

**Report IV for Lumina
On Access, Tuition Discounting and Pricing
Comparison of Student Responses in the Fall and Spring for the Same Students**

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Overview

This is one in a series studies using the data base of high school seniors and their parents during the senior year in high school. The data was collected in the fall and spring of the 2006-2007 academic year. (See Report I May, 2008 for an analysis of the data base) In the spring, we went back to the students and parents who responded to the survey in the fall as our first priority. We were able to get responses from 27% of the students who responded in the fall to the spring survey.

This report compares the responses of those 200 students on the questions that were the same. The report explores how perceptions, expectations, and college choices of high school seniors change between the fall and spring of their senior year.. It also explores how they *planned* to finance college when we surveyed them in the fall, and how they now are actually going to do it.

Where are students thinking about going to college?

We asked a series of questions in the fall about how many schools students planned to apply to, the type of school they thought they would attend and where they would live while at school. We then repeated these questions in the spring to see how much had stayed the same and how much had changed.

How many schools are you applying to?	Fall	Spring	
1	5%		22%
2	8%		13%
3	16%		18%
4-6	59%		34%
7 or more	12%		15%

In the fall when students were asked how many schools they planned to apply to, only 5% said that they were only going to apply to one school whereas 22% of the students actually applied to only one school. In the fall, 12% of the students planned to apply to seven or more schools and 15% actually applied to these large numbers of schools. The modal number of school applications remained four to six in both the fall and spring although a significantly higher percentage of students in the fall (59%) expected to apply to this number of schools compared to 34% that actually applied to four to six colleges.

Type of Institution	Fall	Spring	
2 Year	15%		28%

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4 Year	85%	72%
Public	78%	80%
Private	22%	20%

Students were asked in the fall if they expected to go to a two- or four-year college, and to a public or private college. In the fall, only 15% of the students expected to attend a two- year college while 28% of these students actually ended up at a two-year college. There is much less change between students' expectations in the fall about their attendance at a public institution and where they are actually going. In the fall, 78% of the students responded that they expected they would attend a public institution and 80% of these students actually will attend a public institution.

Only 31% of the students are attending the college they named as their first choice in the fall, yet 85% said they were accepted at their first-choice school This data indicates that significant numbers of students change their mind as to their first-choice school during their senior year. This has been the argument of many guidance counselors against encouraging students to apply early decision to college.

Twenty-eight percent of students will not attend their first-choice school among those that accepted them. The primary reasons these students gave for not attending their first choice school are financial (36%) and distance the college is from their home (29%).

Are you planning on living at home while attending college?

	Fall	Spring
Yes	23%	33%
No	63%	65%
Not sure	15%	2%

We see in the fall that 23% of the students planned to live at home while attending college, 63% planned not to live at home and 15% were unsure where they will live. In the spring, the 65% of students reported they will live away from home, about the same percent as originally expected to live away from home, while 33% of the students will live at home. Almost all of the "undecided" will live at home.

College Characteristics which Influence College Decision

Influence on Attending College	Fall	Spring
8/10.1. Academic reputation of the college	3.38	3.33
8/10.2. Size of the college	2.49	2.6
8/10.3. Distance from home	2.71	2.72
8/10.4. Total cost to attend before financial aid or scholarships	3.25	3.11
8/10.5. Amount of scholarships offered	3.26	2.9
8/10.6. Total out-of-pocket costs per year	3.21	3.08
8/10.7. I felt like I fit in at the college	3.05	2.88
8/10.8. Availability of athletic programs	2.19	2.14

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8/10.9. Rankings of the college, such as the US News rankings	2.49	2.45
8/10.10. Having friends who attend the college	2.22	2.22

Weighting done on a 1-4 scale of importance with 1 = no influence and 4 = great deal of influence

The importance of the factors that influence students to decide on which college to attend remain relatively consistent between the fall and spring with the exception of “fitting into college” and the “cost and scholarship” variables. Concern about fitting into college was more important to students in the fall than the spring. In the fall, they gave it a weight of 3.05 compared with 2.88 in the spring.

