissions process.

**FIG. 1** PRACTICES USED TO MANAGE ENROLLMENT BY DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS



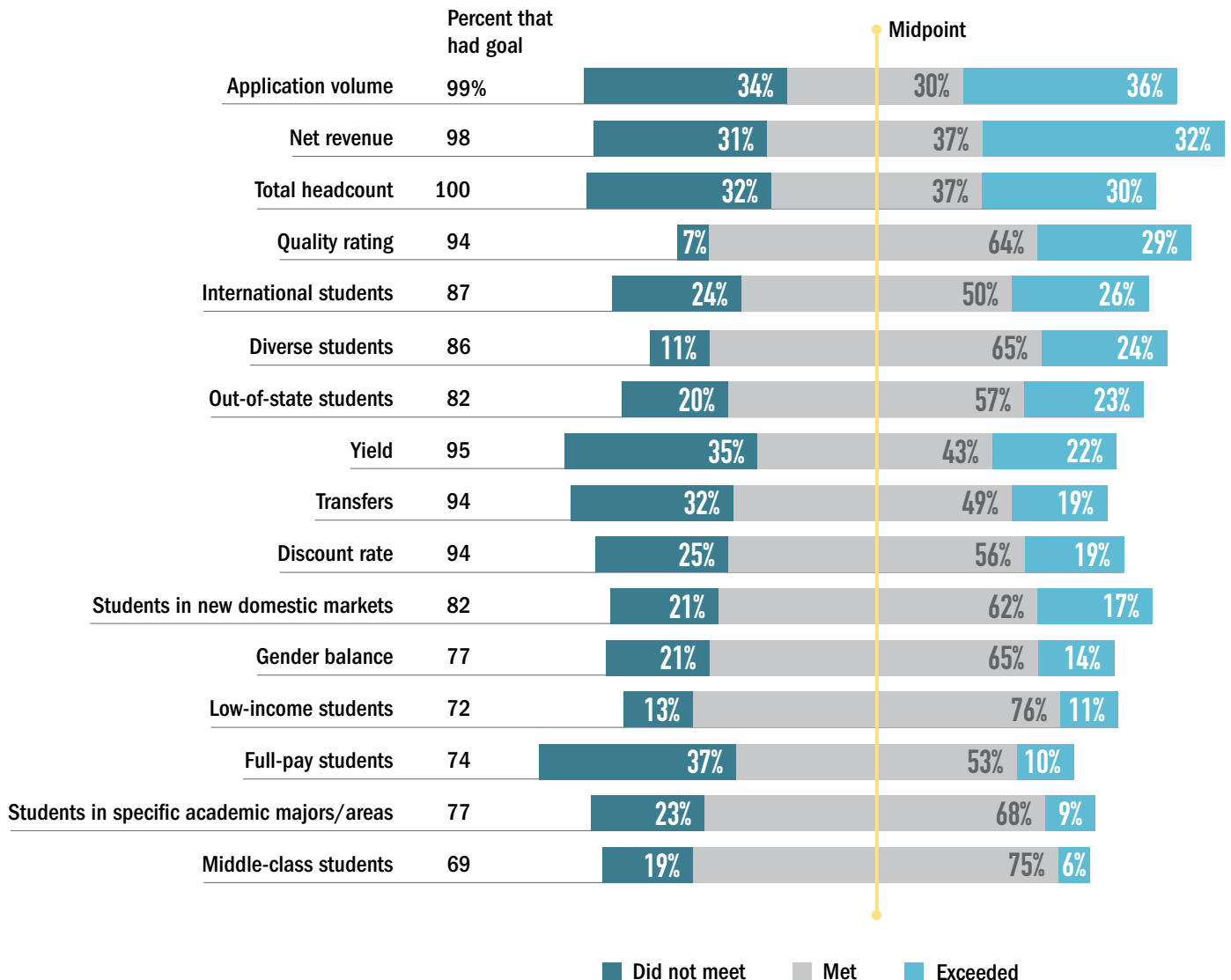
Public and private colleges differed somewhat in their top goals for recruiting this fall’s incoming class, and both then had mixed success in hitting those marks. At least one in four public institutions missed their goals for international students and overall yield (see Figure 2).

**FIG. 2** ENROLLMENT GOALS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS VS. THEIR ACTUAL PERFORMANCE



Meanwhile, about one in three private colleges fell short of their goals for applications, net revenue, and yield (see Figure 3). Both the private and public sectors had many institutions that didn't hit their goals for transfer students, an important constituency given that one out of three students today transfers at least once before earning a bachelor's degree.

**FIG. 3** ENROLLMENT GOALS OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS VS. THEIR ACTUAL PERFORMANCE



Financial aid, of course, is a tool enrollment officers use to attract students. In the past two decades, the use of merit aid to draw academically talented and well-off students increased dramatically among institutions, particularly those interested in raising their profile in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

How much weight enrollment officials put on merit aid compared to need-based aid depends on where they are employed. Merit aid is used most often at private master’s-level universities and least by regional public colleges. Private research universities are most focused on using need-based aid to shape their classes (see Figure 4).

**FIG. 4** HOW MUCH FOCUS INSTITUTIONS PLACE ON MERIT AID VS. NEED-BASED AID

	Public		Private		
	Master’s Colleges and Universities	Doctoral/ Research Universities	Baccalaureate Colleges	Master’s	Doctoral/ Research Universities
Need-Based Aid	66%	70%	76%	71%	80%
Merit-Based Aid	50%	67%	75%	85%	70%

