



# Applicant to Admit: An examination of how institutions admit the freshmen class

2019



**AACRAO**

*Advancing Global Higher Education*

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## Foreword

AACRAO is pleased to partner with NACAC in conducting our first admission practice survey.

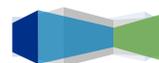
Admission practices evolve over time as the profession matures, the recruitment landscape changes, and new technologies emerge. This subject in particular has been in discussion recently among the public, policy makers, and the media. While acknowledging the fluid nature of admission practices, AACRAO and NACAC partnered to survey our memberships on their current practices in hopes of offering admission professionals a window into the range of practices that guide their work and provide a means of comparing practices with other institutions. This survey also gave us an opportunity to gain an understanding of the extent of certain practices such as priority and legacy admission that have been the subject of discussion among the public, policy makers, and the media.

We hope the insights gained from this report provide a broader context to examine your own practices. While they vary from institution to institution, the data indicate that certain practices are more common at private or proprietary institutions than at public institutions, for example. This could be driven by differences in legislative mandates and other public policy directives, but could also derive from differences in missions and philosophy. We hope this report provides a foundation for future discussions of admission practices and helps us gain an understanding of how certain practices evolve and are incorporated at our institutions.

Mike Reilly  
Executive Director  
AACRAO

### About NACAC

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), founded in 1937, is an organization of more than 15,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education. NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the association's [\*Code of Ethics and Professional Practices\*](#).



## Executive Summary

AACRAO and the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) partnered on this first-of-its-kind comprehensive report on admission operations at U.S. institutions who admit freshmen. Throughout this report we offer admission professionals a window into the range of practices that guide their work and provide a means of comparing practices with other institutions. The survey results also give us an opportunity to gain an understanding of the extent to which certain practices such as priority admission are used. Responses were received from a statistically representative sample of U.S., Title IV eligible, degree-granting institutions who admit freshman (n=318, CI 90%, SE 5%) of varying size<sup>1</sup>, types<sup>2</sup> and institutional control<sup>3</sup> (Appendix A).

The survey design is based on the collective understanding of admission operations between NACAC and AACRAO admission professionals. In addition, it expands on and adds nuance to the admission practices captured in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) admission content<sup>4</sup>, and NACAC's annual State of College Admission (SOCA) report.<sup>5</sup> As such, this report is meant to compliment both IPEDS and SOCA data.

The report is separated into the following topics:

- Application materials, type and related operations
- Admission plans and calendars
- Operational technology
- Staffing and opinions about operations
- Use of data analytics to measure operational efficiency

### Key Findings

- Despite the availability of technology solutions designed to automate certain aspects of admission operations, admission processes are highly complex for most institutions.
- The use of technology, or lack thereof, is the most referenced challenge to admission operations.
- At 62% of institutions, prospects can only apply for admission online.
- Most freshmen are admitted to the institution and their program/major through a central office of admission, in contrast to a specific academic department.
- Paper is still a prevalent method for the submission of required application materials.
- Nearly one-fifth of admission offices measure and consider a prospect's demonstrated interest as part of the admission process.

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<sup>1</sup> The enrollment value used to delineate the institution's size category is defined as full-time enrollment plus 1/3 of the part-time enrollment and is based on the enrollment reported by the institution to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

<sup>2</sup> Types: Lower-division only refers primarily to community and technical colleges; comprehensive institutions offer both undergraduate and/or professional degrees; undergraduate only

<sup>3</sup> Control: public; private, not-for-profit; private, proprietary

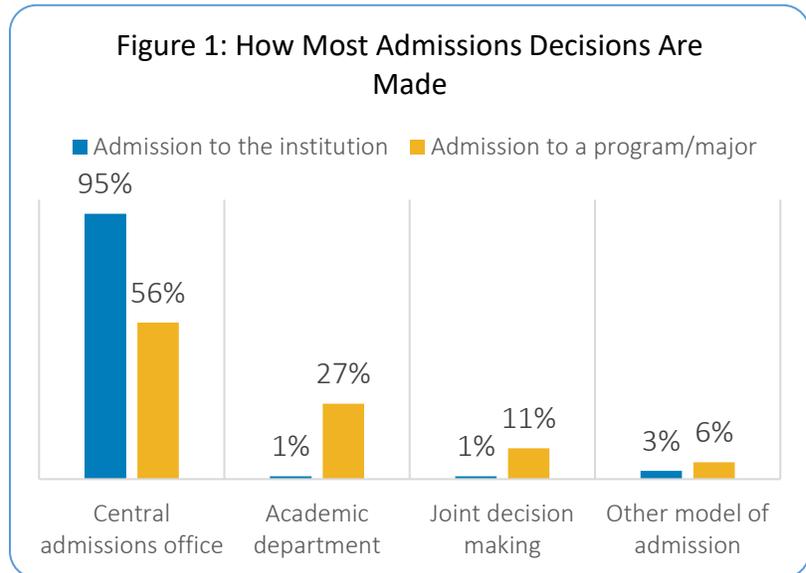
<sup>4</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/survey-components/6/admissions>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/publications/state-of-college-admission/>

## Application Materials, Types and Related Operations

Most institutions make both institutional level and program/major level admission decisions through a central office (Figure 1). However, private-proprietary institutions are much less likely than public and private-not-for-profit institutions to make admission decisions in a centralized office. Undergraduate-only institutions are also more likely than other types of institutions to make joint admission decisions (i.e., decisions involving a centralized office and an academic department).

Even with the availability of technology to make automated admission decisions if configured to do so, less than half automate all or some the admission decisions (see below).



**62%** - “None of our admission decisions are made automatically - each decision is made by a person or committee.”

**14%** - “All of our admission decisions are made automatically (by a system process) based on data collected in the application process.”

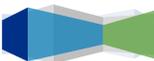
**17%** - “More than half of our admission decisions are made automatically.”

**7%** - “Less than half, but some, of our admission decisions are made automatically.”

### Application Format(s)

Admission process related technology is big business in higher education<sup>6</sup> and includes technology focused on complete student information systems with a built-in application function, stand-alone application solutions, recruitment solutions, content management solutions, relationship management solutions, analytic solutions and any number of permutations of the functions above. When focusing on just the application for admission, survey results indicate that online applications for freshmen admission are ubiquitous. In this

<sup>6</sup> <http://pages.nrcua.org/rs/514-WFI-660/images/Eduventures-Research-2019-Tech-Landscape.jpg>

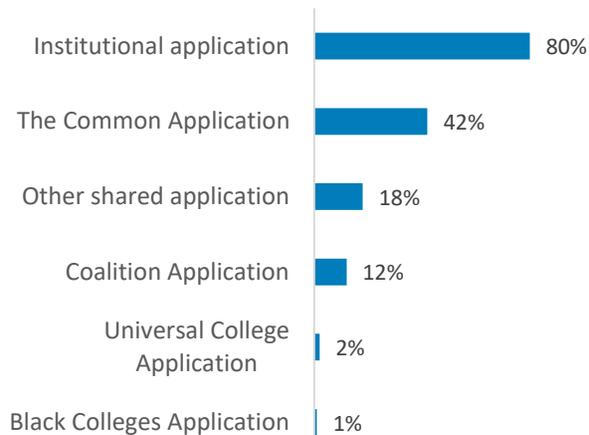


sample, just one institution does not have an online application. The following bullet points highlight the complexity of the application streams in which most institutions operate.

### Online application data

- 62% report exclusively using an online process for admission applications.
  - Of these institutions, 61% use more than one online application.
- Among all respondents
  - 58% use just one online application,
  - 30% use two online applications, and
  - 12% use three or more.
- 80% of institutions use their own online application (Figure 2), and of those, 45% do so exclusively (i.e., no other online application but may use paper or digital download). Other shared applications may include state level applications (e.g., Apply Texas), and other consortia applications.

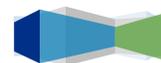
Figure 2: Online Applications in Use

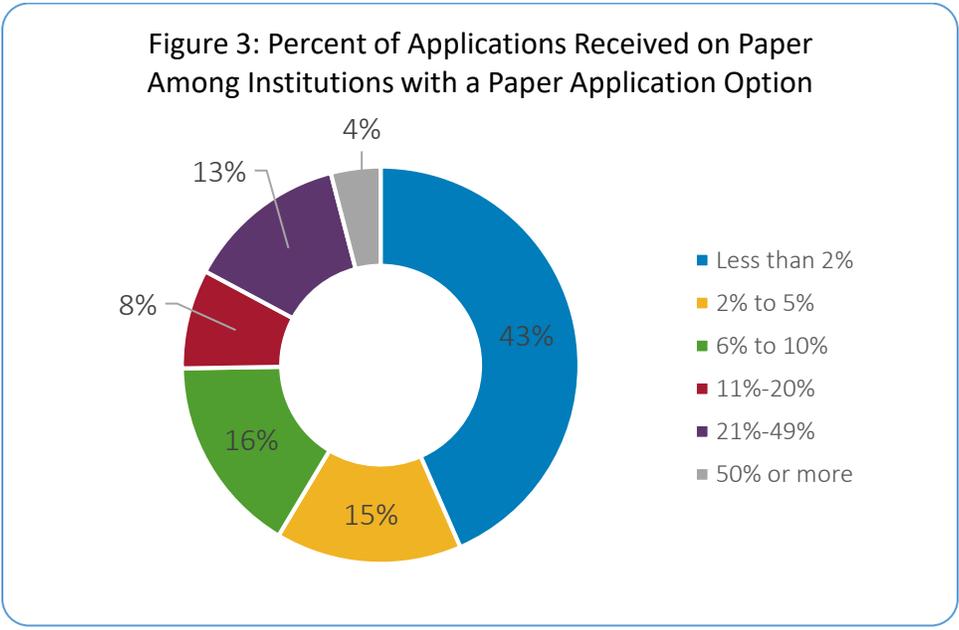


### Multiple application formats data

- 38% of institutions offer applicants alternatives in addition to at least one online application.
  - 88% provide paper copies
  - 60% provide a digital download
  - 48% provide both
- 10% of responding institutions use more than one online application AND provide BOTH a digital download and paper option for applicants. This means there are at least four application streams for staff to monitor, manage and process.

Among the institutions using multiple application formats, online is overwhelmingly the preferred format. For at least some institutions, the effort of printing and processing paper applications may not be offset by the percentage of applications received in that format (Figure 3). Nearly half report that less than 2% of their applications are submitted on paper, and just 4% report that half or more of their applications are submitted on paper. Paper applications typically take longer to process due to the fact that at least some of the data must be manually entered into the student information system (SIS).





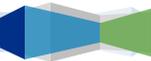
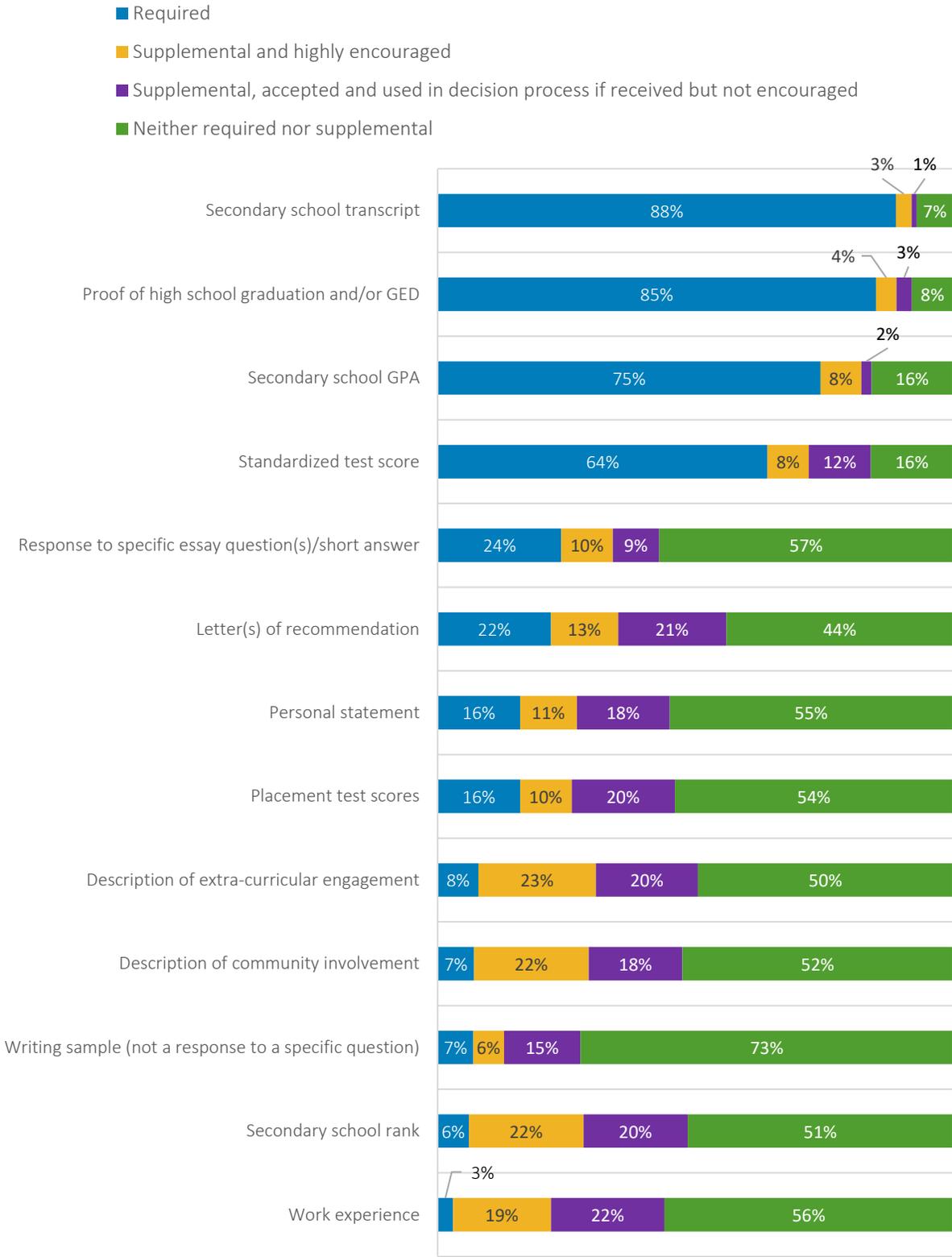
**Information, Materials and Factors used in the Admit Process; Method of Collection; and Timeframe**

**Application Requirements**

Deviating slightly from the IPEDS admission considerations language for undergraduates<sup>7</sup>, this survey used the following consideration categories to help capture the nuanced difference in practice: “required,” “supplemental and highly encouraged,” “supplemental, accepted and used in decision process if received but not encouraged,” or “neither required nor supplemental.” In addition, the IPEDS survey includes nine admission considerations; this survey includes 13 in an attempt to be more broadly encompassing of institutional practices (Figure 4). How each item is addressed in the admission process varies by institutional type and control (Appendices B and C).

<sup>7</sup> [https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/Downloads/Forms/package\\_14\\_102.pdf](https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/Downloads/Forms/package_14_102.pdf)

**Figure 4: Application Materials Collected**



Not surprisingly, with the exception of lower-division-only and private-proprietary institutions, the secondary school transcript is the item most often required for admission, and work experience the least likely to be required.

As anticipated, the differences in materials collected and how they are addressed in the admission process differs considerably between lower-division-only institutions and undergraduate or comprehensive institutions. For example:

- Lower-division-only institutions require fewer materials but are more likely to require placement test scores.
- Undergraduate-only institutions are more likely than the other two types to highly encourage supplemental materials.
- Public institutions are less likely to use supplemental materials than either private-not-for-profit or private-proprietary institutions.
- Comprehensive institutions are more likely to require standardized test scores than other institutional types, as are public institutions.

The application requirement details collected through this survey also complement data gathered annually by NACAC and published in the State of College Admission report.<sup>8</sup> NACAC's primary interest has been to understand the weight that is given to various factors as institutions make admission decisions.<sup>9</sup> As expected, the results of NACAC's annual Admission Trends Survey (ATS) on the importance of various admission factors are generally consistent with the data presented here on application material requirements. For example, ATS survey results have shown that grades in high school are consistently cited as the most important factor in admission decisions. Other factors that are rated as considerably important by a majority of institutions include strength of the high school curriculum and admission test scores.

### Methods for collecting application materials

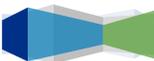
Although most enable applicants to submit materials through more than one method, paper remains prominent in the process (Figure 5). The following definitions were provided to respondents to help in the selection process.

- " 'Part of the online application' is intended to mean the data is entered by the applicant as part of the online application and may or may not also be submitted as a paper or digital document."
- "A 'digital document' refers to a PDF, JPEG, TIFF, Word or any other format that can be uploaded/attached to an online application, an email or other electronic means as part of the application process."

