

Higher Ed Benchmarks

Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Recruitment Trends

2009 Cost of Recruiting Report: Comparative Benchmarks for Two-Year and Four-Year Institutions

In November of 2009, Noel-Levitz conducted a Web-based poll of accredited postsecondary institutions across the U.S. to compare their spending on undergraduate student recruitment. To provide context, the 2009 costs were then compared to the findings of previous Noel-Levitz polls conducted in fall 2007 and fall 2005.

Among the highlights:

- The cost of recruiting a single student edged upward for four-year public, four-year private, and two-year public institutions compared with two years earlier.
- Private colleges and universities spent the most to bring in new undergraduates in 2009 at \$2,143 per new student (median costs). They also used the most staff, with a ratio of one FTE staff member for every 35 new students at the median.
- Four-year and two-year public institutions spent much less than private colleges at \$461 per new student and \$263 per new student, respectively (median costs), while using far fewer staff in relation to the number of new students who enrolled.
- Analyses of four-year institutions by enrollment size, region, and staff size showed those with smaller enrollments spent more; Southern private colleges spent less; and private colleges in the East and public universities in the South used fewer outreach staff in relation to the number of new students who enrolled.

Readers are encouraged to compare the benchmarks in this report to their own admissions/recruiting budget and staff size.

For comparable benchmarks from 2007 and additional comparative reports, visit www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports.



Noel-Levitz®



About this report

This report provides comparative, up-to-date benchmarks on the cost of recruiting undergraduate students based on the following four data points reported by college and university officials in November of 2009:

- 1.Total approximate budget for recruiting and admissions for 2008-2009, rounded to the nearest thousand dollars (see breakdown of budget components below);
- 2.Total number of new undergraduate first-year and transfer students who enrolled in all terms beginning since January 1, 2009, including the fall 2009 term;
- 3.Total number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees, including student workers, who worked in the undergraduate admissions office during 2008-2009; and
- 4.Total number of the above FTE employees who represented the institution in face-to-face outreach (e.g., high school visits, college fairs, or on-campus events/tours).

To calculate the cost of recruiting a single undergraduate student, the total budget figure (#1) was divided by the total number of new undergraduates (#2). For context, this figure was then compared with data reported in previous Noel-Levitz polls conducted in fall 2007 and fall 2005, as shown on page 3.

To calculate how many staff were used in relation to the number of new students, the total number of new undergraduates (#2) was divided by the staff size figures (#3 and #4), as shown on pages 5 and 6.

Detail on budget components

For consistency in reporting the total approximate budget for recruiting and admissions, the poll instructed respondents to include the sum of:

- Staff salaries and benefits, pro-rated, for all full- or part-time employees working with undergraduate recruitment and admissions, including temporary or work-study employees and supervisors who carried additional responsibilities outside of undergraduate recruitment and admissions;
- Capital costs (equipment, if any);
- Supplies;
- Travel (if any);
- Publications and advertising;
- Consultant services (if any);
- Vendor/outsourced services; and
- Any additional expenses related to recruiting and admissions not named.

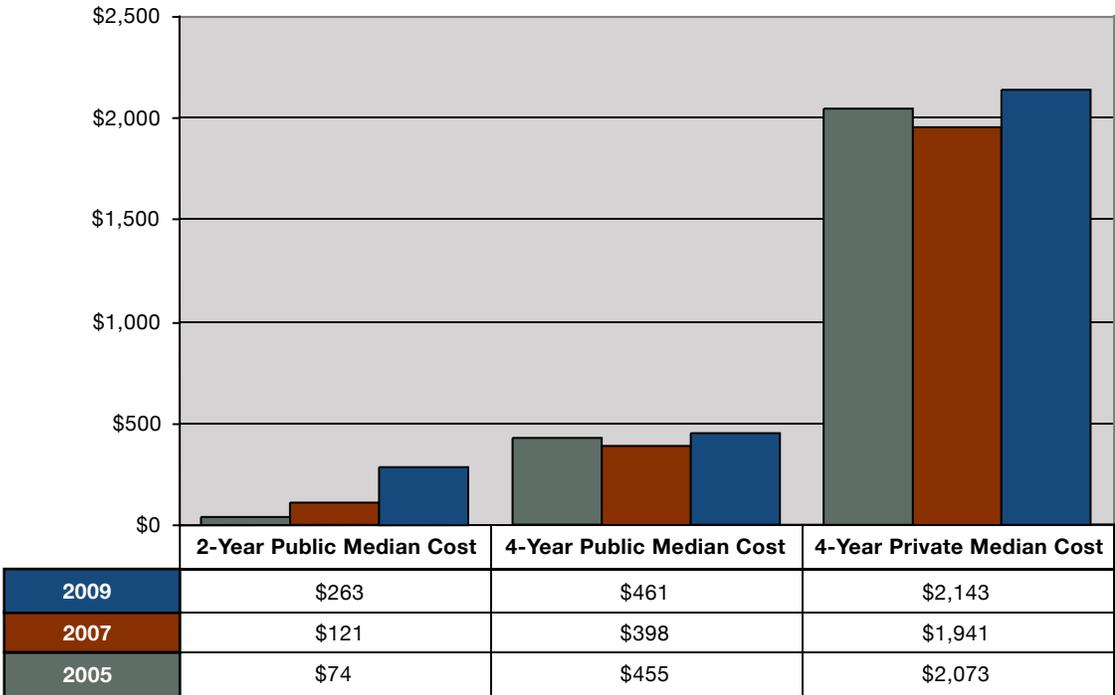
Two-year public institutions—please note

