College Admissions Trends Analysis (2018-2025): Patterns, COVID-19 Impact, and Future Projections

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Abstract

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of college admissions data from academic years 2018-19 through 2024-25. Using statistical analysis and data visualization techniques, we examine overall admissions trends, demographic disparities, the impact of COVID-19, yield optimization opportunities, geographic diversity, and future enrollment projections. Our findings highlight significant shifts in application volumes, acceptance rates, and yield patterns, with particular attention to demographic equity considerations across racial/ethnic groups, residency categories, and first-generation status. The analysis reveals both challenges and opportunities for strategic enrollment management, including concerning trends in declining yield rates and persistent demographic disparities that warrant institutional attention.

Contents

1 Introduction

Understanding admissions trends is crucial for higher education institutions to develop effective enrollment strategies, promote diversity and inclusion, and plan for future resource allocation. This report analyzes admissions data spanning seven academic years (2018-19 to 2024-25), encompassing a critical period that includes the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

The analysis examines five key metrics:

- **Applied**: Number of students who submitted applications

- **Offered**: Number of students who received admission offers

- **Enrolled**: Number of students who accepted offers and enrolled

- **Offered Rate**: Percentage of applicants who received offers (applications-to-offers conversion)

- **Yield**: Percentage of admitted students who enrolled (offers-to-enrollment conversion)

These metrics are analyzed across multiple demographic dimensions:

- **Race/Ethnicity**: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White

- **Residency**: In-state, Out-of-state, International, National

- **Generation Status**: First-generation, Non-first-generation

- **Gender**: Male, Female

Our analysis addresses the following key questions:

1. How have admissions trends evolved over the seven-year period?

2. What impact did the COVID-19 pandemic have on different demographic groups?

3. What disparities exist in acceptance and yield rates between demographic groups?

4. What opportunities exist for optimizing enrollment yield for underrepresented groups?

5. How might admissions metrics evolve in the coming years based on current trends?

2 Overall Admissions Trends

2.1 Application, Offer, and Enrollment Volumes

The period from 2018-19 to 2024-25 has witnessed substantial changes in application volumes and subsequent admissions metrics. Figure 1 illustrates these trends.
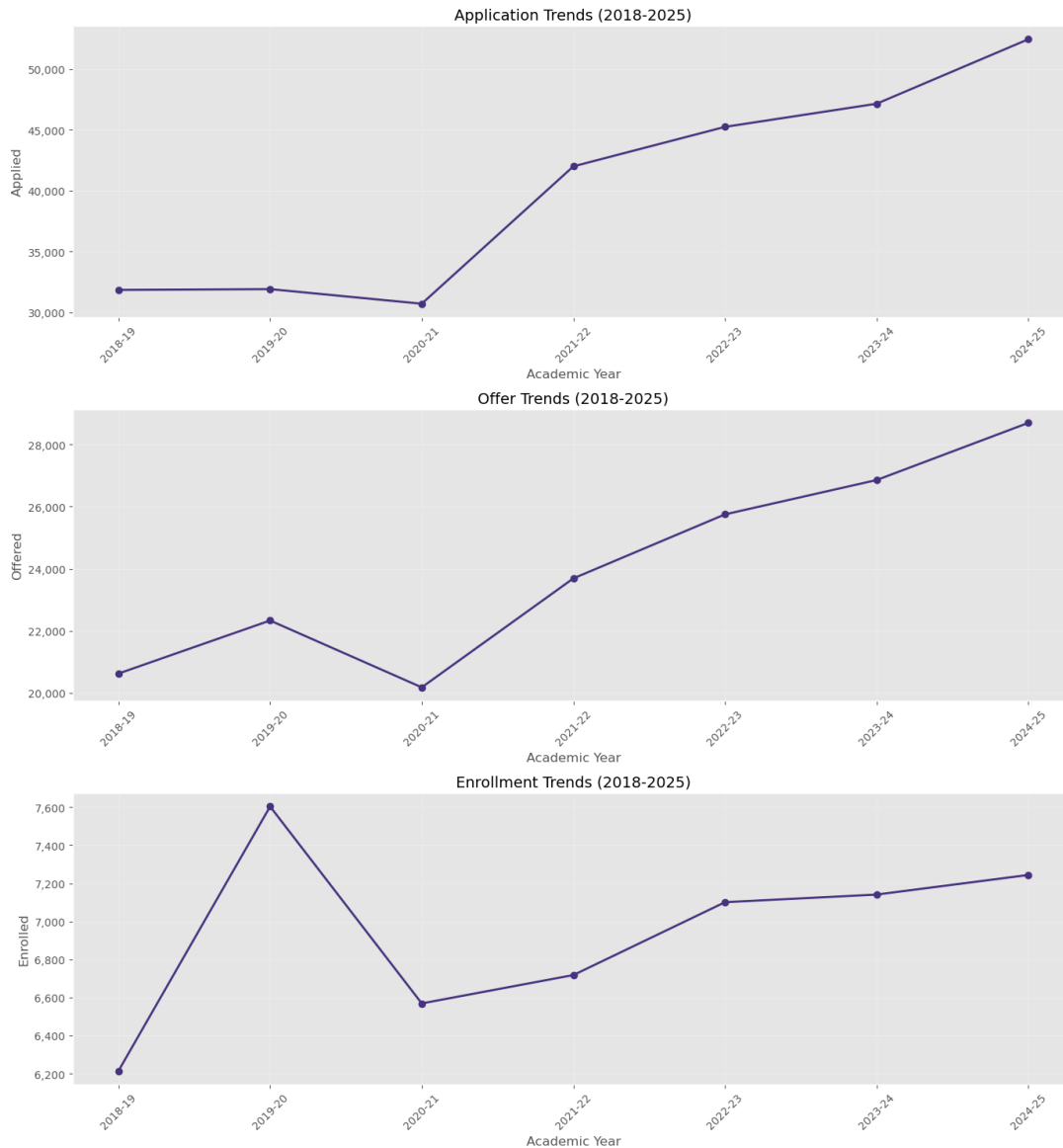
Figure 1: Overall trends in applications, offers, and enrollments (2018-2025)

Key observations from Figure 1:

- **Applications**: After remaining stable around 32,000 in 2018-2020, applications saw a dramatic surge to approximately 42,000 in 2021-22, following a slight decline during early COVID (2020-21). This upward trajectory continued steadily, reaching 52,434 by 2024-25—representing an overall growth of approximately 65% over the seven-year period.

- **Offers**: The number of admission offers has generally tracked with application growth, increasing from around 20,600 in 2018-19 to nearly 28,700 by 2024-25. However, the rate of increase has been more modest than applications, reflecting declining acceptance rates.

- **Enrollment**: Enrollment patterns show more volatility than applications or offers. After reaching a peak of approximately 7,600 students in 2019-20 (pre-COVID), enrollment dropped sharply to about 6,600 during the early pandemic period. While recovery has been consistent since 2021-22, enrollment in 2024-25 (7,244) remains below the pre-pandemic peak despite significantly higher application and offer volumes.

The growth in application volumes is consistent with wider national trends. According to recent

research by the Common App, applications to public colleges grew by 10% between the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 admissions cycles, while applications to private institutions increased by just 3% during the same period [1]. This growth was particularly pronounced in the south and southwest regions, with some institutions like the University of Texas at Austin experiencing a 24% increase in applications, including a 48% rise in out-of-state applicants. This phenomenon reflects a broader national shift in student interest toward institutions in these regions.

2.2 Acceptance and Yield Rate Trends

Figure 2 shows the trends in acceptance rates and yield rates over the seven-year period.
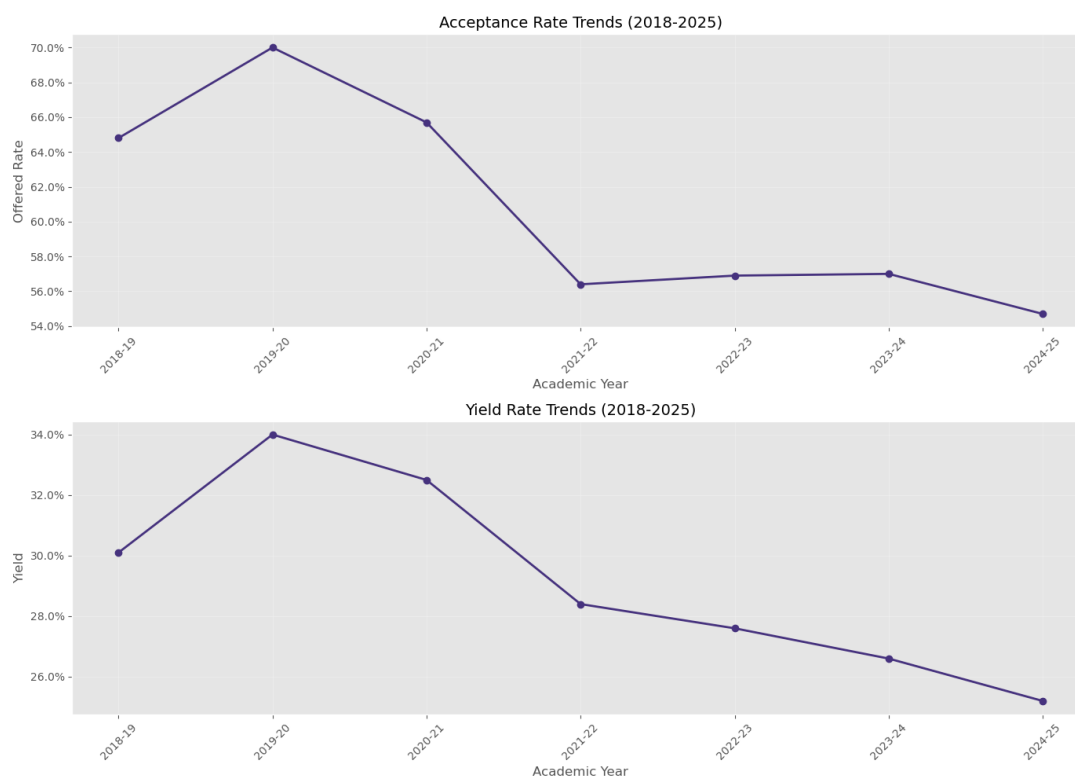

Figure 2: Overall trends in acceptance and yield rates (2018-2025)

Key observations from Figure 2:

- **Acceptance Rate**: The acceptance rate peaked at 70% in 2019-20, then fell sharply to 56.4% by 2021-22 as applications surged during the pandemic period. It has continued a gradual decline to 54.7% by 2024-25, representing a 15.3 percentage point decrease from the peak.

- **Yield Rate**: The yield rate shows a concerning downward trend throughout most of the period, declining from a peak of 34% in 2019-20 to just 25.2% by 2024-25. This 8.8 percentage point decline means that a significantly larger admit pool is needed to achieve the same enrollment goals.

The declining yield rate trends observed in this study align with national patterns. According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the average yield rate for four-year not-for-profit colleges was just 30% in fall 2022, continuing a multi-year downward trend [5]. This national decline in yield rates is forcing institutions to admit substantially larger cohorts to achieve enrollment targets, creating complex ripple effects throughout the admissions process and raising important questions about strategic enrollment management.