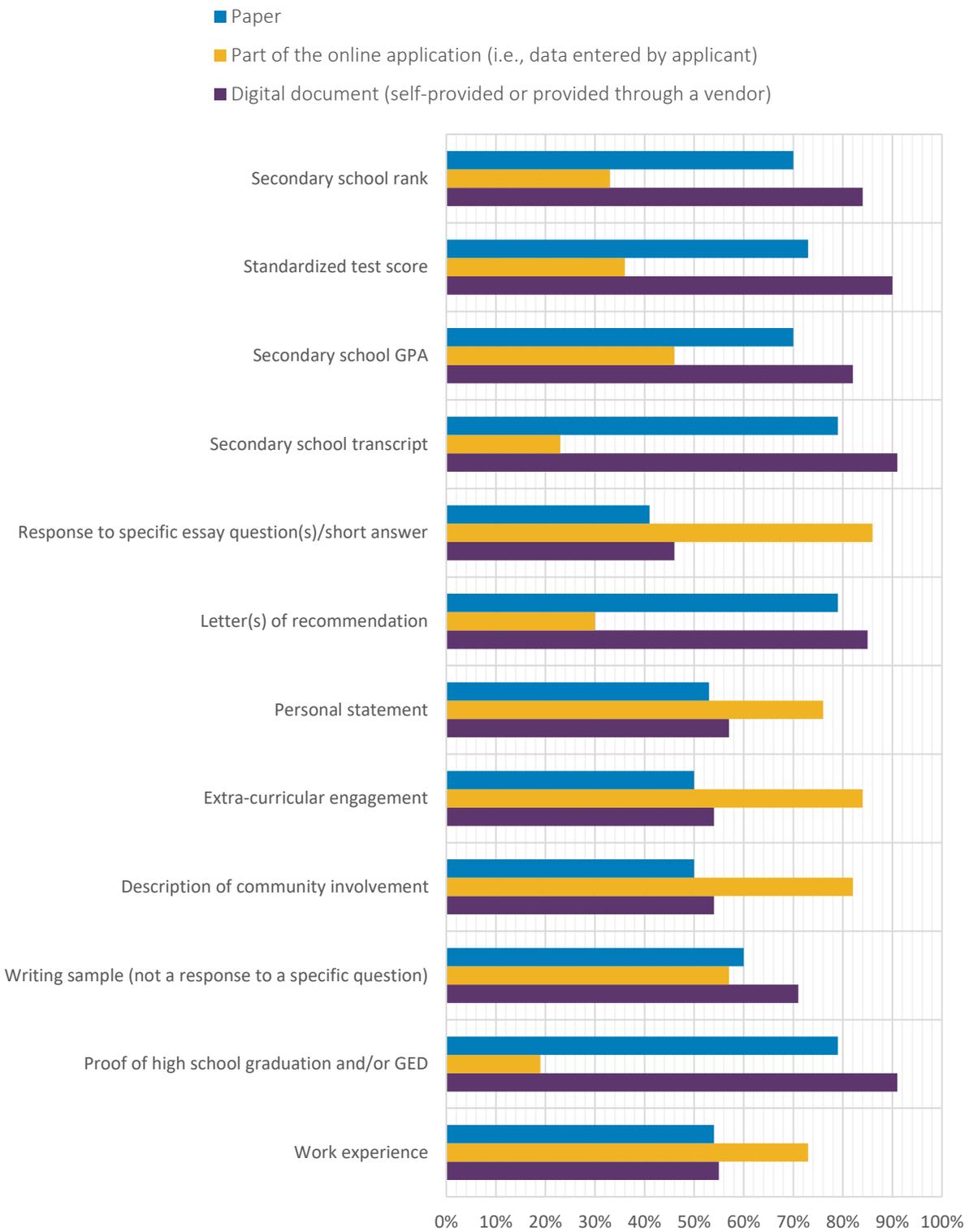
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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018\\_soca/soca18\\_ch3.pdf](https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018_soca/soca18_ch3.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> NACAC's survey of admission offices is limited to four-year, not-for-profit institutions.

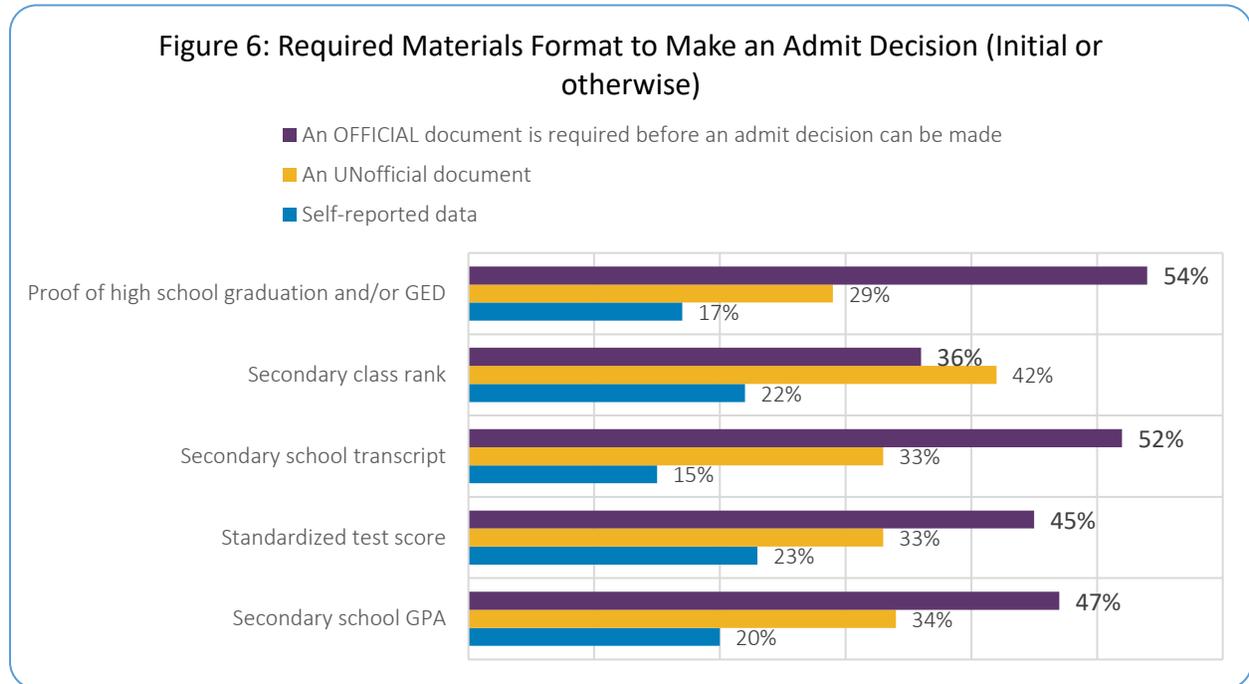


**Figure 5: Methods for Collecting Application Materials\***  
(all that apply)

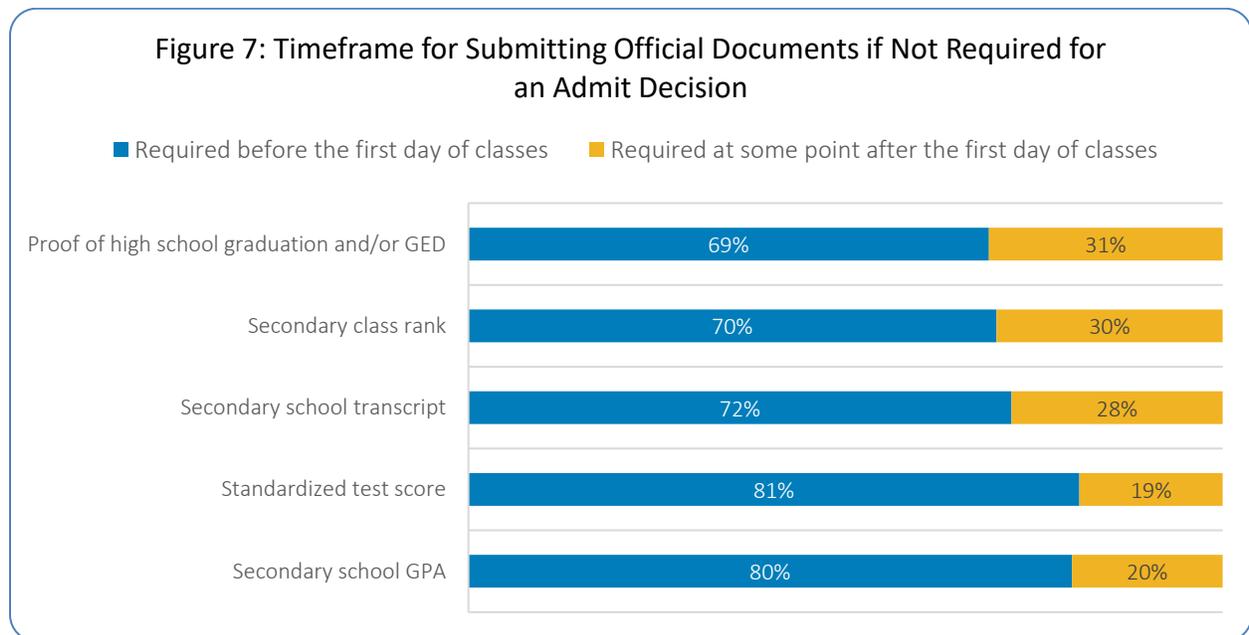


\*Placement tests are taken at the institution and do not need to be submitted.

When required as part of the application, some self reported data is considered sufficient for an admission decision for about a quarter of respondents. The remainder required either an unofficial document or an official document before an admit decision (initial or otherwise) is made (Figure 6).

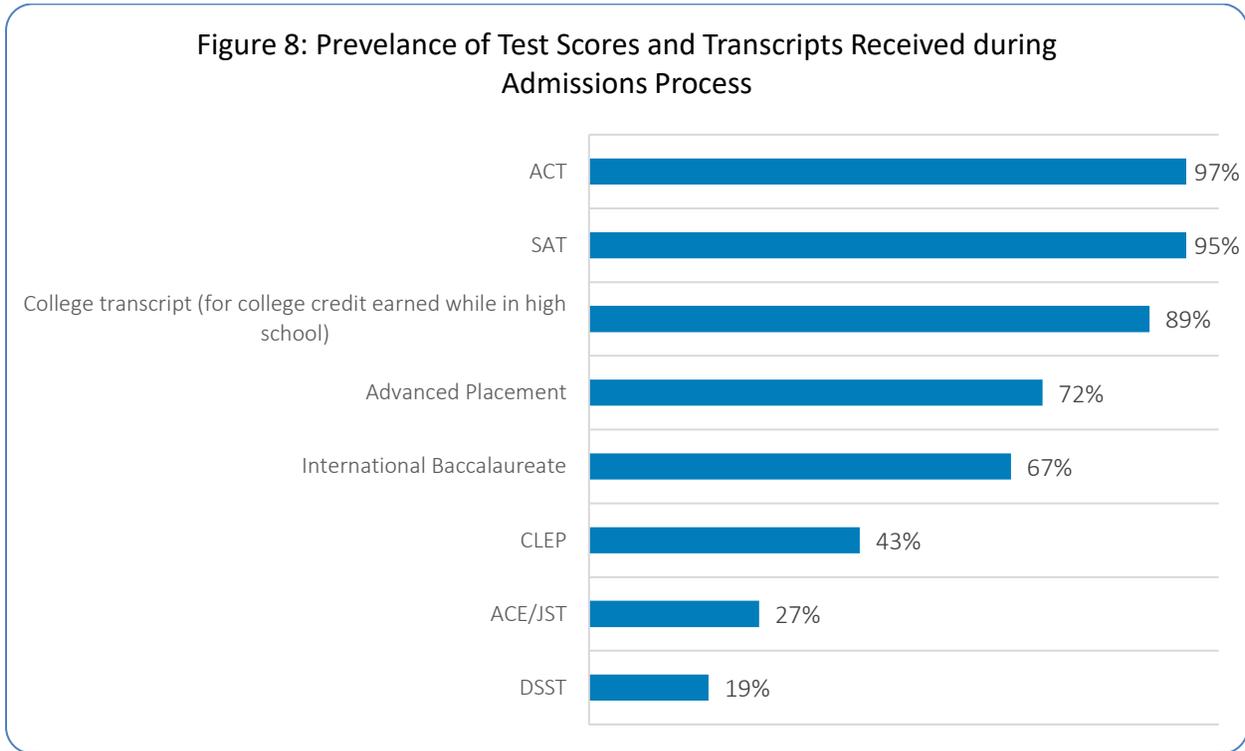


When an official document was NOT required before the admit decision could be made, respondents were asked to indicate when the official document was required (Figure 7). In most cases, the official document was required before the first day of class.



## Collecting test scores and college transcripts

Not all institutions collect standardized test scores, alternative credit transcripts (e.g., advanced placement, CLEP) or college transcripts for high school applicants who earned credit while still in high school. Figure 8 details the prevalence of each.



How institutions receive the test scores and transcripts listed above varies with most accepting more than one format (Figure 9). Respondents were able to indicate which formats are accepted: paper, an electronic data load (i.e., computer to computer), a digital document such as a PDF, or some combination thereof. While paper is less common than the other formats for ACT and SAT scores, it is the predominant format for the others.

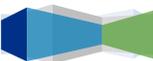
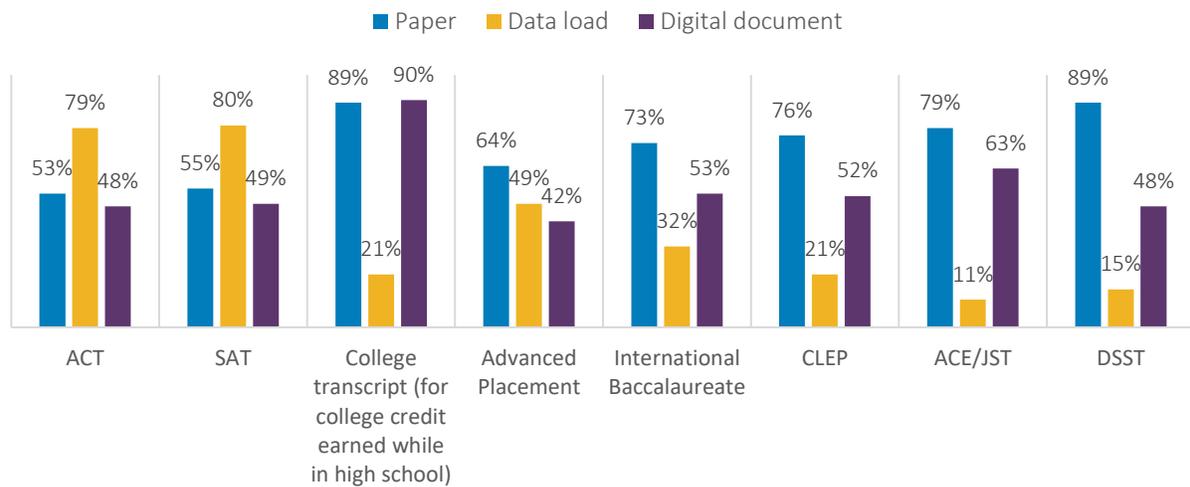


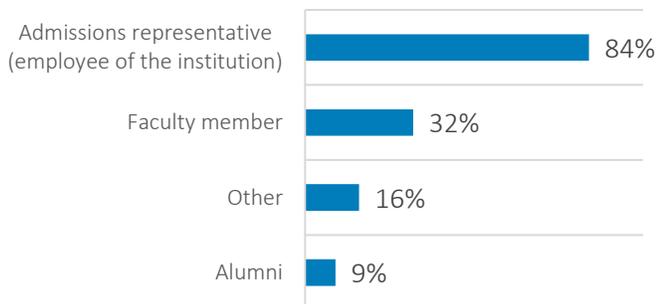
Figure 9: Method of Receipt for Test Scores and College Transcripts (all that apply)



### Use of interviews

About one-quarter (27%) of institutions require a personal interview. Of those institutions requiring an interview, 5% require it for all applicants, and 22% for some. The survey enabled respondents to indicate who conducts the interviews. By allowing respondents to select more than one response, it was intended that two possible practices were collected: 1) the applicant may be interviewed by any one among the selected; or 2) the applicant is interviewed by more than one during the admit process. Among those who interview applicants, admission representatives are the most likely to complete the interview, and alumni are the least likely (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Who Conducts Admission Interviews (all that apply)



### Admitting home schooled students

Just 1% of respondents do not admit home schooled applicants. Among the rest, 48% have an institutional policy addressing how these applicants are processed. The other 51% admit home schooled applicants but do not have a formal practice or policy for doing so. The methods accepted as proof of high school completion for home schooled applicants varies; however, 70% of survey respondents accept either a GED or a transcript issued by the home-schooling parent (Figure 11).

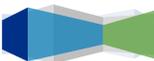
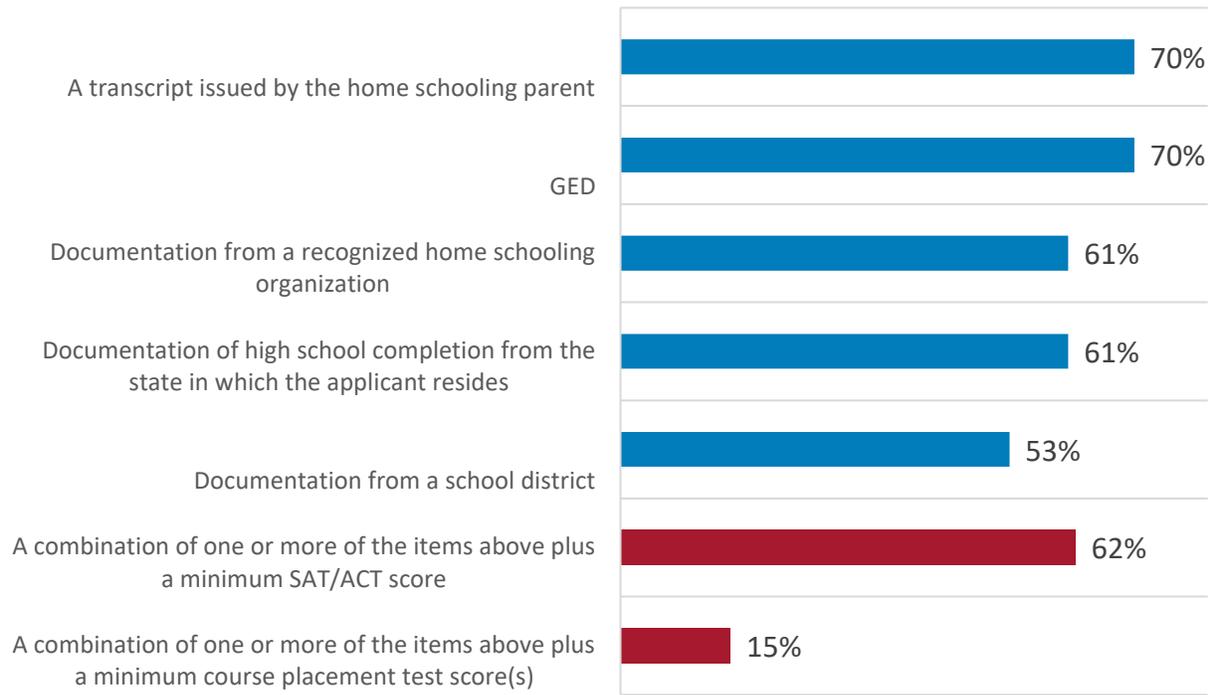


Figure 11: Accepted as Proof of High School Completion for Home Schooled



### Criminal justice information

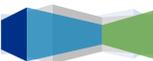
Almost two-thirds of institutions ask about criminal history as part of initial application; one-third do not ask at any point; and 3% ask post-application but pre-admission.