This report includes benchmarks to compare costs and staffing among two-year public institutions, based on the survey sample. However, due to the limited two-year sample size (see list of respondents from two-year institutions, page 7), further breakdowns and analyses by enrollment size and geographic region are not included for this sector on pages 4-6, nor in the sidebar on page 3.

Cost of recruiting rises in 2009 for public and private institutions

Compared to two years earlier, the median cost of recruiting a single undergraduate student edged upward in 2009 for two-year public, four-year public, and four-year private institutions. For two-year public institutions, the increase was part of a continuous rising trend over four years. For four-year public and private institutions, the increase was a return to approximately the same levels as four years earlier.

Cost to recruit a single undergraduate student, 2005-2009



Compared to 2007, costs rose in 2009 for all three sectors shown above, continuing an upward trend for two-year public institutions and returning to approximately the same levels as 2005 for four-year public and private institutions.

In a separate comparison of costs by geographic region, four-year private institutions in the South were found to have a lower median cost per student than schools in the East, Midwest, and West. However, no significant differences in costs were found among four-year public institutions. (Two-year institutions—see note on page 2.)

Smaller schools spent more, bigger schools spent less per new student

Significant differences were found in the cost of recruiting a single student when the responses from poll participants from four-year institutions were divided into three groups by enrollment size. As shown below, costs per new student were highest among the smallest four-year public and private institutions. In addition, costs per new student were higher for the middle third compared to the largest third of four-year private institutions. (Two-year institutions—see note on page 2.)

2009: Cost to recruit a single undergraduate student by enrollment size for four-year institutions and by percentile for all sectors

	2-Year Public	4-Year Public	4-Year Publics: Smallest Third in Enrollment Size (290 to 2,144 students)	4-Year Publics: Middle Third in Enrollment Size (2,200 to 4,611 students)	4-Year Publics: Largest Third in Enrollment Size (4,900 to 10,614 students)	4-Year Private	4-Year Privates: Smallest Third in Enrollment Size (60 to 385 students)	4-Year Privates: Middle Third in Enrollment Size (387 to 646 students)	4-Year Privates: Largest Third in Enrollment Size (660 to 4,678 students)
25th percentile	\$173	\$349	\$390	\$284	\$342	\$1,589	\$1,957	\$1,800	\$1,303
Median cost	\$263	\$461	\$638	\$455	\$423	\$2,143	\$2,691	\$2,212	\$1,672
75th percentile	\$462	\$682	\$913	\$539	\$682	\$3,027	\$3,350	\$2,998	\$2,339

Among four-year institutions, the cost of recruiting a single student ranged considerably based on the number of new undergraduates enrolled, with larger schools spending less and smaller schools spending more.

Private colleges used more staff in relation to the number of new students who enrolled, as did smaller institutions

As shown below, significant differences were also found in the numbers of full-time-equivalent staff that were used to bring in new students. Four-year private institutions used the most staff in relation to the number of new students, followed by four-year public institutions and two-year public institutions. When the responses from four-year institutions were again divided into three groups by enrollment size, it was evident that the smallest public and private institutions used the most staff in relation to the number of new students, as did the middle third compared to the largest third of four-year private institutions.