2.3 Year-over-Year Changes

Figure 3 presents the year-over-year percentage changes in key admissions metrics, highlighting periods of significant growth or decline.
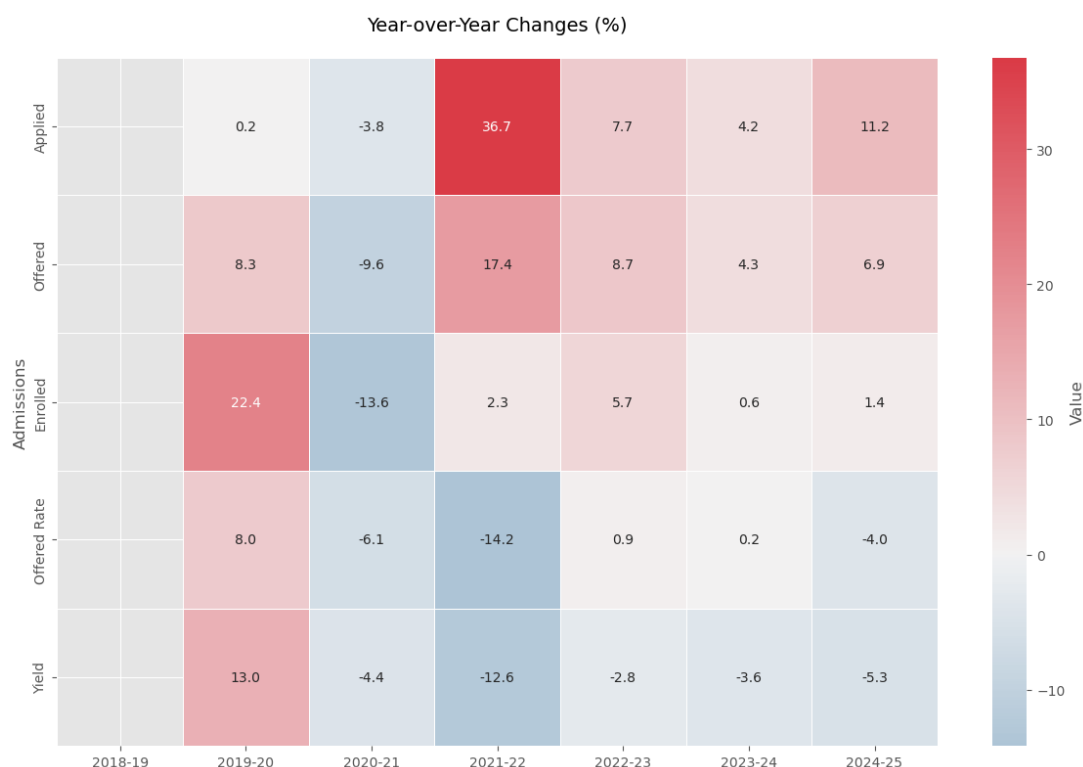

Figure 3: Year-over-year percentage changes in admissions metrics

The heatmap reveals several critical inflection points:

- **COVID-19 Initial Impact (2020-21)**: Applications declined by 3.8%, offers by 9.6%, and enrollment by 13.6%, demonstrating the pandemic's immediate disruptive effects.

- **Post-COVID Surge (2021-22)**: Applications rebounded dramatically with a 36.7% increase, while offers rose by 17.4%. Despite this growth, the acceptance rate fell sharply by 14.2%, reflecting capacity constraints in accommodating the surge.

- **Continued Yield Challenges**: Every year since 2020-21 has seen negative year-over-year changes in yield rates, with the most recent year (2024-25) showing a 5.3% decline from the previous year.

2.4 Current Admissions Funnel

Figure 4 illustrates the current (2024-25) admissions funnel from applications through enrollment.
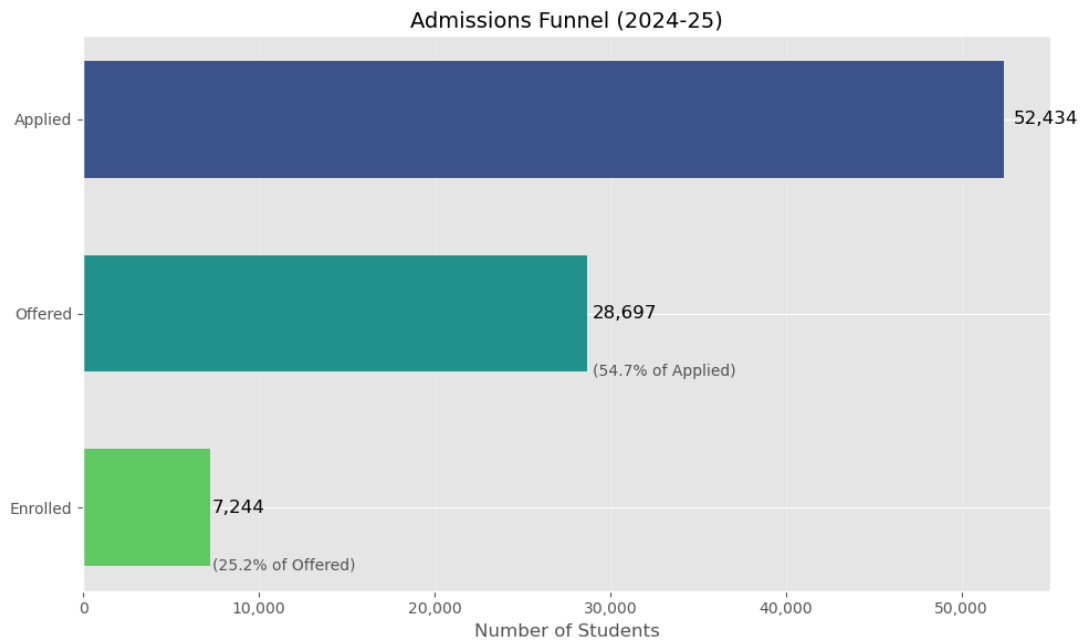
Figure 4: Admissions funnel for 2024-25 academic year

The current admissions funnel shows:

- 52,434 applications received

- 28,697 offers of admission (54.7% of applicants)

- 7,244 enrolled students (25.2% of those offered admission)

This visualization highlights the substantial narrowing that occurs at each stage of the process, with only 13.8% of original applicants ultimately enrolling.

3   Demographic Comparison Analysis

3.1   Acceptance Rate Disparities by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 5 displays the acceptance rates across racial/ethnic groups for the 2024-25 academic year.

Figure 5: Acceptance rates by race/ethnicity (2024-25)

The data reveals substantial disparities in acceptance rates:

- White applicants: 59.0%

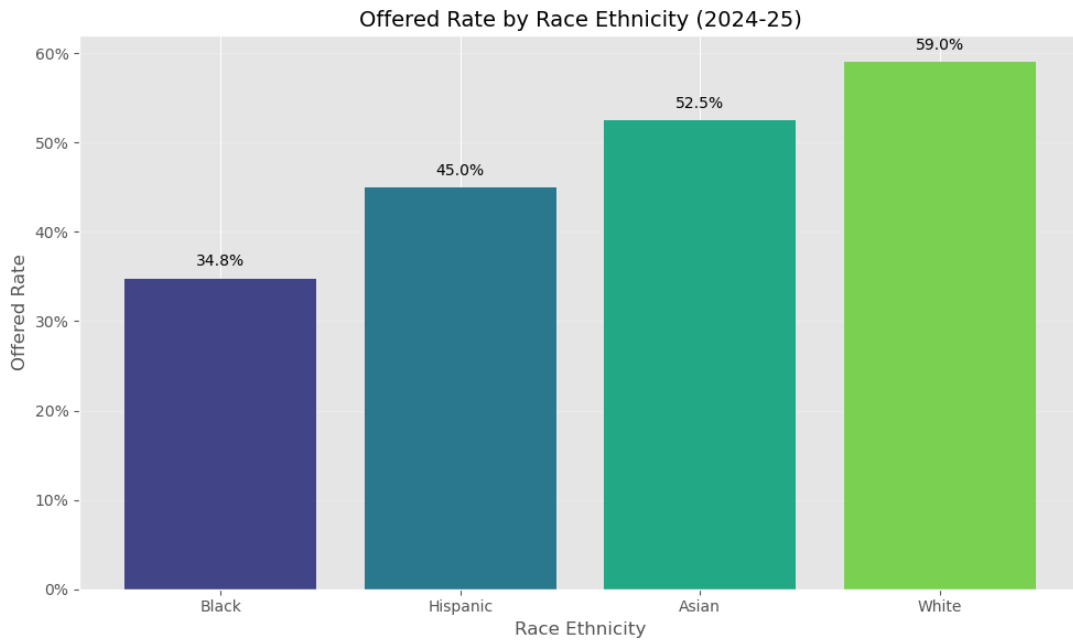- Asian applicants: 52.5%

- Hispanic applicants: 45.0%

- Black applicants: 34.8%

The 24.2 percentage point gap between the highest (White) and lowest (Black) acceptance rates raises significant equity concerns and warrants further investigation into potential structural barriers in the admissions process.

The racial and ethnic disparities in acceptance rates observed in this analysis reflect broader systemic challenges in higher education. Recent research indicates a continued increase in diversity of applicants nationally, with applications from underrepresented minority students rising 67% since the 2019-20 admissions cycle [2]. However, the Supreme Court's 2023 decision to end race-conscious admissions has created new challenges for institutions seeking to maintain diverse student bodies. Many institutions are now exploring alternative approaches to promote diversity, including revised essay prompts and holistic review processes that consider the full context of applicants' experiences [2].

3.2 Yield Rate Differences by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 6 shows yield rates across racial/ethnic groups for the 2024-25 academic year.
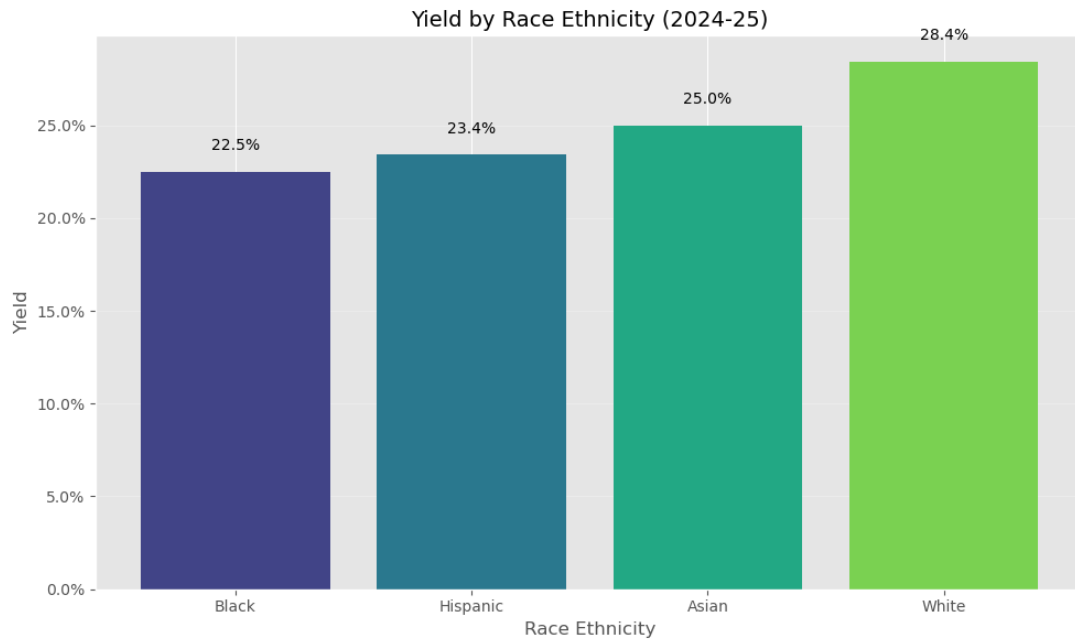
Figure 6: Yield rates by race/ethnicity (2024-25)

Yield rate disparities, while present, are less pronounced than acceptance rate differences:

- White admitted students: 28.4%

- Asian admitted students: 25.0%

- Hispanic admitted students: 23.4%

- Black admitted students: 22.5%

The narrower gap in yield rates (5.9 percentage points between highest and lowest) suggests that once offers are extended, students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds enroll at more similar rates compared to the disparities in receiving offers.

