

Higher Ed Benchmarks

Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

2010 Admissions Funnel Benchmarks for Four-Year Public and Private Institutions

To assist campuses with accurately forecasting enrollments, this report continues Noel-Levitz's long-standing research into admissions funnel conversion and yield rates. The report is based on a Web-based survey of college and university admissions officials in September and October, 2010, in which respondents reported fall 2010 and fall 2009 data. For context, data from previous Noel-Levitz surveys are offered for comparison. Among the highlights:

- Yield rates (from admit to enroll) for first-year and transfer students continued their downward trend for private colleges, while yield rates for public universities are either leveling off or following no noticeable trend lines.
- The rising “secret shopper” applicant trend reported earlier by Noel-Levitz—and the corresponding rise in inquiry-to-applicant conversion rates for first-year and transfer students—continued to gain steam. For fall 2010, fully one-third of first-year applicants and approximately half of transfer applicants did not identify themselves to their chosen institution(s) until they submitted an application.
- Admitted, first-year applicants who applied online continued to yield at lower rates than mail-in admitted applicants, while first-year, in-state admitted applicants continued to yield at higher rates than out-of-state and international admitted applicants.
- Up to 22 percent of first-year students failed to complete their applications, led by online applicants at private colleges.

Readers are encouraged to use the benchmarks in this report to more accurately predict enrollment yields, to set accurate goals, and more. For guidance on how to use the benchmarks, see page 12 and additional resources at www.noellevitz.com/ChangingFunnel.

What is an admissions funnel? For those who are unfamiliar, an admissions funnel is 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. See more examples inside.



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Don't miss the additional data and insights from Noel-Levitz consultants in the Appendix of this report.

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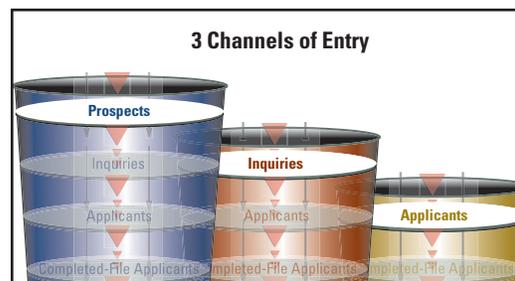
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Although it is changing, the admissions funnel paradigm continues to help enrollment teams accurately forecast enrollment just as well or better than any other system of metrics. For guidance on using the funnel, see the Appendix, pages 12-13.



Freshman yield rates continue to decline for private colleges but may have leveled off for public universities

As shown in Table 1 in blue, the latest two years of yield data reported by four-year public university respondents show that FTIC yield rates may have leveled off for this sector, though they continue to be much lower than in 2003 and 2004. In contrast, the highlighted FTIC data in Table 2 for private colleges continue a clear pattern of steady decline.

Table 1: Public Universities—FTIC First-Year Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Inquiry to application	35%	34%	33%	31%	28%	25%	27%	24%
Application to admit (all applications)	66%	65%	66%	67%	70%	73%	70%	72%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	82%	85%	71%	74%	83%	83%	NA	NA
Admit to enroll (yield)	41%	43%	38%	39%	42%	43%	47%	49%
Deposited/confirmed to enroll	93% (Melt: 7%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	93% (Melt: 7%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	92% (Melt: 8%)	NA	NA

Table 2: Private Colleges and Universities—FTIC First-Year Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Inquiry to application	15%	15%	13%	13%	14%	13%	12%	10%
Application to admit (all applications)	66%	65%	71%	73%	70%	72%	75%	76%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	86%	86%	87%	87%	91%	87%	NA	NA
Admit to enroll (yield)	29%	29%	31%	33%	35%	35%	36%	36%
Deposited to enroll	88% (Melt: 12%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	91% (Melt: 9%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	NA	NA

Private colleges are seeing declining freshman yields and a slight increase in freshman melt rates as shown in the last two rows of Table 2 above. In addition, public and private institutions continue to see an upward inquiry-to-applicant trend (see the next section on “secret shoppers”).

In a separate study last spring, nearly two-thirds of public and private institution respondents expected higher-than-usual summer melt in 2010 compared to previous summers,¹ likely due to the mini-trend shown above between 2007 and 2009. However, **for public universities, summer melt actually came in lower in 2010 than in 2009** and lower than the four preceding years. In addition, 2010 summer melt held steady with 2009 for private colleges, though it was still higher than in earlier years.

