

Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

2013 Cost of Recruiting an Undergraduate Student Benchmarks for Four-Year and Two-Year Institutions

What is a typical budget and staff size for admissions and recruitment for private vs. public and small vs. large institutions? To answer this question and provide up-to-date benchmarks, Noel-Levitz conducted a brief, web-based poll of enrollment and admissions officers across the United States in the fall of 2013. The poll was part of the firm's ongoing series of benchmark polls for higher education.

Among this year's findings:

- Four-year private institutions spent the most to bring in new undergraduates in 2012-13, spending \$2,433 per new student at the median vs. \$457 per new student and \$123 per new student at the median, respectively, for four-year public institutions and two-year public institutions.
- Four-year private institutions staffed their admissions and recruitment offices at the highest levels. For example, at four-year public institutions, the median ratio of new student enrollees to full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff is 111:1, but at private institutions, the ratio is 31:1.
- Because allowing time for face-to-face outreach substantially affects staffing levels, this study separately examined staffing levels for outreach activities, finding new-student-enrollee-to-FTE-outreach-staff median ratios of 56:1 at four-year private institutions, 243:1 at four-year public institutions, and 723:1 at two-year public institutions.
- Only 30 percent of four-year private institutions and 21 percent of four-year public institutions reported substantially increasing their total recruiting budgets in 2013-14—proportions that were down from the year before.



How does your own institution's spending compare?

To compare the benchmarks in this report to your own institution's budget and staff size for admissions/recruitment, simply run the calculations described on pages 4-5.

For findings from previous years' Cost of Recruiting polls based on samples drawn from similar-sized but different sets of institutions, visit www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports.

Two-year public institutions, please note: The benchmarks for two-year public institutions in this report are based on a finite number of observations, due to a limited two-year sample size. See the bottom of page 3.

About this report

See how many institutions substantially increased, substantially decreased, or kept their budgets the same over the past two years on pages 7-8.



Find details on this year's poll participants on page 9.

This Noel-Levitz report provides comparative, up-to-date benchmarks on the cost of recruiting undergraduate students based on the following four data points reported in the fall of 2013 by college and university officials in response to an electronic poll:

1. Total approximate budget for undergraduate recruitment and admissions for 2012-13, 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 January 1, 2013, including the fall 2013 term;
3. Total number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees, including student workers, who worked in the undergraduate recruitment or admissions office during the 2012-13 academic year; 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).

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), shown on pages 5-6.

The poll was emailed to enrollment and admissions officers at accredited, two-year and four-year, degree-granting U.S. institutions. See a list of responding institutions on pages 9-10.

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, prorated, for all full- or part-time employees working with undergraduate recruitment or admissions, including temporary or work-study employees and prorated salaries, benefits, and operating costs of supervisors who carried additional responsibilities outside of undergraduate recruitment and admissions;
- Capital costs (equipment, if any);
- Supplies;
- Travel (if any);
- Publications and advertising related to recruitment;
- Web and electronic communications costs related to recruitment;
- Consultant services (if any);
- Vendor/outsourced services (if any); and
- Any additional expenses related to recruitment and admissions not named, such as any costs associated with recruiting and admissions that are covered by departments outside the admissions office but excluding grants and/or scholarships.

To save time completing the poll, respondents were given the option to estimate all outlays and to calculate approximate employee benefits as a percentage of salary.

Throughout this report, “2013” refers to budgets and staff sizes in 2012-13. For further definition, see page 2.

2013 cost of recruiting a single undergraduate student

The median cost of recruiting a single undergraduate student in 2013 is shown in Table 1 below by institution type. Consistent with the findings of previous Noel-Levitz studies, costs were highest at four-year private institutions.

Table 1: Cost to recruit a single undergraduate student, 2013

Percentile	Four-year private institutions	Four-year public institutions	Two-year public institutions*
25th percentile	\$1,602	\$268	\$52
Median	\$2,433	\$457	\$123
75th percentile	\$3,116	\$750	\$205

TM

At \$2,433 per new student, the median cost of recruiting was substantially higher for four-year private institutions than the comparable median cost of \$457 per student for four-year public institutions and \$123 per student at two-year public institutions.

