

# 02

## Chapter 2 Recruitment and Yield Strategies

### Recruitment Strategies by Prospective Student Group

Results of NACAC's 2018–19 Admission Trends Survey indicate that institutions use a wide variety of recruitment methods to connect with prospective students. Contacting students through email and engaging with them through the institution's website or by hosting campus visits were the most important recruitment strategies that colleges and universities used for first-time freshmen. An additional four factors were each rated as considerably important by at least half of survey respondents. They were high school visits (63 percent), direct mail (50 percent), and outreach to parents and high school counselors (55 percent and 54 percent, respectively) (see Table 4).

### Early Decision

Twenty-five percent of respondents to NACAC's 2018–19 Admission Trends Survey offered Early Decision (ED). Private colleges were more likely than public institutions to offer Early Decision programs (37 percent compared to 5 percent), as were selective colleges.<sup>1</sup> More than half (56 percent) of the most selective colleges (those accepting fewer than 50 percent of applicants) had an Early Decision application option. (See Appendix C for a detailed description of Early Decision and Early Action policies.)

Early Decision applicants represent only a small portion of the total applicant pool at colleges that have ED policies. Only 6 percent of all applications for Fall 2018 admission

to ED colleges were received through Early Decision. The proportion of all applications received through ED increased with the admission selectivity rate and yield rate.<sup>2</sup>

As expected, colleges with Early Decision policies reported a higher acceptance rate for their ED applicants as compared to all applicants (61 percent versus 49 percent). Given the binding nature of Early Decision policies, the average yield rate for Early Decision admits was 90 percent, substantially higher than the average yield rate for all students admitted to ED colleges (25 percent) (see Table 5). Colleges with lower total yield rates tended to admit a greater percentage of their ED applicants compared to those with higher yield rates.<sup>3</sup> More selective colleges tended to have higher ED yield rates.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chi-squared test for Early Decision policy and: institution type ( $X^2(1) = 55.8$ ,  $\Phi = .366$ ),  $p < .001$ ; Correlation (Spearman's Rho) for Early Decision policy and acceptance rate ( $-.371$ ),  $p < .001$ .

<sup>2</sup> Correlation (Pearson's R) for percent of apps received through ED and: acceptance rate ( $-.333$ ); yield rate ( $.439$ ),  $p < .01$ .

<sup>3</sup> Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional yield rate and ED acceptance rate ( $-.617$ ),  $p < .01$ .

<sup>4</sup> Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional selectivity rate and ED yield ( $.727$ ),  $p < .01$ .

TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE TO VARIOUS RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, FALL 2018

Factor	N	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
Email	215	88.4	10.2	1.4	—
Hosted Campus Visit	215	85.1	13.5	1.4	—
Website	215	78.6	19.5	1.9	—
High School Visit	214	63.1	30.8	6.1	—
Parents	215	54.9	30.7	14.0	0.5
High School Counselor	214	54.2	36.9	8.4	0.5
Direct Mail	214	50.0	32.7	15.0	2.3
Social Media	215	47.4	42.8	9.8	—
College Fairs	213	44.1	38.5	16.4	0.9
Text Messaging	212	34.4	31.1	21.2	13.2
Online Advertising	214	25.7	38.8	25.7	9.8
Community-Based Organizations	214	20.6	44.4	32.2	2.8
Test-Optional Policy	210	11.9	12.4	10.5	65.2
Conditional/Provisional Admission Program	212	9.0	19.8	30.7	40.6
Alumni	212	7.1	45.3	43.9	3.8

—No respondents chose this option.

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018–19.



**56%**

OF SELECTIVE COLLEGES  
OFFERED EARLY DECISION

Between Fall 2017 and Fall 2018, colleges reported an average increase of 11 percent in the number of Early Decision applicants and 10 percent in ED admits. In a prior survey, colleges also had reported increases in ED applications and ED admits between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 (4 percent each).

### Early Action

Thirty-eight percent of four-year colleges offered Early Action plans, according to results of the 2018–19 Admission Trends Survey. Colleges with lower yield rates were more

likely to offer Early Action.<sup>5</sup> Forty-six percent of colleges with yield rates lower than 30 percent used Early Action.

For Fall 2018, 45 percent of applications to colleges that had Early Action admission plans were received through EA. Similar to the pattern with Early Decision, colleges with Early Action accepted a greater proportion of EA applicants when compared to the overall applicant pool (73 percent versus 64 percent). Unlike Early Decision, Early Action did not provide a significant benefit to institutions in terms of yield



**46%**

OF COLLEGES WITH LOW  
YIELD RATES OFFERED  
EARLY ACTION

rates. The average yield rate for EA admits was nearly identical to that of the overall applicant pool (25 percent and 24 percent, respectively) (see Table 6).

From Fall 2017 to Fall 2018, the number of Early Action applications increased by 10 percent and the number of students accepted through EA increased by 9 percent, on average. Colleges also had reported average increases in EA applications and EA admits between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 (9 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

TABLE 5. KEY STATISTICS FOR EARLY DECISION COLLEGES: FALL 2018

	N	Mean Percent
Applications Received through Early Decision	100	5.6
Early Decision Selectivity Rate	98	61.1
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	104	49.3
Early Decision Yield Rate	84	89.6
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	104	25.4

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018–19.

<sup>5</sup> Correlation (Spearman's Rho) for Early Action policy and institutional yield rate (.254),  $p < .001$ .

## Wait Lists

For the Fall 2018 admission cycle, 43 percent of institutions reported using a wait list. Private institutions were more likely than public colleges and universities to maintain a wait list (48 percent compared to 34 percent). Both colleges with lower enrollments and those with lower acceptance rates also were more likely to use a wait list.<sup>6</sup> Eighty-two percent of the most selective institutions (accepting fewer than half of all applicants) maintained a wait list.

Institutions reported placing an average of 10 percent of all applicants on the wait list for the Fall 2018 admission cycle, and an average of 50 percent of waitlisted

students opted to remain on the wait list. Colleges with lower acceptance rates placed a greater proportion of students on wait lists, on average.<sup>7</sup>

Institutions admitted an average of 20 percent of all students who chose to remain on wait lists. Selective colleges were least likely to admit students from a wait list.<sup>8</sup> Only seven percent of students who accepted a wait list spot at the most selective colleges (those accepting fewer than half of all applicants) were ultimately admitted. The average number of students offered a position on a wait list increased by 18 percent between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 and by 12 percent between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017.



THE MOST SELECTIVE COLLEGES ADMITTED ONLY 7 PERCENT OF WAITLISTED STUDENTS

TABLE 6. KEY STATISTICS FOR EARLY ACTION COLLEGES: FALL 2018

	N	Mean Percent
Applications Received through Early Action	112	45.3
Early Action Selectivity Rate	106	73.1
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	161	63.9
Early Action Yield Rate	106	25.4
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	161	23.7

SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018–19.

<sup>6</sup> Chi-squared test for wait list policy and: institution type ( $X^2(1) = 8.8$ ,  $\Phi = .144$ ),  $p < .01$ ; Correlation (Spearman's Rho) for wait list policy and institutional acceptance rate (-.402), enrollment (-.196),  $p < .001$ .

<sup>7</sup> Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional acceptance rate and percentage of applicants waitlisted (-.196),  $p < .01$ .

<sup>8</sup> Correlation (Pearson's R) for institutional acceptance rate and percentage admitted from wait list (.443),  $p < .01$ .