Definition of an inquiry: An inquiry was defined in this study as a student who had contacted the institution through any source (phone, e-mail, inquiry card, Web site contact, sent test scores, application for admission, etc.). This included all first-contact inquiries, including students who made their first recorded contact when they submitted an application.

Note: Data from 2008 and earlier are based on earlier reports from Noel-Levitz.

¹ Noel-Levitz. (2010). 2010 deposits/confirmed students as of May 1 at four-year institutions. Coralville, IA: Author. Retrieved from www.noellevitz.com/benchmarkreports.

“Secret shopping” on the increase as one-third of freshman applicants and about half of transfer applicants are now searching anonymously

In another continuing trend, a growing percentage of prospective students bypassed the top of the traditional admissions funnel and did not identify themselves to their chosen institution(s) until they submitted an application. Notable increases in this area were evident among first-year students at public and private institutions and among transfer students at private institutions. However, it appears that the secret shopper phenomenon may be leveling off among transfer students at public institutions.

Table 3: Public Universities: First-Year and Transfer Applicants Who Failed to Identify Themselves Before Applying

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

Table 4: Private Colleges and Universities: First-Year and Transfer Applicants Who Failed to Identify Themselves Before Applying

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

Again this year, more incoming students did not contact admissions offices prior to submitting an application, a continuing trend that is reframing the funnel and changing how admissions and recruitment teams operate.

The secret shopper trend shown above helps explain the rising inquiry-to-applicant FTIC conversion rates shown in Tables 1 and 2 on page 3. Beyond the data in this report, there are unknown numbers of prospective students out there who never inquire, apply, or identify themselves in any way to the institutions they are considering as they use the Internet to select their preferred colleges. This obviously reduces the total number of inquiries. In addition, it has the effect of increasing the percentage of the other inquiries—those who identify themselves to an institution—who convert to application, because those who remain tend to be more serious about enrolling.

The secret shopper trend has many additional implications for enrollment teams. For example, many campuses are now placing a higher priority on electronic recruiting² and revamping their search process.³ In addition, campuses have learned to expect lower yield rates from secret shoppers who apply online vs. mailing a paper application (see Tables 7 and 8 on page 6). Further, it is clear that traditional funnel metrics must be re-examined and re-thought, as metrics such as inquiry-to-applicant conversion rates are becoming increasingly meaningless for FTIC and transfer students, as described above, as shown in Tables 1-6, and as described in Noel-Levitz literature.⁴

² Noel-Levitz. (2010). 2010 e-recruiting practices and trends at four-year and two-year institutions. Coralville, IA: Author. Retrieved from www.noellevitz.com/benchmarkreports.

³ Noel-Levitz. (2010). In pursuit of the secret shopper: Effective new strategies for finding and engaging prospective students. Coralville, IA: Author. Retrieved from www.noellevitz.com/changingfunnel.

⁴ Noel-Levitz. (2009). Warning: Your most common admissions funnel metrics may be meaningless! Coralville, IA: Author. Retrieved from www.noellevitz.com/changingfunnel.

Secret shoppers do not enter the funnel prior to applying. This trend has many implications for reframing college admissions programs.

Why are students searching anonymously? The abundance of information on the Internet is generally considered the main reason, as students are able to find the information they need online through formal and informal sources.

Transfer student yield rates decline for private colleges, too

As shown in Table 6 in blue, the latest two years of transfer student yield data reported by four-year private college respondents show a continued decline, paralleling the decline in freshman yield rates reported earlier in Table 1 on page 3. However, for public universities, no noticeable trend is evident in Table 5, similar to the FTIC findings reported earlier.

Table 5: Public Universities—Transfer Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Inquiry to application	79%	80%	72%	72%	71%	61%
Application to admit (all applications)	64%	66%	61%	61%	66%	72%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	88%	88%	82%	82%	91%	87%
Admit to enroll (yield)	66%	65%	63%	63%	68%	69%
Deposited/confirmed to enroll	88% (Melt: 12%)	86% (Melt: 14%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	87% (Melt: 13%)

Some of the same trends that were evident among first-year students were also evident among transfer students, though conversion and yield rates for transfer students were quite different.