Looking at costs and staff sizes through the correct lens

The benchmarks in this report are based on final, new-student enrollment counts (i.e., cost per new student enrollee), a more reliable metric for measuring institutional effectiveness and efficiency than comparing budgets and staff sizes to the number of student applications. For example, a cost-per-applicant metric can mistakenly signal that an institution generating a lot of “soft” applications (applicants who are unlikely to enroll) is more efficient, when in fact the institution may be less efficient by generating the softer applicants.

* Two-year public institutions—please note:

The benchmarks for two-year public institutions in this report are based on a finite number of observations, due to a limited two-year sample size. Although the sample proved to be too small to ensure statistical significance, we judged these benchmarks to be helpful but ultimately leave that judgment up to the reader. See list of responding institutions on page 10.

Findings color key

Four-year private institutions

Four-year public institutions

Two-year public institutions

Cost of recruiting a single student by size of institution

The 2013 cost per new student was examined by the enrollment size of the institutions in the sample. Although minor differences were apparent, this year's study found no statistically significant correlations between the cost per new student and enrollment size.

For two-year public institutions, differences by enrollment size are unavailable due to the smaller size of the two-year public sample, as noted on page 3.

Table 2: Cost to recruit a single undergraduate student in 2013 by enrollment size for four-year institutions and by percentile for all sectors

Percentile	Four-year private institutions				Four-year public institutions				Two-year public institutions*
	Overall	Smallest third in enrollment size	Middle third in enrollment size	Largest third in enrollment size	Overall	Smallest third in enrollment size	Middle third in enrollment size	Largest third in enrollment size	Overall
25th percentile	\$1,602	\$1,447	\$1,630	\$1,692	\$268	\$311	\$249	\$243	\$52
Median	\$2,433	\$2,392	\$2,559	\$2,174	\$457	\$575	\$399	\$452	\$123
75th percentile	\$3,116	\$3,006	\$3,378	\$2,833	\$750	\$997	\$610	\$592	\$205

TM

This study found no statistically significant correlations between the cost per new student and enrollment size.

Definition of enrollment size

To determine differences by enrollment size, four-year institutions with total enrollments below the 33.3rd percentile for enrollment size were classified as "small," while four-year institutions with enrollment sizes above the 66.7th percentile were classified as "large."

For four-year private institutions, the 33.3rd percentile for total enrollment size was 1,197 and the 66.7th percentile was 2,570.

For four-year public institutions, the 33.3rd percentile for total enrollment size was 7,090 and the 66.7th percentile was 16,072.

For two-year public institutions, differences by enrollment size were unavailable due to the smaller size of the two-year sample, as noted on page 3.



To compare your institution's budget to the benchmarks in this report, simply divide your 2012-13 recruiting/admissions budget by the number of new first-year and transfer students who enrolled at your institution between January 1, 2013, and October 1, 2013 (see details on which budget components to include at the bottom of page 2). Then, compare this figure with the 2013 benchmarks shown above for your institution type.

* See note at the bottom of page 3 regarding the benchmarks for two-year public institutions.

Ratios of new students enrolled to FTE recruitment staff

This study also examined the ratio of the number of new students enrolled to the number of FTE admissions/recruitment staff, including breakdowns by the enrollment size of the institutions in the sample.

Overall, as Table 3 shows, it is clear that four-year private institutions staff their admissions/recruitment offices at the highest levels.

Although minor differences are apparent in the table below, this study found no statistically significant correlations between the ratios and enrollment size, with one exception. Namely, the median ratio (41) for the largest private institutions in the sample was significantly different than the ratios for the smallest and middle third of the private institutions.

Although breakdowns by size were unavailable for respondents from the two-year public sector (see note about small sample size on page 3), respondents from this sector, overall, reported using fewer recruitment staff for each new undergraduate enrollee.

Table 3: Number of new undergraduates in 2013 for each FTE employee in undergraduate recruitment or admissions in 2012-13

Percentile	Four-year private institutions				Four-year public institutions				Two-year public institutions*
	Overall	Smallest third in enrollment size	Middle third in enrollment size	Largest third in enrollment size	Overall	Smallest third in enrollment size	Middle third in enrollment size	Largest third in enrollment size	Overall
25th percentile	23	20	21	29	90	64	85	106	184
Median	31	28	29	41	111	102	117	116	375
75th percentile	44	40	42	51	149	139	144	219	642

TM

At private four-year institutions, the median ratio of new-student enrollees to FTE staff was 31:1, but at public four-year institutions, the ratio was 111:1. At two-year public institutions, the comparable ratio was 375:1. With just one exception noted above, this study found no statistically significant correlations between the ratios and enrollment size.