Note: Percentage reflects those responding “high” or “very high” focus

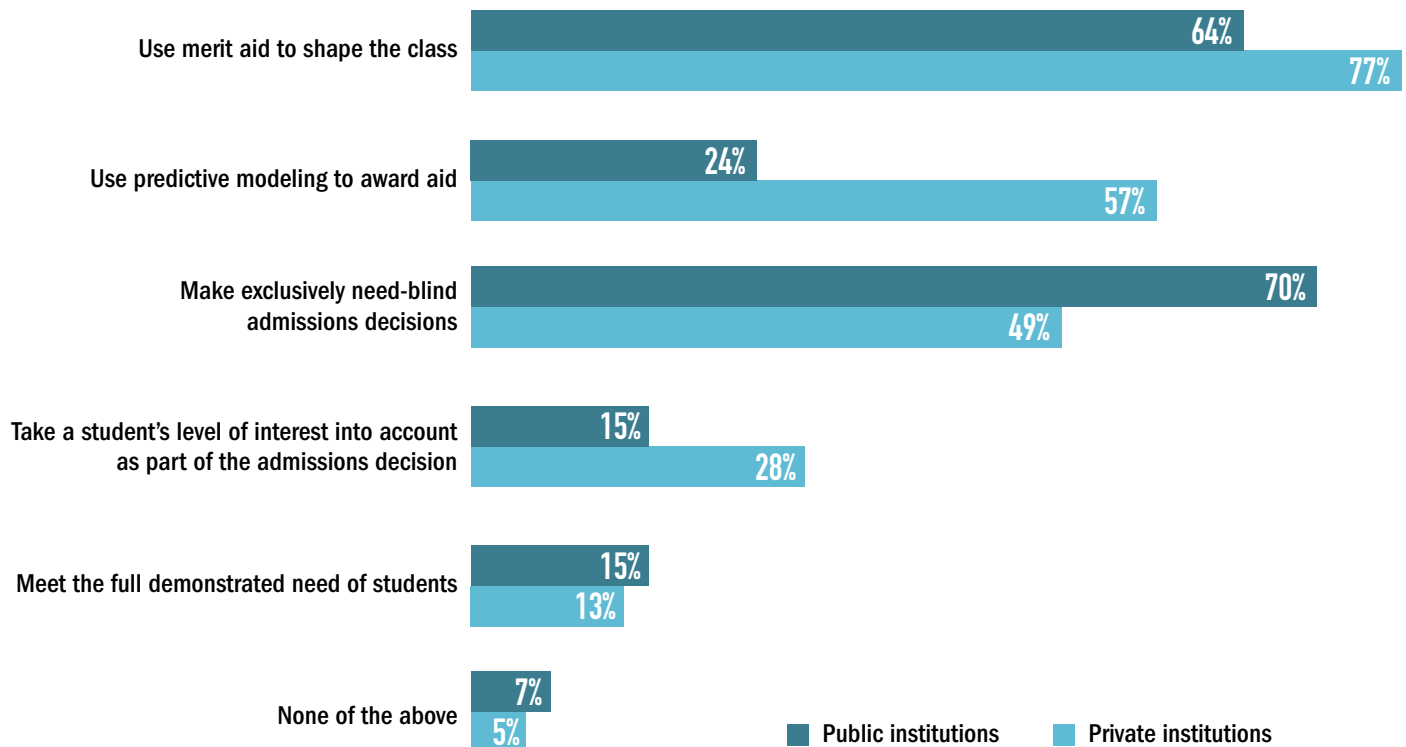
Whether the amount of aid a student needs factors into an admissions decision was the subject of considerable media attention this past year after George Washington University clarified its long-standing “need-blind” policy. A need-blind policy means that institutions evaluate applicants without considering their financial need.

But such approaches are expensive, and fewer and fewer institutions can afford to follow such approaches as the cost of higher education escalates. In clarifying its policy, George Washington University said that it had actually been “need-aware” for years, meaning that for, at least part of its incoming classes, the ability to pay did come into play in admissions decisions.

Merit aid is used most often at private master’s-level universities and least by regional public colleges.

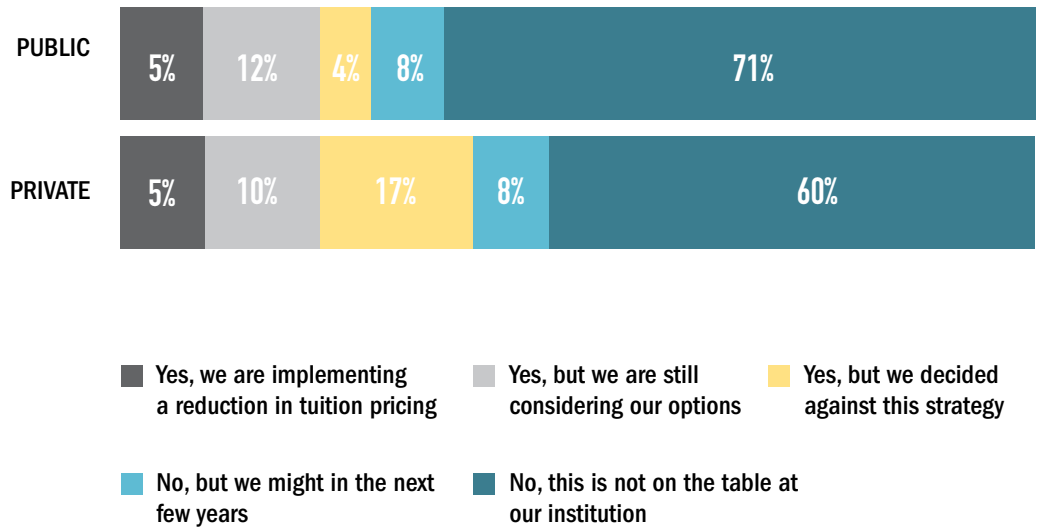
According to the survey, only half of private colleges say they “exclusively make need-blind admissions decisions” (see Figure 5). Even so, many of those institutions can’t afford to meet the “full demonstrated need” of admitted students. As a result, they “gap” students, leaving them to cover the difference between the aid awarded from the institution and what their family is expected to pay. Often those students or their parents take on loans, and sizeable ones, if they want to attend that particular institution. Only 13 percent of private institution enrollment managers in the survey said they meet the full demonstrated need of students.

**FIG. 5** THE VARIOUS APPROACHES ADMISSIONS OFFICERS USE TO RECRUIT A CLASS



The survey revealed that very few institutions plan to follow the handful of colleges that in the past year have made significant cuts to their tuition prices in order to attract students. While 17 percent of private institutions have considered but decided against such a strategy, only 4 percent of public institutions have done so. In both sectors, a vast majority of enrollment managers said such plans, known as “tuition resets,” are not on the table at their institutions (see Figure 6).

**FIG. 6** CONSIDERATION OF TUITION REDUCTION STRATEGIES



# DEMOGRAPHY AS DESTINY FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

In half of the states, more children are Asian, and almost everywhere more are Hispanic.