Table 6: Private Colleges and Universities—Transfer Student Funnel Rates

Median Funnel Rates	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Inquiry to application	48%	49%	43%	42%	47%	40%
Application to admit (all applications)	56%	58%	58%	57%	59%	60%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	90%	90%	88%	80%	91%	90%
Admit to enroll (yield)	53%	54%	54%	56%	57%	57%
Deposited to enroll	86% (Melt: 14%)	87% (Melt: 13%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	88% (Melt: 12%)

How do your numbers compare? Are you seeing higher or lower percentages?

Private colleges are seeing declining transfer student yields and a slight increase in transfer student melt rates as shown in the last two rows of Table 6 above, paralleling the findings for freshmen reported earlier on page 3. In addition, both public and private institutions continue to see an upward inquiry-to-applicant trend among transfer students, again paralleling the freshman findings.

Definition of a transfer student: For this study, a transfer student was simply defined as a student who previously attended college at another institution prior to enrolling.

Online applicants continue to yield at lower rates than mail-in applicants

In another continuing trend, the yield rate on first-year, admitted students who completed an online application was lower than the yield rate on admitted students who completed a paper application for both public and private institutions in fall 2010, as shown in Tables 7 and 8 below. These findings were consistent with earlier Noel-Levitz findings in fall 2008 and fall 2006. Of course, this does not mean that institutions should cease to offer online applications. Noel-Levitz continues to encourage the use of online applications as a complement to traditional paper and other application forms. Rather, the findings mean that campuses should expect admitted online applicants to yield at a lower rate than students who apply using paper applications.

Table 7: Public Universities—Fall 2010 FTIC First-Year Student Funnel Rates by Type of Application

Median Funnel Rates	Online Application	Paper/Mail Application	Common Application	Outside Application*
Application to admit (all applications)	69%	64%	NA	NA
Application to admit (completed applications only)	82%	81%	NA	NA
Admit to enroll (yield)	37%	47%	NA	NA
Applicants not completing application process	11%	18%	NA	NA
Deposited/confirmed to enroll	92% (Melt: 8%)	95% (Melt: 5%)	NA	NA

Table 8: Private Colleges and Universities—Fall 2010 FTIC First-Year Student Funnel Rates by Type of Application

Median Funnel Rates	Online Application	Paper/Mail Application	Common Application	Outside Application*
Application to admit (all applications)	60%	65%	75%	51%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	87%	80%	82%	83%
Admit to enroll (yield)	33%	36%	18%	19%
Applicants not completing application process	22%	17%	9%	29%
Deposited to enroll	88% (Melt: 12%)	88% (Melt: 12%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	90% (Melt: 10%)

Admitted online applicants continued to yield at lower rates than their paper counterparts, especially at public institutions, where 37 percent of admitted online applicants enrolled vs. 47 percent of admitted paper applicants.

* The “Outside Application” column is for any applications received from freshmen via an outside agency (other than Common Application) such as the Royall FastTrack application.

Yield rates on different types of applicants are quite different and can significantly impact final enrollment.

Nearly 30 percent of applicants using outside applications* other than the Common Application failed to complete their applications, consistent with earlier Noel-Levitz findings in 2008 and 2006.

Percentage of freshmen who fail to complete their applications rises

A comparison of the 2010 data below with parallel data from 2008 and 2006 reveals that the number of FTIC applicants who fail to complete their applications is rising. In 2010, at public universities, 11 percent of online applicants failed to complete their application and 18 percent of paper applicants failed to complete their application. This compared with 10 percent of online applicants and 13 percent of paper applicants, respectively, in 2008, and with 12 percent of online applicants and 10 percent of paper applicants, respectively, in 2006.

At private colleges, a similar pattern is evident. As shown below, 22 percent of online applicants failed to complete their applications and 17 percent of paper applicants failed to complete their applications. This compared with 18 percent of online applicants and 14 percent of paper applicants in 2008 and with 19 percent of online applicants and 11 percent of paper applicants in 2006.

An exception to this trend was evident among private college applicants using the online Common Application. As shown on Table 8 on page 6, just 9 percent of those applicants failed to complete their applications in 2010. This was lower than the percentages reported in previous Noel-Levitz studies: 12 percent and 11 percent in 2008 and 2006, respectively. However, applicants using the Common Application have consistently yielded at a much lower rate than applicants using an institutional application.