To compare your staff size to the benchmarks shown, simply divide the number of new first-year and transfer students who enrolled at your institution in all terms between January 1, 2013, and October 1, 2013, by the number of FTE staff in your admissions/recruitment division in 2012-13 (see FTE definition below). Then, compare this figure with the benchmarks shown above for your corresponding type of institution.

FTE definition

The number of full-time equivalent employees is the sum of:

1. The number of employees working full-time; and
2. The number of part-time employees, expressed as fractions of full-time (i.e., half-time = 0.5 and quarter-time = 0.25).

For example, an office with 20 full-time employees and 12 students who work an average of 10 hours per week (0.25 of full-time) has 23 FTE employees (20+3).

* See note at the bottom of page 3 regarding the benchmarks for two-year public institutions.

Ratios of new students enrolled to FTE outreach recruitment staff

Similar to the findings on the previous page, this study also examined the ratio of the number of new students enrolled to the number of FTE outreach recruitment staff, including breakdowns by the enrollment size of the institutions in the sample. FTE outreach staff were defined as employees involved in face-to-face outreach, such as high school visits, college fairs, or on-campus events/tours.

Consistent with the findings on the previous page, four-year private institutions staffed their admissions/recruitment outreach activities at the highest levels.

Again here, although minor differences are apparent in the table below, this study found no statistically significant correlations between these ratios and enrollment size, with one exception. Namely, the median ratio (74) for the largest private institutions in the sample was significantly different than the ratios for the smallest and middle third of the private institutions.

Table 4: Number of new undergraduates in 2013 for each FTE employee who was involved in face-to-face outreach for undergraduate recruitment or admissions in 2012-13

Percentile	Four-year private institutions				Four-year public institutions				Two-year public institutions*
	Overall	Smallest third in enrollment size	Middle third in enrollment size	Largest third in enrollment size	Overall	Smallest third in enrollment size	Middle third in enrollment size	Largest third in enrollment size	Overall
25th percentile	41	30	38	53	174	125	150	235	437
Median	56	45	50	74	243	201	244	373	723
75th percentile	83	74	68	98	448	290	397	523	1,062

At private four-year institutions, the median ratio of new-student enrollees to FTE outreach staff was 56:1, but at public four-year institutions, the ratio was 243:1. At two-year public institutions, the comparable ratio was 723:1. With just one exception noted above, this study found no statistically significant correlations between the ratios and enrollment size.

*See note at the bottom of page 3 regarding the benchmarks for two-year public institutions.

Changes in recruiting budgets (2013-14 vs. 2012-13 and 2012-13 vs. 2011-12)

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether their total budgets for recruitment and admissions had: A) decreased 2 percent or more; B) stayed the same, give or take 2 percent; or C) increased 2 percent or more for each of the past two years. Tables 5-7 show the findings for each sector, providing another perspective on the median costs per student reported on pages 3-4.

For clarification, the final column shown in Tables 5-7 indicates the percentages of respondents that reported the same category both years (i.e., budget decreased 2 percent or more, budget stayed the same, or budget increased 2 percent or more for 2013-14 vs. 2012-13 and for 2012-13 vs. 2011-12). Note that the percentages in this column do not add up to 100 percent because many respondents reported different responses for the two years.

As the findings show in Tables 5 and 6, substantially more institutions reported keeping their budget the same than reported increases or decreases among the four-year private and public institutions in the sample. This finding held true across all three columns shown (i.e., for the previous budget year, the current budget year, and among those who reported the same category both years).

Among the respondents from two-year public institutions*, the most common response was also keeping the budget the same, as shown in Table 7 on the next page.

Table 5: Four-year private institutions—Percentage changes in budget for recruitment and admissions each of the last two years

Four-year private institutions	2012-13 budget vs. 2011-12 budget	2013-14 budget vs. 2012-13 budget	Reported same category both years**
Budget decreased 2% or more	14.6%	21.8%	7.0%
Budget stayed the same	52.1%	47.9%	33.8%
Budget increased 2% or more	33.3%	30.3%	17.6%

TM

One-third of respondents from four-year private institutions reported they kept their budgets steady each of the past two years.

