

# Counselors: Please tell your students we can take it



February 03, 2021 By Jon Boeckenstedt, Oregon State University

To say this has been an odd year in college admissions would be an understatement. The complexity and the uncertainty and the pressures of the season are all part of what we signed up for as part of the job, of course. While the profession can be a roller-coaster, it's also a lot of fun and quite gratifying. I'm now in the 38th year of doing this, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

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But with the upheaval of the pandemic comes great uncertainty. Colgate applications **went up** 102%. Harvard **reported** being up 42%. Campuses in the University of Florida system are **down** by as much as 50%. What does it all mean? It means trying to figure out how fall will look is harder than it's ever been.

In order to know how many students to admit, we have to figure out what percentage of those admitted will enroll. For those of you who don't live and breathe college admissions, that's what we call the "yield rate."

Every year, someone asks me, "What if everyone you admit enrolls?" and I have to assure them that this is not something we ever worry about. In fact, at most colleges, most students (**by a lot**) who are admitted *don't* enroll. (The overall percentage keeps falling, and now is about 25%, meaning only one of every four admits, as shown on the pink line below, enrolls).

It's a delicate balance to get your new student enrollment right: Too few students and the university budget can be affected. Too many, and you're facing problems with over-crowded classrooms and residence halls, if you even have the ability to enroll more. It's never easy to predict how several thousand 18-year-olds will behave. This year, none of the things we'd normally use to predict yield rate is as reliable as it's been in the past, and that means it can be harder to make admissions decisions.

Like a lot of universities, our application numbers at **Oregon State** are very solid this year, up 40% over last year at this time (and in consideration of all that students are dealing with, we're likely to keep the application process open well past our deadline, especially for Oregon residents. You

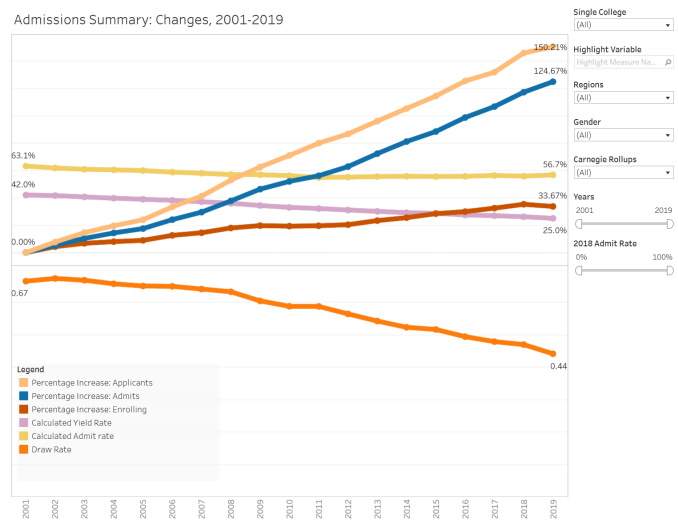
can always email me at [jon.boeckenstedt@oregonstate.edu](mailto:jon.boeckenstedt@oregonstate.edu) to check if we're still open.) In addition to the record number of applications, we have a few hundred admitted students who wanted to attend last year but who decided they couldn't due to COVID challenges. They have spots in Fall, 2021 reserved for them. While positive admissions trends are generally considered a good thing, increases like this can be a little scary to those of us who do this for a living.

So, counselors, please tell your students: If they've applied and/or been admitted, but have decided to attend another college, just let us know. Call the office, drop us an email from the account we have for you, click on the survey we send, or just go into your student portal and make a few clicks. It would be enormously helpful for us, but you'll also be doing a favor for the students who are eager to attend but might not be admitted yet. *(Just to be clear, students still have until May 1 to make their decision, so there is no pressure to do so before then. But once a decision has been made, we appreciate knowing.)*

We do this every year, but this year everything we do, including this, seems to be taking on greater importance. So, let us know?

We're not going to take it personally. Honestly. You'll be doing us a favor by giving it to us straight.

I think I speak for my colleagues at colleges and universities across the country, but I know for sure that we'd appreciate hearing from you **Out Here in Oregon.**



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