3.3   Acceptance Rate by Residency Status

Figure 7 illustrates acceptance rates across different residency categories.
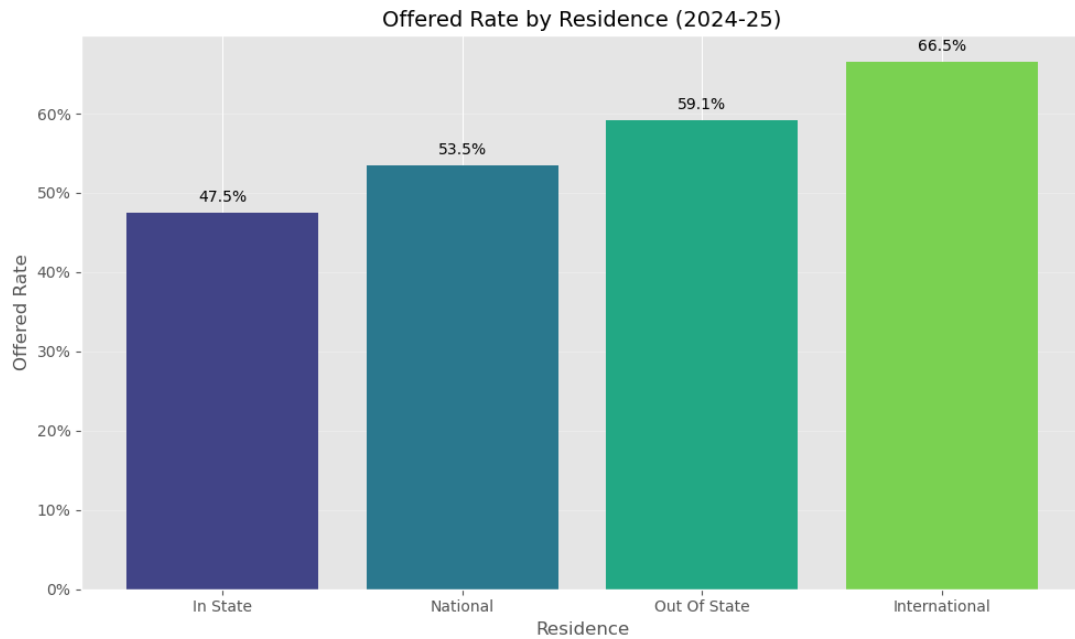
Figure 7: Acceptance rates by residency status (2024-25)

A notable pattern emerges in acceptance rates by residency:

- International applicants: 66.5%

- Out-of-state applicants: 59.1%

- National applicants: 53.5%

- In-state applicants: 47.5%

This inverted pattern—where in-state applicants have the lowest acceptance rate while international applicants have the highest—raises questions about institutional priorities and revenue considerations in the admissions process.

3.4 Application Volumes by Residency

Figure 8 shows the distribution of applications across residency categories.
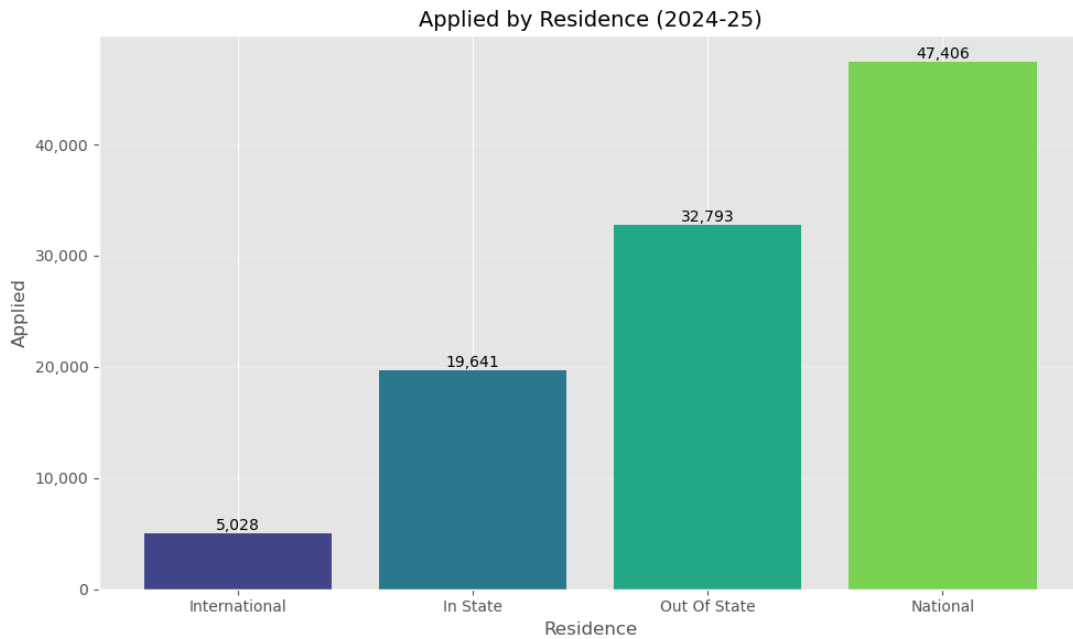
Figure 8: Application volumes by residency status (2024-25)

The residency distribution of applications provides important context:

- National: 47,406 applications (47.7%)

- Out-of-state: 32,793 applications (33.0%)

- In-state: 19,641 applications (19.8%)

- International: 5,028 applications (5.1%)

While international applicants have the highest acceptance rate, they represent the smallest applicant pool. Conversely, in-state applicants face the most competitive acceptance rate despite these students traditionally having the highest yield rates.

3.5 Enrollment Patterns by Generation Status and Gender

Figures 9 and 10 display enrollment distributions by generation status and gender for 2024-25.
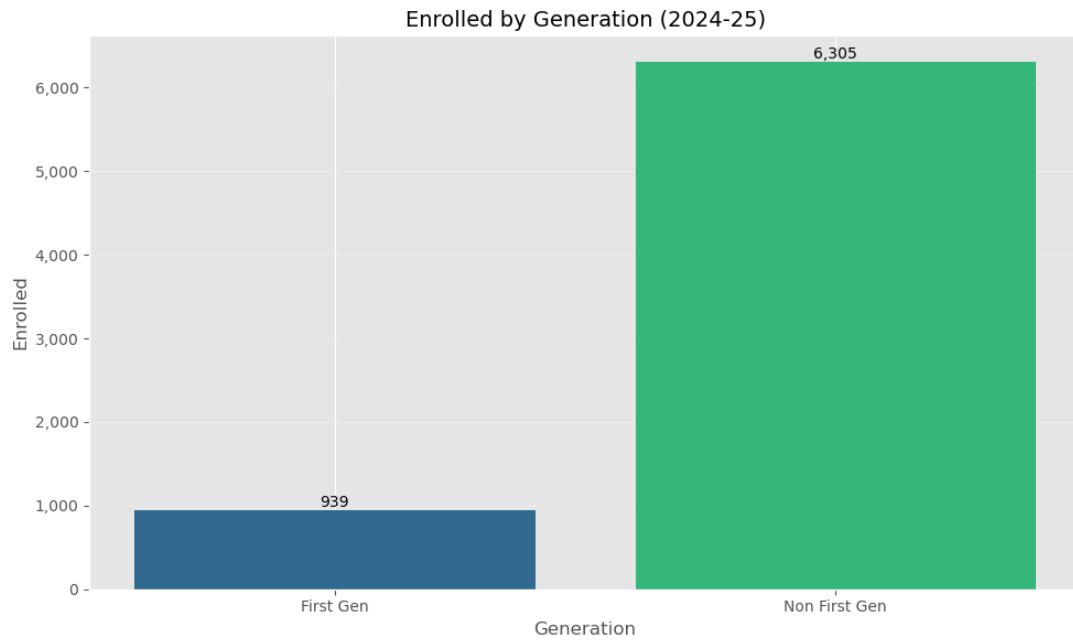
Figure 9: Enrollment by generation status (2024-25)
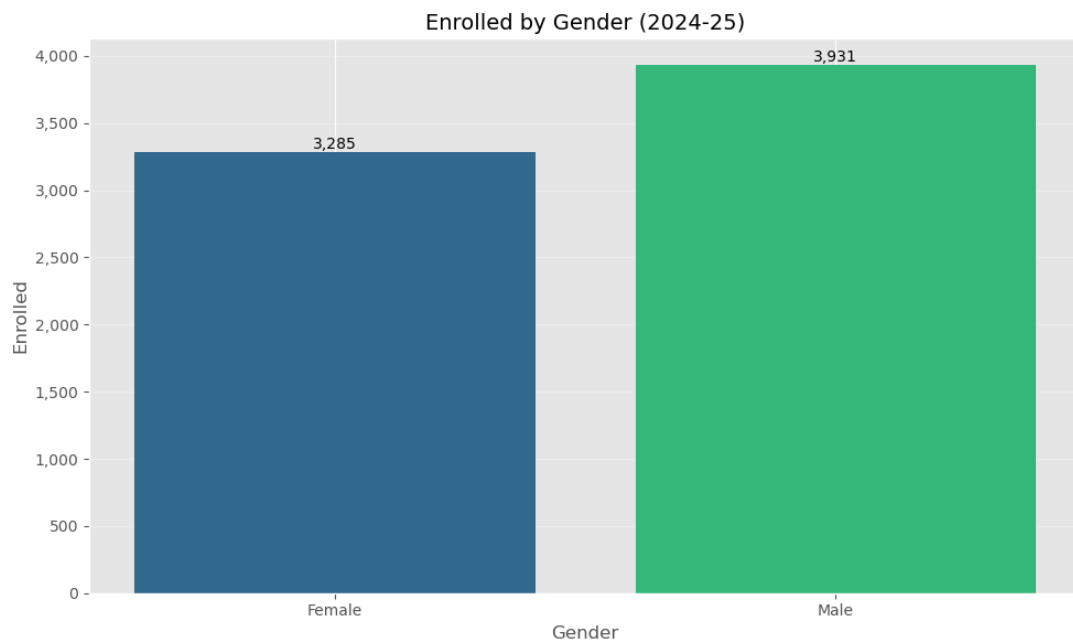
Figure 10: Enrollment by gender (2024-25)

Key observations from these enrollment distributions:

- **Generation Status**: First-generation students comprise only 13% (939) of the enrolled student population, compared to 87% (6,305) non-first-generation students, highlighting significant opportunity for improvement in socioeconomic diversity.