### Additional factors used in the admit decision rubric

In response to the recent an ongoing news about the various admission scandals, the question below was constructed to gather data on whether or not an institution gives preference to an applicant’s membership in a particular special population in the admit decision. This question is differentiated from the data listed in figure 4 (page 6) in that the elements listed in figure 4 are not necessarily used to make an admit decision but may be collected for other purposes. For example, a high school transcript is required by 88% of respondents but community colleges likely only use the transcript to prove graduation from high school rather than to look for a particular grade point average, course grades, and/or courses taken. Whereas, the data in figure 12 indicates that these items are part of an admit decision rubric.

*“Indicate if any of the following factors are taken into consideration when evaluating whether or not to admit an applicant. Reminder: All data will be reported in the aggregate. No single institution will be identified.*

- Athletes
- Legacy applicants



- Veterans*
- Applicants who have completed a dual enrollment course, summer program or other immersive program at the institution prior to high school graduation*
- Applicants who have a particular set of academic qualifications (HS GPA, HS rank, test score)*
- Applicants who are related to a current employee of the institution*
- Applicants who help the institution meet a particular diversity goal*
- Other(s) not listed here*
- None of the above”*

Key findings include:

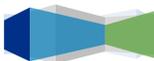
**32%** indicate that their institution does not consider any of the additional admission factors

Among those that do consider one or more of the additional factors:

**63%** use what is defined for the purpose of this report as an academic index (i.e., some combination of HS GPA, HS rank, and test score)

**Only 28%** of institutions give any consideration as to whether or not an applicant is also an athlete

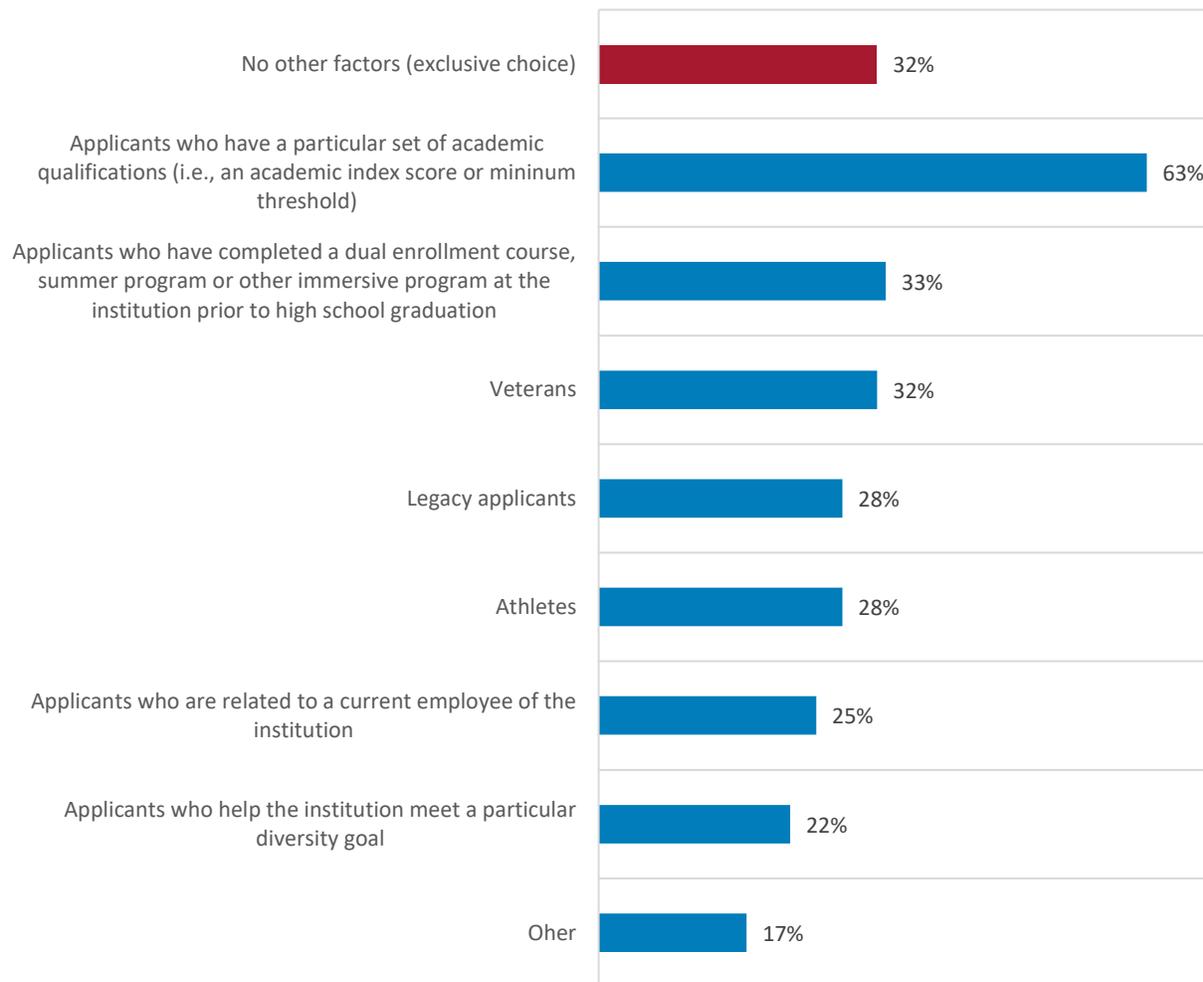
Use of these factors varies by institutional control, type, admit percentage and whether or not the institution has an open admission policy as recorded in IPEDS (Appendix D). Use of additional factors in the admit decision rubric also declines as the percent admitted category increases<sup>10</sup>. Private, not-for-profit institutions are more likely to consider additional factors than public or private, proprietary institutions. Not unexpectedly, lower-division-only institutions are much less likely to use additional factors than other institution types, as are open-admission institutions.




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<sup>10</sup> Percent admitted category calculated from data reported to IPEDS when available.

Figure 12: Other Factors Considered in the Admissions Process

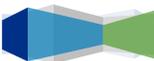


### Measuring demonstrated interest

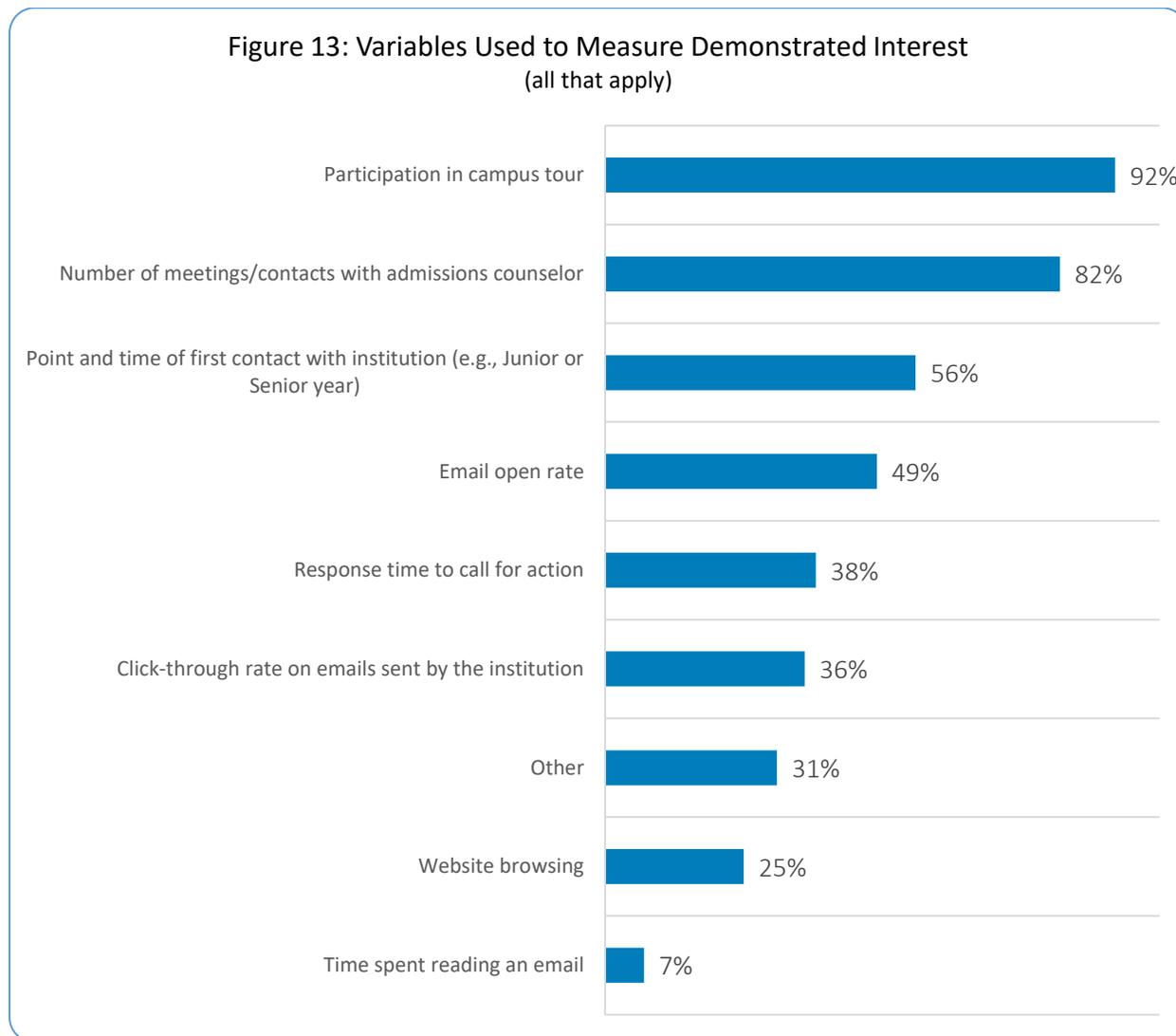
Some institutions use a measure of demonstrated interest as one of several means to help predict whether or not an applicant will enroll if admitted.

**19%** of respondents to this survey indicated they measure an applicant’s demonstrated interest as part of the admission process.

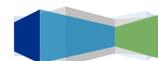
This data point is not particularly surprising because lower-division-only and open-admission institutions are not likely to include this factor because all applicants are admitted. Those that do measure demonstrated interest use a variety of factors. Among the response choices given, participation in a campus tour and the number of contacts with the admission office were by far the most common. The point of first contact and email open rates were also used by about half of institutions (Figure 13). The survey did not request further details for the “other”



response choice. However, given that 31% selected that response institutions are evidently using other measures of interest not currently addressed in the literature. Future research should address this gap in the knowledge base.

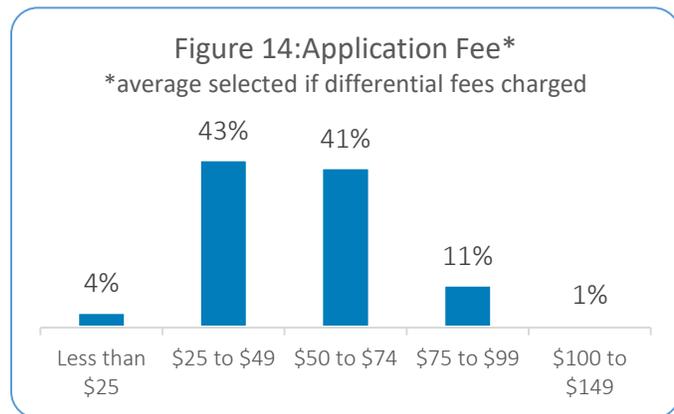


NACAC's annual Admission Trends Survey also includes demonstrated interest as one of the admission decision factors and asks institutions to indicate how important it is to admission decisions. For the fall 2018 admission cycle, about 16% of NACAC survey respondents indicated that demonstrated interest was considerably important, and another 21% indicated that it was moderately important. Any inconsistencies with the survey conducted for this report is likely due to the samples surveyed. NACAC's survey does not include lower-division nor proprietary institutions.



## Application fee

More than half (54%) charge an application fee for the majority of applicants. Of those, 84% charge between \$25 and \$74 (Figure 14). Private institutions are more likely than public to charge an application fee of less than \$25. In this sample, none of the 38 very large institutions (20,000+) charged less than \$25. Respondents were asked to select an average fee if the institution charged differential application fees.

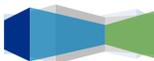


## Communication with applicants

The data presented in the previous sections on the number and types of applications, as well as the methods for collecting a variety of supplemental application materials, highlight some of the complexity involved with admission office operations. Respondents also reported all of the various permutations of formats used to communicate with applicants during the admission process, further underscoring the complexity (Table 1). Email is the most commonly used format for all but the admission decision letters. “Not applicable” is an exclusive response choice and as such the data indicates that 6% do not acknowledge starting or completing an application; 10% do not send any student life information; and 5% do not send registration process information.

Table 1: Applicant Funnel Communication Formats (all that apply)

	Email	Student portal	Paper	Text	Phone call	Chat bot	Web page	Not applicable
Acknowledgement of application started	89%	44%	12%	16%	24%	0%	5%	6%
Reminder about missing materials	93%	56%	33%	47%	58%	1%	3%	2%
Acknowledgement of a complete application	81%	52%	20%	21%	24%	0%	5%	6%
Admission decision	72%	50%	78%	22%	41%	0%	3%	0%
Enrollment deposit reminder	74%	42%	34%	44%	54%	1%	15%	24%
Student life information	75%	25%	35%	12%	18%	0%	51%	10%
Registration process	87%	47%	42%	27%	40%	0%	43%	5%
Orientation process	94%	41%	58%	37%	47%	1%	51%	1%
Next steps (enrollment steps)	93%	52%	57%	42%	59%	1%	41%	0%
Housing information	76%	40%	42%	20%	26%	0%	45%	17%
Financial aid information/Scholarship	92%	64%	67%	26%	49%	1%	43%	0%



## Use of an admission decisions appeal policy

More than half (58%) of the responding institutions have an admission decision appeal policy, and about half (52%) post the policy on the institution's website. Lower-division-only, open-admission, and public institutions are more likely than other institutional types and controls to have a policy (Appendix F).

## Admission Plans and Related Calendars

In the 2018 State of College Admission report<sup>11</sup>, the authors state that “The use of multiple admission plans by colleges and universities often results in confusion among students, parents, and college admission counseling professionals. NACAC believes institutions must clearly state policies, and counselors are advised to assist students with their understanding of the various admission decision options.” That being said, it is understood that some institutions of higher education in the United States still use more than one. This survey collected which one(s) and how many. The admission plan definitions below and included in the survey were created in partnership with NACAC and reflect their ongoing research and practice recommendations.

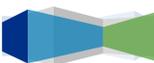
- *Rolling admission* - Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render decisions throughout the admission cycle.
- *Regular decision*
- *Deferred admission*
- *Early action (EA)* - Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.
- *Early decision (ED)* - Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadlines occur early.
- *Restrictive early action (REA)* - Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED, EA or REA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, they have until May 1 to confirm.

Figures 15 and 16 and Table 2 detail the frequency of use for each plan across all institutions, the number of different plans in use per institution, and the top 10 combination of plans (See Appendix E for the complete list). Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to report on the use of January term admission (43%), and winter term admission (7%).

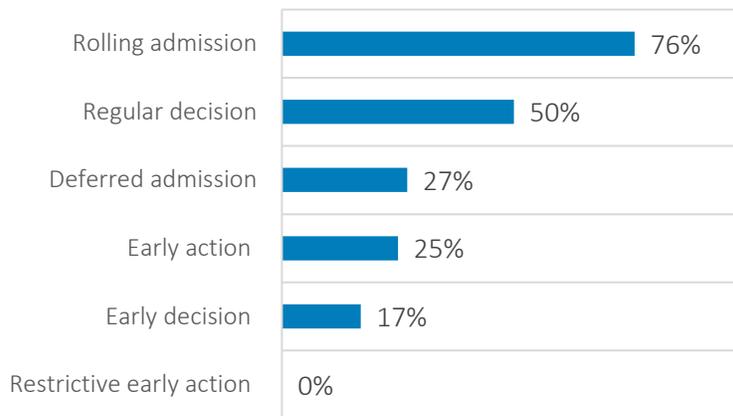
- More than three quarters use a Rolling Admission plan either on its own or in combination with another plan or plans.
- More than half use more than one plan.
- Private institutions are less likely than publics to use rolling admission and lower-division-only institutions rarely use the more selective admission plans (Appendix F).