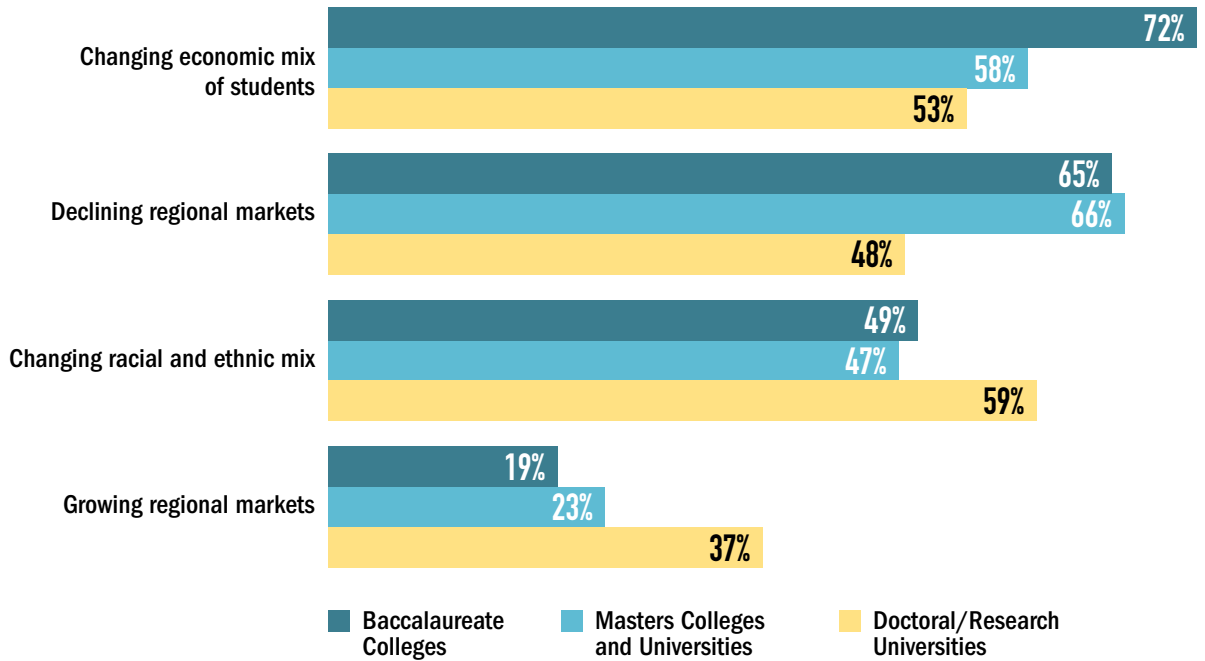
In the next 10 years, the number of high-school graduates will shrink, and some regions—particularly the Northeast and the Midwest—will witness significant declines, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. What colleges are most unprepared for, demographers say, is the drop in the number of affluent, well-prepared high-school graduates, the type of students who fueled the growth of colleges for much of the past decade.

The pipeline of students going to college in the future will look different from the one that supplies institutions today. In half of the states, more children are Asian, and almost everywhere more are Hispanic, according to a Chronicle analysis. In about 450 counties with significantly more younger than older children, about 330 have median incomes below \$50,000, lower than the national median of \$52,762. By comparison, in many of the highest-income, most-educated counties, the number of young children is shrinking.

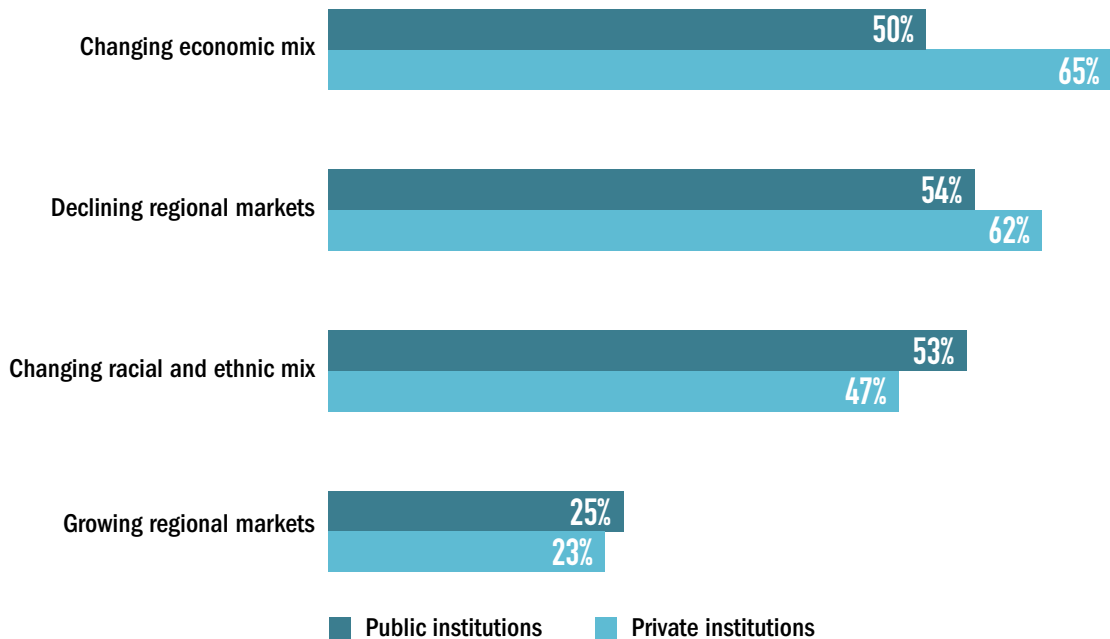
Small and medium-sized private colleges have already started to feel the impact of these changing demographics, according to the survey. Nearly three-quarters of baccalaureate colleges (small liberal-arts colleges) said they have witnessed the effects of the changing economic mix of their students, while some 60 percent of research universities reported a shifting racial and ethnic mix in their student body (see Figure 7).