- **Gender**: Male students constitute 54.5% (3,931) of enrolled students, while female students make up 45.5% (3,285), showing a modest gender imbalance that has remained relatively consistent over the study period.

First-generation students face unique challenges throughout the admissions process. Research by Niche found that first-generation applicants were significantly less likely to have visited colleges before applying, citing barriers like lack of resources (time, money, or transportation) and uncertainty about how to schedule visits [6]. Additionally, these students were more likely to report that application fees were too expensive or that applications were too confusing. Effective recruitment strategies for this population must address these specific barriers through targeted support services, clear communication about financial aid, and streamlined application processes.

4 Trends by Demographic Group

4.1 Application Trends by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 11 shows how application volumes have evolved across racial/ethnic groups over the seven-year period.
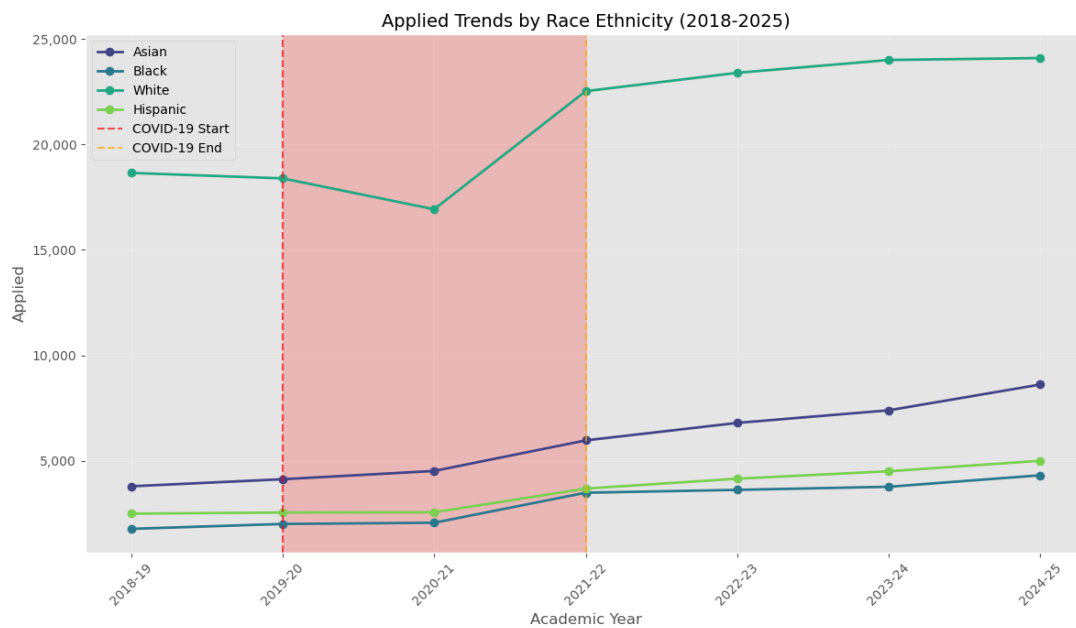
Figure 11: Application trends by race/ethnicity (2018-2025)

Key observations:

- All racial/ethnic groups show an increase in applications over the seven-year period, though with varying patterns and magnitudes.

- The COVID-19 period (highlighted in the shaded area) initially saw a decline in applications from all groups in 2020-21, followed by substantial increases in 2021-22 as the pandemic response adapted.

- White and Asian applicants show the steepest growth trajectories, while Black and Hispanic application growth has been more moderate.

4.2 Enrollment Trends by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 12 illustrates how enrollment patterns have evolved across racial/ethnic groups.
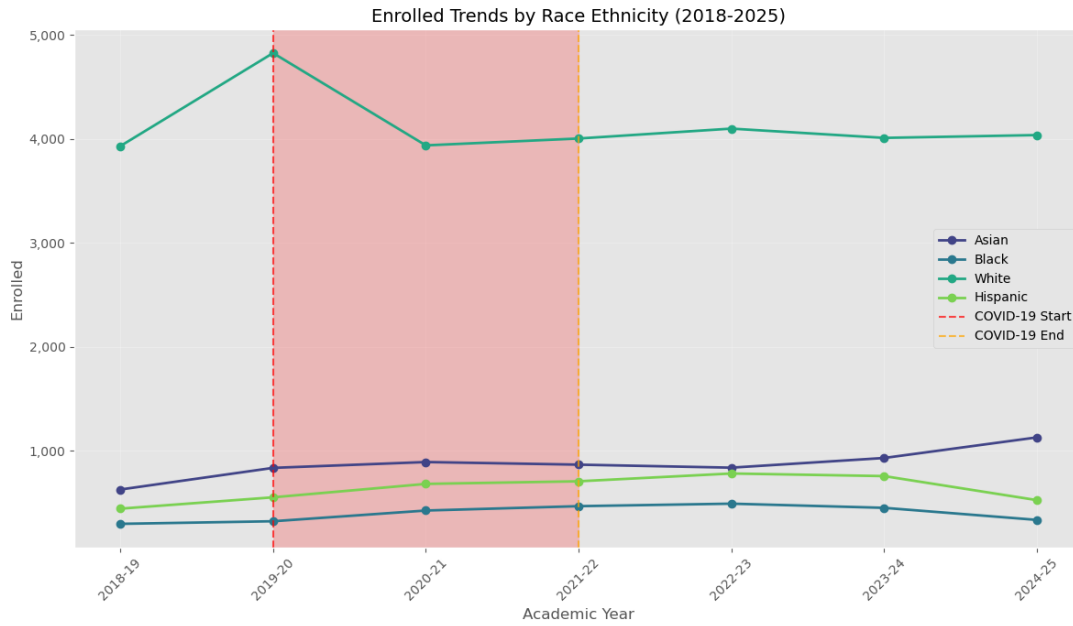
Figure 12: Enrollment trends by race/ethnicity (2018-2025)

Notable enrollment patterns include:

- Asian student enrollment has grown consistently, nearly doubling over the seven-year period.

- White student enrollment saw a peak in 2019-20, followed by a drop during COVID, and has since stabilized around 4,000 students per year.

- Hispanic student enrollment increased until 2022-23 but has declined in the most recent two years.

- Black student enrollment has remained relatively flat throughout the period with a slight decline in the most recent year.

4.3   Acceptance Rate Trends by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 13 shows the evolution of acceptance rates across racial/ethnic groups over time.
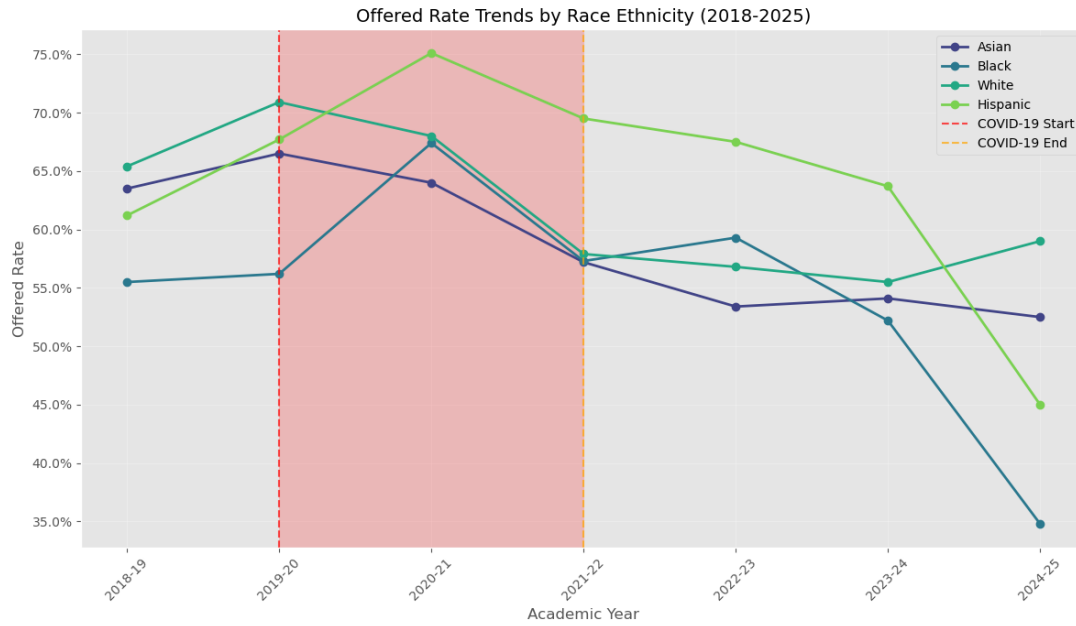
Figure 13: Acceptance rate trends by race/ethnicity (2018-2025)

This visualization reveals several critical patterns:

- All racial/ethnic groups experienced a significant decline in acceptance rates from 2019-20 to 2021-22, corresponding with the surge in applications during this period.

- Black applicants have experienced the steepest decline in acceptance rates, from approximately 68% in 2020-21 to 34.8% by 2024-25.

- While acceptance rates initially converged around 57-58% during COVID (2021-22), they have subsequently diverged, with racial gaps widening in the post-COVID period.