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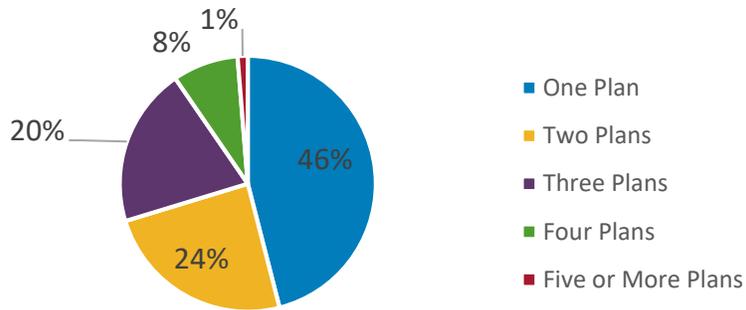
<sup>11</sup> [https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018\\_soca/soca18.pdf](https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018_soca/soca18.pdf)



**Figure 15: Admissions Plans  
(all that apply)**

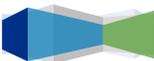


**Figure 16: Number of Admissions Plans**

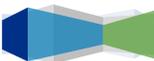
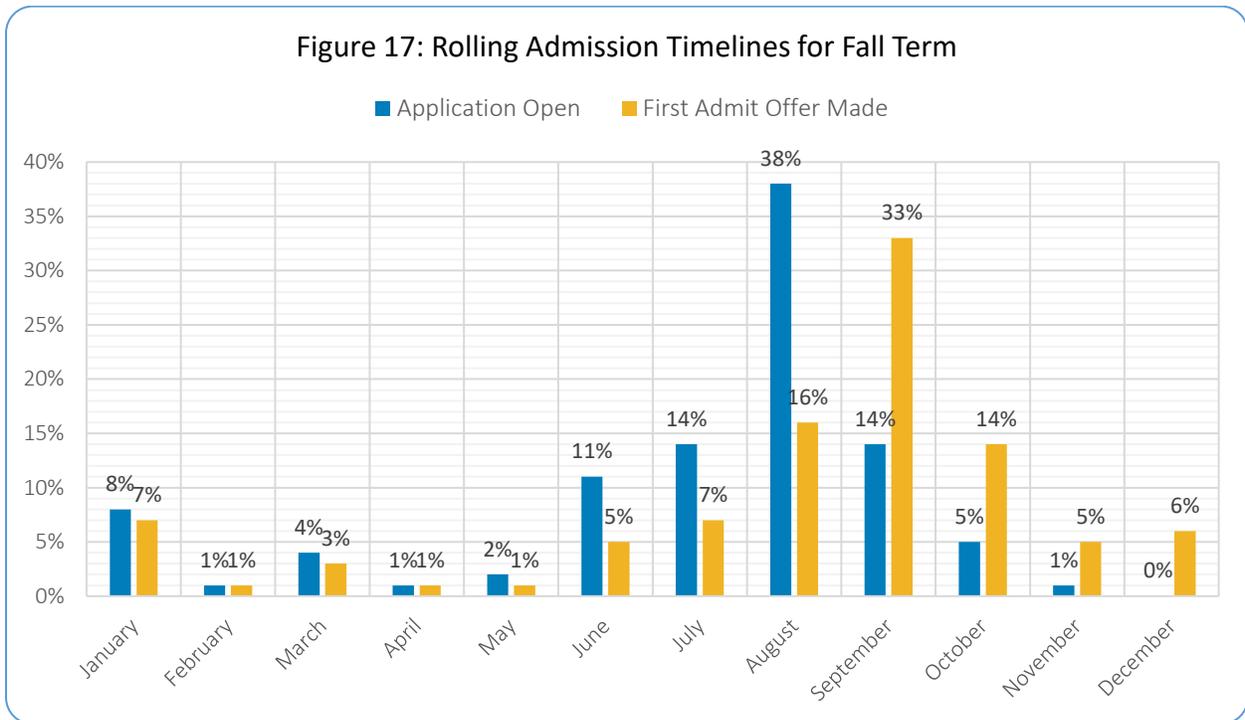


**Table 2: Top 10 Combinations of Admission Plans**

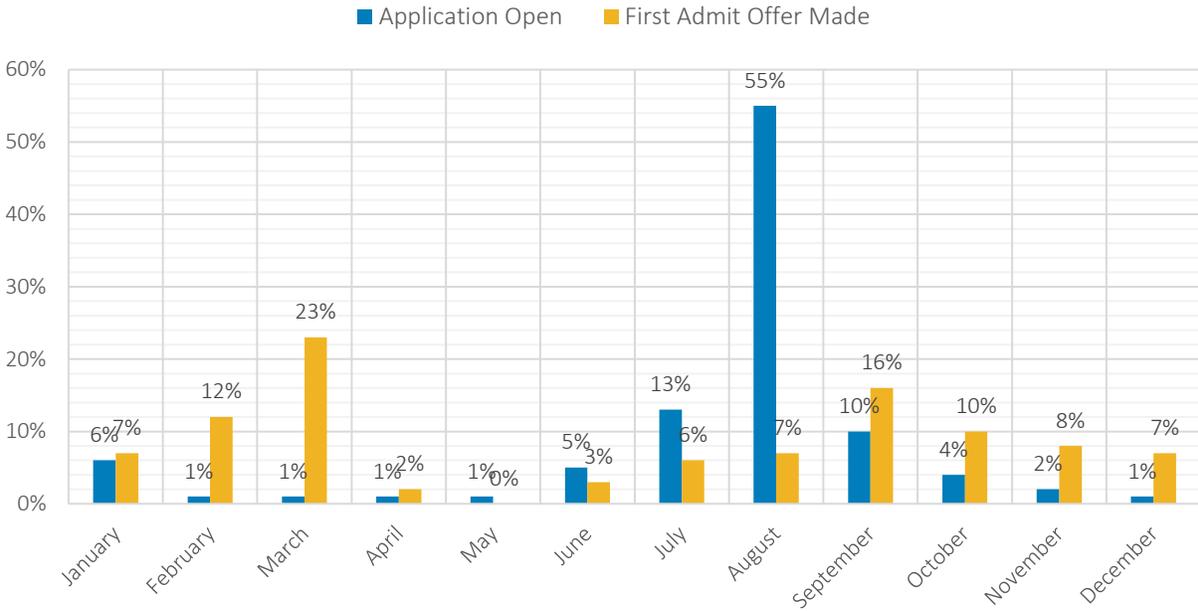
Admission Plan(s)	Percentage
Rolling Admission only	37%
Regular Decision only	8%
Rolling Admission and Deferred Admission	8%
Regular Decision and Rolling Admission	7%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, and Deferred Admission	5%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, and Early Action	4%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Action, and Deferred Admission	4%
Regular Decision, Early Action, and Early Decision	4%
Regular Decision and Early Decision	4%
Regular Decision and Early Action	3%



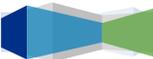
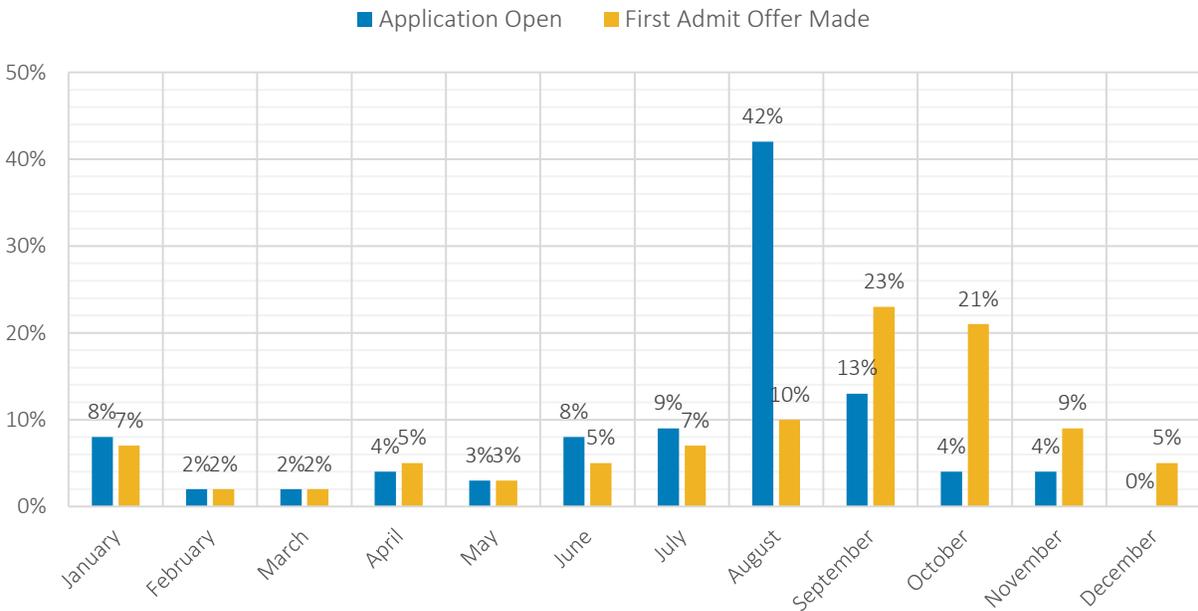
Respondents provided two calendar dates for each admission plan: 1) the month the application opened for fall term enrollment; and 2) the month when the first fall admit offers are made. Figures 17-19 display the frequency of each of these side by side and by month for the three most frequently used admission plans. The figures shed light on the high degree of variance in practice for both processes (see Appendix G for the other plans). Most open the application in August for rolling admission, regular decision, and January term. Sixteen percent start to make rolling admission admit offers in August and an additional third make the first admit offer in September. In contrast, March is when the highest percentage make the first admit offer for regular decision.



**Figure 18: Regular Decision Timelines for Fall Term**



**Figure 19: January (Spring Term) Admission Timelines**



## Enrollment Confirmation Deadline

When, if at all, a candidate must reply to the offer of admission (i.e., a decision deadline) varies by admission plan (Figure 20). If a fall 2019 term admission plan has a decision deadline, the vast majority report May 1 or another date in May as the deadline, and the second most common date is in June. Some institutions reported that students admitted through an early decision process must confirm their enrollment for fall 2019 as early as May, October and December of 2018 (Table 3).

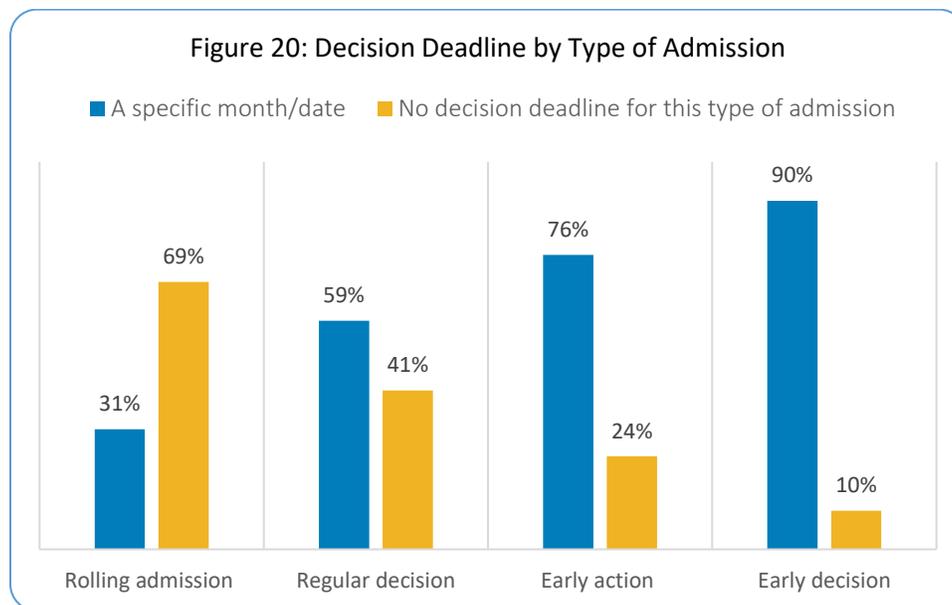
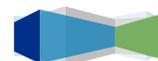


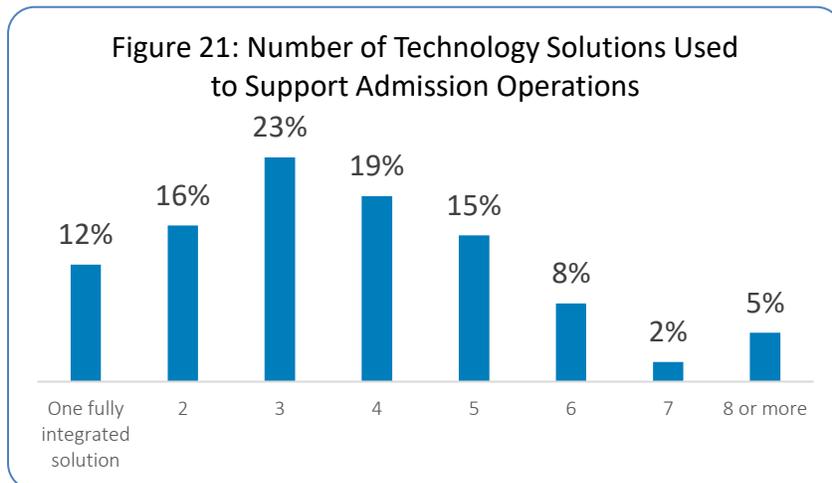
Table 3: Enrollment Confirmation Date for Early Decision Admit for Fall 2019

	Jan	Feb	Apr	May	Oct	Dec	Year Total
<b>2018</b>	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	16%	21%
<b>2019</b>	42%	26%	2%	9%	0%	0%	79%

## Use of Technology

The institutional online application for admission is more likely to be a separate product (64%) than part of the SIS (36%). Very few institutions have one integrated solution to support admission (12%); nearly a quarter use three solutions; and 5% use eight or more solutions (Figure 21). Given this fact and others already mentioned in this report, it is not surprising that technology was mentioned by half of those who answered the question “What is your institution’s greatest challenge in the operations addressed in this survey?”





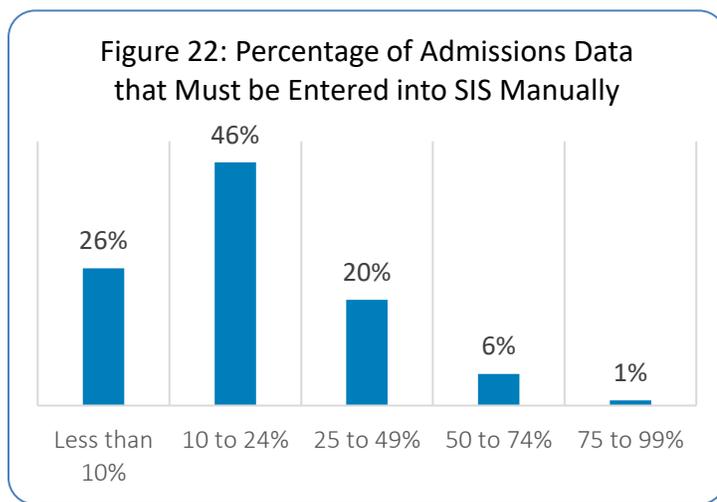
Respondents were asked about the level of data integration between the SIS and the online application(s), and it varies as follows:

**47%** - “Fully integrated: All of the necessary data from the application are imported into the SIS without manual data entry.”

**46%** - “Partially integrated: Some of the necessary data are imported and some require manual entry.”

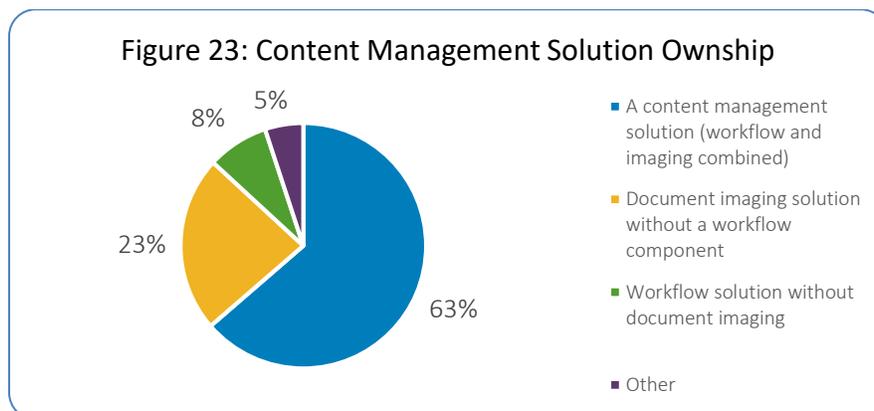
**7%** - “Not integrated. The online application system and the SIS are separate systems. All necessary data are moved from the application to the SIS manually.”

Among those whose systems are not fully integrated, nearly half indicate between 10% and 24% of the data from the application is manually entered into the SIS, and 7% enter 50% or more (Figure 22).



More than three quarters use a content management system (i.e., document imaging and/or a workflow) as part of the admission process. A complete content management system is used by most (63%), and others use a separate document imaging solution or a workflow solution (Figure 23).

Some employ a home-grown solution or a CRM with an integrated content management solution, and one institution contracts for the service.



Similar to content management ownership rates, CRM functionality is part of the admission operations process for most institutions: 38% use a separate CRM; 49% use an integrated application and CRM; and 13 % do not have a CRM. Two-thirds of those that have CRM functionality, regardless of the configuration, share that technology with other departments in the institution. The degree of integration between the online application(s) and CRM is similar to that between the application and the SIS (see below).

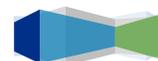
**36%** - Fully integrated: all of the necessary data from the application are imported into the CRM without manual data entry

**46%** - Partially integrated: some of the necessary data are imported without manual intervention, and some require manual entry.

**18%** - Not integrated at all. The online application system and the CRM are separate systems. All necessary data are moved from the application to the SIS manually.