Cost and financial aid were more important to students in the fall than in the spring. The amount of scholarship aid offered was more important to students than the total out-of-pocket cost or total cost to attend before financial aid. In the spring, the amount of scholarship aid was less important than the cost of the college. This may be a very important finding in terms of college strategy vis-à-vis the high cost/high aid strategy that many follow. The offer of financial aid may be important to persuade students to apply, but in the end the net cost of the college becomes more important. The total amount of aid offered although financial aid still remains important as we see below.

College Cost, Choice and Quality

We asked a series of questions about college cost and its relationship to college quality.

9/12.1. Generally speaking, if a college that costs \$30,000 a year offered me a \$10,000 scholarship, I would prefer this college over a college that costs \$20,000 that offers me no scholarships

	Fall	Spring
Strongly disagree	5%	9%
Somewhat disagree	8%	10%
Neither agree nor disagree	38%	38%
Somewhat agree	32%	28%
Strongly agree	18%	16%

When students were asked explicitly if they would prefer a college that cost \$30,000 and gave them a \$10,000 versus a college that cost \$20,000 and did not offer them a scholarship, 50% of the students in the fall chose the higher-priced college with the scholarship (44% of students in the spring study selected this option). Only 13% of the students in the fall and 19% of the students in the spring would prefer the lower-priced college without the scholarship.

	Fall	Spring
9/12.2 The old saying "you get what you pay for" is generally true	3.38	3.21

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9/12.3. The price of a college is a good indicator of its quality 2.78 2.61

9/12.4. You will always have to pay a bit more for the best 3.28 3.02

Weighting done on a 1- 5 scale of importance with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

We then asked three questions looking at the relationship of the cost of a college and its quality. Students remained fairly consistent in their responses between fall and spring of their senior year although the relationship between price and quality weakened in the spring. The results of these questions are somewhat inconsistent; students believe more strongly that generally you get what you pay for and that you will have to pay a bit more for the best than that price is a good indicator of quality.

Price of Tuition, Room and Board	Fall	Spring
Less than \$10,000	14%	27%
\$10,000 - \$20,000	13%	29%
\$20,000 - \$30,000	16%	18%
More than \$30,000	33%	10%
Don't Know	25%	18%

In the fall, students were asked how much tuition, room and board could be before it was too expensive and then in the spring they were asked the cost of the college they would be attending. We see that in the fall, students were willing to spend more on college than they are actually spending. A third of the students responded in the fall that they would consider colleges that cost more than \$30,000 and we see that only 10% of them will be attending these expensive colleges and universities. More than half of the students will be going to schools that will cost less than \$20,000.

The Financial Aid Process

12/16. How well do you understand the overall financial aid application process?	Fall	Spring
I did not understand it at all	9%	4%
I did not understand it very well	26%	12%
I had a general understanding	53%	34%
I understood it well	13%	42%
Did not apply for any financial aid		9%

We see that in the fall, 35% of the students did not understand the financial aid process. By the spring, this portion of surveyed students had fallen to 16%. It is still a problem that 16% of the students who were applying for financial aid did not understand the

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process in the spring. However, it is good to see that the percent of students who understood the process well increased from 13% in the fall to 42% in the spring.

14/ 22 Where did you go to get information about financing your college education

	Fall	Spring
College	5%	16%
HS	60%	45%
internet	20%	20%
Other	15%	19%

When students were asked in the fall and spring where they went to get information about funding their college education, high school teachers and guidance counselors topped the list in both surveys as the first response the students gave. In the fall, 60% of the students went to their HS for information and in the spring this fell to 45% with an increase in those who got their information from college financial aid or admission offices. The internet was the source of information for 20% of the students in both the fall and spring. The website fastweb.com was specifically mentioned by a good number of these students as the source of their financing information. In response to another question, 52% of students in the spring stated that the recommendation of their high school guidance counselor influenced their college choice.