4.4 Demographic Composition Trends

Figures 14 and 15 show how the demographic composition of enrolled students has evolved over time.
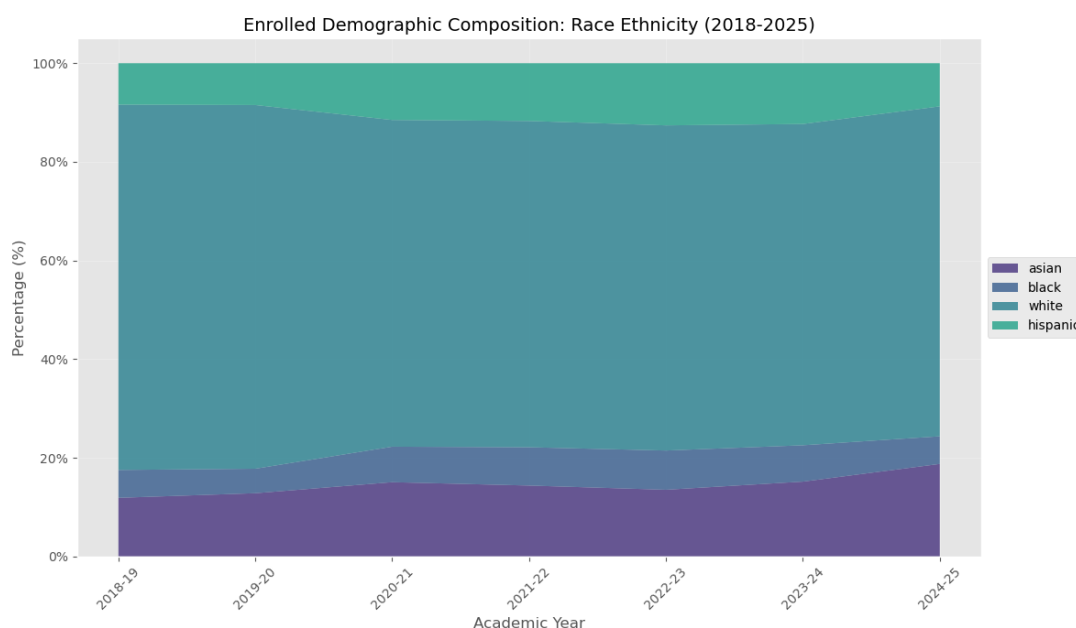
Figure 14: Enrolled demographic composition by race/ethnicity (2018-2025)
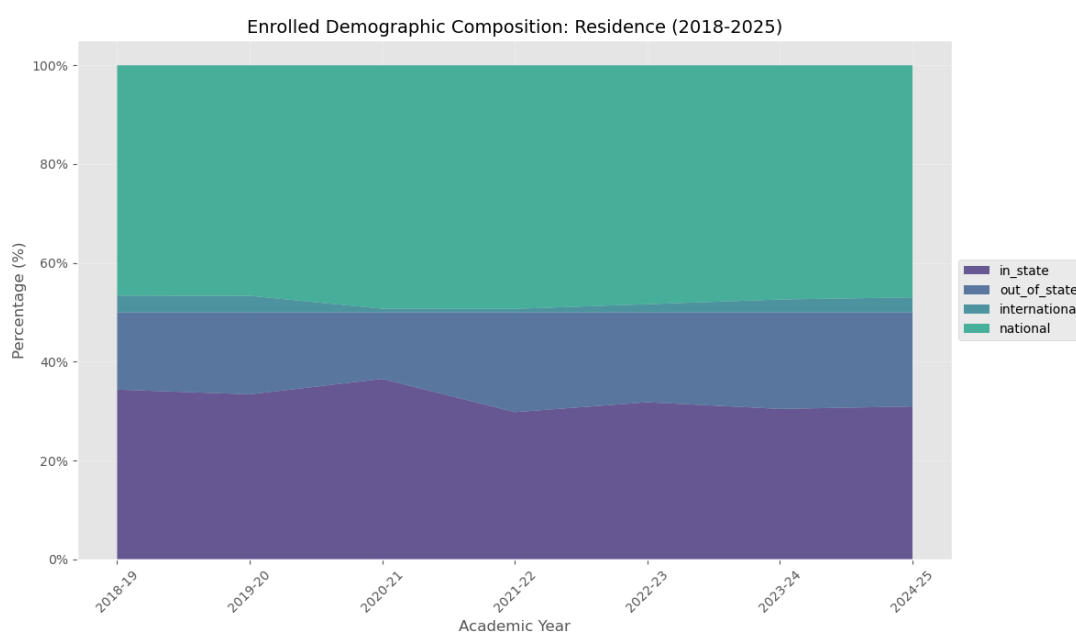
Figure 15: Enrolled demographic composition by residence (2018-2025)

Key observations from demographic composition analysis:

- **Race/Ethnicity**: White students consistently represent approximately 70-75% of the student body. Asian student representation has increased from approximately 12% to 18% over the period. Black and Hispanic student representation has remained relatively stable, with minor fluctuations.

- **Residency**: Despite significant fluctuations in acceptance rates by residency status, the overall geographic composition has remained relatively stable, suggesting that yield rate differences (especially high in-state yield) play a compensatory role in maintaining the balance.

While the demographic composition of enrolled students has remained relatively stable at this institution, national projections suggest significant shifts on the horizon. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment of students aged 25 to 34 years old is projected to increase by 4% between 2019 and 2030, while enrollment of students 35 years and older is expected to increase by 18% during the same period [9]. These changing demographics will require institutions to adapt their recruitment, support services, and academic programming to serve an increasingly diverse student population effectively.

5 COVID-19 Impact Analysis

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a watershed moment in higher education admissions. The rapid shift to test-optional policies during this period has had lasting effects, with more than 80% of four-year colleges not requiring standardized test scores for the 2023-2024 admission cycles [10]. While some institutions like MIT and the University of Tennessee system have reinstated testing requirements, many others have made test-optional policies permanent. This evolution in admissions requirements has significantly altered application patterns and may have contributed to the application surge observed in our data.

5.1 Impact on Applications

Figure 16 visualizes the percentage changes in applications across the pre-COVID, during-COVID, and post-COVID periods.
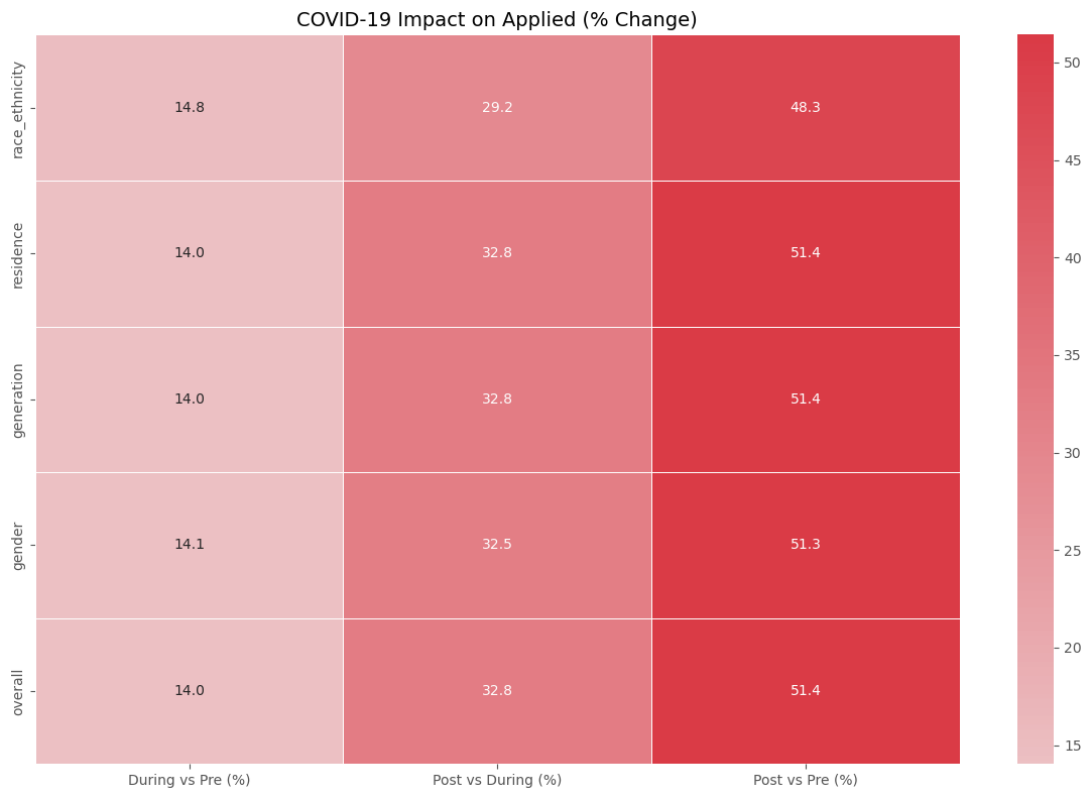

Figure 16: COVID-19 impact on applications (% change)

The analysis reveals several key impacts:

- Applications increased modestly (14.0%) during COVID compared to the pre-COVID period.

- The post-COVID period saw a substantial 32.8% increase in applications compared to the during-COVID period.

- The cumulative effect represents a 51.4% increase in applications from pre-COVID to post-COVID.

- This pattern was relatively consistent across demographic categories, suggesting a universal shift in application behavior rather than one affecting specific groups.

5.2 Impact on Offers

Figure 17 shows how COVID-19 affected admission offers across different periods.
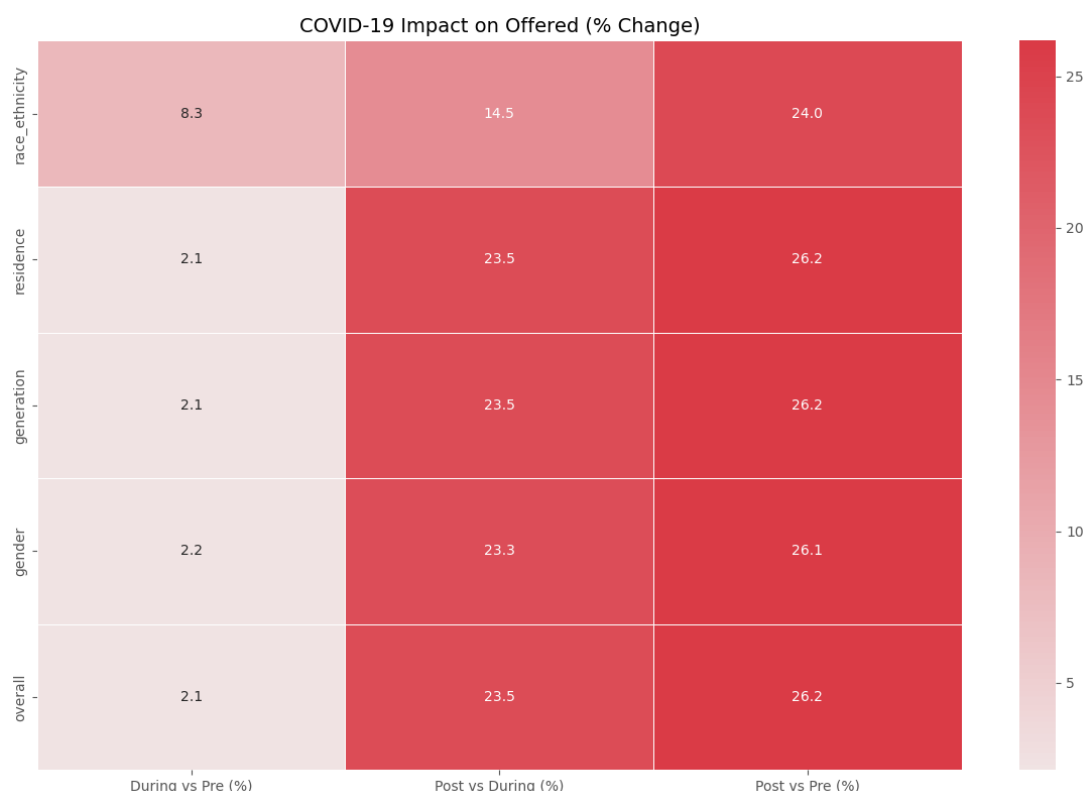
Figure 17: COVID-19 impact on offers (% change)

Key observations regarding admission offers:

- The during-COVID period saw only a modest 2.1% increase in offers compared to pre-COVID, despite the 14.0% increase in applications during this same comparison.

- The post-COVID period experienced a substantial 23.5% increase in offers compared to during-COVID.

- The cumulative effect was a 26.2% increase in offers from pre-COVID to post-COVID, significantly less than the 51.4% increase in applications over the same timeframe.

- This disproportionate growth between applications and offers explains the declining acceptance rates observed during and after the pandemic.