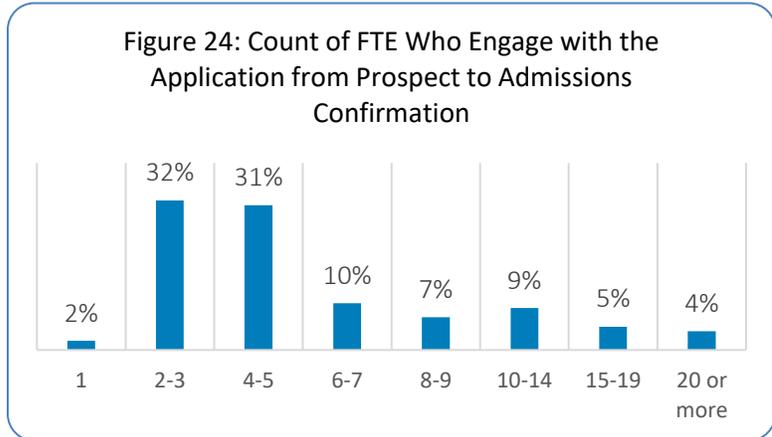
An emerging technology solution to help admission professionals create a contextualized view of the applicant is the Environmental Context Dashboard<sup>12</sup> by the CollegeBoard. This technology was described in the survey, and respondents were asked to indicate their level of familiarity and interest in the solution OR similar technology for the purpose of assisting in the admit decision process. Most (74%) were not familiar with the solution; however, 79% expressed some measure of interest in the solution or a similar one.

<sup>12</sup> <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/environmental-context-dashboard>

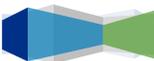
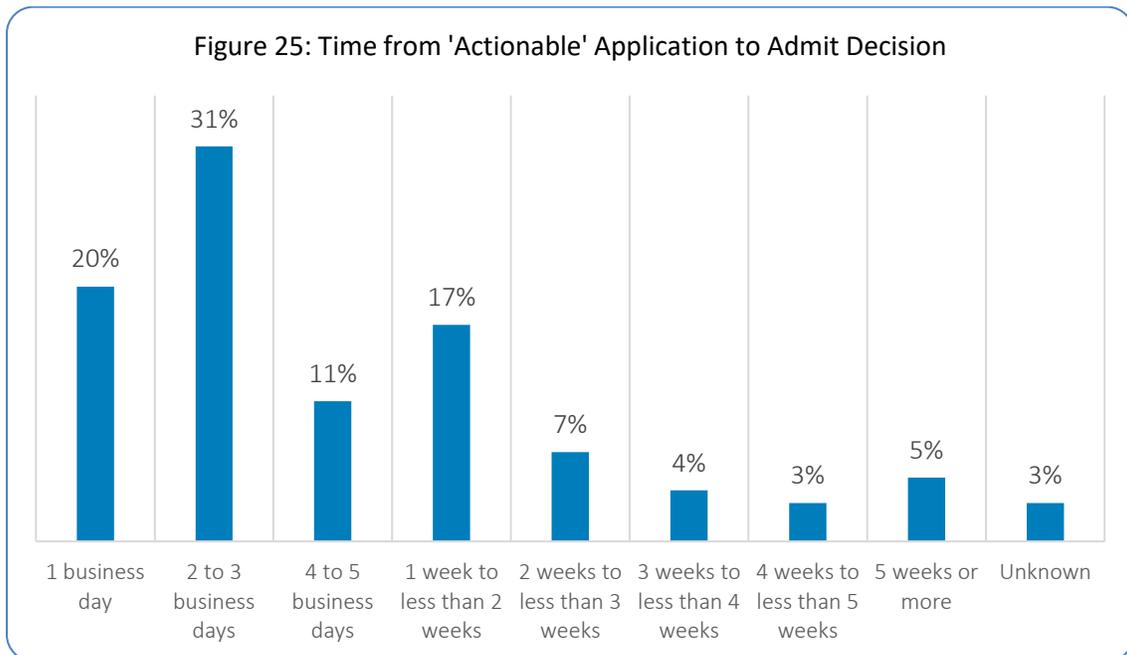


## Staffing, Time to Decision, and Opinions about Operations

In order to get an idea of the level of effort required to support admission, respondents were asked to indicate how many full-time equivalent (FTE) staff engage with an application from prospect to admission confirmation (or institutional equivalent). More than one-third have six or more FTE engaged with each application, and another 63% report between two and five FTE handle each application (Figure 24). Nearly all use student employees (88%); 28% use part-time staff year-round; and 26% use seasonal part-time staff.



It is clearly evident by the complexity of the application processes, the number and variety of technology solutions in use, and the number of staff who engage with each application that freshmen admission operations is a highly involved process for most institutions. However, there is an additional proxy for measuring complexity: understanding the time it takes for an admission decision to be made once an application is considered “actionable.” From the data collected, 62% appear to have an efficient decision-making process, taking five business days or less to make a decision (Figure 25). The remainder take one to five weeks or more.



## General perceptions about admission related processes

Respondents provided their personal perceptions on several topics related to admission operations both in general and at their institution. Three-quarters believe their high school senior enrollment goals are aligned with the mission of the institution (Figure 26). On the other hand, general perceptions about independent admission counselors are mixed (Figure 27). Nearly one-third feel their institution's admission process is more complex than that of their peers' (Figure 28). Although technology is a challenge for many, more than half feel their institution IS using technology to its fullest extent to support student admission (Figure 29). Nearly eight in 10 feel the criteria for admission and the selection process assists in offering admission to those who are most likely to be successful at the institution (Figure 30).

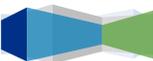
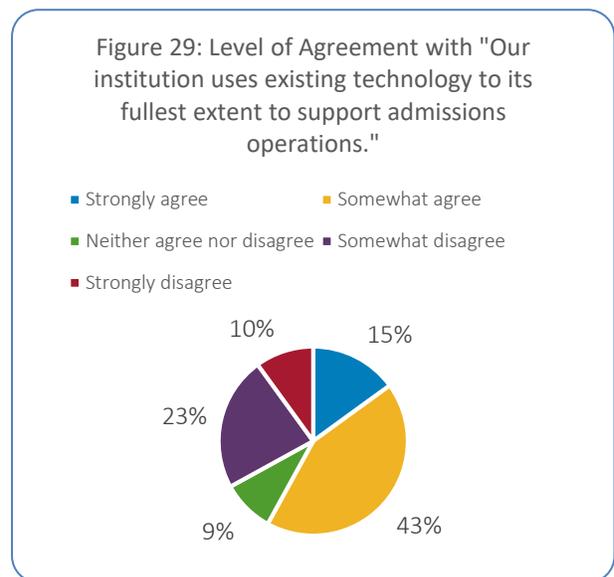
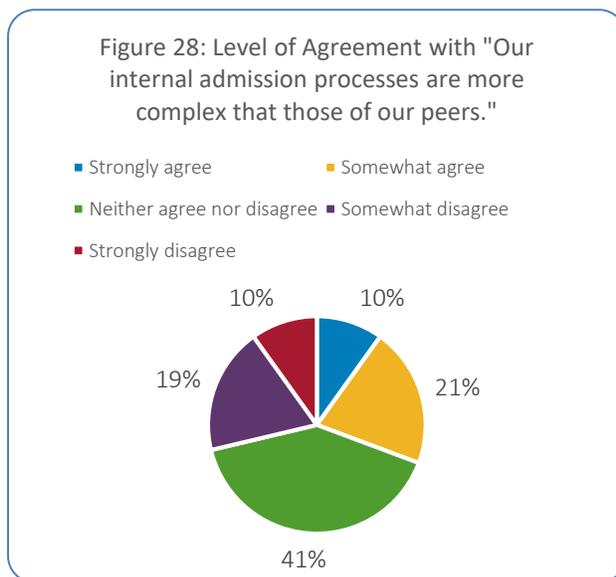
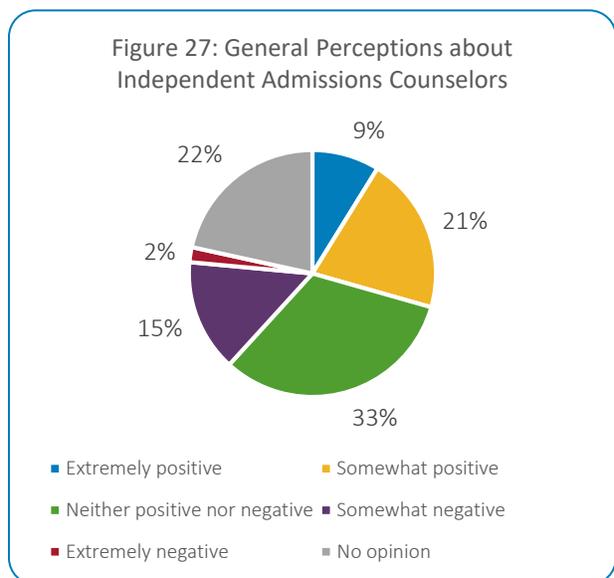
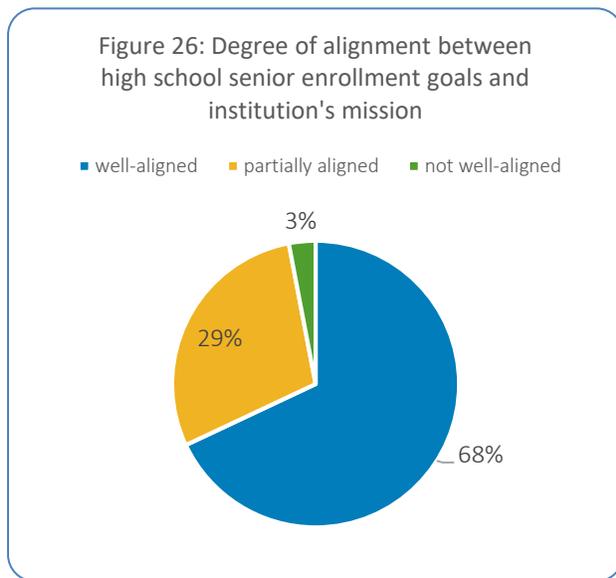
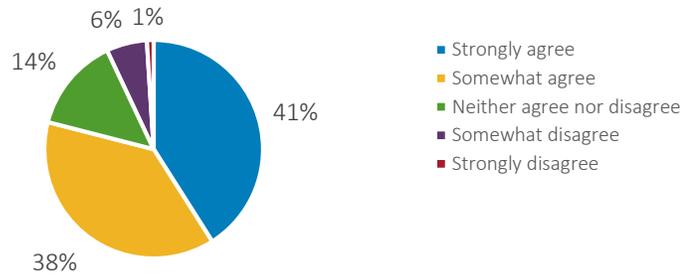


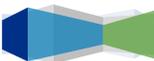
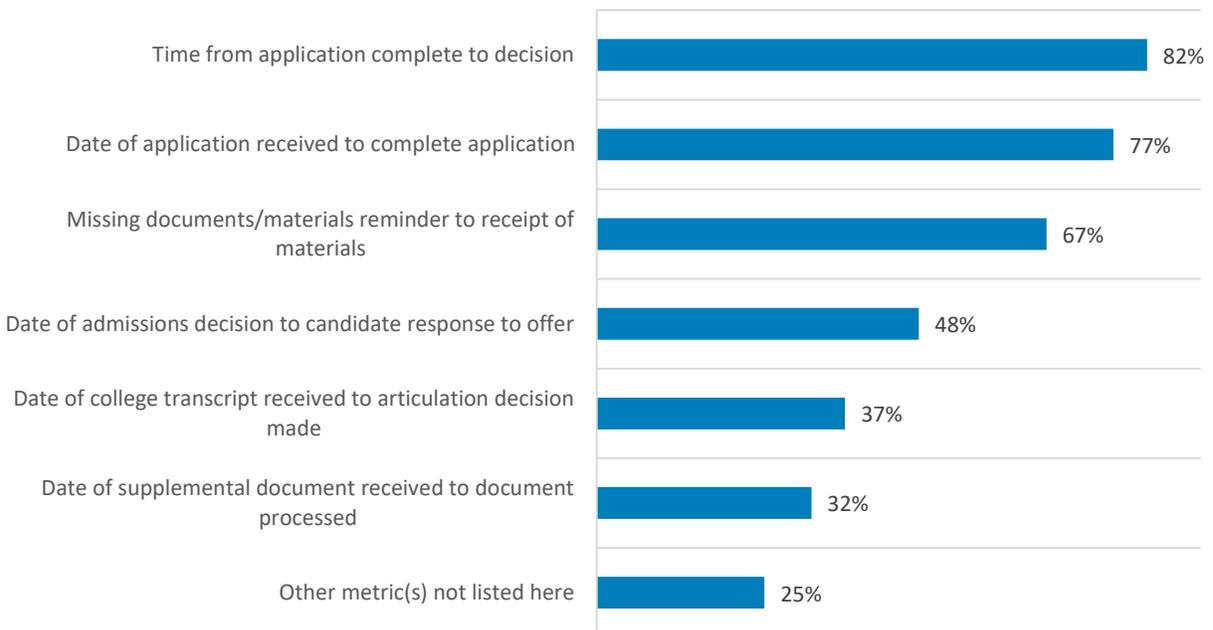
Figure 30: Level of Agreement with "Our admissions criteria and selection process enable us to offer admission to those who are most likely to be successful at our institution."



### Use of Data Analytics to Measure Operational Efficiency

The use of various analytics can help measure efficiencies and identify roadblocks in the admission process. Among the respondents to this survey, 59 percent set standards for application processing time or other operations-related analytics. Almost all measure the time from application completion to decision, and more than half measure the date of application received to complete application as well as the missing documents reminder to receipt of missing materials (Figure 31). Respondents were not asked to separately identify "other metric(s) not listed here."

Figure 31: Data Monitored for Specific Analytics (all that apply)



## Operational Challenges

In this report, practitioners shared their institutional experience regarding the complexity of practice, how admission decisions are made, the use of technology, the use of data analytics, and staffing levels. In addition, open-ended responses to admission operations related challenges were collected from 186 institutions, or 58% of respondents. The statements were analyzed for shared challenges and several common themes are present. The list below ranks the challenges from most to least identified themes.

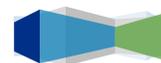
- Technology
- Volume of applications (too many)
- Staffing limitations (not enough staff)
- Getting applicants to complete the application
- Complicated and inefficient processes
- Budget
- Converting applicants to enrolled
- Communication with applicants
- Actionable data

As mentioned earlier, half who listed challenges report issues with technology. These issues ranged from not enough of the right technology to too many technology solutions and not being able to use them properly. Although technology is often touted as a means to make processes easier, it is clear that for many it does not, and, in fact, makes them more complicated because of not using the technology to the potential demonstrated in the vendor sales pitch or having too many disparate and disconnected solutions.

Having too many applications to process in a timely manner was frequently reported hand in hand with not having enough staff to complete the work in the desired timeframe. In addition, issues with volume and limited staffing can be exacerbated by overly complex and inefficient processes and technology issues. As such, the challenges listed above are likely not able to be addressed in isolation but rather holistically.

## Closing and Recommendations for Practice

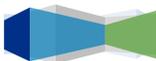
It is apparent from the data and from our knowledge of admission practices that the degree of complexity related to admitting an applicant tends to increase when one moves from examining processes at an open admission institution to a selective admission institution. However, this does not mean that open admission institutions always have efficient and effective processes as supported by the challenges shared by respondents for all types of institutions. Admission process, policy and the use of technology should be regularly reviewed in an effort to improve service to applicants and improve workplace efficiency for staff.



The following high-level recommendations are based on the collective knowledge of admission practitioners and researchers. These recommendations have been implemented and proven to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the prospect to matriculant funnel.

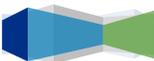
- Conduct a business process analysis by flowcharting the complete admission process from applicant to matriculant.
  - Look for steps that can be simplified for staff such as:
    - Improving the use of technology to let the systems in place do as much work as possible before a staff member is required to engage in the application.
    - Simplifying internal policies and procedures.
    - Limit the number of decision makers required in the admission process to just the necessary minimum.
  - Look for steps that be simplified for students such as:
    - Limiting the questions on the application to only those needed to make an admit decision. Collect other post-admit, pre-matriculation data further on in the process.
    - If a high school GPA is required for admission, use a self-reported GPA for the admission decision and spot check accuracy like institutions do for financial aid applicants and/or require applicants to submit official documents before the first day of class and not before an admit decision is made. The ability for public institutions to implement this solution will likely vary based on state requirements on how and when proof of high school graduation must be obtained.
    - Implement technology that support the electronic submission and internal review of all required documents.
- Improve communication with applicants by engaging newly matriculated students during their first semester in focus groups. Reconfigure process, policy and technology to address their preferred communication style and needs.
  - Examine where applicants stop out in the online application process and address the causes.
  - Examine the rate of return for each of the application sources and determine whether or not the staff effort needed to support multiple application options is worth the effort to maintain those options (e.g., paper applications, multiple online applications).
  - Ask staff what their major sticking points are in the application process and ask how they would make improvements, why and in what order.

[AACRAO](#) has a number of related resources, research and publications to assist in these endeavors.