In general, more and more applicants are failing to complete their applications. However, students using the Common Application appear to be defying this trend.

Table 9: Public Universities: FTIC First-Year Students Who Failed to Complete Their Applications

Median Rates	2010	2008	2006
Online applications	11%	10%	12%
Paper applications	18%	13%	10%

Table 10: Private Colleges and Universities: FTIC First-Year Students Who Failed to Complete Their Applications

Median Rates	2010	2008	2006
Online applications	22%	18%	19%
Paper applications	17%	14%	11%

Up to 22 percent of students failed to complete their applications, led by online applicants at private colleges.

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

Recruiting first-year international students offers some distinct advantages, as the **findings in blue** below show that admitted international students continued to yield at higher rates than out-of-state FTIC domestic students for both sectors in 2010. However, in-state FTIC students enrolled at the highest rates of all. These findings were consistent with Noel-Levitz’s earlier studies in 2008 and 2006.

Also important to note: In-state FTIC students completed their applications at the highest rates and were least likely to be “secret shoppers” (see Appendix, p. 11, Table A2, last two rows of median rates near bottom of page).

Knowing the yield rates for applicants based on where they live—whether it’s in-state, out-of-state, international, or more specific designations—can be very helpful in forecasting final enrollment because students’ enrollment behaviors have proven to vary by their locations.

Table 11: Public Universities—Fall 2010 FTIC Funnel Rates for In-state, Out-of-state, and International Freshmen

Median Funnel Rates	In-state	Out-of-state	International
Inquiry to application	44%	28%	60%
Application to admit (all applications)	66%	61%	36%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	83%	79%	79%
Admit to enroll (yield)	47%	26%	35%
Applicants not completing application process	13%	25%	50%
Confirmed/deposited to enroll	93% (Melt: 7%)	90% (Melt: 10%)	85% (Melt: 15%)

Table 12: Private Colleges and Universities—Fall 2010 FTIC Funnel Rates for In-state, Out-of-State, and International Freshmen

Median Funnel Rates	In-state	Out-of-state	International
Inquiry to application	20%	9%	48%
Application to admit (all applications)	65%	62%	43%
Application to admit (completed applications only)	86%	87%	75%
Admit to enroll (yield)	32%	25%	29%
Applicants not completing application process	22%	28%	40%
Deposited to enroll	91% (Melt: 9%)	89% (Melt: 11%)	89% (Melt: 11%)

The yield rate for in-state freshmen continues to be higher than the yield rate for international freshmen and out-of-state freshmen. Also worth noting: International freshmen yield better than out-of-state freshmen.

Appendix A: Additional findings

This section lists the complete findings of this study, including additional data not reported in the main section. Note that we have included “n” counts in these tables so you can see the precise number of responding institutions for each item. Even where these counts are low, our judgment is that they are helpful, though we encourage you to make your own judgments.

Table A1: Recruitment Funnel Ratios: FTIC First-Year and Transfer Students at Four-Year Public and Four-Year Private Institutions

