

## Resilience Over Rates: College Admissions in 2024

CEO of the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), Dr. Angel B. Pérez, encourages students to apply despite low acceptance rates.

By **The Editorial Board** Follow

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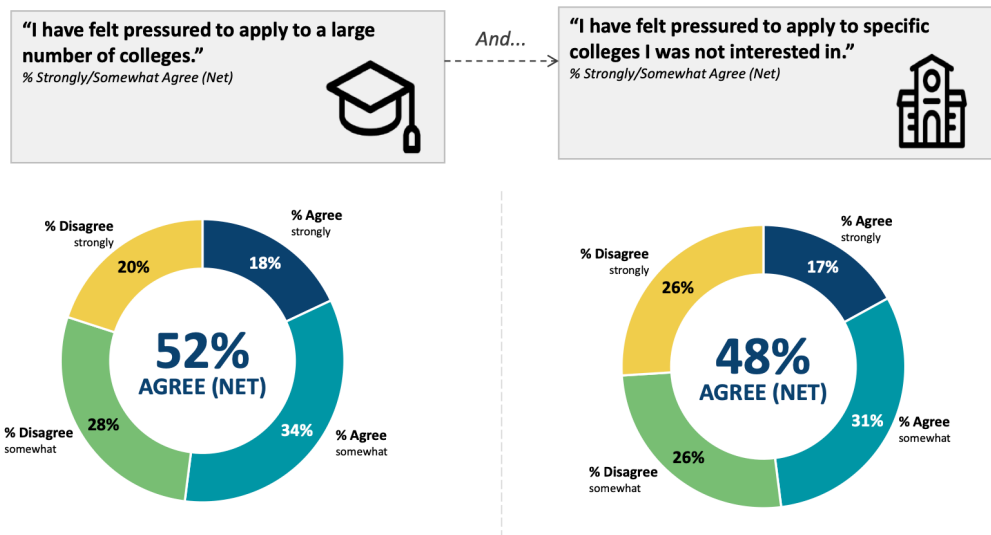


Higher selectivity means higher stress for students PHOTO: BILL MCCULLOUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Student rejection in the college admissions process is on the rise as the process is more selective now due to the recent increase in applications. When Covid-19 struck the nation, the number of applications skyrocketed as many students couldn't tour college campuses in person. By applying to more colleges, many students created a safety net to prepare for rejection from desired schools.

Although a "safety net" is crucial to have within the application process, the increase in applications contributes to the trend of increase in selectivity because applications are up by nine percent in the 2023-24 academic year. Ivy League schools aren't the only ones displaying an increase in selectivity; non-selective schools have begun to do the same.

Examining this trend, 60% of high school students reported feeling overwhelmed in the application process along with pressure to apply to colleges because many colleges students applied to didn't interest them. In the 2023 NACAC College Admissions Process [Survey](#) commissioned by the Harris Poll, stress and the high-intensity of the application process caused students to feel discouraged to apply to colleges.



Note: Students' pressures to apply to many or specific schools

Source: 2023 National Association of College Admissions Counseling Process Survey

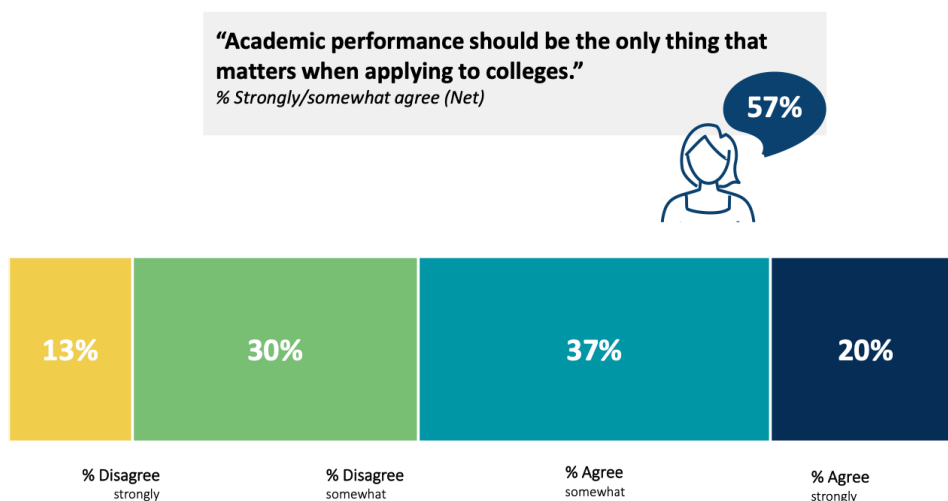
The lack of knowledge and student support increases difficulty for students in the application process. In a 2023 [YouScience report](#), 55% of students didn't attend a four-year college or university as they chose an alternative route. Many students' decisions stem from a lack of understanding in the college application process and minimal exposure to career paths.

Navigating the college application process without a plan is like navigating an unknown area without a GPS. Effectively college planning can ease uncertainty in the application process. When students understand the college application and admission process, there's a higher chance of acceptance, a higher likelihood of choosing the best fit, and reduced stress and anxiety.

According to the 2023 NACAC Survey, the most challenging step perceived and experienced by 80% of students was the decision of what schools would be considered the [right fit](#). Finding the right fit requires an individualistic and educational approach of understanding the school along with its culture, size, and available academic curriculums.

If students are set on an Ivy League or selective school, they should educate themselves on acceptance requirements for that specific school early in the application process. Understanding how the application process works, what makes a college the best fit, and researching schools in-depth will contribute to a higher chance of acceptance.

With academic pressure and competition on the rise, students should remember colleges look at more than grades on paper. The college application essay is a crucial opportunity for students to differentiate themselves in a unique and individualistic way.



Note: Students' pressures to apply to many or specific schools

Source: 2023 National Association of College Admissions Counseling Process Survey

"The main college application essay is valuable, outweighing class rank, extracurricular involvement, and letters of recommendation. This is a student's opportunity to differentiate themselves from other applicants," Dr. Angel Pérez, the CEO of the NACAC, said in a recent interview.

Although the decrease in acceptance rates is increasing academic competition, the NACAC encourages students to use the [Step by Step Guide](#) provided to confidently navigate the next chapter of their lives.