* See note at the bottom of page 3 regarding the benchmarks for two-year public institutions.

**This column represents the percentage of respondents that chose the same category (i.e., budget decreased 2 percent or more, budget stayed the same, or budget increased 2 percent or more) for 2012-13 vs. 2011-12 *and again* for 2013-14 vs. 2012-13. Note that the percentages in this column do not add up to 100 percent because many respondents reported different responses for the two years.

Changes in recruiting budgets, continued...

Table 6: Four-year public institutions—Percentage changes in budget for recruitment and admissions each of the last two years

Four-year public institutions	2012-13 budget vs. 2011-12 budget	2013-14 budget vs. 2012-13 budget	Reported same category both years**
Budget decreased 2% or more	7.1%	5.4%	1.8%
Budget stayed the same	67.9%	73.2%	53.6%
Budget increased 2% or more	25.0%	21.4%	7.1%

TM

Slightly more than one-half of respondents from four-year public institutions reported they kept their budgets steady each of the past two years.

Table 7: Two-year public institutions—Percentage changes in budget for recruitment and admissions each of the last two years

Two-year public institutions*	2012-13 budget vs. 2011-12 budget	2013-14 budget vs. 2012-13 budget	Reported same category both years**
Budget decreased 2% or more	31.8%	31.8%	18.2%
Budget stayed the same	40.9%	45.5%	22.7%
Budget increased 2% or more	27.3%	22.7%	9.1%

TM

Approximately one-quarter (23 percent) of respondents from two-year public institutions reported they kept their budgets steady each of the past two years.

* See note at the bottom of page 3 regarding the benchmarks for two-year public institutions.

**This column represents the percentage of respondents that chose the same category (i.e., budget decreased 2 percent or more, budget stayed the same, or budget increased 2 percent or more) for 2012-13 vs. 2011-12 *and again* for 2013-14 vs. 2012-13. Note that the percentages in this column do not add up to 100 percent because many respondents reported different responses for the two years.

Responding institutions

Representatives from 221 colleges and universities participated in Noel-Levitz's 2013 national electronic poll of undergraduate recruiting costs. Respondents included 143 four-year private institutions, 56 four-year public institutions, and 22 two-year public institutions. The poll was completed between September 24 and October 15, 2013. Below is a list of institutions that participated.

Note: Noel-Levitz conducts this study every two years. For previous reports, visit www.noellevitz.com/Benchmarks.

Four-year private institutions

Note: Any participating two-year private institutions are included among the four-year private institutions.

Abilene Christian University (TX)
Alderson Broaddus University (WV)
Alma College (MI)
Anderson University of Indiana (IN)
Andrew College (GA)
Andrews University (MI)
Appalachian Bible College (WV)
Arizona Christian University (AZ)
Asbury University (KY)
Aurora University (IL)
Averett University (VA)
Baker University (KS)
Baldwin Wallace University (OH)
Bay Path College (MA)
Baylor University (TX)
Bennett College (NC)
Bluefield College (VA)
Bluffton University (OH)
Brooks Institute (CA)
Bryan College (TN)
Bryant University (RI)
Bucknell University (PA)
Buena Vista University (IA)
Butler University (IN)
Caldwell College (NJ)
Campbellsville University (KY)
Capital University (OH)
Carroll College (MT)
Christ College of Nursing & Health Sciences, The (OH)
Christian Brothers University (TN)
Clarke University (IA)
Coe College (IA)
College of Our Lady of the Elms (MA)
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (MN)
Colorado Christian University (CO)
Columbia College (MO)
Columbia College Chicago (IL)
Columbia International University (SC)
Concordia College (MN)
Culver-Stockton College (MO)
Curry College (MA)
Daemen College (NY)
Delaware College of Art and Design (DE)
Drew University (NJ)
East Texas Baptist University (TX)
Eastern Nazarene College (MA)