5.3 Impact on Enrollment

Figure 18 illustrates the effect of COVID-19 on enrollment across different periods.
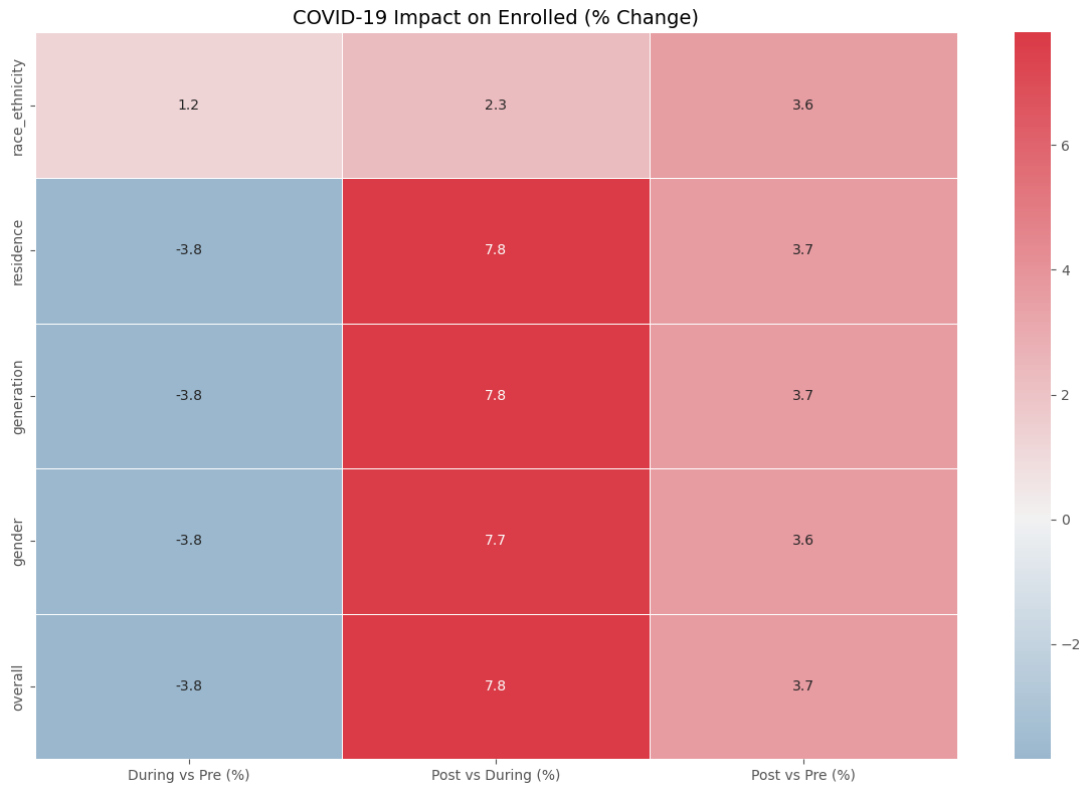
Figure 18: COVID-19 impact on enrollment (% change)

The enrollment data reveals a more complex pattern:

- The during-COVID period saw a 3.8% decline in enrollment compared to pre-COVID, despite increases in both applications and offers during this period. This decline underscores the pandemic's disruptive effect on student decision-making.

- The post-COVID period experienced a 7.8% recovery in enrollment compared to during-COVID.

- The net effect was a modest 3.7% increase in enrollment from pre-COVID to post-COVID, significantly lower than the growth in both applications (51.4%) and offers (26.2%) over the same period.

- This disproportionate pattern highlights the declining yield rates that have characterized the post-pandemic environment.

6 Yield Optimization Analysis

6.1 Yield Rate Trends by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 19 shows how yield rates have evolved across racial/ethnic groups over the seven-year period.
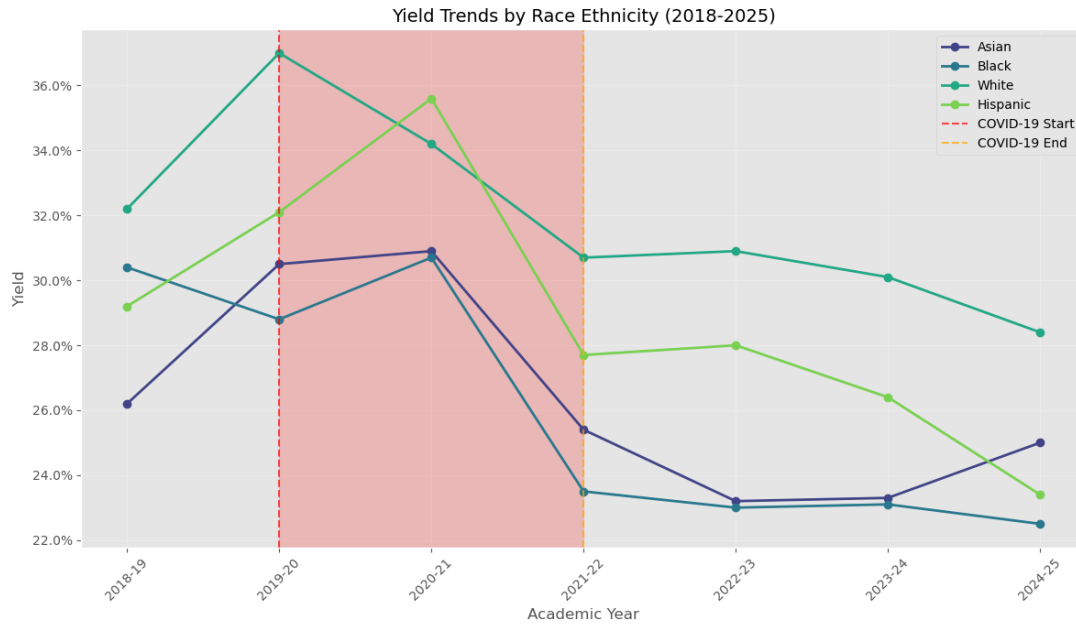
Figure 19: Yield rate trends by race/ethnicity (2018-2025)

Key observations:

- All racial/ethnic groups show a similar pattern of yield decline since 2019-20.
- The COVID-19 period (shaded area) marks a turning point, with a particularly sharp yield decline between 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- White students have consistently maintained the highest yield rates throughout the period.
- By 2024-25, all groups have converged to historically low yield rates ranging from 22.5% (Black) to 28.4% (White).

6.2 Yield Optimization Opportunities

Figure 20 presents an analysis of the top 10 opportunities for improving enrollment by increasing yield rates across various demographic groups.
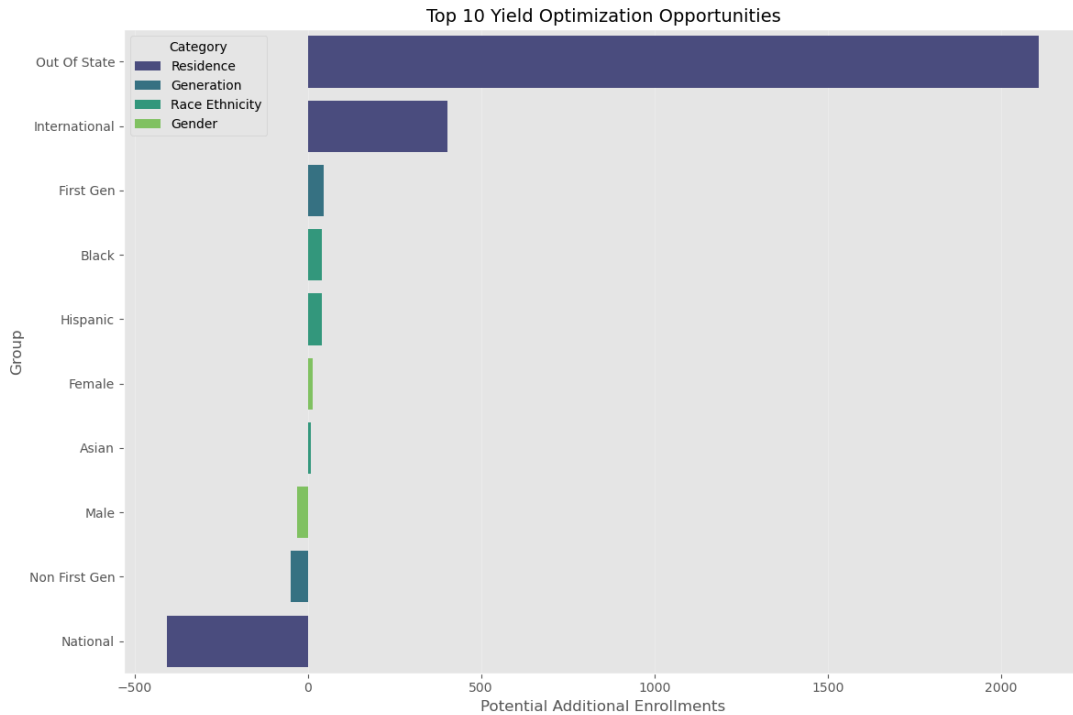
Figure 20: Top 10 yield optimization opportunities by potential additional enrollments

The analysis reveals:

- Out-of-state students represent by far the largest opportunity for yield improvement, with potential for over 2,000 additional enrollments if yield rates could be increased to target levels.

- International students represent the second-largest opportunity, though at a much smaller scale than out-of-state students.

- Several demographic groups (First-Generation, Black, Hispanic, Female, and Asian students) offer smaller but significant opportunities for yield improvement.

- Some demographic categories show negative potential (National, Non-First-Gen), suggesting their yield rates already exceed targets relative to their overall yield rate.

Enhancing yield rates requires strategic, data-driven approaches tailored to specific student segments. Industry experts recommend several evidence-based yield strategies, including personalized communication plans, targeted digital marketing, engaging virtual and in-person admitted student events, and clear articulation of institutional value propositions [11]. Particularly for first-generation students, research indicates that specific communications about campus support services, financial aid transparency, and family involvement strategies can significantly improve yield rates [6]. Our analysis of yield opportunities by demographic group provides a foundation for implementing such targeted approaches.

7   Geographic Diversity Analysis

7.1   Trends by Geographic Origin

The global landscape of student mobility continues to evolve rapidly. International student recruitment trends indicate that over 70% of international students in the U.S. now come from India and China, and these students contributed approximately $43.8 billion and over 378,000

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jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2023-2024 academic year [4]. However, geopolitical factors, including tensions between the United States and China, have led to a 5% decrease in new international student enrollment in 2024-2025 [4]. Institutions seeking to enhance geographic diversity must adapt their recruitment and support strategies to address these shifting dynamics while demonstrating clear return on investment for international students.