**FIG. 7** THE IMPACT OF SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS ON ADMISSIONS, BY INSTITUTION TYPE

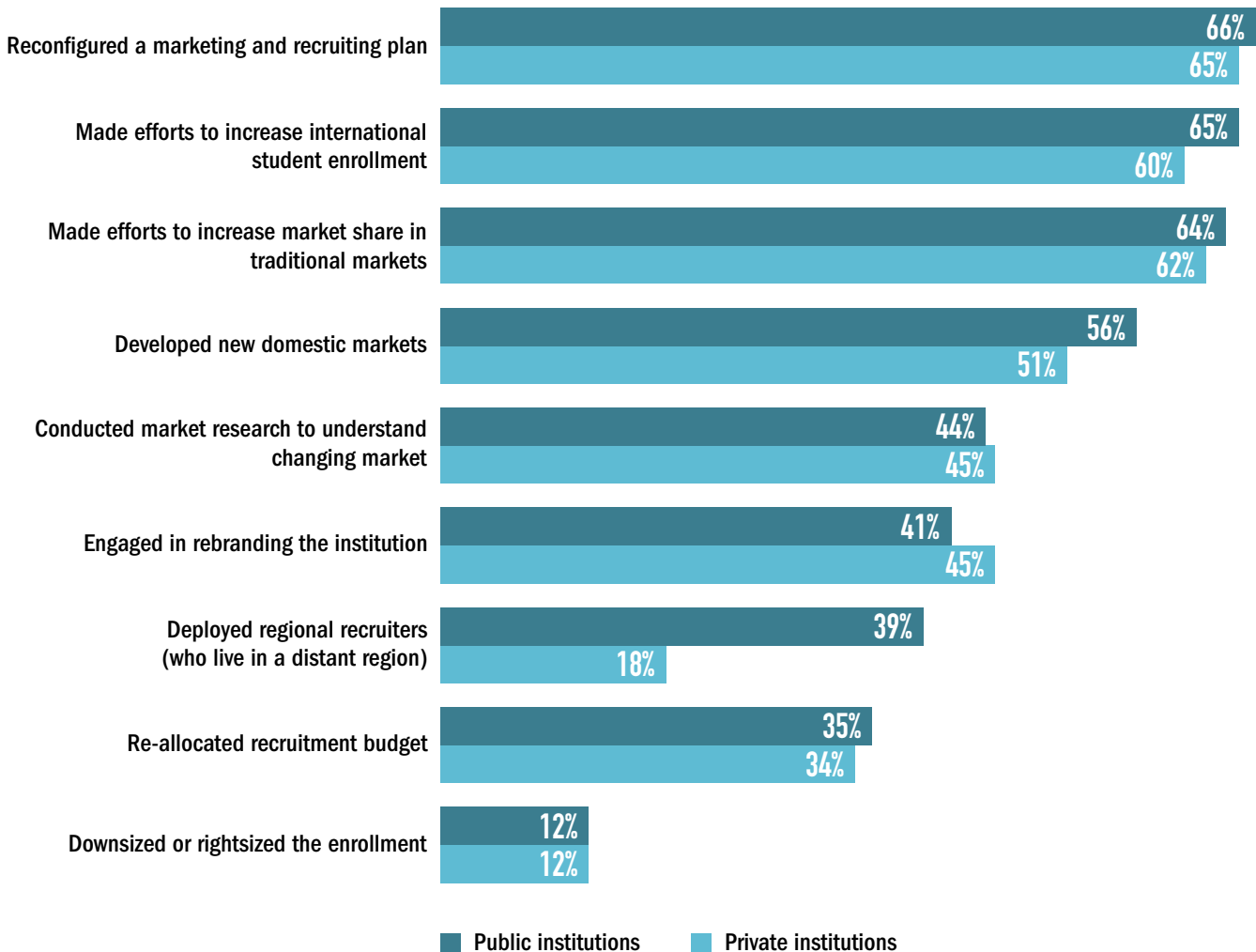


THE IMPACT OF SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS ON ADMISSIONS, BY PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

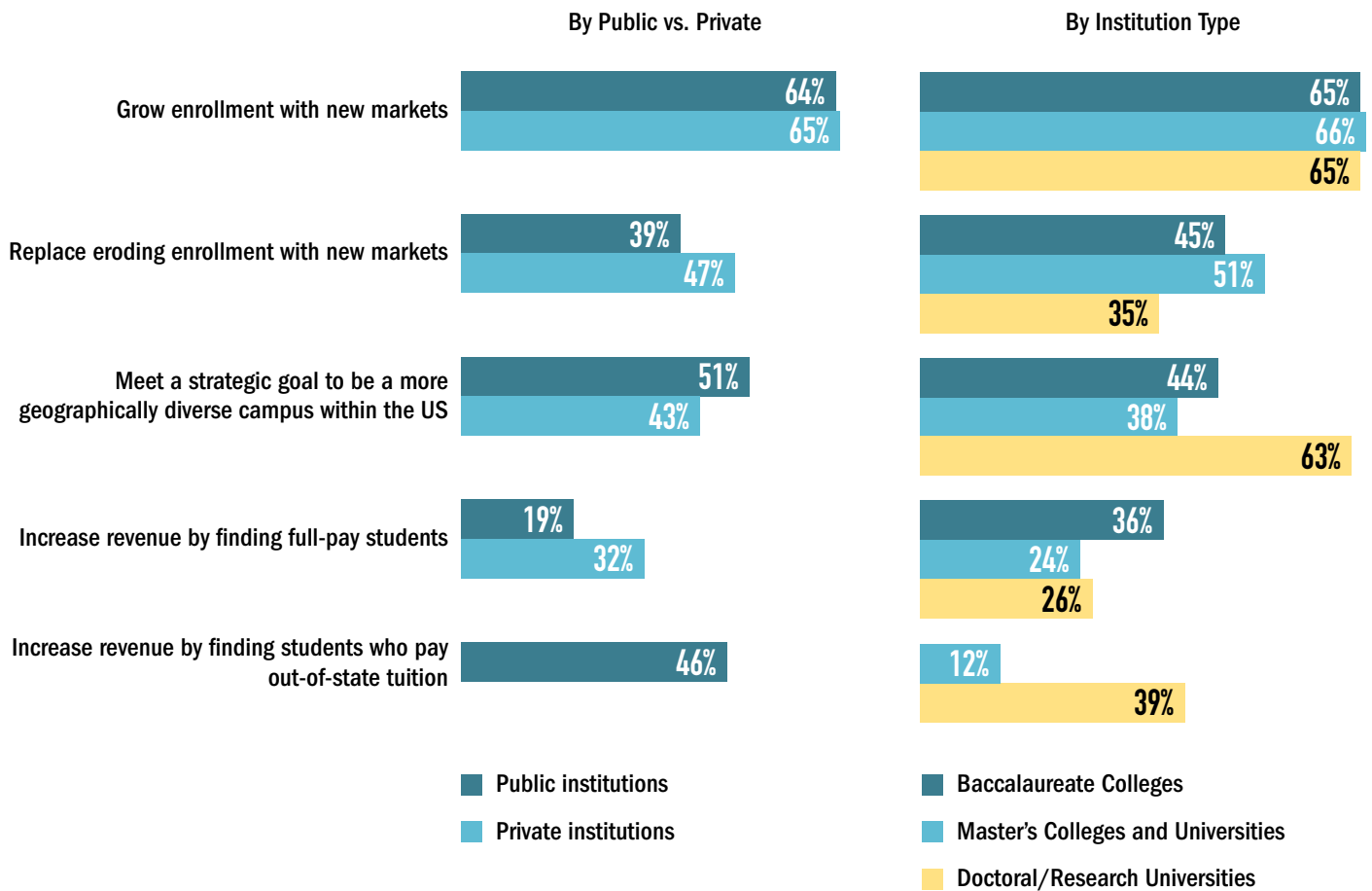


To respond to the demographic changes, public and private colleges have followed somewhat different strategies. Public colleges have deployed regional recruiters to develop new domestic markets, especially for full-pay students. Private institutions have focused more on rebranding their institution to appeal to students, while small private institutions, in particular, have reconfigured their marketing and recruiting approaches (see Figure 8).