Paying for College

We asked a series of questions in both the fall and spring about how students were planning on financing their college education.

18. Approximately what percent of your total undergraduate college tuition, room and board will you and your family be paying out of pocket?

	Fall	Spring
Less than one-quarter	22%	32%
One-quarter	26%	14%
One-half	21%	16%
Three-quarters	12%	9%
All of it	5%	17%
Not sure	16%	14%

Perhaps the most surprising response to the question about what percent of the total undergraduate tuition, room and board costs the student and his family would be paying out of pocket is that 16% of the students did not know in the fall of their senior year and 14% of them still did not know late in the spring before they were going to start college within just a few months. The percent of students who planned to pay all of their college costs went up significantly between fall (5%) and spring (17%).

18/27. How much are you and your family borrowing for your first year of college?

	Fall	Spring

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Not borrowing	17%	41%
Less than \$2,700	27%	14%
\$2,700 to \$7,500	27%	12%
\$7,501 to \$15,000	11%	7%
More than \$15,000	7%	3%
Don't know	13%	24%

One of the most significant changes that occurred among this group of students is the propensity to borrow. In the fall, only 17% of the students said they would not be borrowing, but in the spring this had increased to 41%. This may be attributable to a larger percent of students choosing less-expensive schools than they thought they would attend in the fall, combined with an increase in the percent of students who were paying the full cost of college out-of-pocket in the spring. It also may be that students were awarded more financial aid than they thought they would receive when asked in the fall. It also is surprising that in June of their senior year, 24% of the students still did not know if they would be borrowing any money to help pay for college.

19/28. Who will be primarily responsible for paying back these loans?

	Fall	Spring
Me	58	64
My parents	19	23
Jointly paying off the loans	87	30
Not sure	3	1
Total	167	118

We have a much smaller group responding to the question on loan repayment in the spring than in the fall because of the increased number of students who no longer plan to borrow money. There is a slight increase in the number of students who expect that they will be responsible for repaying the loans themselves and a slight increase in those that expect that their parents will be responsible for repaying the loans. The major change occurs among those who expect that the responsibility for repaying the loans was a joint one with their parents. This is in large part attributable to the increase in the number of students who expect to pay for the total cost of college out of pocket.

Demographic Information on these 200 students and their families

The demographics of this group is quite similar to that of the entire sample but it does differ in certain respects. For data on the entire sample for the fall and spring, see Report May, 2008. The results presented in this report have not been weighted by race/ethnicity as they have in most of the other reports as the purpose of this report was to compare the responses of the same students between the fall and spring. The responses of this group are similar enough to the responses by the whole sample for the fall and spring that other reports will use the entire sample to make fall/spring comparisons. By using the full sample, analysis can be done by race/ethnicity and other variables. This cannot be done with this group as the numbers are too small to make comparisons of sub-groups of respondents.

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
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Asian/Pacific Islander	21	11%
African American	41	21%
Caucasian	101	51%
Hispanic	25	13%
All other races	12	6%
	200	100%

34. Which of the following ranges best categorizes your family's annual household income?

	Number	Percent
Less than \$25,000	24	12%
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	38	19%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	49	25%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	17	9%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	12	6%
More than \$150,000	6	3%
Not sure/no answer	54	27%
Total	200	100%

31. What is your parent's highest level of education?

	Number	Percent
Less than a high school diploma	15	8%
High school graduate	58	29%
Some college	32	16%
Two-year degree	21	11%
Four-year degree	42	21%
Some post-graduate work	4	2%
Graduate degree	24	12%
Don't wish to reveal	4	2%
Total	200	100%

32. What is your parents' marital status?

	Number	Percent
Single - never married	19	10%
Married	137	69%
Divorced	37	19%
Widow	5	3%
Separated	2	1%
Total	200	100%

35. Gender	Number	Percent
Female	117	59%
Male	83	42%
Total	200	100%

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