Figure 21 presents a comprehensive view of geographic trends in applications, acceptance rates, and yield rates over the seven-year period.
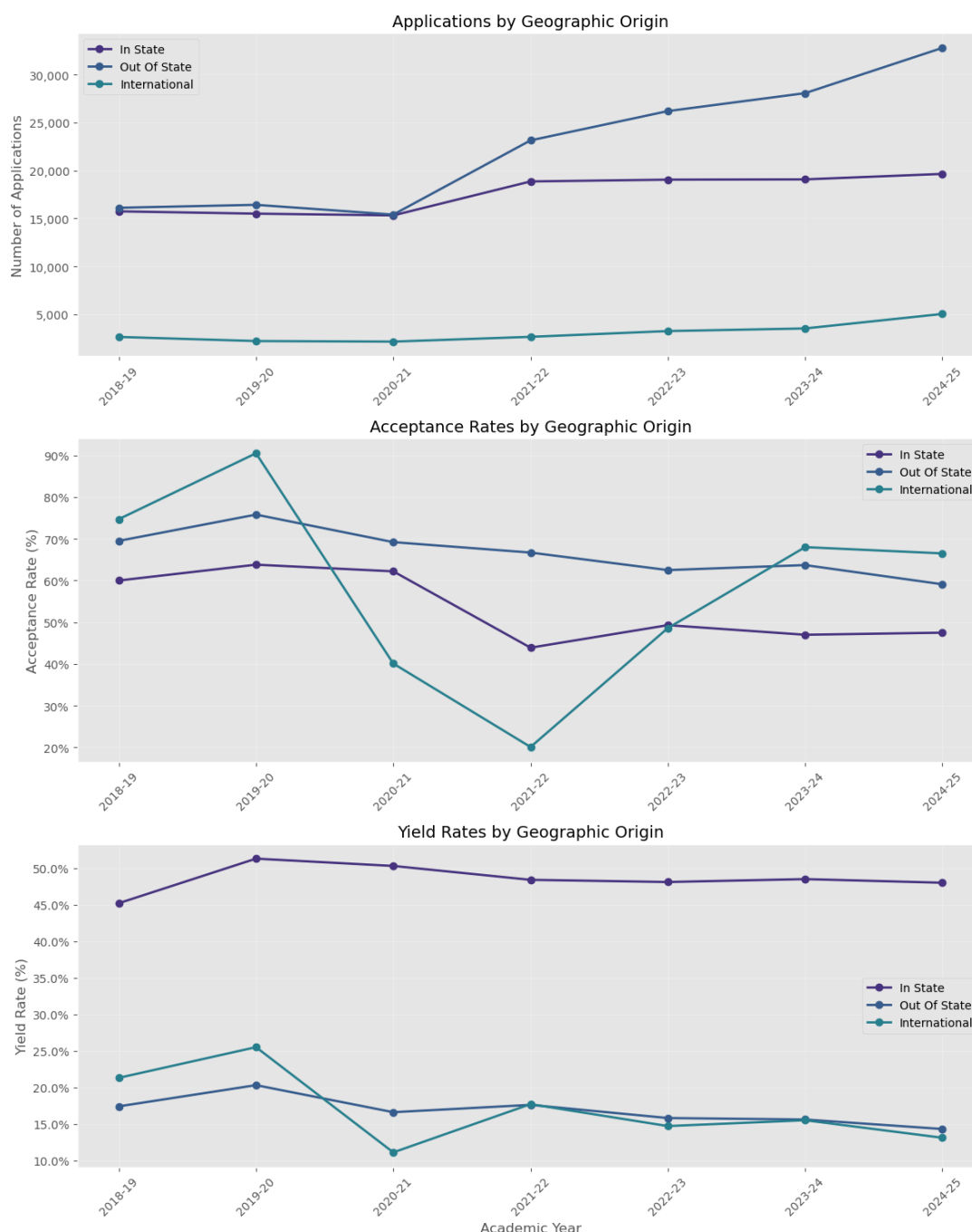

Figure 21: Geographic trends in applications, acceptance rates, and yield rates (2018-2025)

The analysis reveals several critical patterns:

- **Applications**: Out-of-state applications have grown most dramatically, more than dou-

bling from approximately 15,000 to over 30,000 during the study period. In-state applications have shown modest growth, while international applications have remained relatively stable until a recent uptick in 2024-25.

- **Acceptance Rates**: International students experienced extreme volatility in acceptance rates, from a high of 90% in 2019-20 to a low of approximately 20% in 2021-22, before recovering to around 67% by 2024-25. In-state acceptance rates have declined steadily from approximately 65% to 48%.

- **Yield Rates**: In-state students maintain consistently high yield rates around 48%, while out-of-state and international yield rates have declined to approximately 14% and 13% respectively by 2024-25. This creates a strategic tension between relatively low acceptance/high yield for in-state students versus high acceptance/low yield for out-of-state and international students.

Digital technologies are revolutionizing international recruitment, with institutions increasingly employing AI-powered chatbots, virtual campus tours, personalized digital marketing campaigns, and recruitment platforms to connect with prospective students globally [13]. Additionally, many institutions are enhancing their partnerships with schools, colleges, and international educational agencies to establish stronger recruitment networks in target regions. These digitally-enabled approaches can complement traditional recruitment methods to enhance geographic diversity.

8 Predictive Modeling

8.1 Application Projections

Figure 22 presents projections for application volumes over the next three academic years (2025-26 through 2027-28).
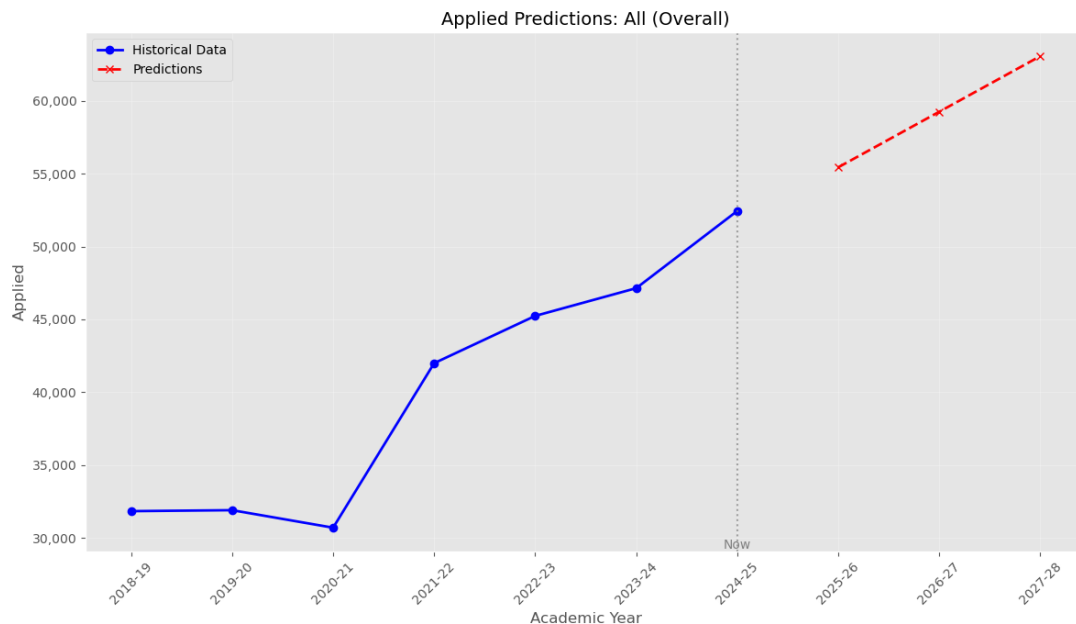

Figure 22: Application volume projections (2025-2028)

The predictive model forecasts:

- Continued strong growth in applications, reaching approximately 65,000 by 2027-28.

- This represents approximately a 25% increase from the current level of 52,434.

- The growth trajectory remains steep, suggesting no immediate plateau in application volume.

8.2 Enrollment Projections

Figure 23 shows projections for enrollment over the next three academic years.
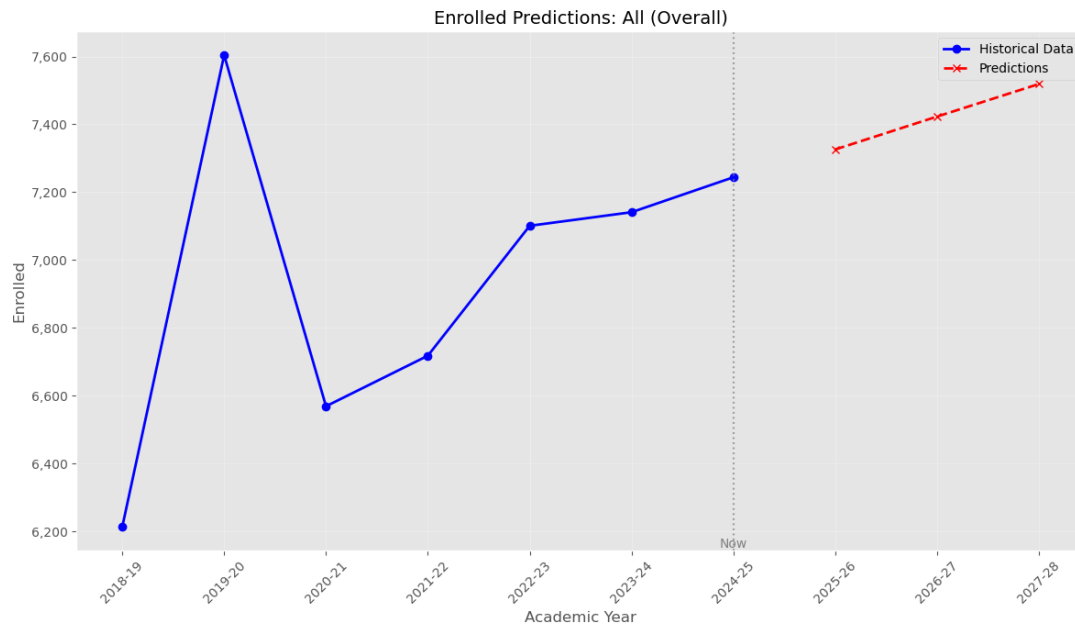
Figure 23: Enrollment projections (2025-2028)

The enrollment model predicts:

- Modest growth in enrollment, reaching approximately 7,500 students by 2027-28.

- Current enrollment would increase by approximately 3.5% over the three-year projection period.

- Notably, even by 2027-28, enrollment is projected to remain below the pre-pandemic peak of 7,604 from 2019-20, despite the dramatically higher application and offer volumes.

Recent national enrollment data shows encouraging signs for higher education. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, undergraduate enrollment rose 3% in fall 2024 compared to the previous year, with first-year enrollment increasing by 5.5% [15]. Growth was particularly strong among older first-year students—ages 21-24 (+16.7%) and 25 and older (+19.7%)—compared to traditionally aged first-year students (+3.4%). These trends suggest potential opportunities for enrollment growth beyond the traditional college-age population, which aligns with our institution's projected modest growth in overall enrollment.

8.3 Yield Rate Projections

Figure 24 presents projections for yield rates over the next three academic years.
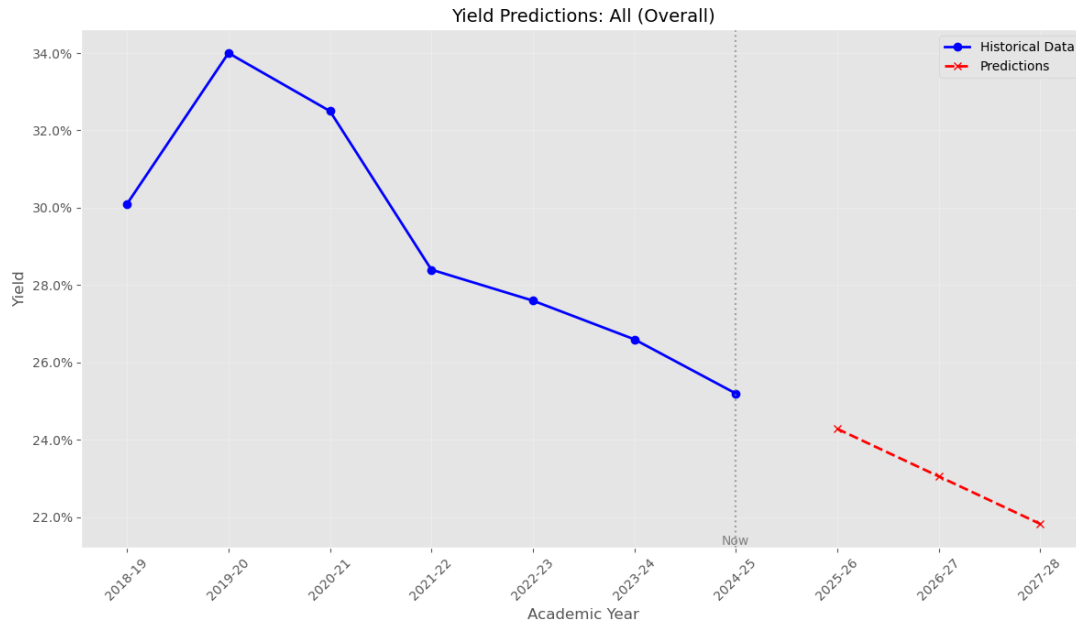
Figure 24: Yield rate projections (2025-2028)

The yield rate model forecasts:

- Continued decline in yield rates, reaching approximately 22% by 2027-28.