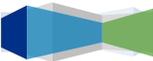


## Appendix A: Participant Institution Control, Type and Size

Control, type and size	Count
<b>Public</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Lower Division Only</b>	<b>45</b>
Under 1,000	10
1,000 - 2,499	9
2,500 - 4,999	10
5,000 - 9,999	12
10,000 - 19,999	4
<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>6</b>
Under 1,000	1
1,000 - 2,499	3
2,500 - 4,999	2
<b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b>	<b>103</b>
1,000 - 2,499	2
2,500 - 4,999	12
5,000 - 9,999	29
10,000 - 19,999	23
20,000+	37
<b>Private not-for-profit</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b>	<b>72</b>
Under 1,000	18
1,000 - 2,499	28
2,500 - 4,999	10
5,000 - 9,999	9
10,000 - 19,999	6
20,000+	1
<b>Private, not-for-profit</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Lower Division Only</b>	<b>1</b>
1,000 - 2,499	1
<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>24</b>
Under 1,000	15
1,000 - 2,499	7
2,500 - 4,999	2
<b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b>	<b>54</b>
Under 1,000	13
1,000 - 2,499	19
2,500 - 4,999	10
5,000 - 9,999	8
10,000 - 19,999	2

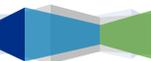
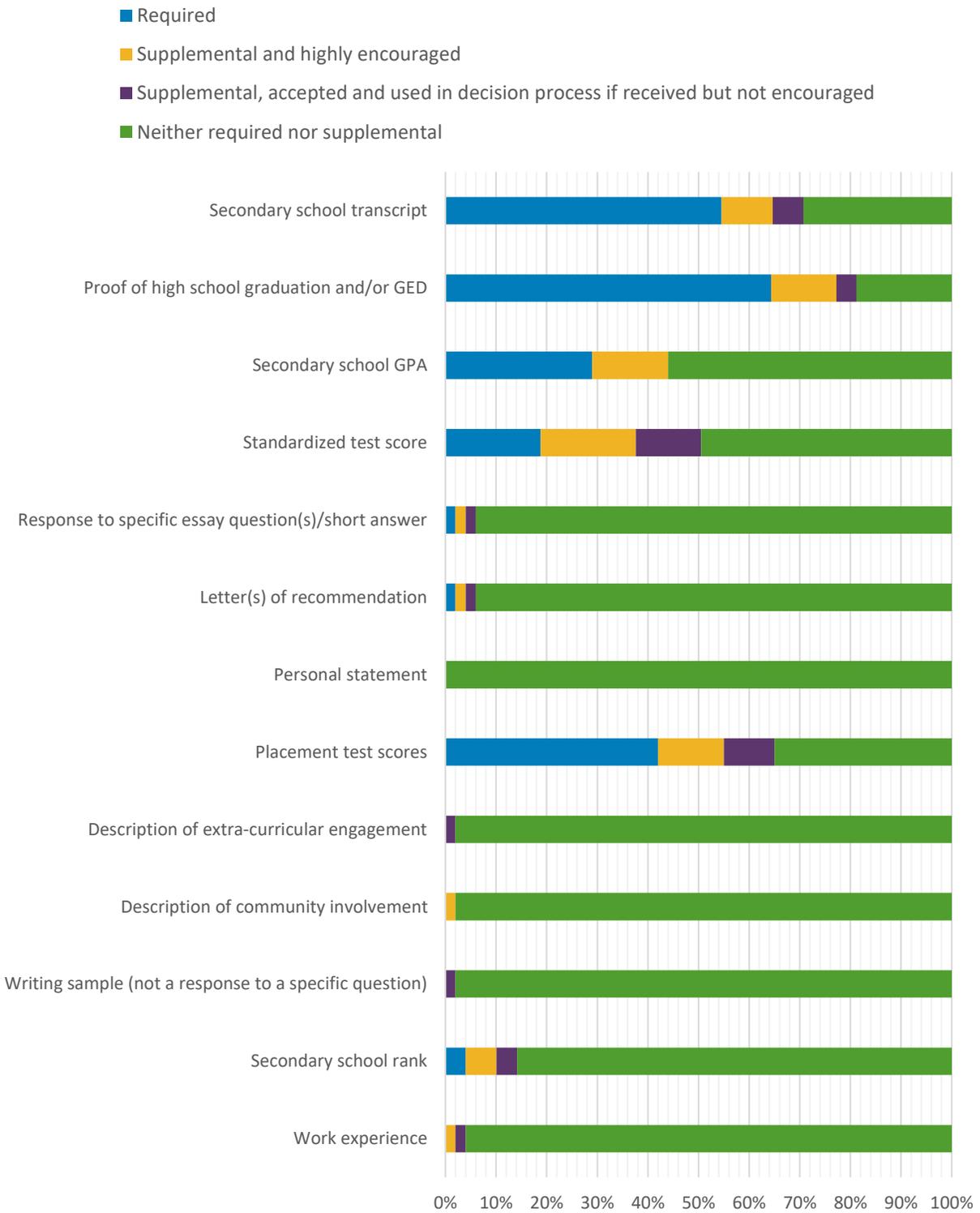


20,000+	2
<b>Private, proprietary</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Lower Division Only</b>	<b>2</b>
Under 1,000	1
1,000 - 2,499	1
<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>5</b>
Under 1,000	3
1,000 - 2,499	2
<b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b>	<b>6</b>
Under 1,000	1
1,000 - 2,499	1
5,000 - 9,999	2
10,000 - 19,999	1
Not Applicable	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>318</b>



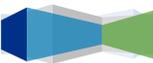
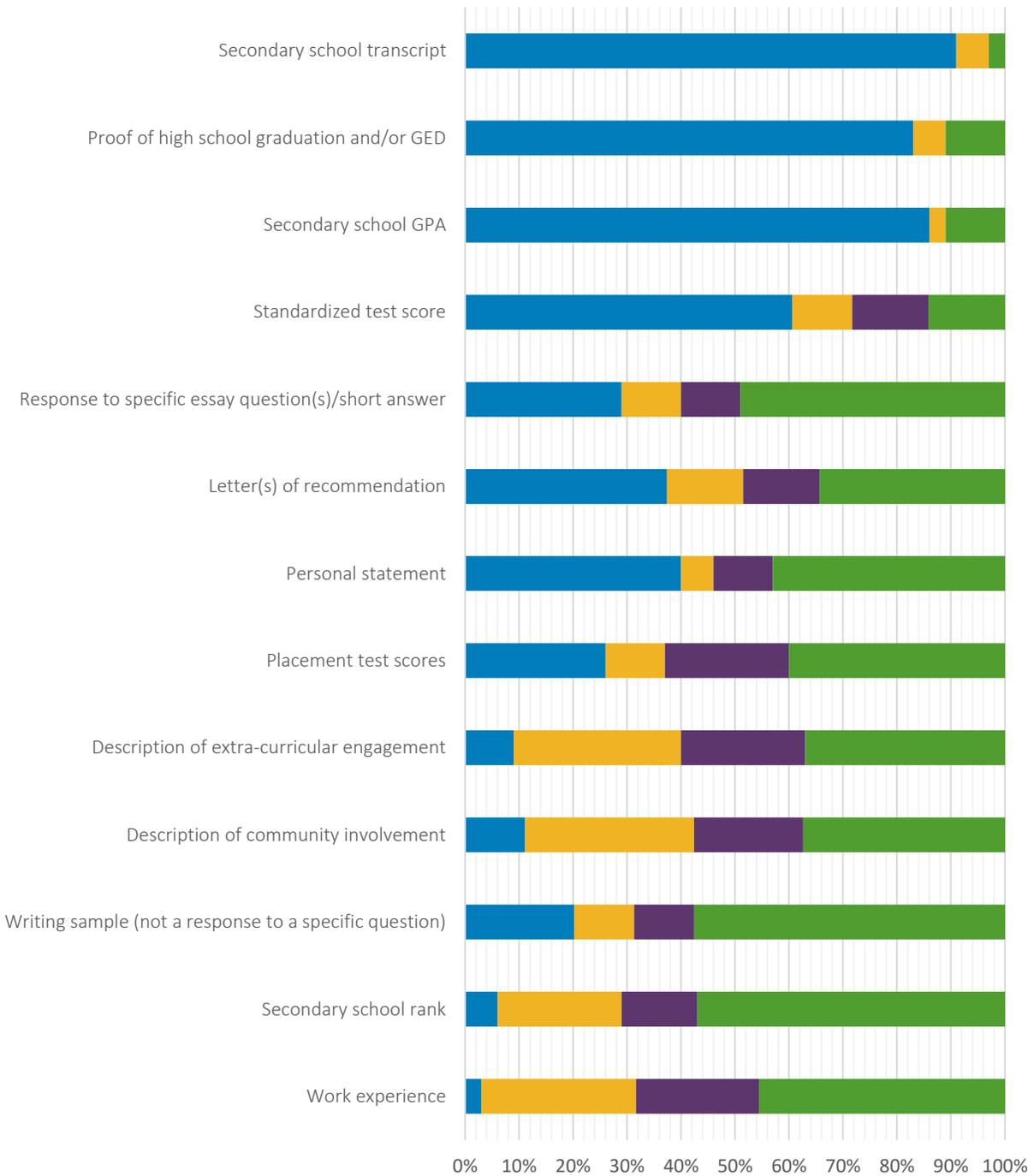
## Appendix B: Application Materials Collected by Institution Type

### Application Materials Collected Lower Division Institutions Only



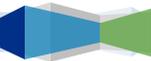
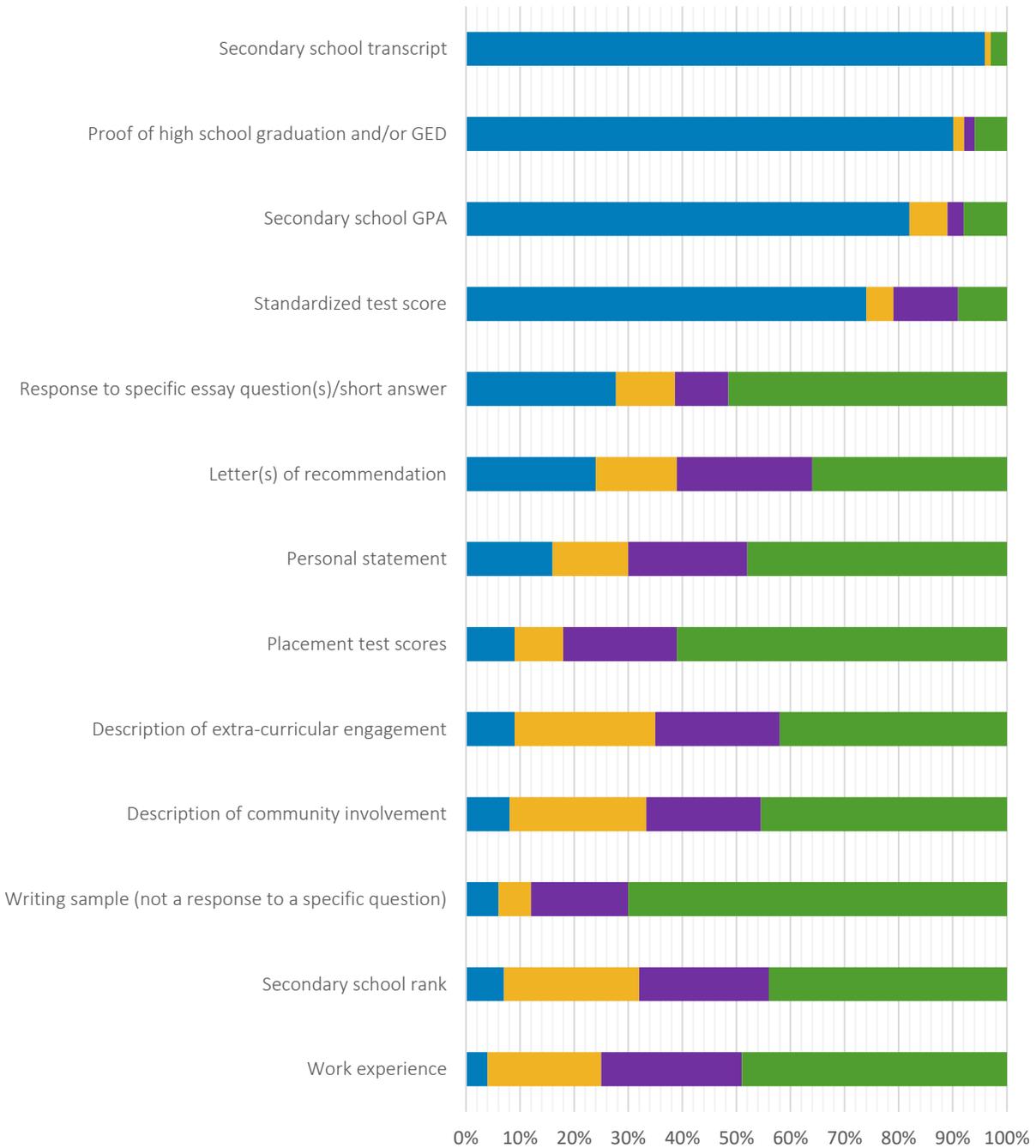
## Application Materials Collected Undergraduate Only Institutions

- Required
- Supplemental and highly encouraged
- Supplemental, accepted and used in decision process if received but not encouraged
- Neither required nor supplemental



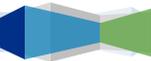
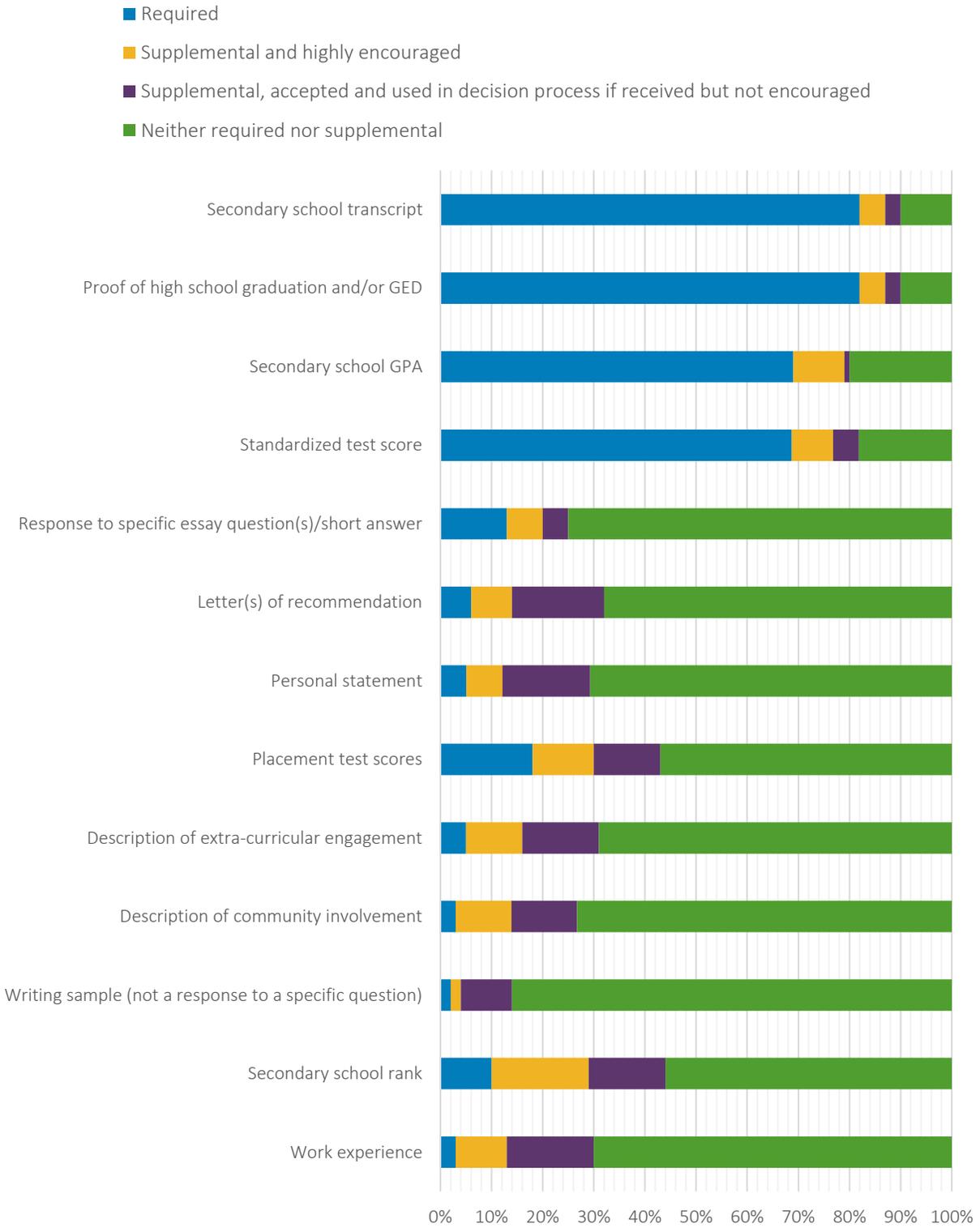
## Application Materials Collected Undergraduate, Graduate and/or Professional Institutions Only

- Required
- Supplemental and highly encouraged
- Supplemental, accepted and used in decision process if received but not encouraged
- Neither required nor supplemental