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Public				Four-Year Private			
		First-Year Students Fall 2010	First-Year Students Fall 2009	Transfer Students Fall 2010	Transfer Students Fall 2009	First-Year Students Fall 2010	First-Year Students Fall 2009	Transfer Students Fall 2010	Transfer Students Fall 2009
Conversion rate from inquiry to application	Median	34.6%	34.1%	78.8%	79.7%	14.7%	14.6%	47.8%	49.1%
	First Quartile	24.7%	23.9%	61.7%	53.5%	9.4%	9.2%	36.5%	35.3%
	Third Quartile	42.8%	42.2%	97.3%	100.0%	22.0%	21.8%	65.4%	68.7%
	N	27	24	23	19	126	122	112	110
Admit rate from application to admit	Median	66.3%	65.3%	64.0%	66.3%	65.5%	65.4%	55.7%	57.9%
	First Quartile	57.7%	57.7%	52.1%	50.2%	53.1%	54.5%	44.8%	46.2%
	Third Quartile	72.4%	77.9%	70.5%	75.1%	74.9%	75.9%	65.6%	67.2%
	N	40	37	38	34	141	136	137	133
Admit rate from complete application to admit	Median	82.1%	85.1%	88.4%	87.7%	86.4%	86.4%	89.9%	89.9%
	First Quartile	67.8%	69.4%	75.0%	67.8%	75.3%	75.7%	71.2%	75.7%
	Third Quartile	90.0%	92.8%	95.4%	95.2%	93.6%	94.8%	96.5%	94.9%
	N	29	26	26	23	122	119	114	112
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	40.8%	42.8%	65.8%	65.3%	29.3%	28.8%	52.6%	53.6%
	First Quartile	34.5%	35.5%	61.8%	61.5%	21.6%	21.8%	45.5%	45.6%
	Third Quartile	48.0%	49.5%	70.4%	71.5%	40.4%	41.6%	60.3%	61.2%
	N	40	38	39	35	142	137	138	134
Melt rate from deposit/confirmed to enrollment	Median	6.9%	8.6%	12.2%	14.4%	11.8%	11.7%	14.3%	12.6%
	First Quartile	4.4%	6.2%	3.6%	8.2%	7.1%	7.5%	9.1%	9.4%
	Third Quartile	10.1%	11.9%	16.4%	16.6%	16.5%	17.2%	18.4%	20.3%
	N	18	18	11	10	91	84	85	76
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	Median	16.9%	14.3%	25.2%	23.2%	21.6%	21.7%	34.6%	31.6%
	First Quartile	5.9%	5.7%	17.9%	13.9%	14.0%	12.5%	22.2%	21.4%
	Third Quartile	24.3%	22.6%	30.6%	28.0%	34.0%	29.5%	43.8%	46.5%
	N	30	26	26	23	121	118	113	111
Percentage of students not identifying themselves before application	Median	34.9%	26.2%	45.8%	39.2%	32.1%	28.3%	50.8%	48.7%
	First Quartile	20.6%	12.9%	17.5%	27.6%	20.8%	17.4%	34.4%	31.1%
	Third Quartile	47.6%	40.6%	66.2%	60.1%	45.3%	41.2%	65.7%	65.6%
	N	20	19	15	15	89	78	70	64

Table A2: Recruitment Funnel Ratios for FTIC First-Year Students by Type of Application, Fall 2010

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Public				Four-Year Private			
		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	Common Application	Another Outside Agency's Application*
Admit rate from application to admit	Median	69.2%	64.0%	NA	NA	60.2%	64.8%	74.8%	51.1%
	First Quartile	57.5%	52.7%	–	–	48.1%	48.7%	61.9%	42.2%
	Third Quartile	78.9%	78.6%	–	–	72.1%	76.0%	81.4%	69.8%
	N	22	20	–	–	73	65	36	27
Admit rate from complete application to admit	Median	82.1%	81.4%	NA	NA	86.9%	79.8%	82.1%	82.7%
	First Quartile	61.0%	65.3%	–	–	72.9%	61.6%	76.2%	71.3%
	Third Quartile	85.4%	88.2%	–	–	95.3%	93.2%	92.1%	96.4%
	N	15	13	–	–	61	56	29	21
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	37.3%	47.2%	NA	NA	32.9%	35.9%	17.9%	19.4%
	First Quartile	32.7%	38.0%	–	–	26.1%	28.6%	13.8%	15.0%
	Third Quartile	44.7%	55.2%	–	–	44.0%	47.2%	24.2%	31.1%
	N	22	20	–	–	72	63	35	24
Melt rate from deposit/confirmed to enrollment	Median	7.7%	4.6%	NA	NA	11.5%	11.6%	11.0%	10.0%
	First Quartile	4.7%	2.7%	–	–	7.6%	6.3%	7.6%	7.9%
	Third Quartile	13.8%	12.5%	–	–	17.9%	16.3%	14.2%	14.2%
	N	12	9	–	–	61	51	32	17
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	Median	11.1%	18.0%	NA	NA	22.2%	16.7%	9.1%	28.6%
	First Quartile	1.0%	8.4%	–	–	14.9%	11.1%	6.6%	20.7%
	Third Quartile	18.4%	28.9%	–	–	35.1%	28.6%	13.7%	45.1%
	N	16	14	–	–	76	56	29	23

* The “Outside Application” column is for any applications received from freshmen via an outside agency (other than Common Application) such as the Royall FastTrack application.