- This represents a further 3 percentage point decrease from the current 25.2%.

- The persistent downward trend suggests a fundamental shift in student decision-making patterns that will require strategic adaptation from the institution.

Declining yield rates represent a sector-wide challenge. Deloitte's higher education trend analysis for 2025 identifies several factors contributing to this phenomenon, including heightened competition among institutions, changing student decision-making patterns, and financial considerations [8]. The report notes that institutions achieving success in this environment are those implementing robust enterprise risk management approaches, developing innovative recruitment strategies, and clearly articulating their value propositions to prospective students. These insights reinforce the importance of our recommendations for addressing yield rate decline.

9 Comprehensive Dashboard

Figure 25 presents a comprehensive dashboard of key admissions metrics for the 2024-25 academic year.
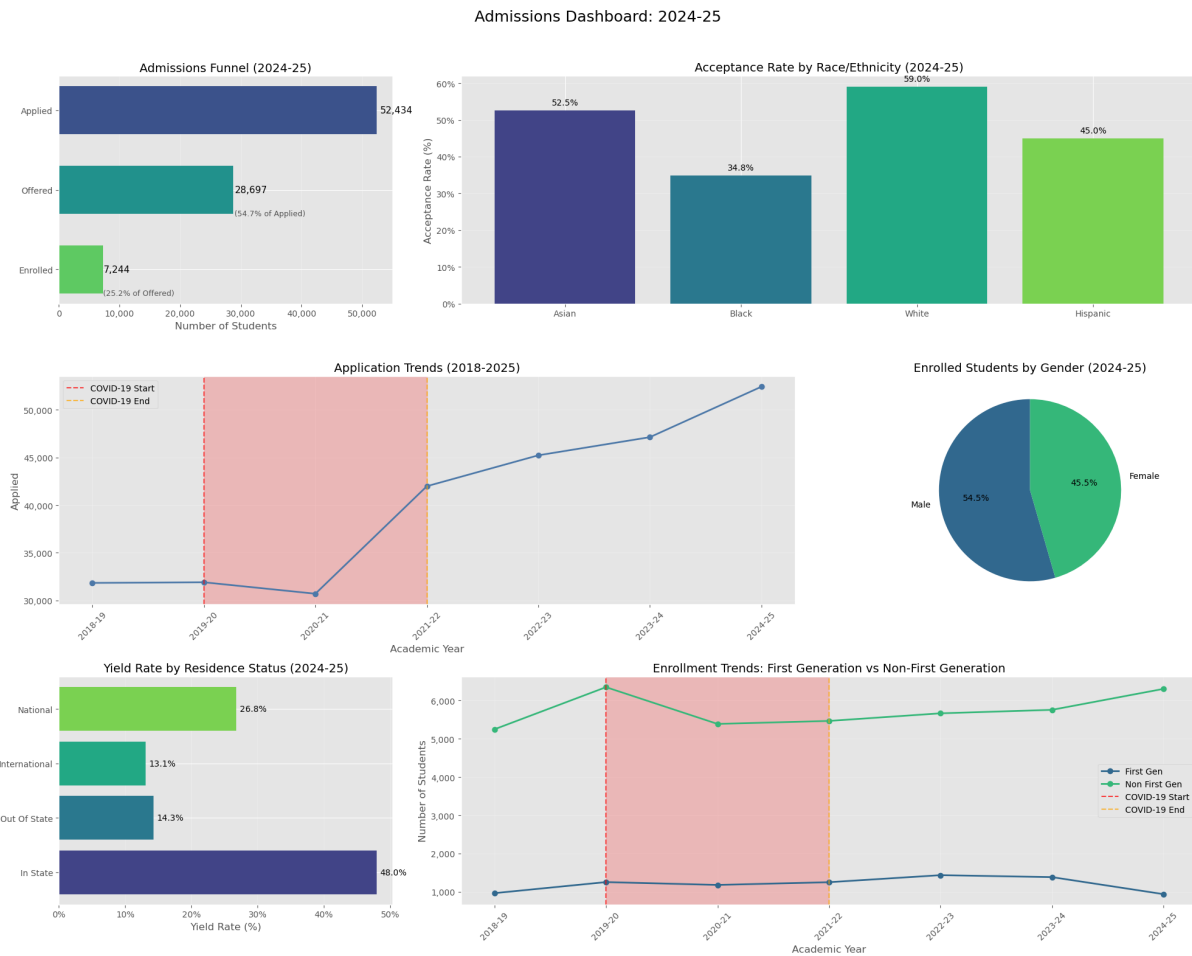
Figure 25: Comprehensive admissions dashboard (2024-25)

The dashboard provides a holistic view of:

- The current admissions funnel from applications to enrollment

- Acceptance rates by race/ethnicity, highlighting equity concerns

- Application trends from 2018-2025, with COVID-19 period markers

- Gender distribution of enrolled students

- Yield rates by residency status, showing the stark advantage for in-state students

- First-generation vs. non-first-generation enrollment trends

10 Strategic Implications and Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis presented in this report, we identify several critical strategic implications and recommend the following actions:

10.1 Addressing Yield Rate Decline

- **Finding**: Overall yield rates have declined from 34% to 25.2% over the study period and are projected to continue declining.

- **Implication**: The institution needs approximately 35% more admitted students to achieve the same enrollment targets compared to 2019-20.

- **Recommendations**:

  – Conduct targeted yield research with admitted students who decline offers to better understand decision factors

  – Develop personalized yield strategies for high-priority demographic groups

  – Evaluate financial aid packages compared to competitor institutions

  – Enhance admitted student programming and engagement opportunities

  – Implement a comprehensive communication strategy for admitted students

Effective yield strategies increasingly leverage digital engagement tools to nurture admitted students through personalized communication. Industry leaders recommend using predictive analytics to identify students at risk of not enrolling, developing segmented communication plans for different student populations, and creating compelling digital content that helps admitted students envision themselves on campus [12]. Additionally, recent research highlights the growing importance of addressing mental health support, campus safety, and career outcomes in yield communications, as these factors increasingly influence student decision-making [7].

10.2   Addressing Demographic Disparities

- **Finding**: Significant disparities exist in acceptance rates across racial/ethnic groups, with Black applicants facing an acceptance rate 24.2 percentage points lower than White applicants.

- **Implication**: These disparities raise serious equity concerns and may undermine diversity goals.

- **Recommendations**:

  – Conduct a thorough equity audit of admissions policies and procedures

  – Implement holistic review practices that consider the full context of applicants' experiences

  – Develop pre-application support programs targeted at underrepresented groups

  – Establish clear equity benchmarks and monitor progress toward reducing disparities

  – Provide implicit bias training for admissions staff and application readers

Research indicates that today's students are increasingly evaluating institutions based on perceived value and clear career pathways from degree programs [14]. To enhance recruitment of underrepresented groups, institutions should emphasize the specific support services available to these students, develop targeted financial aid strategies, and clearly articulate employment outcomes by demographic group. Recent studies show that 70% of Americans believe colleges should recruit and admit more students from historically underserved backgrounds, suggesting broad public support for such initiatives [13].

10.3   Reconciling Geographic Strategy

- **Finding**: In-state applicants face the lowest acceptance rates (47.5%) despite having the highest yield rates (48%), while international students have the highest acceptance rates (66.5%) despite low yield rates (13.1%).

- **Implication**: Current geographic strategy may be prioritizing application and offer volumes over enrollment efficiency.

- **Recommendations**:

  – Reevaluate in-state admission criteria to ensure alignment with institutional mission

  – Develop more selective targeting strategies for international recruitment to improve yield

  – Implement differentiated yield strategies based on geographic segments

  – Consider enrollment capacity allocations by residency category

  – Establish specific goals for geographic diversity that balance mission and efficiency

10.4 Leveraging COVID-19 Insights

- **Finding**: The COVID-19 period represents a clear inflection point, with substantial increases in applications but declining yield rates.

- **Implication**: The pandemic has fundamentally altered student application and decision-making behaviors.

- **Recommendations**:

  – Adjust enrollment projections and targets to account for the "new normal" of higher application volumes and lower yield rates

  – Maintain flexible admissions and yield practices developed during the pandemic

  – Enhance digital and virtual engagement strategies proven effective during COVID

  – Develop contingency planning for potential future disruptions

  – Continue monitoring for stabilization or further shifts in post-pandemic patterns

10.5 Prioritizing First-Generation Recruitment

- **Finding**: First-generation students comprise only 13% of the enrolled student population, with concerning recent decline.

- **Implication**: The institution may be missing opportunities to enhance socioeconomic diversity and fulfill its societal mission.

- **Recommendations**:

  – Develop targeted recruitment strategies for first-generation prospects

  – Enhance financial aid and scholarship opportunities for first-generation students

  – Create pre-enrollment support programs addressing unique barriers

  – Leverage current first-generation student success stories in recruitment

  – Establish specific enrollment targets for first-generation representation

11 Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis of admissions data from 2018-19 through 2024-25 reveals a period of significant transformation in college admissions patterns. The institution has experienced dra-

matic growth in application volumes (65% increase) but faces ongoing challenges with declining yield rates and persistent demographic disparities.

The COVID-19 pandemic marks a clear inflection point, accelerating changes in application behavior while disrupting traditional enrollment patterns. While the institution has recovered from initial pandemic-related enrollment declines, current enrollment remains below pre-pandemic peaks despite significantly higher application and offer volumes.

Of particular concern are the equity implications of differential acceptance rates across demographic groups, with Black and Hispanic applicants facing substantially lower acceptance rates than White and Asian peers. Similarly, the relatively low representation of first-generation students (13%) suggests missed opportunities for enhancing socioeconomic diversity.

The projections for future admissions metrics suggest continued growth in applications but persistent yield challenges that will require strategic adaptation. Without intervention, acceptance rate disparities may continue to widen, and yield rates are projected to decline further to approximately 22% by 2027-28.

To address these challenges, the institution should prioritize equity-focused admissions reform, targeted yield improvement strategies, recalibration of geographic recruitment approaches, and enhanced support for first-generation prospects. By taking proactive steps now, the institution can work toward a more equitable, efficient, and mission-aligned enrollment profile in the coming years.

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