**FIG. 8** STRATEGIES INSTITUTIONS HAVE USED TO MITIGATE SHIFTS IN DEMOGRAPHICS, PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE



**FIG. 9** MOTIVATIONS FOR EXPANDING DOMESTIC MARKETS



**60% of research universities report a shifting racial and ethnic mix in their student body.**

International students have become an important target market for institutions of all kinds. The United States remains the world’s top destination for international students, according to the Institute of International Education. Even so, only 3.9 percent of students on American campuses are from overseas.

As a result, developing new international markets is important to more than half of all enrollment managers surveyed. This strategy is particularly important at top public research universities. Admissions officers at six out of 10 research universities say that international recruiting is just as important as domestic recruiting at their institutions because of their efforts to increase diversity and become a global campus (see Figure 10).

**FIG. 10** MOTIVATIONS FOR EXPANDING INTERNATIONAL MARKETS



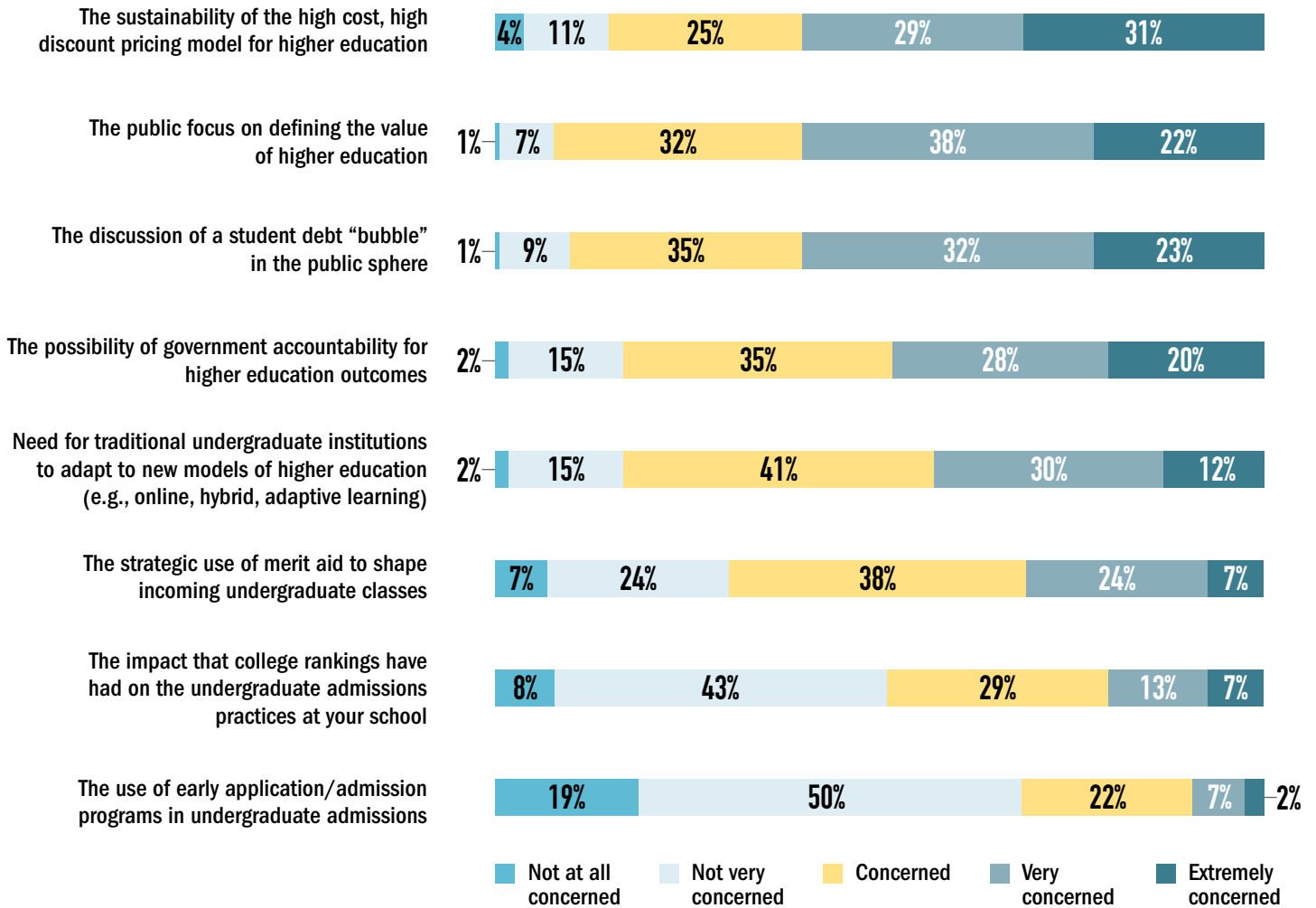
# EMERGING ISSUES IN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

**The focus on the value of a college education worries senior enrollment managers.**

As the fall semester opened on college campuses nationwide in 2013, President Barack Obama hit the road on a two-day bus tour through New York and Pennsylvania. The subject: college affordability. In stops at several colleges, the president called for a new ratings system that rewarded colleges on access and completion measures and allowed students and parents to compare institutions on a simple measure: “where you can get the most bang for your educational buck.”