2009: Number of new undergraduates for each FTE employee in the admissions office

	2-Year Public	4-Year Public	4-Year Publics: Smallest Third in Enrollment Size (290 to 2,144 students)	4-Year Publics: Middle Third in Enrollment Size (2,200 to 4,611 students)	4-Year Publics: Largest Third in Enrollment Size (4,900 to 10,614 students)	4-Year Private	4-Year Privates: Smallest Third in Enrollment Size (60 to 385 students)	4-Year Privates: Middle Third in Enrollment Size (387 to 646 students)	4-Year Privates: Largest Third in Enrollment Size (660 to 4,678 students)
25th percentile	146	94	80	111	95	25	17	26	36
Median number of new students	198	122	98	135	141	35	28	35	49
75th percentile	292	171	124	212	181	48	34	42	78

Four-year private institutions used the most staff, with one FTE employee for every 35 new students at the median, compared to a median ratio of 1 employee to 122 new students for four-year public universities and a median ratio of 1 employee to 198 new students for two-year public institutions.

Private colleges and smaller institutions used more outreach staff, too

Looking specifically at admissions office employees who were involved in face-to-face outreach (such as high school visits, college fairs, or on-campus events/tours), four-year private institutions and smaller public and private institutions were again found to use more of these staff to bring in new students. In addition, the middle third compared to the largest third of four-year private institutions used more outreach staff.

2009: Number of new undergraduates for each FTE employee in the admissions office who was involved in face-to-face outreach

	2-Year Public	4-Year Public	4-Year Publics: Smallest Third in Enrollment Size (290 to 2,144 students)	4-Year Publics: Middle Third in Enrollment Size (2,200 to 4,611 students)	4-Year Publics: Largest Third in Enrollment Size (4,900 to 10,614 students)	4-Year Private	4-Year Privates: Smallest Third in Enrollment Size (60 to 385 students)	4-Year Privates: Middle Third in Enrollment Size (387 to 646 students)	4-Year Privates: Largest Third in Enrollment Size (660 to 4,678 students)
25th percentile	256	172	151	183	212	44	28	47	69
Median number of new students	385	263	202	285	418	63	45	61	94
75th percentile	928	448	301	473	642	83	59	73	132

Four-year private institutions used the most outreach staff, too, with one outreach employee for every 63 new students at the median, compared to a ratio of 1 employee to 263 new students at the median for four-year public universities and 1 employee to 385 new students at the median for two-year public institutions.

Analysis by geographic region

In a separate analysis of outreach employees by geographic region, four-year private institutions in the East were found to have a higher ratio of new students to outreach employees than institutions in the Midwest, South, and West. In addition, four-year public institutions in the South had a higher ratio of new students to outreach employees compared to institutions in the East, Midwest, and West. However, no significant differences by geographic region were found in the ratios of new students to overall FTE employees (outreach and non-outreach) for either of these sectors.

A special thank you to those who participated.

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Responding institutions

Representatives from 211 U.S. colleges and universities participated in Noel-Levitz's national electronic poll of undergraduate recruiting costs, which was distributed to 2,995 degree-granting institutions in November 2009. The respondents represented 60 four-year public institutions, 138 four-year private institutions, and 13 two-year public institutions. The names of the participating institutions appear below.

Four-year public institutions

California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo
City University of New York Hunter College
Delta State University
Eastern Kentucky University
Eastern New Mexico University Main Campus
Eastern Washington University
Evergreen State College, The
Fort Hays State University
Indiana University Bloomington
Indiana University Southeast
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Lincoln University (MO)
Lyndon State College
Maine Maritime Academy
Michigan Technological University
Midland College
Missouri Western State University
Montclair State University
Morehead State University
North Carolina State University
Northern Michigan University
Ohio State University Main Campus, The
Oregon State University
Purchase College, State University of New York
Salisbury University
Shepherd University
Sonoma State University
Southern Oregon University
State University of New York at Fredonia
State University of New York at New Paltz
State University of New York College at Brockport
State University of New York College of Technology at Alfred
Tennessee Technological University
Texas Tech University
University of Arizona
University of Central Oklahoma
University of Georgia
University of Hawaii-West Oahu
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Iowa, The
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
University of Michigan-Dearborn
University of Minnesota Rochester
University of Missouri-Columbia
University of Nevada, Reno
University of North Carolina at Wilmington
University of North Dakota Main Campus
University of South Carolina Columbia
University of South Florida
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Texas-Pan American
University of Texas at El Paso
University of Texas at San Antonio
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
Virginia Commonwealth University
Wayne State College
West Texas A & M University
Western Washington University