Table A3: Recruitment Funnel Ratios for In-State Vs. Out-of-State Vs. International FTIC First-Year Students, Fall 2010

Funnel Rates		Four-Year Public			Four-Year Private		
		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	Median	44.0%	27.8%	59.8%	20.4%	8.8%	47.7%
	First Quartile	25.7%	23.1%	31.6%	14.2%	5.1%	24.3%
	Third Quartile	49.8%	47.7%	90.5%	27.8%	17.4%	63.2%
	N	14	14	10	89	89	79
Admit rate from application to admit	Median	65.6%	60.9%	35.5%	64.8%	62.2%	43.3%
	First Quartile	59.7%	53.1%	28.5%	51.8%	51.2%	28.6%
	Third Quartile	75.1%	70.0%	54.6%	74.8%	74.8%	57.9%
	N	28	28	24	108	108	97
Admit rate from complete application to admit	Median	83.4%	79.3%	78.6%	86.3%	87.4%	75.0%
	First Quartile	71.6%	65.7%	69.7%	74.7%	74.1%	60.5%
	Third Quartile	90.2%	91.4%	92.0%	94.4%	94.5%	97.2%
	N	20	20	17	88	87	74
Yield rate from admission to enrollment	Median	47.2%	25.9%	34.7%	32.2%	25.1%	28.6%
	First Quartile	40.3%	21.7%	29.2%	25.0%	17.9%	18.0%
	Third Quartile	53.4%	36.4%	47.2%	45.9%	34.3%	45.7%
	N	28	27	22	107	107	93
Melt rate from deposit/confirmed to enrollment	Median	7.3%	9.5%	14.6%	8.6%	11.1%	11.1%
	First Quartile	4.7%	5.7%	10.9%	5.0%	6.3%	0.0%
	Third Quartile	9.9%	15.8%	18.8%	14.4%	16.4%	22.2%
	N	15	15	10	93	94	78
Percentage of applicants not completing application process	Median	13.0%	25.4%	50.0%	22.2%	27.5%	39.6%
	First Quartile	4.8%	10.0%	9.7%	13.9%	15.1%	17.0%
	Third Quartile	24.4%	35.4%	62.9%	32.6%	38.2%	57.7%
	N	19	19	16	87	86	76
Percentage of students not identifying themselves before application	Median	29.9%	43.4%	71.6%	30.3%	36.5%	58.6%
	First Quartile	21.7%	25.2%	51.5%	22.0%	24.6%	34.5%
	Third Quartile	39.7%	47.8%	81.6%	47.5%	54.2%	75.7%
	N	13	12	10	64	63	46

Appendix B: How to use the benchmarks in this report

As the benchmarks in this report have shown, and as the illustration shows below, prospective students are entering the funnel in different ways and moving through it at different rates. 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, 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 to 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. **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,

This report answers questions such as:

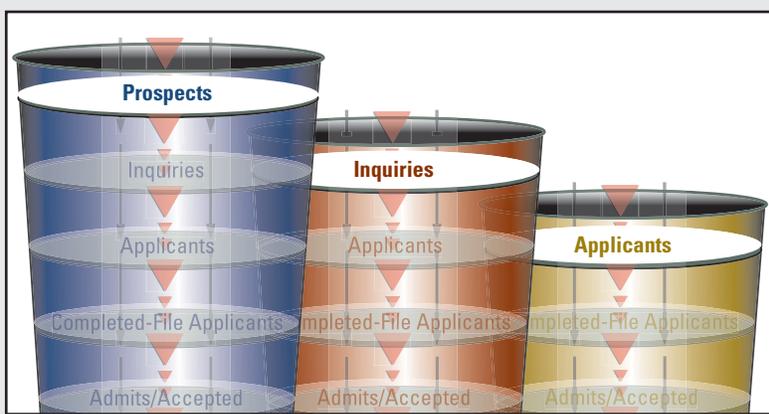
- Is it just my institution's students that are behaving this way or are other four-year campuses (public or private) seeing similar percentages of students inquiring/applying/matriculating?
- How much should I expect yield and funnel rates to differ for in-state vs. out-of-state students vs. international students, and for freshmen vs. transfer students and online vs. paper applicants?