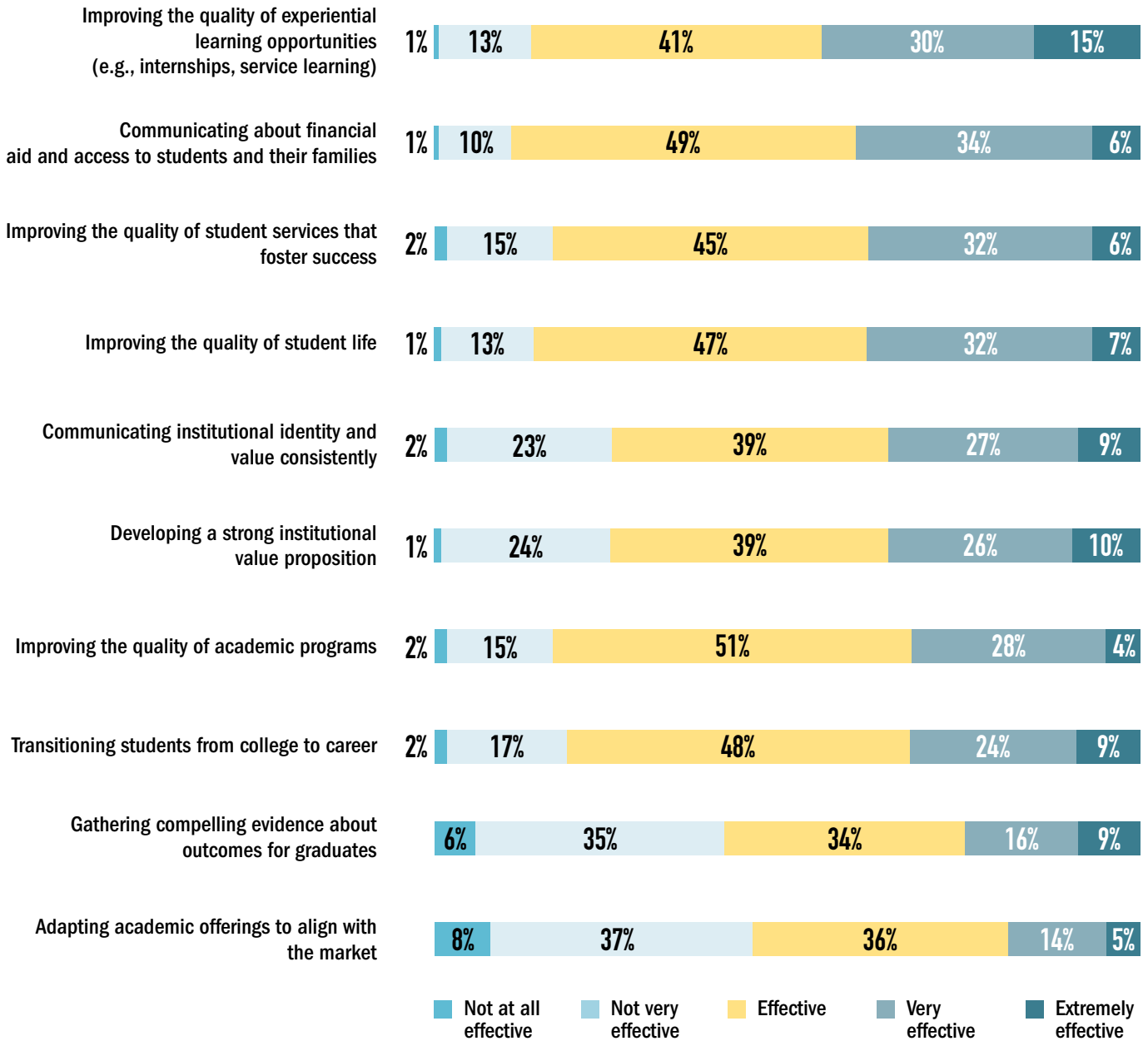
The focus on the value of a college education worries senior enrollment managers, according to the results of the survey. They fear that their colleges will be compared to each other, much as consumers compare other purchases, such as cars or televisions. Some 60 percent of admissions officials responded that they are “very concerned” or “extremely concerned” with the public focus on value (see Figure 11). Nearly half expressed similar concerns about the possibility of new government regulations to measure student outcomes, such as whether recent graduates are employed and how much they earn in those jobs.

**FIG. 11** HOW CONCERNED ENROLLMENT OFFICERS ARE ABOUT PRESSING ISSUES FACING THEIR INSTITUTIONS



One reason for their concern might be that many enrollment officials believe their institutions are not very effective when it comes to gathering compelling evidence about outcomes for their graduates and adapting their academic programs to the job market (see Figure 12).

**FIG. 12** HOW EFFECTIVE ADMISSIONS OFFICERS BELIEVE THEIR INSTITUTIONS ARE IN PROVING VALUE



Only a quarter of admissions officers describe their efforts at measuring outcomes as very or extremely effective. Where enrollment executives are most confident in their institution’s ability to measure value is in experiential learning opportunities (such as internships, study abroad, and undergraduate research), financial aid, and student services.

# THE STATE OF THE PROFESSION

---

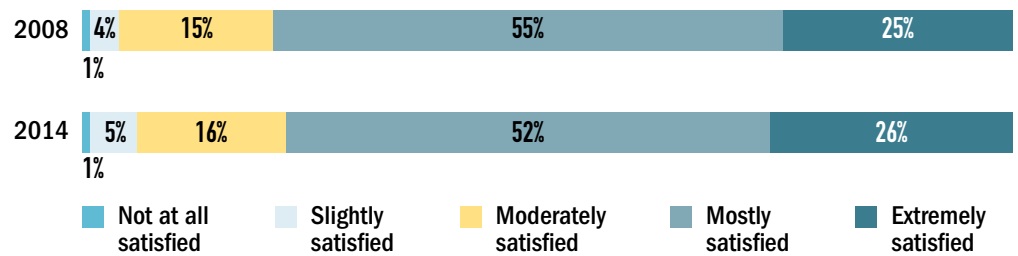
**The highest level  
of job satisfaction  
is among those  
who work at  
private research  
universities**

The Chronicle last conducted a full-scale survey of college and university admissions officers in 2008, just before the economy bottomed out and their world changed. Despite the turmoil in admissions during the past six years, enrollment managers have similar levels of satisfaction with their jobs as they did before the recession (see Figure 13).