Four-year private institutions

Albion College
American International College
Antioch University Los Angeles
Ashland University
Atlanta Christian College
Avila University
Azusa Pacific University

Baker University
Baldwin-Wallace College
Baptist Bible College and Seminary
Belmont University
Bethel College (IN)
California Lutheran University
Campbell University
Canisius College
Capital University
Carroll College
Carroll University
Cazenovia College
Champlain College
Chester College of New England
Coe College
College of Idaho, The
College of Visual Arts
Columbia College Chicago
Concordia University (NE)
Concordia University, St. Paul
Cornish College of the Arts
Crown College (MN)
Curry College
Delaware Valley College
Dominican University of California
Dowling College
Drew University
Drexel University
Earlham College
Eastern Mennonite University
Elizabethtown College
Emmanuel College
Flagler College
Florida Institute of Technology
Florida Memorial University
Franciscan University of Steubenville
Free Will Baptist Bible College
Freed-Hardeman University
Fresno Pacific University
Gardner-Webb University
Geneva College
Georgetown College
Georgian Court University
Graceland University
Guilford College
Hamline University
Heidelberg University
Hilbert College
Holy Names University
Hood College
Hope College
Iowa Wesleyan College
Kansas Wesleyan University
Keystone College
Lake Erie College
Lakeland College (WI)
Lancaster Bible College
Lenoir-Rhyne University
Liberty University
Marietta College
Marquette University
Marymount Manhattan College
Master's College and Seminary, The
McDaniel College
McPherson College
Methodist University
Metropolitan College of New York
Mid-Atlantic Christian University
Mills College
Mississippi College
Missouri Baptist University
Missouri Valley College
Mount St. Mary's University
Mount Vernon Nazarene University

Muskingum University
Nebraska Methodist College
New England College
North Park University
Northwood University
Oral Roberts University
Pace University
Pacific Northwest College of Art
Peace College
Philadelphia Biblical University
Post University
Providence College
Reinhardt College
Rice University
Ripon College
Robert Morris University
Rockhurst University
Saint Anselm College
Saint Louis University
Saint Mary's College
San Diego Christian College
Schreiner University
Simmons College
Simpson University
Southern Adventist University
Southern Virginia University
Spelman College
St. Edward's University
St. Thomas Aquinas College
Stephens College
Stetson University
Syracuse University Main Campus
Taylor University
Tennessee Temple University
Tennessee Wesleyan College
Thomas More College
Trinity Lutheran College
University of Bridgeport
University of Dallas
University of Denver
University of Great Falls
University of Hartford
University of Notre Dame
University of Portland
University of Puget Sound
University of Saint Francis
University of Saint Mary
University of St. Francis
University of the Arts, The
Vanderbilt University
Wagner College
Wartburg College
Washington Adventist University
Westminster College (UT)
Wittenberg University
Xavier University
Yeshiva University

Two-year public institutions

Butler Community College
Central Maine Community College
Community College of Baltimore County, The
Edgecombe Community College
Gwinnett Technical College
Iowa Lakes Community College
Labette Community College
Moraine Park Technical College
New Mexico State University at Carlsbad
Northeastern Junior College
Northwest State Community College
Southeast Technical Institute
Texas State Technical College Waco

Schedule a confidential "personal consult" for an outside perspective on your recruiting costs

Readers are invited to contact Noel-Levitz to schedule a confidential personal consultation by telephone with an experienced consultant for additional, outside perspective on their recruiting costs. We'll listen carefully to your situation, then share our observations. For an appointment, contact Jeff Pierpont, associate director of enrollment solutions, at 1-800-876-1117 or jeff-pierpont@noellevitz.com.





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Questions about this report?

We hope you have found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions or would like more information about the findings, please contact Jim Mager, Noel-Levitz associate vice president, at 1-800-876-1117 or jim-mager@noellevitz.com.

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A trusted partner to higher education, Noel-Levitz is committed to helping institutions meet their goals for enrollment and student success. We work side by side with campus executive teams to facilitate planning and to help implement the resulting plans.

For more than 20 years, we have conducted national surveys to assist campuses with benchmarking their performance. This includes benchmarking marketing/recruitment and student success practices, monitoring student and campus usage of the Web and electronic communications, and comparing institutional budgets, policies, and outcomes. There is no charge or obligation for participating and responses to all survey items are strictly confidential. Participants have the advantage of receiving the findings first, as soon as they become available.

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