EDP College of Puerto Rico-Hato Rey (PR)
EDP College of Puerto Rico-San Sebastian (PR)
Emmanuel College (GA)
Finlandia University (MI)
Fisher College (MA)
Florida Institute of Technology (FL)
Fresno Pacific University (CA)
Gallaudet University (DC)
Goshen College (IN)
Grace College and Seminary (IN)
Gwynedd-Mercy University (PA)
Hilbert College (NY)
Hillsdale College (MI)
Holy Family University (PA)
Houston Baptist University (TX)
ICPR Junior College (PR)
Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)
Johnson College (PA)
Judson University (IL)
Kentucky Mountain Bible College (KY)
Keystone College (PA)
La Salle University (PA)
Lafayette College (PA)
Lake Erie College (OH)
Lancaster Bible College (PA)
Lasell College (MA)
Lincoln Christian University (IL)
Lincoln College (IL)
Malone University (OH)
Manhattanville College (NY)
Maria College of Albany (NY)
Marquette University (WI)
Martin Luther College (MN)
Marylhurst University (OR)
Master's College and Seminary, The (CA)
Menlo College (CA)
Mercy College of Ohio (OH)
Methodist University (NC)
Miles College (AL)
Millikin University (IL)
Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (WI)
Montana Bible College (MT)
Montreat College (NC)
Mount Aloysius College (PA)
Mount Ida College (MA)
Mount St. Mary's University (MD)
Naropa University (CO)
Northwest Nazarene University (ID)
Northwest University (WA)
Ohio Northern University (OH)
Otterbein University (OH)
Pace University (NY)

Pennsylvania College of Art & Design (PA)
Presbyterian College (SC)
Providence College (RI)
Quincy University (IL)
Randolph-Macon College (VA)
Robert Morris University (PA)
Rockhurst University (MO)
Rocky Mountain College (MT)
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (IN)
Saint Joseph's College (IN)
Saint Peter's University (NJ)
Seattle University (WA)
Sewanee: The University of the South (TN)
Shenandoah University (VA)
Shimer College (IL)
Shorter University (GA)
Southwestern Adventist University (TX)
Southwestern Assemblies of God University (TX)
Spartanburg Methodist College (SC)
Spring Hill College (AL)
St. John's University (NY)
St. Joseph's College, New York-Suffolk Campus (NY)
Sterling College (KS)
Stonehill College (MA)
Texas Christian University (TX)
Texas Wesleyan University (TX)
Trinity College of Nursing & Health Sciences (IL)
Tulane University (LA)
University of Dallas (TX)
University of Dayton (OH)
University of Denver (CO)
University of Great Falls (MT)
University of LaVerne (CA)
University of Mary (ND)
University of Northwestern at St. Paul (MN)
University of the Arts, The (PA)
Ursuline College (OH)
Villa Maria College of Buffalo (NY)
Watkins College of Art, Design & Film (TN)
Webster University (MO)
Wesley College (DE)
Whittier College (CA)
William Jewell College (MO)
Wisconsin Lutheran College (WI)
Xavier University (OH)

Thank you to those who participated.

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Four-year public institutions

Alfred State College (NY)
Boise State University (ID)
California State University-Chico (CA)
Castleton State College (VT)
Clarion University of Pennsylvania (PA)
Coastal Carolina University (SC)
Daytona State College (FL)
Delta State University (MS)
Dixie State College of Utah (UT)
Eastern Kentucky University (KY)
Emporia State University (KS)
Illinois State University (IL)
Kansas State University (KS)
Lake Superior State University (MI)
Longwood University (VA)
Metropolitan State University (MN)
Metropolitan State University of
Denver (CO)
Michigan Technological University (MI)
Midwestern State University (TX)
Morgan State University (MD)
Norfolk State University (VA)
Ohio State University Main Campus,
The (OH)
Ohio State University Newark Campus,
The (OH)
Oklahoma State University (OK)
Southern Polytechnic State
University (GA)
Southwestern Oklahoma State
University (OK)
State University of New York at
Binghamton (NY)
State University of New York College
at Oswego (NY)