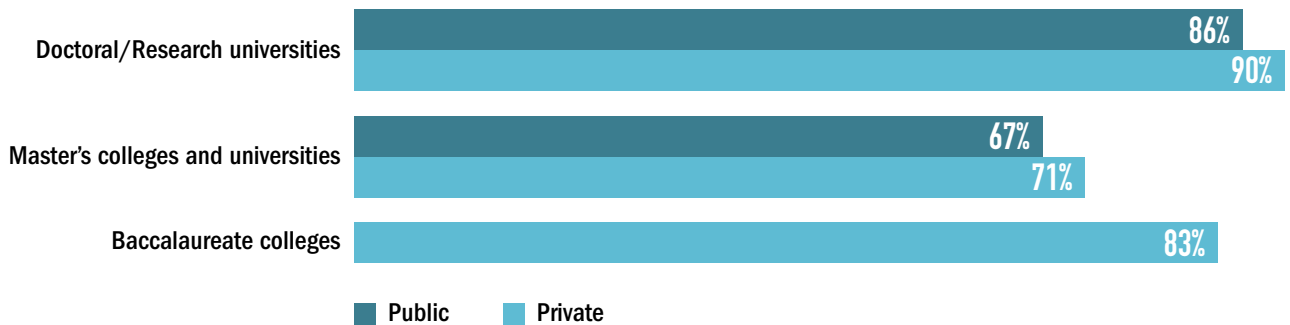
The highest level of job satisfaction is among those who work at private research universities, perhaps because these institutions tend to have large endowments and strong applicant pools; the lowest levels of satisfaction are among those at public master's-level universities, which have seen their budgets cut significantly by state lawmakers and are facing demographic challenges (see Figure 14).



**FIG. 13** HOW SATISFIED ADMISSIONS OFFICERS ARE WITH THEIR JOBS



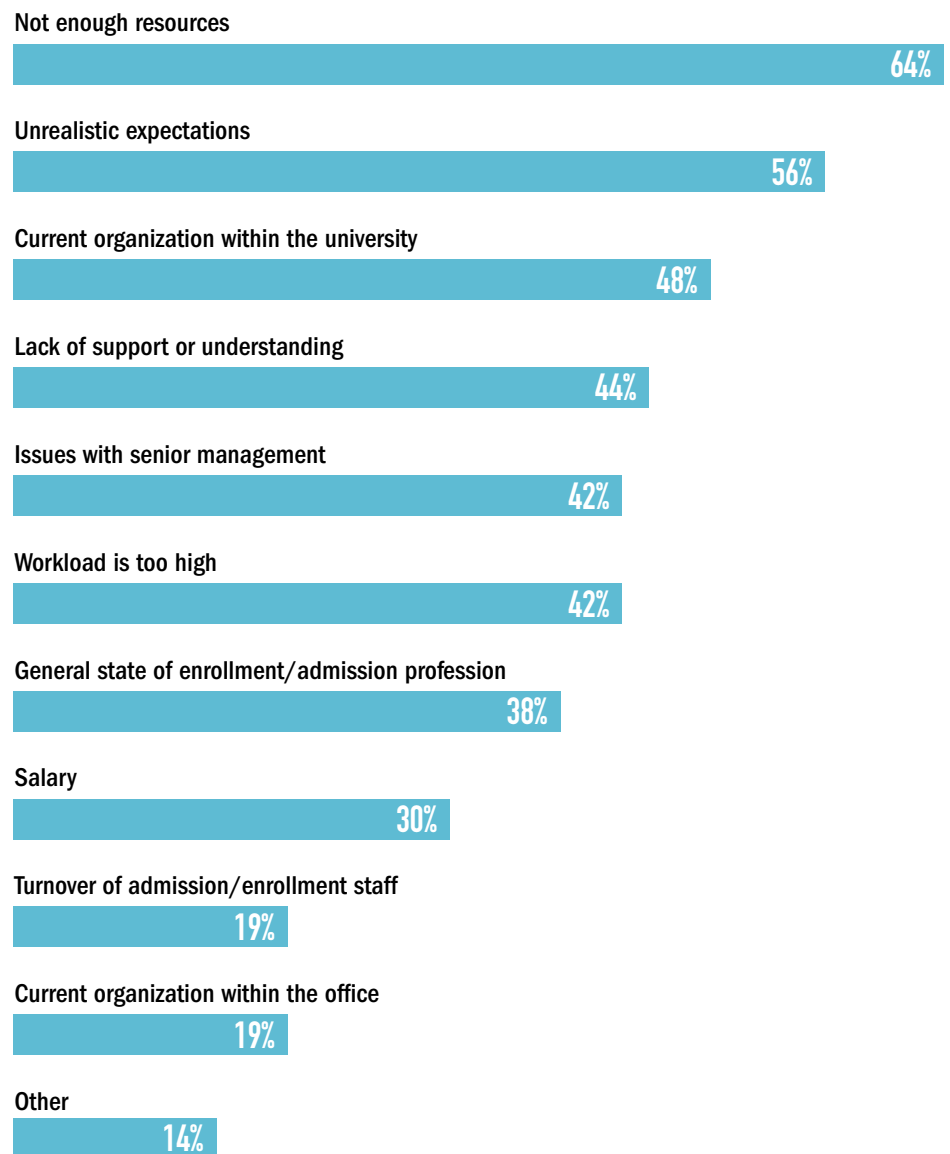
**FIG. 14** ADMISSIONS OFFICERS AT PUBLIC MASTER'S-LEVEL UNIVERSITIES LEAST LIKELY TO BE SATISFIED



Note: Percent reflects those who responded mostly and extremely satisfied

When asked about their source of dissatisfaction with the job, some two-thirds of respondents cited a lack of resources; another half said their leaders had unrealistic expectations for admissions (see Figure 15).