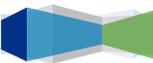
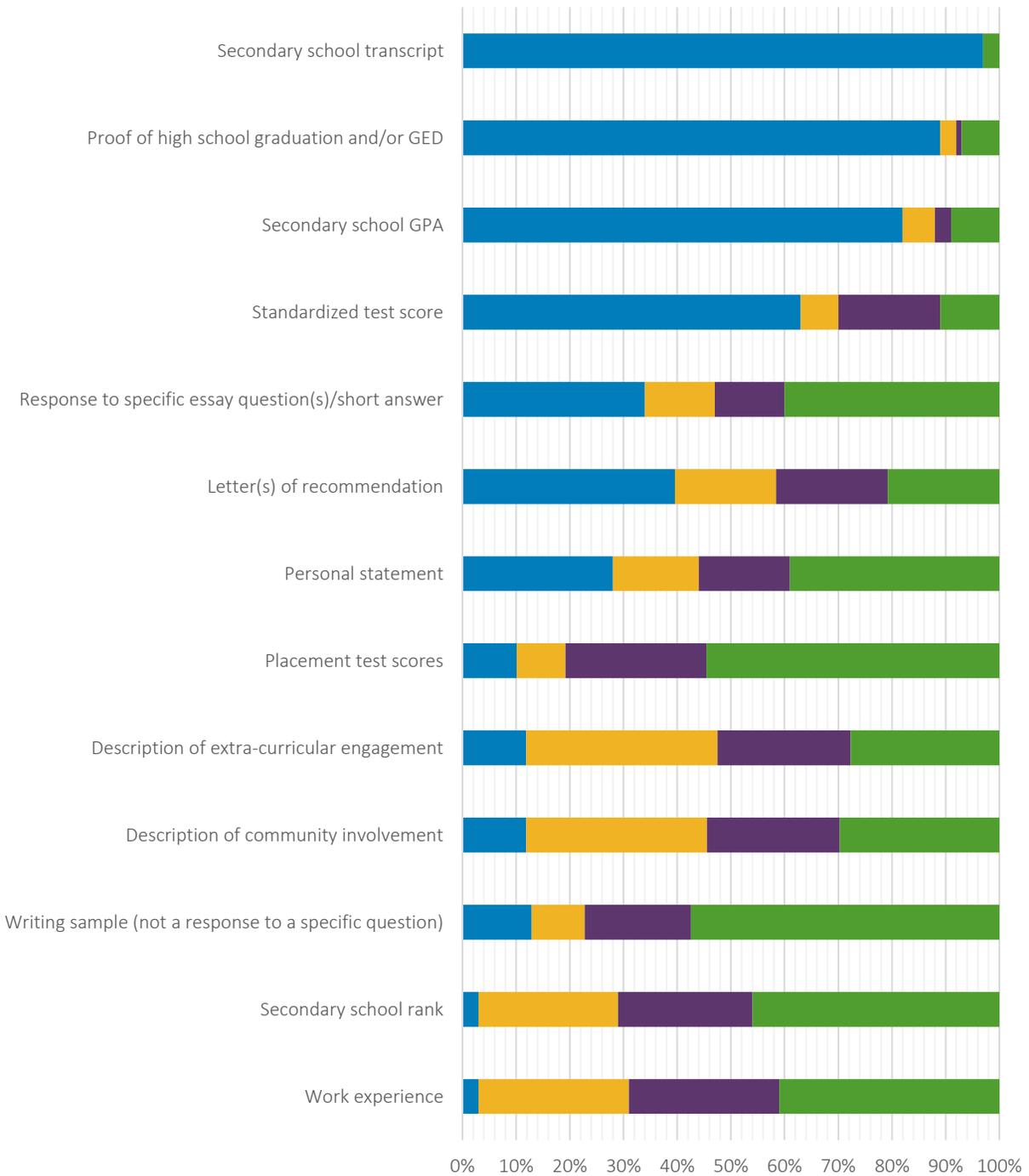
## Appendix C: Application Materials Collected by Institution Control

### Application Materials Collected by Public Institutions



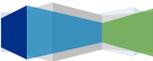
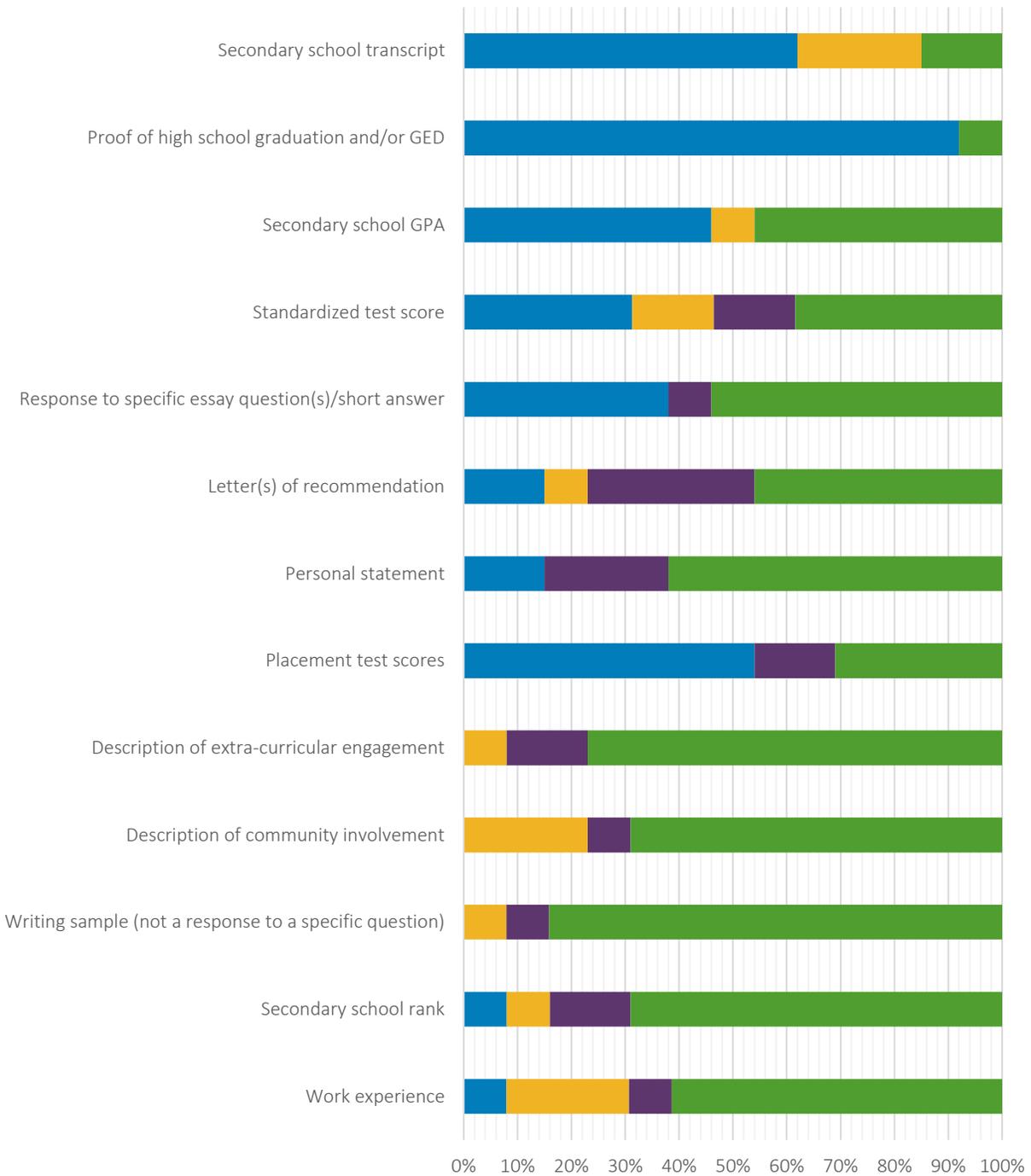
## Application Materials Collected by Private, not-for-profit Institutions

- Required
- Supplemental and highly encouraged
- Supplemental, accepted and used in decision process if received but not encouraged
- Neither required nor supplemental

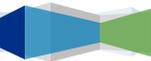
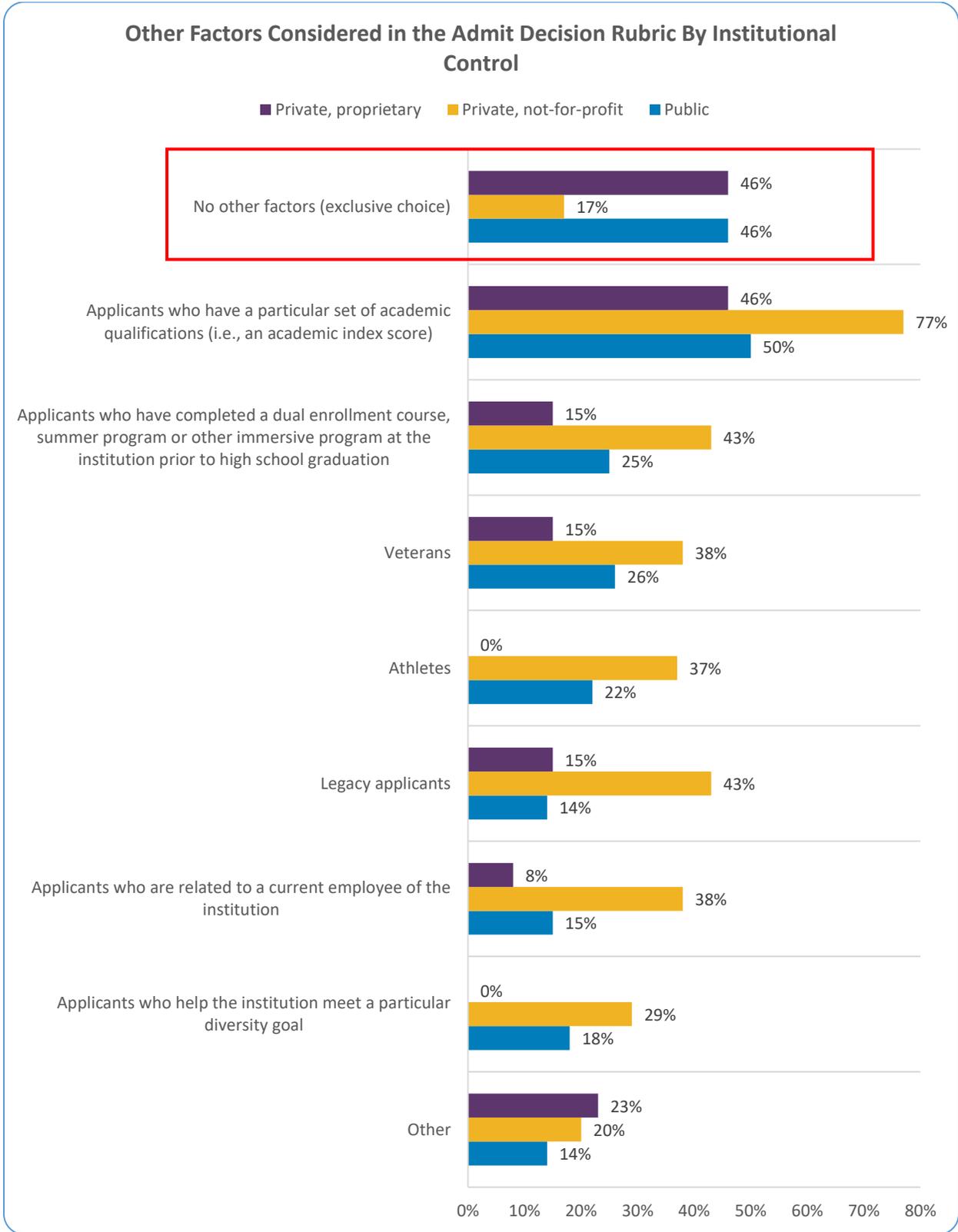


## Application Materials Collected by Private, proprietary Institutions

- Required
- Supplemental and highly encouraged
- Supplemental, accepted and used in decision process if received but not encouraged
- Neither required nor supplemental

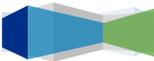
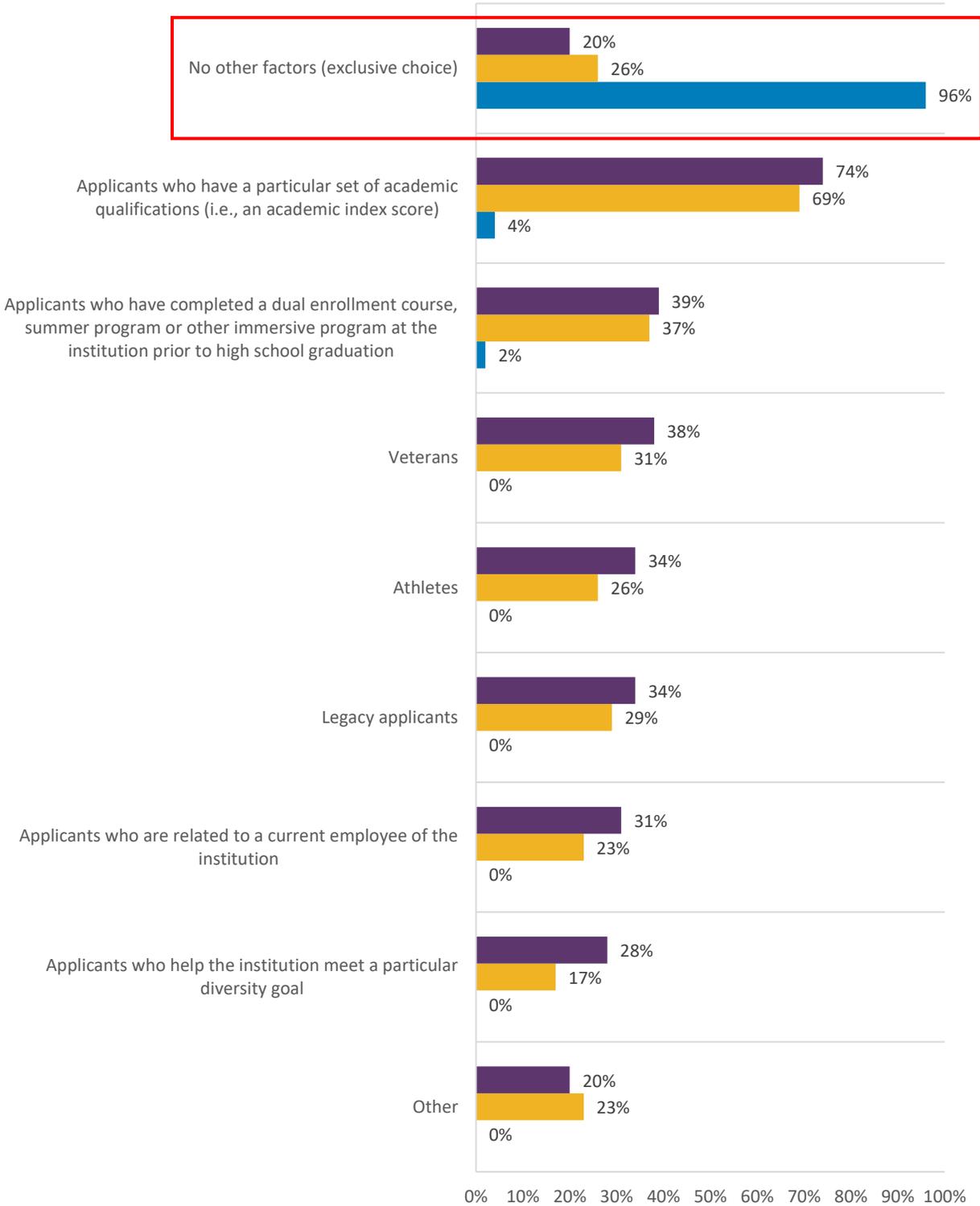


## Appendix D: Other Factors Considered in the Admit Decision Rubric by Institutional Characteristics



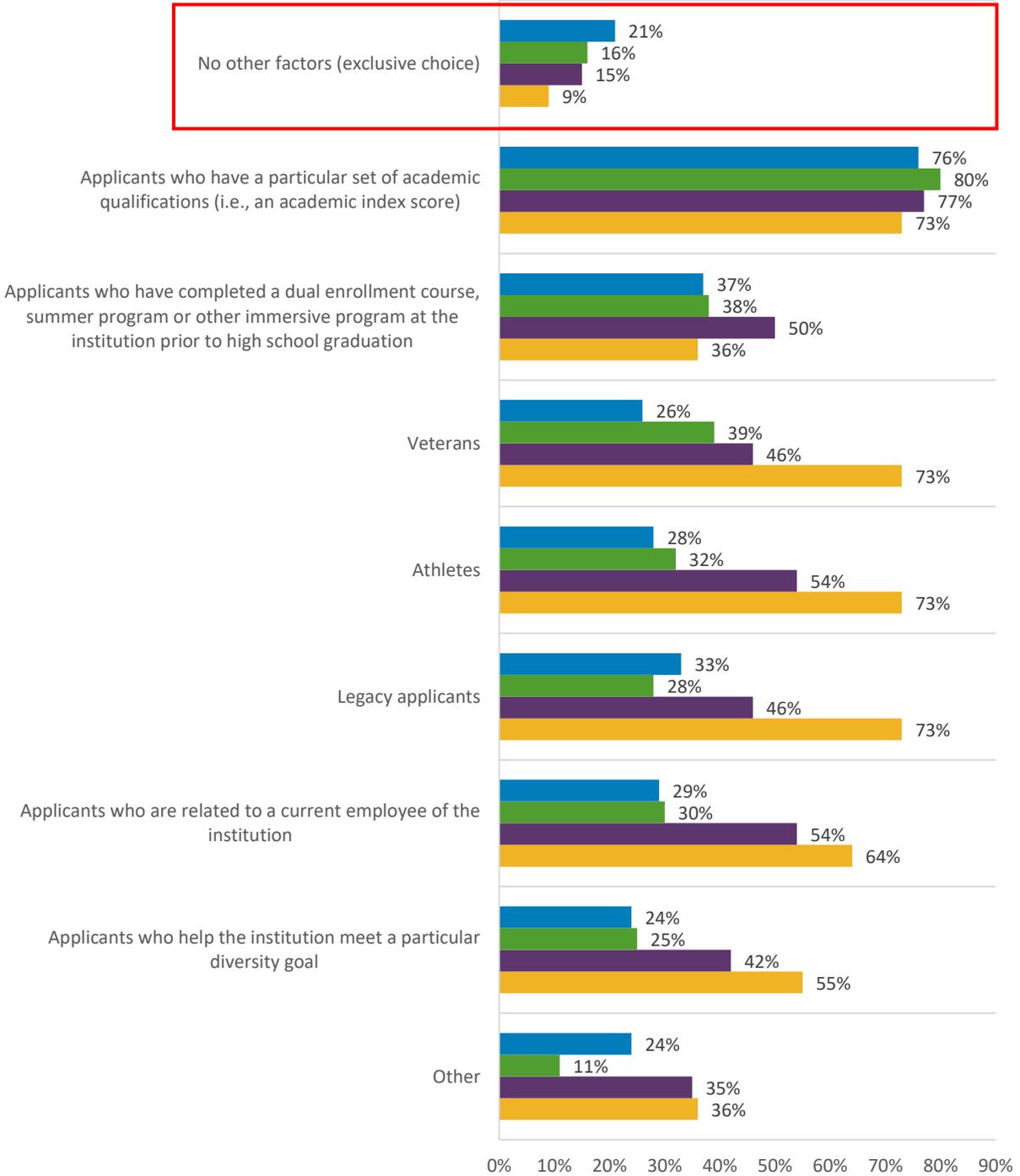
## Other Factors Considered in the Admit Decision Rubric By Institutional Type

■ Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional
 ■ Undergraduate
 ■ Lower Division Only

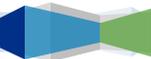


## Other Factors Considered in the Admit Decision Rubric By Percentage Admit Category

■ 75% or more   
 ■ 50-74%   
 ■ 25-49%   
 ■ Less than 25%

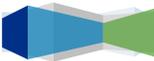
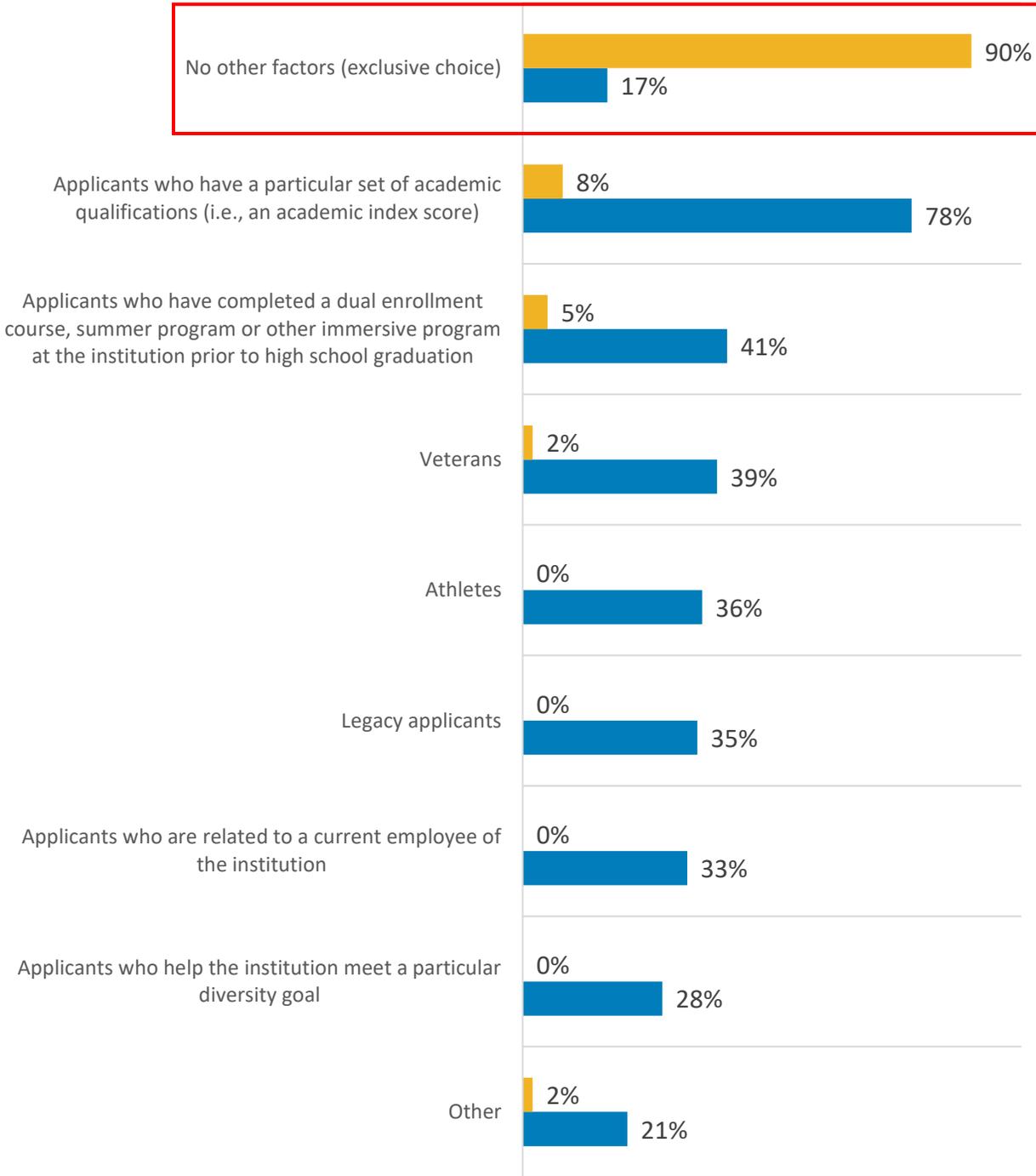


\* The admit percentage category was created from IPEDS data on the percent of applicants admitted. If the data was not reported to IPEDS, the institution's response excluded from this figure.



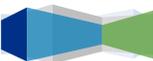
## Other Factors Considered in the Admit Decision Rubric By Open Admission Policy

■ Open Admission     ■ Not Open Admission



## Appendix E: Admission Plans Combinations

Admission Plan(s)	Count	Percentage
Rolling Admission	117	37%
Regular Decision	26	8%
Rolling Admission, Deferred Admission	26	8%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission	23	7%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Deferred Admission	16	5%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Action	13	4%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Action, Deferred Admission	13	4%
Regular Decision, Early Action, Early Decision	11	4%
Regular Decision, Early Decision	11	4%
Regular Decision, Early Action	9	3%
Regular Decision, Early Action, Deferred Admission	7	2%
Regular Decision, Early Action, Early Decision, Deferred Admission	6	2%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Decision	5	2%
Rolling Admission, Early Action, Deferred Admission	5	2%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Action, Early Decision	4	1%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Action, Early Decision, Deferred Admission	4	1%
Regular Decision, Early Decision, Deferred Admission	3	1%
Regular Decision, Rolling Admission, Early Decision, Deferred Admission	3	1%
Rolling Admission, Early Action	3	1%
Rolling Admission, Early Decision	2	1%
Rolling Admission, Early Decision, Deferred Admission	2	1%
Early Action	1	0%
Regular Decision, Deferred Admission	1	0%
Regular Decision, Restrictive early action	1	0%
Rolling Admission, Early Action, Early Decision	1	0%



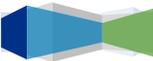
## Appendix F: Admission Plans by Institution Type and Control

### Institution Type

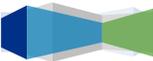
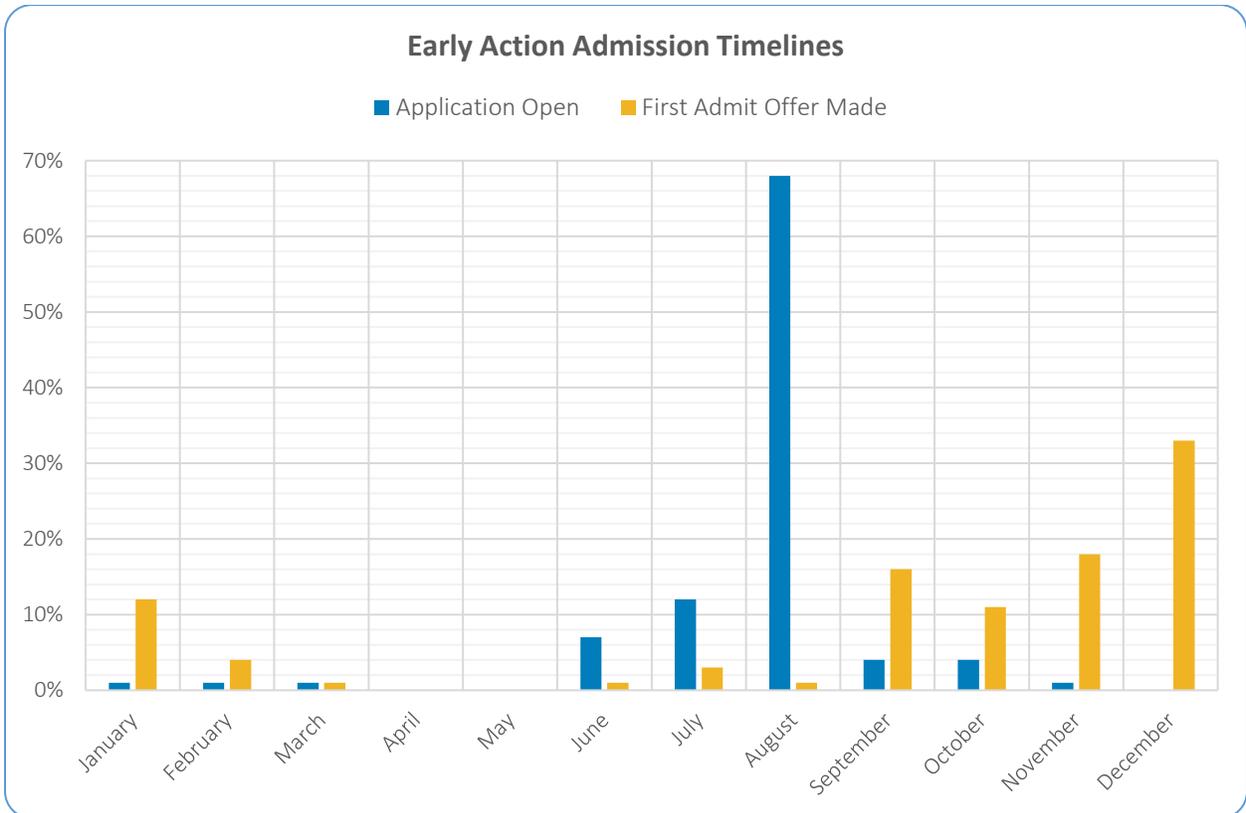
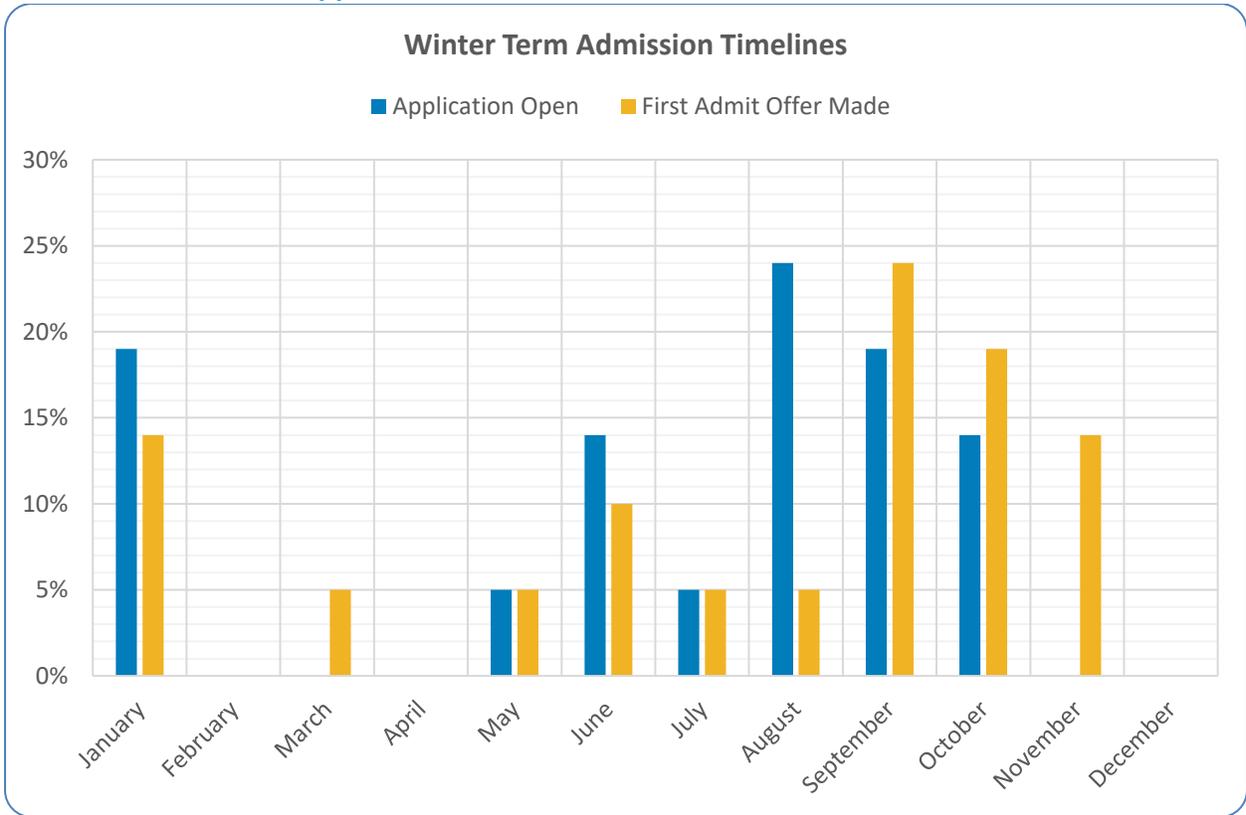
	Lower Division Only	Undergraduate	Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional
Rolling admission	70%	76%	76%
Regular decision	43%	41%	53%
January (spring term) admission	23%	32%	48%
Deferred admission	9%	26%	31%
Early action	5%	12%	30%
Early decision	0%	21%	19%
Winter term admission	7%	6%	8%
Restrictive early action	0%	0%	0%

### Institutional Control

	Public	Private, not-for-profit	Private, proprietary
Rolling admission	80%	72%	69%
Regular decision	47%	54%	31%
January (spring term) admission	40%	49%	8%
Deferred admission	23%	32%	23%
Early action	21%	30%	8%
Early decision	5%	29%	0%
Winter term admission	9%	7%	0%
Restrictive early action	0%	1%	0%

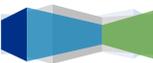
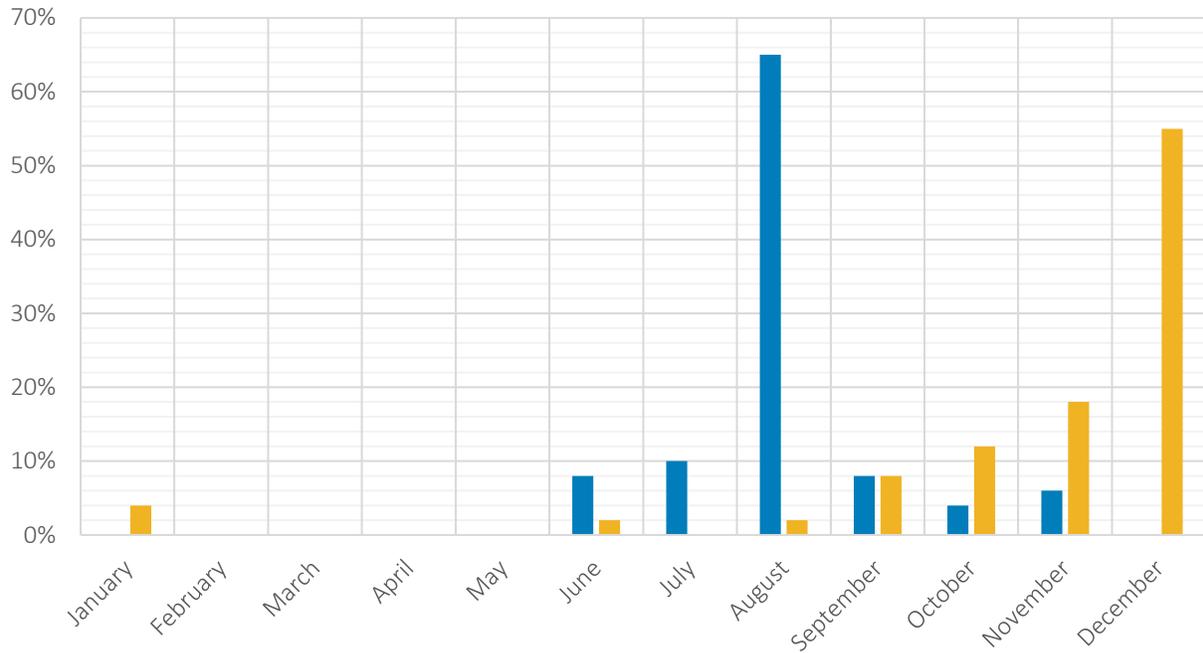


## Appendix G: Additional Admission Plan Calendars



### Early Decision Admission Timelines

■ Application Open   ■ First Admit Offer Made



## Appendix H: Use of Admission Appeal Policy by Institutional Control, Type and Open-Admission

	Lower Division Only	Undergraduate	Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional
No	69.2%	30.8%	41.7%
Yes	30.8%	69.2%	58.3%

	Private, not-for-profit	Private, proprietary	Public
No	47.3%	50.0%	35.5%
Yes	52.7%	50.0%	64.5%

	Open admission Policy	
Appeal Policy	No	Yes
No	38.5%	71.4%
Yes	61.5%	28.6%