State University of New York Empire
State College (NY)
Tennessee Technological University (TN)
University of California-Riverside (CA)
University of California-Santa
Barbara (CA)
University of Central Missouri (MO)
University of Georgia (GA)
University of Houston (TX)
University of Houston-Victoria (TX)
University of Maryland Eastern
Shore (MD)
University of Missouri-Columbia (MO)
University of Nebraska at Kearney (NE)
University of North Carolina at
Charlotte (NC)
University of North Carolina
Wilmington (NC)
University of North Georgia-
Dahlonega (GA)
University of South Dakota, The (SD)
University of Southern Mississippi (MS)
University of Texas-Pan American (TX)
University of Vermont (VT)
University of Virginia's College at Wise,
The (VA)
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (WI)
University of Wisconsin-River Falls (WI)
University of Wisconsin-Stout (WI)
University of Wyoming (WY)
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University (VA)
Washburn University (KS)
West Texas A&M University (TX)
Western Connecticut State University (CT)
Wright State University Main Campus (OH)

Two-year public institutions

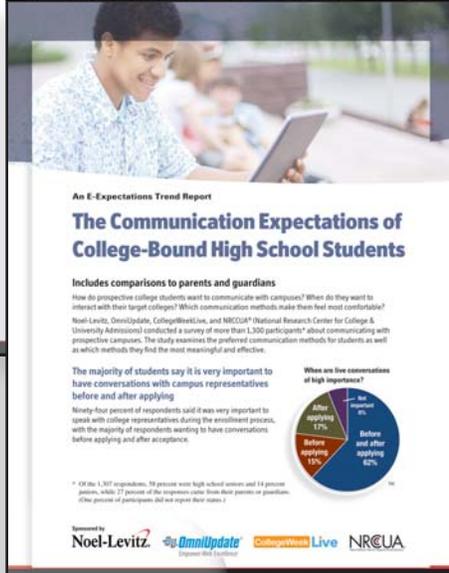
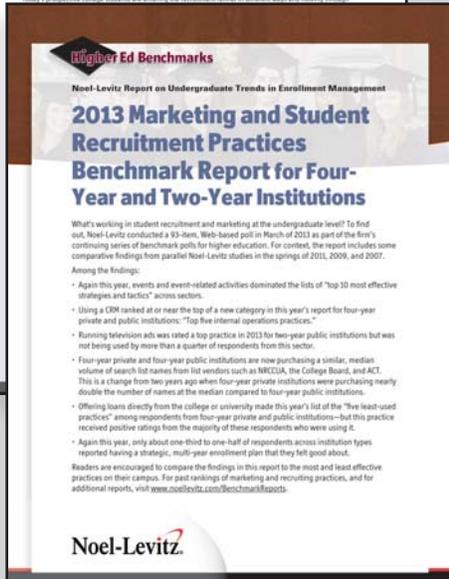
Aiken Technical College (SC)
Central Carolina Technical College (SC)
College of Western Idaho (ID)
Columbus State Community College (OH)
East Georgia State College (GA)
Eastern New Mexico University-
Roswell (NM)
Flathead Valley Community College (MT)
Heartland Community College (IL)
Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana-
Northwest (IN)
Marion Technical College (OH)
Minnesota West Community and
Technical College (MN)
North Arkansas College (AR)
NorthWest Arkansas Community
College (AR)
Northwest State Community College (OH)
Ocean County College (NJ)
Otero Junior College (CO)
Parkland College (IL)
Riverland Community College (MN)
Sussex County Community College (NJ)
Temple College (TX)
The University of Montana-Helena
College of Technology (MT)
West Virginia Northern Community
College (WV)

Get another perspective on your recruiting costs

Readers of this report are invited to contact Noel-Levitz for a complimentary telephone consultation. We'll listen carefully to your circumstances and offer our outside perspective on your costs based on our research and consulting work with campuses nationwide. To schedule an appointment, contact us at 1-800-876-1117 or ContactUs@noellevitz.com.

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Questions about this report?

We hope you found this report to be helpful and informative. If you have questions or would like additional information about the findings, please contact Noel-Levitz at 1-800-876-1117 or ContactUs@noellevitz.com.

Please watch for Noel-Levitz's next survey of undergraduate recruiting costs in fall 2015.

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A trusted partner to higher education, Noel-Levitz focuses on strategic planning for enrollment and student success. Our consultants 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 and outcomes, monitoring student and campus usage of web and electronic communications, and comparing recruitment budgets and policies. 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.

For more information, visit www.noellevitz.com.

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