Questions? Want to discuss your funnels or yields?

Please contact Jim Mager, Ph.D., Noel-Levitz senior associate consultant, at jim-mager@noellevitz.com or by calling 1-800-876-1117.

3 Channels of Entry

Here is one important way the funnel is changing



Prospective students enter the funnel at different times and in different ways. Read more about the changing admissions funnel by downloading the resources listed on the next page.

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.

5. **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.
6. **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 institutions' 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.
7. **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, and 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.

For further reading

Visit www.noellevitz.com/ChangingFunnel to access the following papers and reports with our consultants' insights on new approaches to the funnel:

2010 Noel-Levitz White Paper: *In Pursuit of the Secret Shopper: Effective New Strategies for Finding and Engaging Prospective Students*

2009 Article: *Warning: Your Most Common Admissions Funnel Metrics May be Meaningless!*

2009 Noel-Levitz White Paper: *A New Way to Measure Student Success*

2009 Noel-Levitz White Paper: *Retooling the Enrollment Funnel: Strategies and Metrics for a New Era*

Responding institutions

Representatives from 193 four-year, U.S. colleges and universities participated in Noel-Levitz's national electronic survey of undergraduate enrollment, retention, and admissions funnel success, which was distributed to all four-year, degree-granting institutions in September and October of 2010. The respondents included 43 four-year public institutions and 150 four-year private institutions. The names of the participating institutions appear below.

To download the corresponding fall 2010 enrollment and retention report, visit www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports.

Thank you to those who participated.

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4-year public institutions

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (GA)
Arizona State University (AZ)
California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo (CA)
Delaware State University (DE)
Emporia State University (KS)
Frostburg State University (MD)
Georgia Institute of Technology (GA)
Illinois State University (IL)
Indiana State University (IN)
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IN)
James Madison University (VA)
Kent State University Tuscarawas Campus (OH)
Louisiana Tech University (LA)
Missouri State University (MO)
Northern Michigan University (MI)
Ohio State University at Lima Campus, The (OH)
Ohio State University Main Campus, The (OH)
Southern Utah University (UT)
State University of New York at Fredonia (NY)
State University of New York at Stony Brook (NY)
Tarleton State University (TX)
Texas Tech University (TX)
University of Central Arkansas (AR)
University of Central Missouri (MO)
University of Iowa, The (IA)
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (MI)
University of Minnesota-Rochester (MN)
University of Missouri-Columbia (MO)
University of Nevada, Reno (NV)
University of New Mexico Main Campus (NM)
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (PA)
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (OK)
University of South Carolina Columbia (SC)
University of South Dakota, The (SD)
University of Southern Mississippi, The (MS)
University of Texas-Pan American (TX)
University of Vermont (VT)
University of Washington (WA)
University of Wisconsin-River Falls (WI)
West Texas A & M University (TX)
Western Michigan University (MI)
Westfield State University (MA)
Wright State University Main Campus (OH)

4-year private institutions

Note: A few two-year private colleges are included among the four-year private institutions.

