

## Education

# Students apply themselves, but not to a dozen colleges

By Mary Beth Marklein  
USA TODAY

College-bound students are more likely than ever to apply to multiple institutions. But although the number of students who apply to just one school has declined dramatically, reports suggesting that many students are applying to a dozen or more are greatly exaggerated, a report says.

Only 2.2% of freshmen entering a four-year college last fall had applied to 12 or more schools, a 1.3% increase over 2000, the report says. It was released Monday by UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program.

"Every spring, when admissions decisions are communicated, one hears stories about students who applied to 20 or more colleges," the report says. But the proportion who do so is "very low."

And although media reports abound this year about record numbers of students being rejected, the survey notes that 67.3% of first-year students last year said they were attending their top choice of colleges. More than half of those who said they weren't at their top choice said they were admitted but opted not to go.

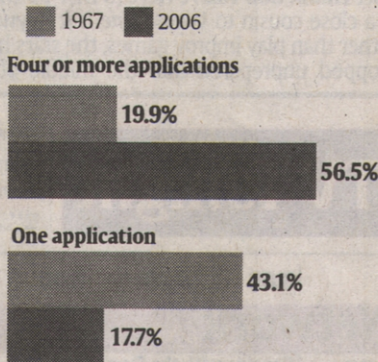
The wide-ranging report, based on surveys of more than 8 million entering freshmen on 1,201 campuses during the past 40 years, examines how college freshmen's attitudes, behaviors, characteristics and values have evolved.

Some things haven't changed much. Entering freshmen in both 1976 and 2006, for example, said the top two reasons for going to college were to "learn about things that interest me" and "get a better job."

After that, though, money seems to take on greater importance today. Last year, 69% of students identified "being able to make more money" as their third-most-important reason for going to college, compared with 49.9% in 1976. Also, 66.5% of entering freshmen in 2006 agreed that "the chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one's earning power."

### How many applications?

The percentage of entering college freshmen who apply to four or more schools is increasing, while the percentage who apply to just one is falling:



Source: University of California-Los Angeles Cooperative Institutional Research Program

By Suzy Parker, USA TODAY

So, does that mean students today are too focused on making money?

"It would be simplistic to view today's college students as materialistic," says report co-author John Pryor. For example, he says, students last year said their top personal objective was "raising a family," and 66.7% cited "helping others in difficulty" as important, the largest number to say that in 20 years. Both "are accomplished with greater ease if one is well-off financially," Pryor says.

Bryan Cook, associate director of the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council of Education, a Washington-based non-profit for colleges and universities, says the rising cost of going to college also might help explain why students today have money on their minds.

"An important component is making money, not necessarily simply for making financial gain, but making sure you not only have a livable wage but you're also able to pay back student loans."