



search had found students becoming more cynical about higher education.

"Students say, they're cheating us, so we can cheat them," he said. "The cheat they see is that colleges are out for themselves, not for them as students. Our research, with 2,500 students, found that of all the sources of information students get about higher education, they thought the least trustworthy sources are the colleges and college representatives themselves."

While community colleges said their most important challenge in the near future was reduced state funding, all the other institutions named rising concerns from families about tuition and affordability.

Admissions directors at many public universities said in the survey that recruiting more out-of-state and international students, who pay higher tuition, was their top strategy. According to the survey, more than one-third of full-time international undergraduates did not receive any grant aid this year.

At community and private colleges, admissions officers were more likely to say that providing aid for low and middle income students was their focus. More than half the admissions officers from four-year institutions said that coaching by parents or college counsellors was making it harder to really learn about applicants.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

# Dwindling grants

## ADMITTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO CAN PAY IS NOW THE PRIORITY FOR US COLLEGES, FINDS TAMAR LEWIN

**M**oney is talking a bit louder in US college admissions, according to a survey released by Inside Higher Ed, an online publication for higher education professionals. More than half of the admissions officers at public research universities, and more than a third at four-year colleges said that they had been working harder in the past year to recruit students who need no financial aid and can pay full price, according to 462 admissions directors and enrolment managers who spoke in the survey.

Similarly, 22 per cent of the admissions officials at four-year institutions said the financial downturn had led them to pay more attention in their decision to applicants' ability to pay. Increasingly, colleges and universities in the US are reducing the number of scholarships for international students.

"As institutional pressures mount over decreased state funding, pressure to raise a college's profile, and pressure to admit certain students, we're seeing a funda-

mental change in the admissions process," said David A. Hawkins, director of public policy and research at the National Association for College Admission Counseling. "Where many of the older admissions professionals came in through the institution and saw it as an ethically centered counselling role, there's now a different dynamic that places a lot more emphasis on marketing."

In the survey, 10 per cent of the admissions directors at four-year colleges — and almost 20 per cent at private liberal-arts schools — said that the full-pay students they were admitting, on average, had lower grades and test scores than other admitted applicants.

But they are not the only ones with an edge: the admissions officers said they admitted minority students, athletes, veterans, children of alumni, international students and, for the sake of gender balance, men, with lesser credentials, too.

At many colleges and universities, the survey found, whom you know does matter. More than a quarter of the admissions directors said

they had felt pressure from senior-level administrators to admit certain applicants, and almost a quarter were coaxed by trustees or development officers.

"If external parties are trying to influence admis-

sions decisions, there is a concern that strikes at the legitimacy of the whole process," said Hawkins. "We certainly have standards, but there needs to be awareness that when the economy starts to crumble, the standards may start to go out the window."

Lloyd Thacker, executive director of the Education Conservancy, a two-person non-profit organisation he founded in 2003 to improve college admissions, said the Inside Higher Ed findings were troubling.

"Such behaviour is common now, but it seems to me that it's growing," Thacker said. "I don't know whether to blame it on hard times or lack of courage and leadership."

Thacker said his own re-

The Indian view



Although the increased fee scenario has not gone down well in India, many students are still choosing to study in the US. Also, education in the private sector in India has become so expensive that only a couple of lakhs more can fetch you quality education in the US. As far as scholarships are concerned, most US universities are preferring to dole them out after seeing the performance of enrolled students rather than awarding them at the time of application. Students should explore all options to get the best bargain.

**Arindam Roy**

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