Abilene Christian University (TX)
Alvernia University (PA)
Alverno College (WI)
Antioch University Los Angeles (CA)
Aquinas College (MI)
Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University, The (MA)
Ashland University (OH)
Atlanta Christian College (GA)
Augsburg College (MN)
Azusa Pacific University (CA)
Baldwin-Wallace College (OH)
Baylor University (TX)
Belhaven University (MS)
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (MA)
Berea College (KY)
Bethel College (IN)
Boston University (MA)
Brigham Young University Hawaii (HI)
Bryan College (TN)
Burlington College (VT)
Butler University (IN)
Caldwell College (NJ)
California College of the Arts (CA)
California Lutheran University (CA)
Canisius College (NY)
Capital University (OH)
Cardinal Stritch University (WI)
Carroll University (WI)
Cedarville University (OH)
Central College (IA)
Chatham University (PA)
Christian Brothers University (TN)
Clarke University (IA)
Cleveland Chiropractic College-Kansas City (KS)
Cleveland Institute of Art (OH)
Coe College (IA)
College of Saint Benedict (MN)
Columbia College (SC)
Columbia College Chicago (IL)
Concordia University Chicago (IL)
Corcoran College of Art and Design (DC)
Cornell College (IA)
Cornerstone University (MI)
Crown College (MN)
Delaware Valley College (PA)
Dillard University (LA)
Dominican University of California (CA)
Drexel University (PA)
East Texas Baptist University (TX)
Edgewood College (WI)
Eureka College (IL)
Evangel University (MO)
Flagler College (FL)
Fresno Pacific University (CA)
Georgetown College (KY)
Georgian Court University (NJ)
Holy Cross College (IN)
Guilford College (NC)
Hamline University (MN)
Holy Cross College (IN)
Holy Family University (PA)
Hood College (MD)
Hope College (MI)
Indiana Institute of Technology (IN)
Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)
Jacksonville University (FL)
Keystone College (PA)
La Roche College (PA)
Lakeview College of Nursing (IL)
Lancaster Bible College (PA)
Lenoir-Rhyne University (NC)
LeTourneau University (TX)
Lewis and Clark College (OR)
Loyola Marymount University (CA)
Marist College (NY)
Marquette University (WI)
Marymount College (CA)
Master's College and Seminary, The (CA)
Menlo College (CA)
Mercer University (GA)
Milligan College (TN)
Mills College (CA)
Mount Ida College (MA)
Mount Mercy University (IA)
Mount St. Mary's University (MD)
Mount Vernon Nazarene University (OH)
National-Louis University (IL)
Oklahoma City University (OK)
Oral Roberts University (OK)
Otterbein University (OH)
Pacific Northwest College of Art (OR)
Palm Beach Atlantic University (FL)
Paul Smith's College of Arts and Sciences (NY)
Post University (CT)
Prescott College (AZ)
Principia College (IL)
Providence College (RI)
Queens University of Charlotte (NC)
Quincy University (IL)
Randolph College (VA)
Regent University (VA)
Ripon College (WI)
Robert Morris University (PA)
Rockhurst University (MO)
Rocky Mountain College (MT)
Saint Joseph's University (PA)
Saint Louis University (MO)
Saint Martin's University (WA)
Saint Norbert College (WI)
Saint Peter's College (NJ)
Seattle University (WA)
Simpson University (CA)

Soka University of America (CA)
Southwestern Assemblies of God
University (TX)
Southwestern College (KS)
Spartanburg Methodist College (SC)
Spring Arbor University (MI)
St. Ambrose University (IA)
St. John Fisher College (NY)
Suffolk University (MA)
Susquehanna University (PA)
Sweet Briar College (VA)
Syracuse University Main Campus (NY)
Texas Wesleyan University (TX)
Tiffin University (OH)
Tulane University (LA)
University of Dallas (TX)
University of Dayton (OH)
University of Denver (CO)
University of Findlay, The (OH)
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (TX)
University of Mobile (AL)
University of Portland (OR)
University of Saint Francis (IN)
University of St. Francis (IL)
University of St. Thomas (TX)
University of the Southwest (NM)
Vaughn College of Aeronautics and
Technology (NY)
Waynesburg University (PA)
Western New England College (MA)
Westminster College (MO)
Wheelock College (MA)
White Earth Tribal and Community
College (MN)
Whitworth University (WA)
Widener University (PA)
William Jessup University (CA)
Wilson College (PA)
Wisconsin Lutheran College (WI)
Xavier University (OH)
York College of Pennsylvania (PA)
Young Harris College (GA)

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Readers are invited to contact Noel-Levitz to schedule a complimentary, 30-minute consultation by telephone with an experienced enrollment and/or retention strategist. We'll listen carefully to what's happening with your funnel and share insights with you based on our consulting work with campuses nationwide. To schedule an appointment, contact us at 1-800-876-1117 or ContactUs@noellevitz.com.



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Please watch for our next survey and report on admissions funnel conversion and yield rates in fall 2012.

Questions about this report?

We hope you have found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions or would like more information about the findings, please contact Jim Mager, Noel-Levitz senior associate consultant, at 1-800-876-1117 or jim-mager@noellevitz.com.

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About Noel-Levitz and our higher education research

A trusted partner to higher education, Noel-Levitz focuses on strategic planning for enrollment and student success. We 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, monitoring student and campus usage of the Web and electronic communications, and comparing institutional budgets, policies, and outcomes. 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.

For more information, visit www.noellevitz.com.

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