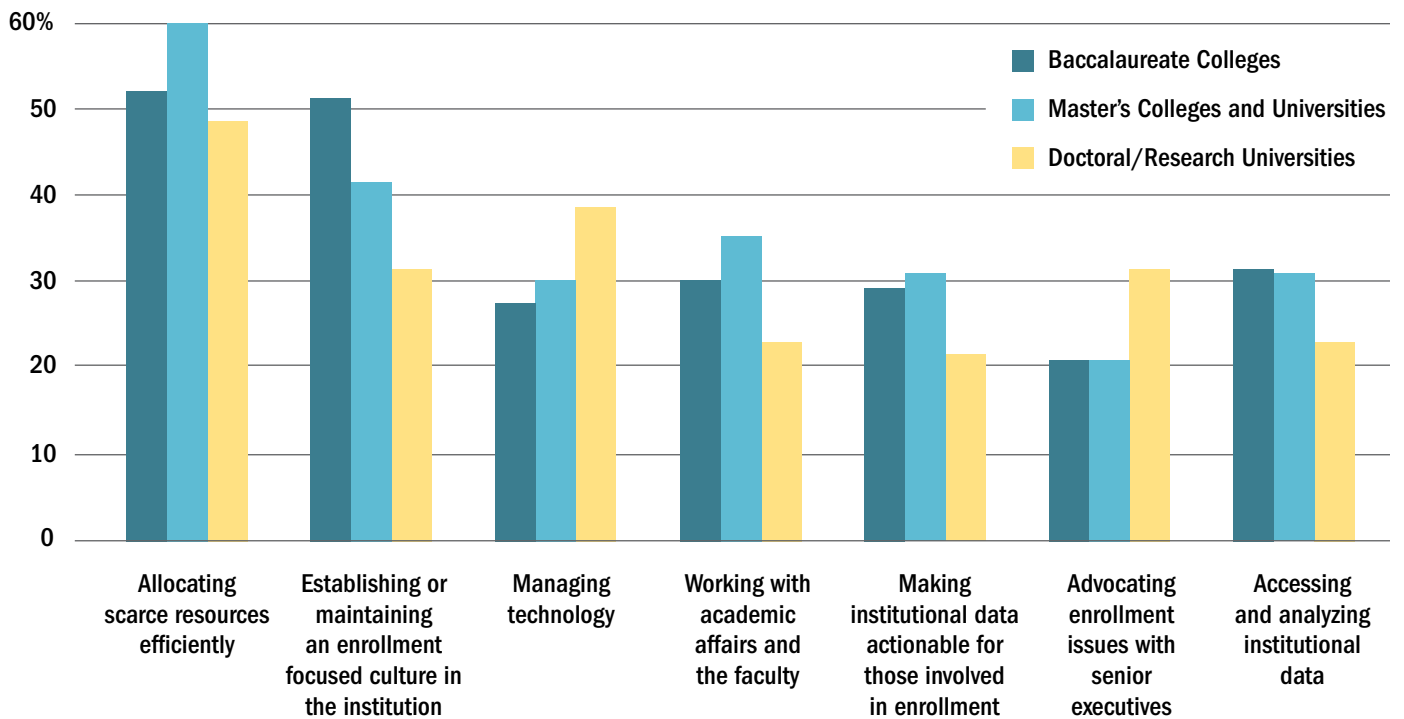
**FIG. 15** TOP REASONS WHY ADMISSIONS OFFICERS ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOBS



In the past two decades, the jobs of admissions officers at colleges and universities have grown to encompass a greater number of roles, from marketing to financial aid. At public universities, enrollment management has expanded, with admissions officers reporting a handful of new responsibilities within the institution, including orientation, student retention, and institutional research. Meanwhile, at private universities, the admissions office tends to be focused on the core enrollment functions.

The challenges facing enrollment managers are similar, although to different degrees, among the various sectors of higher-education institutions. Admissions officers in all types of institutions said their top challenge was allocating scarce resources efficiently. They are also concerned about managing technology and working with academic affairs and the faculty at their institutions (see Figure 16).

**FIG. 16** TOP CHALLENGES FACING ADMISSIONS OFFICERS



# CONCLUSION

Since The Chronicle last conducted a survey of senior enrollment managers in 2008, higher education has entered an era of economic instability and a demographic downturn in college-bound students. The results of this year's survey indicate that the impact of these changes has differed significantly among the types of institution. Public colleges have gained some traction in the market, increasing applications, net revenue, and diversity, while private institutions are just holding steady or losing on a variety of their goals, evidence of the intense fight for market share among other private institutions and, increasingly, with public colleges.

The survey also shows that most enrollment managers have not faced the demographic reality bearing down on their institutions. Most of the activities pursued to mitigate the effects of demographic changes still relate to generating more revenue and increasing enrollment, not facing the realities of a declining or changing market. Fewer than 15 percent of institutions have downsized their enrollments, for example. That means that competition for students is very intense at most institutions.

Finally, most enrollment officers are concerned about the ability of their institution to respond to a new focus by parents and prospective students on the value of going to a specific college. While many admissions officials believe that their institutions are effective at demonstrating value in extracurricular areas, such as experiential learning opportunities or student services, they are worried about the ability to prove value in the core of the enterprise, particularly when it comes to aligning academic programs with the job market and gathering information on outcomes. The conversation around value is likely to be the focus of families and policymakers in the next decade, and those institutions unable to clearly and easily demonstrate their value face a tough road ahead.

# ARE YOUR HR & FINANCE SYSTEMS BASED ON TECH OLDER THAN THE



# OR ARE THEY BUILT FOR THE FUTURE?

The sad truth is, most enterprise HR and finance systems are built on technology from the '80s. They can't keep up. But there is an enterprise system that's built for today, tomorrow, and everything after. One that is built for the large global enterprise. Built to evolve and change, to work in the cloud, and to grow with your business. And it is cheaper and faster to deploy than yet another upgrade. Workday is your strategic edge.

we are  **workday**<sup>®</sup>

[workday.com/edu](http://workday.com/edu)

Workday and the Workday logo are registered trademarks of Workday, Inc.  
©2014 Workday, Inc. All rights reserved.

# METHODOLOGY

The results of *Shaping the Class: How College Enrollment Leaders View the State of Admissions and their Profession* are based on a survey of enrollment leaders at four-year, not-for-profit institutions that fall into a selected group of classifications developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Maguire Associates, of Concord, Mass., which conducted the online survey for The Chronicle, invited a random sample of 2,861 enrollment leaders to respond, and 435, or 15 percent, did. The data collection took place in July 2014.



*Shaping the Class: How College Enrollment Leaders View the State of Admissions and their Profession* is based on a survey conducted by Maguire Associates, Inc., was written by Jeffrey J. Selingo, contributing editor at The Chronicle of Higher Education Inc., and is sponsored by Workday and Blackboard. The Chronicle is fully responsible for the report's editorial content. Copyright © 2014.

The material in this report is copyrighted and may be reprinted, reproduced, or posted by permission only. To obtain permission for use of this content, please email [permissions@chronicle.com](mailto:permissions@chronicle.com)

# Welcome to the future.



Students today expect more than debt from their education. They want an education that adapts to their lifestyle, budget and goals for the future.

Discover new ways to recruit, retain and engage them from enrollment through graduation, job placement and advancement. **Check us out at [blackboard.com/chronicle](https://blackboard.com/chronicle).**

**Reimagine Education.**

**Blackboard®**

## THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

---

1255 Twenty-Third Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
(202) 466-1000  
Chronicle.com  
Copyright © 2014.

Sponsored by:

