

The excellent education we offer must be more accessible. We must make a Penn education available to all outstanding students of talent and high potential. In a democracy and at great universities, diversity and excellence go together. Keeping them together requires access based on talent, not income or race.

—President Amy Gutmann, inaugural address, 2004

Chapter 2: Access and Equity

Introduction

Increasing access to a Penn education for all students around the world, regardless of financial need, has been one of the core priorities of the Penn Compact since the 2004 inauguration of President Gutmann. To implement this goal at the undergraduate level, the University introduced an “all-grant, no-loan” aid package in 2007 for financially eligible students. As a result, Penn’s traditional undergraduate student body has become increasingly diverse across all measures, including students from all 50 US states and more than 100 countries around the world. We believe that an ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse community enriches the educational experience for all. This commitment to inclusion is a defining element of the Penn community that we will continue to strengthen in the years ahead.

Since 2004, Penn has increased its undergraduate financial aid budget from \$84.5 million to \$181 million in FY2013. Among traditional undergraduate students entering Penn in the fall of 2012, 46 percent received need-based institutional financial aid. Over the years spanning 2004 to 2012, the percentage of Pell Grant recipients in the first-year class increased from 8.7 percent to 14.6 percent (Figure 2.2). In 2008, Penn shifted to an all-grant, no-loan policy for all aided students with the goal of drastically reducing the debt burden for such students and their families.

The diversity of Penn’s traditional undergraduate student body has increased dramatically over the past decade (Figure 2.1). Approximately 11 percent of undergraduate students are international. Among domestic students, just over 9 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino/a. Nearly 19 percent of Penn undergraduates identify as Asian American or Pacific Islander, 7.1 percent as African American or Black, and 3 percent as being of two or more races. Recent survey data reveal that approximately 6 percent of Penn’s undergraduates identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. Penn students identify with a wide variety of religious and spiritual traditions, and students arrive at Penn with a wide range of academic interests and talents.

In developing its Action Plan for Faculty Diversity and Excellence in 2011, the University noted that “A great university – true to its name – must encompass a universe of backgrounds and experiences, ideas and ideologies, theories and perspectives.” The Penn community “draws its strength from a multitude of races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, historical traditions, ages, religions, disabilities, veteran status, interests, perspectives, and socioeconomic backgrounds.” Recognizing this foundational strength, the University works to ensure that its student body, as well as its faculty and staff, reflect “the diversity of the world around it—and the diversity of the world we want our students to lead.” Penn’s

need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid policies have enabled talented students who are admitted to attend Penn regardless of their families' financial circumstances. We are therefore committed to increasing the awareness among prospective applicants and their families of Penn's financial aid policies. The Offices of Admissions and Student Financial Services work assiduously to develop methods of outreach that increase awareness of Penn's affordability.

Figure 2.1
Traditional Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Group
Fall Semesters 2003 to 2012

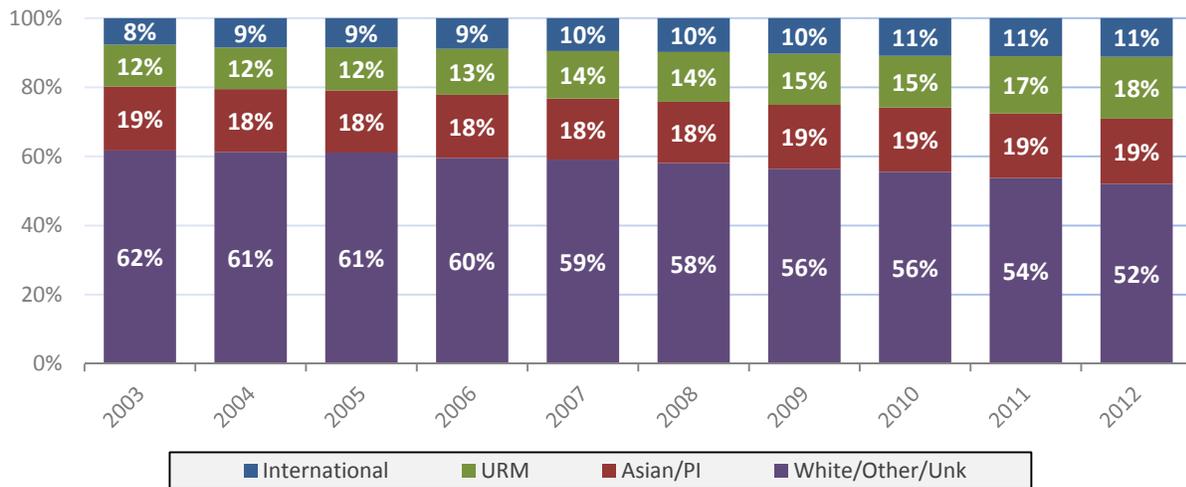
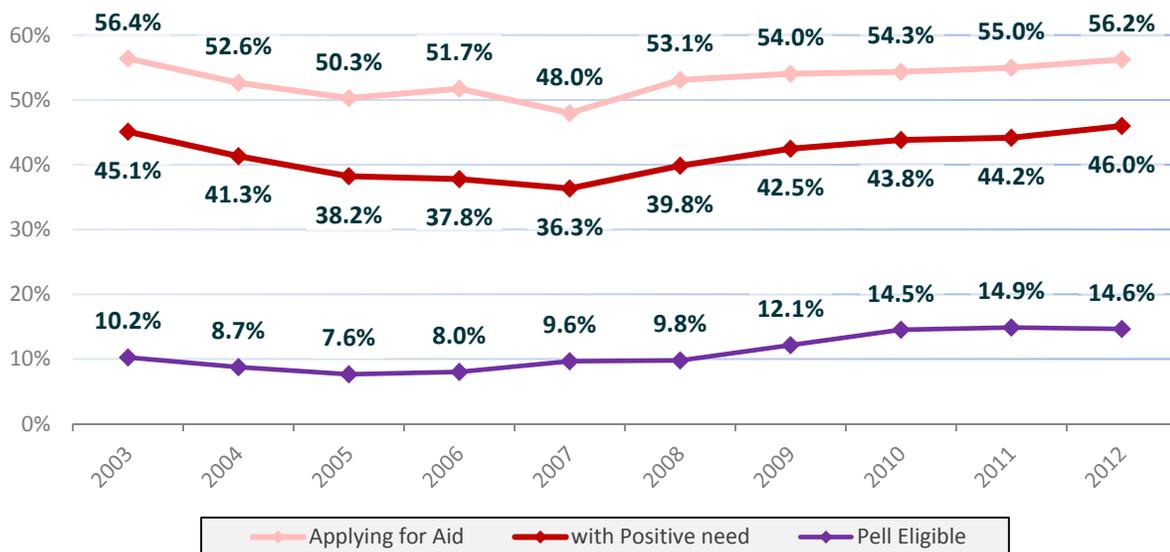


Figure 2.2
Financial Aid - Applications and Need Trends
Fall Cohorts 2003-2012



The University works to ensure that all enrolled students gain equitable access to the full range of opportunities that are available to help ensure their success at Penn and beyond. While we are deeply committed to and concerned about all Penn students, the working group paid particular attention to students who have been historically underrepresented within the Ivy League. Not unexpectedly, these students—including first generation and low income students, as well as underrepresented minority (URM) students identifying as Hispanic/Latino/a, African American/Black and/or Native American/Alaska Native—report some life experiences that are different from those of their peers. To understand this broad range of issues related to access and equity, the working group divided Penn’s work in this area into three interrelated yet distinct categories: admissions, financial aid, and efforts to support and retain students.

Working Group Charge and Process

The charge to the Access and Equity Working Group was to evaluate Penn’s efforts to improve access to and ensure equity in our undergraduate educational programs. The group was asked to articulate what is important about Penn’s current efforts at increasing access and how those efforts could be improved in the future. In addition, they were asked to consider the related issue of ensuring equity in the educational opportunities and support services offered to students in the context of MSCHE Standards 7, 8, and 9. These Standards address the need to assess the University’s work in the context of its mission and goals. The centrality of increasing access to the Penn Compact is underscored by its prominent placement at the first of the Compact’s three principles. MSCHE Standard 7’s emphasis is on *effectiveness*. How do we know that efforts to increase access are effective? How effective are student support services in retaining and supporting Penn’s diverse student body? How can we strengthen the processes for assessing those efforts? Standards 8 and 9 relate directly to issues of access and equity. Do we admit, retain, and support students in ways that allow the most talented students to enroll and succeed at Penn, regardless of their economic circumstances and backgrounds? Do our support services effectively meet the needs of all students?

Among the questions addressed by the Working Group were:

- What has been the impact of the decision to eliminate loans in Penn’s financial aid packages for undergraduates?
- What data and information are important to understand access and equity in relation to undergraduate education?
- What benchmarks, data, or information are the most useful for assessing access and equity issues as they relate to undergraduate education?

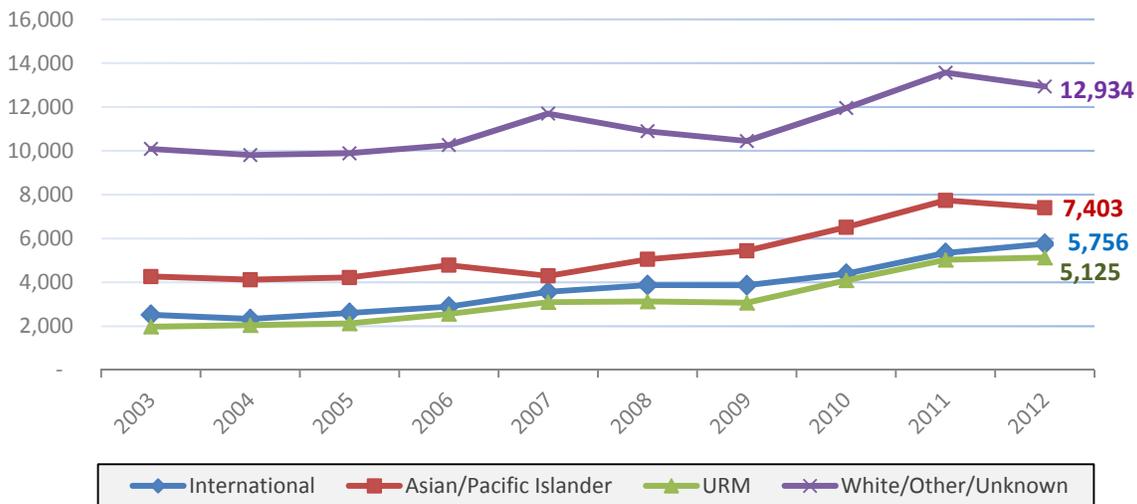
Members of the Working Group interviewed key University leaders in such areas as admissions, financial aid, student support, and retention programs, including the Dean of Admissions, the Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services and University Registrar, the Vice Provost for University Life, the Associate Vice Provost for Equity and Access, the directors of several cultural centers and student support programs, and additional faculty and administrators who oversee other access, equity, and diversity initiatives. In addition, the Working Group gathered information from University publications and websites and from the Offices of Admissions, Institutional Research and Analysis, and Student Financial Services.

Admissions

Penn Admissions receives more than 30,000 applications annually for its traditional undergraduate programs. The majority of these applications are reviewed by at least one admissions officer and discussed by the admissions staff. This labor-intensive review reflects the University’s commitment to creating a class that is both outstanding and diverse. The Office of Admissions organizes its recruitment efforts by geographic region, further supported by staff members who are charged with developing and implementing programs to increase the diversity of the applicant pool.

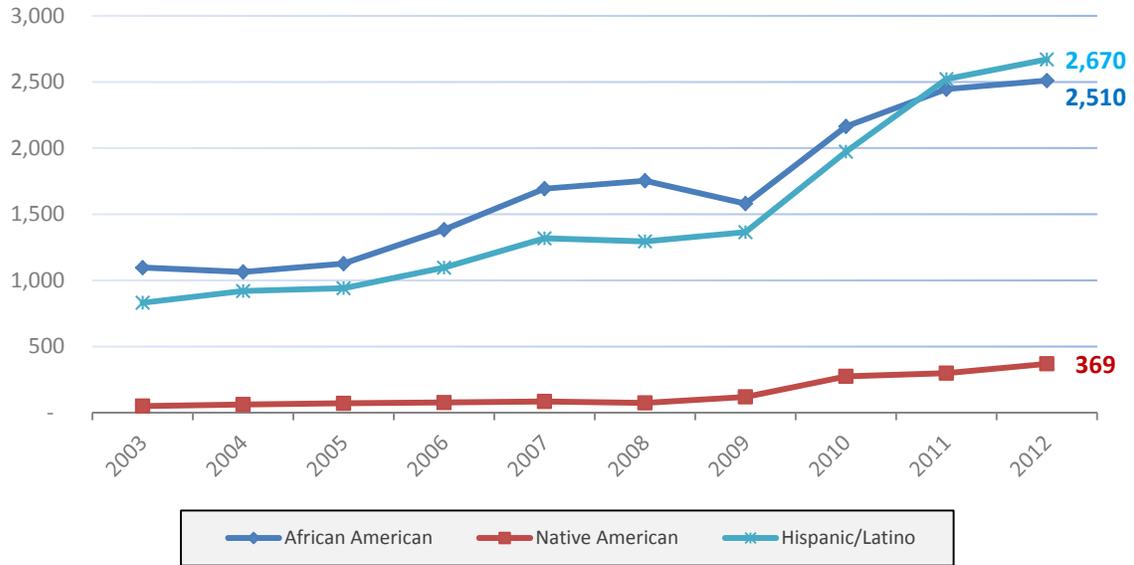
Penn’s outreach includes identifying regions in which we can become more visible to underrepresented groups by creating relationships that allow us to introduce talented prospective applicants to the University. Penn’s partnerships with local and national programs include the Posse Foundation, A Better Chance, Questbridge, College Horizons Program, Say Yes to Education, Prep for Prep, and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), as well as a number of targeted outreach programs that identify potential students in Philadelphia and encourage them to apply to college.

Figure 2.3
Number of Applications by Race/Ethnicity Group
Entry Semesters Fall 2003 to Fall 2012



One way to gauge Penn’s success in creating an outstanding and diverse student body is to analyze the number of applications, admit rate, and yield of students from underrepresented groups. Between the fall of 2008 and the fall of 2012, applications to Penn’s traditional undergraduate programs increased by 36.1 percent to 31,218 students. As Figure 2.3 shows, over this same period, applications from URM students increased by 64.3 percent. The majority of the growth in applications to Penn occurred between 2009 and 2011. While there was a slight decline (1.4%) in the overall number of applications for the fall of 2012, the number of applications from URM students modestly increased (2.1%).

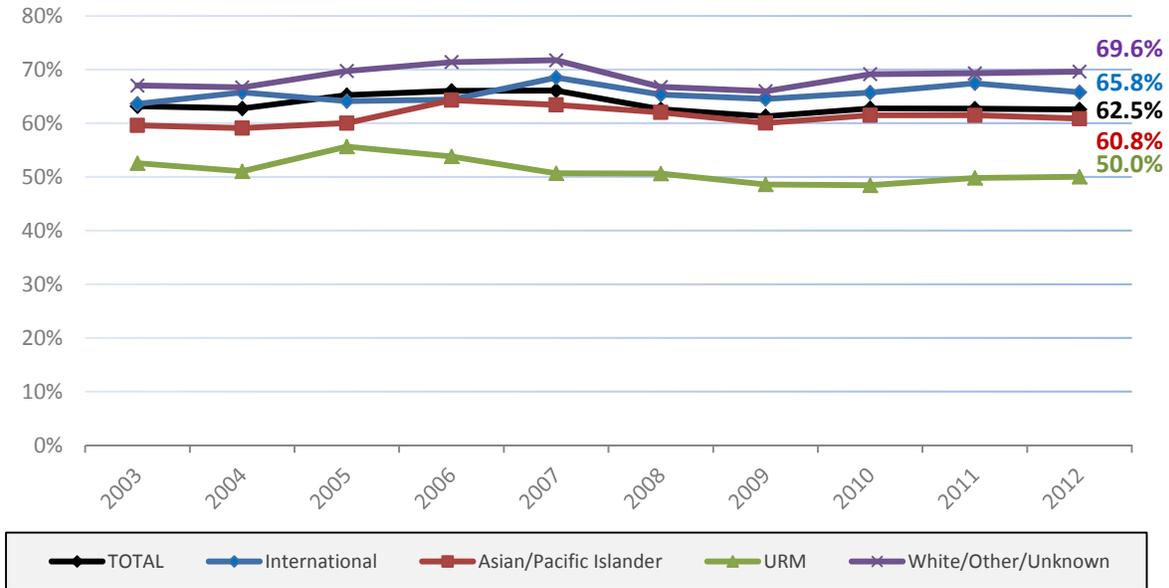
Figure 2.4
 Number of Applicants Identifying with Underrepresented Groups
 Entry Semesters Fall 2003 to Fall 2012



Note: Beginning in 2010, students could self-identify as more than one race/ethnicity

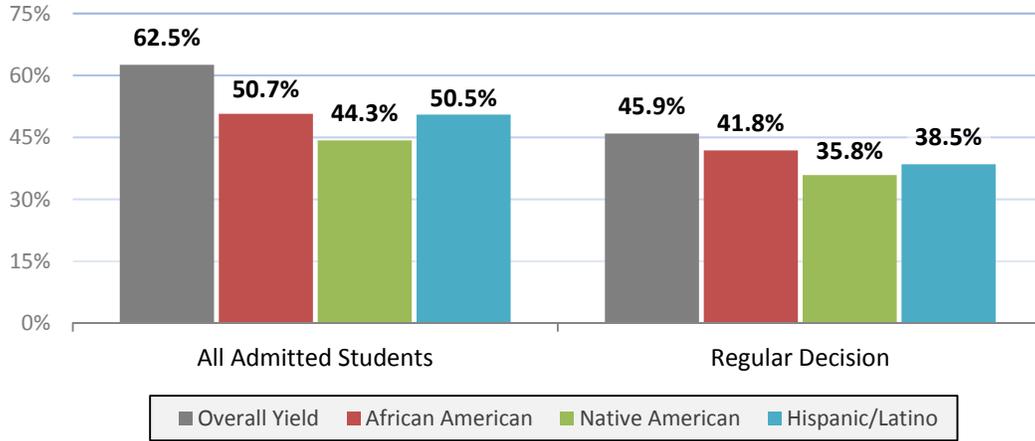
Tracking increases in applications by race/ethnicity has become more complicated as a result of recent changes in the regulations governing federal data collection. Beginning in 2010, applicants were asked to provide information on both Hispanic/Latino/a ethnicity and race. Additionally, applicants were given the opportunity to identify with one or more races (African American/Black; Asian; Native American/Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; White). For this reason, the Working Group focused on changes between 2011 and 2012. Over this period, the number of applicants who identify as Hispanic/Latino/a (of any race) increased by 5.9 percent; the number of applications from students who identify as African American/Black (or African American/Black and another race) increased by 2.7 percent; and the number of applications from students who identify as Native American/Alaska Native (or Native American/Alaska Native and another race) increased by 23.8 percent (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.5
Yield Rate by Race/Ethnicity Group
Entry Semesters Fall 2003 to Fall 2012



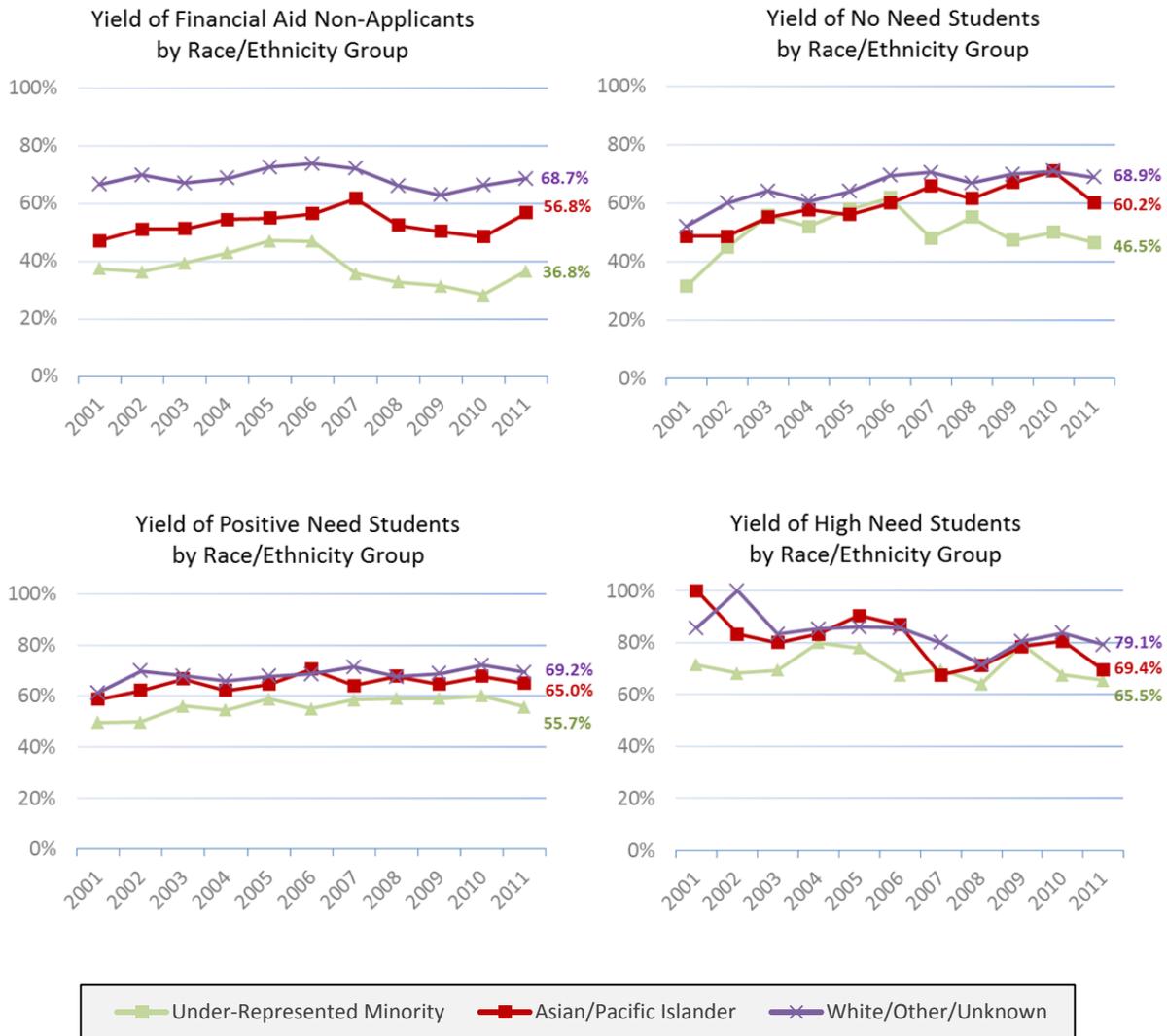
Yield rates demonstrate the challenges of recruiting URM students to Penn. Overall, Penn has a very high rate of admitted undergraduates who choose to attend the University. In 2012, the overall yield was 62.7 percent. However, yield rates for URM students were significantly lower at 50 percent (Figure 2.5). This difference in yield can be attributed in part to a less diverse pool of students among Early Decision applicants who yield at 100 percent when admitted. Yield rates for students admitted through regular decision do not vary as dramatically by race/ethnicity (Figure 2.6). Less than 10 percent of URM students apply Early Decision; working to increase the diversity of the Early Decision pool could have a positive impact on yield rates for URM students in the future.

Figure 2.6
 Overall Yield Rate vs. Regular Decision Yield Rate for Students
 Identifying with Underrepresented Groups
 Fall 2012



Admission to Penn has been need-blind for almost five decades, and Penn is the largest university in the nation to offer a need-based, no-loan financial aid program. Need-blind admission is limited to citizens of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. During the application process, no information is collected about a student’s ability to pay for higher education; as a result, we do not know how much more socioeconomically diverse our *applicant* pool has become over time. However, based on the distribution of students who apply for aid, Penn’s *admitted* pool has become more socioeconomically diverse, and the number of high-need students has increased significantly over the past decade. A recent study of the impact of financial aid on yield rates suggests that Penn’s generous financial aid packages have a positive influence on the yield of the neediest students in the applicant pool. Students with very high levels of need, regardless of race/ethnicity, have higher yield rates than their peers, and this difference is most pronounced for URM students (Figure 2.7). Among those in the fall 2011 entering cohort, the yield of URM students who did not apply for aid was 36.8 percent, while the yield for URM students with significant need was 65.5 percent.

Figure 2.7
Yield by Financial Aid Need Level and Race/Ethnicity Group

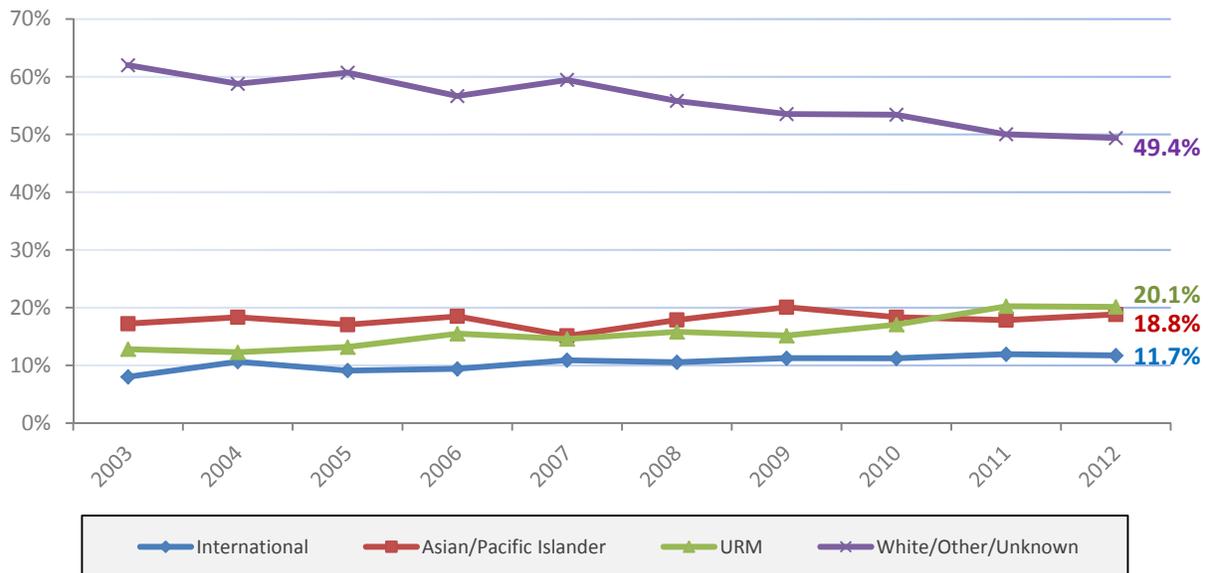


Given the goals of the Penn Compact and the intense competition for talented students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, it is essential that Penn continue to be proactive, innovative, and strategic in its efforts to recruit undergraduates. This is especially necessary given the changing demographics of college admissions. Projections of the Western Interstate Commission indicate that, over the next decade, the pool of high school graduates will become increasingly diverse. The Office of Admissions recently hired a Vice Dean of Admissions and Director of Strategic Planning to lead the development of a five-year strategic plan for undergraduate student recruitment. The aim of the strategic plan is to continue Penn’s leadership in recruiting the most diverse students in a highly competitive and ever-changing landscape.

Influential studies such as *Black-White Test Score Gap* (1998), *The Shape of the River* (1998), *The Source of the River* (2003), and *Taming the River* (2009) have shown that students from underrepresented groups

underperform on standardized admission tests. All colleges and universities face internal and external pressures to increase the median SAT score of admitted students. While our admissions process takes a variety of metrics into account (e.g., high school GPA, essays, recommendations), we must seriously consider the impact of an instrument that may underreport the abilities of students from underrepresented groups as we seek to increase the diversity of the undergraduate student body. We must continue to be vigilant in ensuring admissions practices that make careful and appropriate use of admissions testing. Similarly, debates over possible alternatives to standardized testing may be most effective and best informed if conducted through such organizations as the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), and the Association of American Universities (AAU). Despite the challenges articulated above, Penn has succeeded in diversifying the first year class over the past decade. In 2012, URM students comprised nearly 20 percent of the entering matriculants and, as of fall 2011, White students no longer comprised the majority of matriculated students (Figure 2.8). Socioeconomic diversity has improved as well, with the percentage of Pell-eligible students increasing by nearly 70 percent since 2004.

Figure 2.8
 Percentage of Matriculants by Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity Group
 Entry Semesters Fall 2003 to Fall 2012



Financial Aid

In 2007, the University Trustees approved an all-grant, no-loan policy for students with demonstrated financial need, making Penn the largest university in the nation to have instituted such a generous financial aid policy. This policy was implemented beginning in September 2008 for all students, including new admits, with family incomes of less than \$100,000 and then extended to families regardless of income in fall 2009. Penn meets the full need of all financial aid-eligible domestic students for eight semesters (during the regular academic year) through grants and work-study without loans. Among traditional undergraduates

enrolled full-time in the fall of 2012, 46 percent received institutional financial aid with an average award of \$41,513, an increase of 5.83 percent over the prior year. Results from the 2012 Senior Survey and the 2012 Parent Survey indicate high levels of satisfaction with both financial aid and Student Financial Services (SFS). This is especially true for low-socioeconomic status students—100 percent reported being either generally or very satisfied with both financial aid and SFS.

Raising funds for the student financial aid endowment continues to be a critical strategic objective for Penn, and President Gutmann has placed it among University's highest fundraising priorities. Reflecting Penn's commitment to undergraduate financial aid, the value of the undergraduate financial aid endowment has tripled over the past ten years. Penn's recently completed *Making History* capital campaign raised a total of \$366 million in new gifts for undergraduate financial aid, exceeding the \$350 million goal.

Implementation of Penn's all-grant, no-loan policy has had a significant impact on students and families with financial need by continuing to reduce the amount of debt incurred by these students and their families. The number of students who choose to borrow money has decreased from 38 percent of the entering cohort of 2007 to 19 percent of the entering cohort of 2011. Total loans to students have decreased from over \$5 million for the entering cohort of 2007 to approximately \$2.6 million for the entering cohort of 2011. Despite a challenging general economic climate, the average loan debt at graduation for students who have loans has remained steady at approximately \$19,000, which is significantly less than the national average of \$26,000.

For FY2014, Penn's total undergraduate financial aid grant budget is \$190 million, of which \$179 million is funded internally by unrestricted funds, income from financial aid endowments, and term gifts; \$11 million is supported by Pell grants and other federal and state grants. In addition, needy students will receive almost \$4 million in external grants not reflected in Penn's budget and about \$4 million from academic year work-study opportunities included in the compensation portion of the University's budget. Since President Gutmann took office in 2004, Penn's financial aid budget has grown by 141 percent, an average of 9.2 percent per year, more than twice the average annual growth in total student charges.

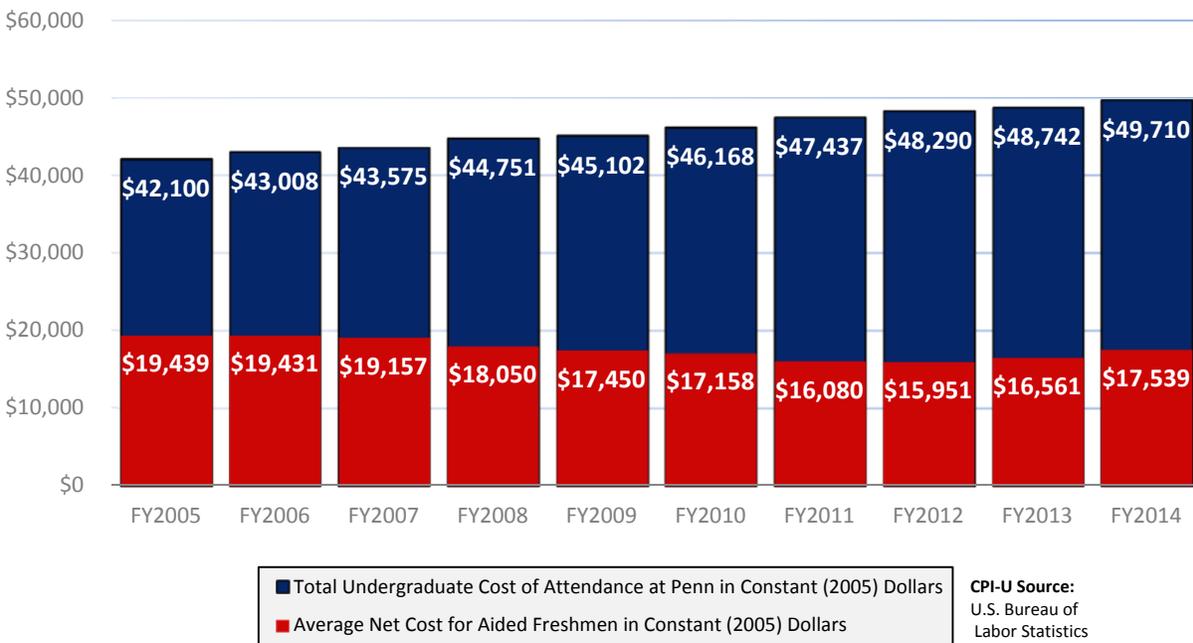
Despite the substantial growth in endowment for undergraduate aid over the past several years, the University's financial aid endowment remains relatively small compared to its Ivy League peers. In FY2014, endowment income will fund about \$40 million of undergraduate financial aid whereas unrestricted resources account for about \$137 million, or about 77 percent of the University-funded undergraduate aid. An additional \$2 million will come from term gifts. The unrestricted component is generated by assessing a charge, known as the financial aid factor, against undergraduate tuition raised by each of the four undergraduate schools. The financial aid factor will increase to 36 percent in FY2014 from 35 percent in FY2013.

At Penn, the amount of financial aid paid from unrestricted funds is greater than at nearly all of its Ivy League peers. This pressure on each school's budget comes from the University's commitment to need-blind admissions and need-based aid and was significantly increased by the economic downturn that began in 2008 and resulted in a large increase in student need. When several peer institutions were unable to continue their financial aid policies for meeting the full need of aided students, Penn never wavered in

its commitment to its all-grant, no-loan policy. Over the last several years, Penn’s financial aid factor has increased from below 31.5 percent in 2006 to 36 percent for FY14. This rise has been alleviated somewhat by the emphasis on undergraduate financial aid in the Making History campaign and by the Trustees’ extraordinary step in providing a temporary adjustment to the University’s spending rule, which allowed for higher endowment payouts toward financial aid. This adjustment was scheduled to begin phasing out in the 2013-14 academic year, but that action has been postponed to the 2015-16 academic year to decrease the impact of the economic downturn on school and University financial aid budgets. Penn has consistently improved the average grant-aided freshman package each year, increasing the total package while reducing and finally eliminating the loan component. The net cost of attendance in constant dollars for FY2013 for aided freshmen was nearly 15 percent below the level of FY2005 (Figure 2.9). In FY2014, the net cost of attendance is projected to be \$1,900 less than it was in FY2005, again in constant 2005 dollars. In addition, Penn has seen a marked increase in financial need, with the number of grant-aided undergraduates growing by 28 percent since FY2008, due in part to the slow economic recovery and, in particular, the continued high unemployment rate.

The key continuing institutional challenges related to financial aid are: 1) increasing financial aid endowment; 2) ensuring that families understand the family contribution component of aid packages; and 3) continuing to offer all-grant, no-loan packages to eligible students. Taken together, these actions should continue to help Penn diversify its student body and ensure the financial stability of its undergraduates and their families.

Figure 2.9
Trend in Undergraduate Cost of Attendance



Measuring Success

Admitting and financially supporting a talented and diverse student body are crucial elements of Penn's efforts to create a diverse and inclusive community. However, the arrival and continuing presence of so many talented students is only a first step. They must succeed at Penn. Four- and six- year graduation rates and the first-year retention rate are critical measures of whether students are achieving their goals. Penn is proud that these rates are very high for all students, including underrepresented minority students and those with high financial need.

The President, Provost, and other senior leaders regularly review reports on retention and graduation organized by gender, race/ethnicity, financial need level, and school and department. These reports, developed by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, are also shared with the Faculty Council on Access and Academic Support (FCAA). Chaired by the Vice Provost for Education and encompassing faculty and senior staff from all four undergraduate schools, the FCAA is tasked "to advise and assist the Provost on a range of activities, including programs designed to 1) support Penn's efforts in developing access to higher education by underrepresented groups, particularly in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields, 2) increase the diversity of our student body, and 3) facilitate the success of all of our students." The FCAA was launched in the fall of 2008 and has since developed and examined a variety of data, discussed the issues raised by such data, proposed actions based on their analysis, met with key constituents (particularly advising and student support staffs), and communicated its conclusions to the Provost and directly to schools and departments.

Penn has historically had excellent first-year retention and graduation rates. Since the early 1990s, at least 95 percent of first-year students have returned for their sophomore year. For the 2012 cohort of first-time full-time students, 98.1 percent returned for their second year. Penn's 4- and 6-year graduation rates have steadily improved over time. At present, 86.7 percent of first-year students can expect to graduate in 4 years, and Penn's most recent 6-year graduation rate is 95.8 percent. These rates are over 30 and 40 percentage points higher, respectively, than national averages (Figures 2.10 and 2.11).

Overall, retention rates vary little by student's intended division, gender, race/ethnicity, or financial need. Figures 2.12 and 2.13 demonstrate the consistency in this metric and the small variability by both race/ethnicity and need level.

Figure 2.10
 6-Year and 4-Year Graduation Rates - Penn and National Average
 Fall 1991 - Fall 2008 Cohort Entry Years

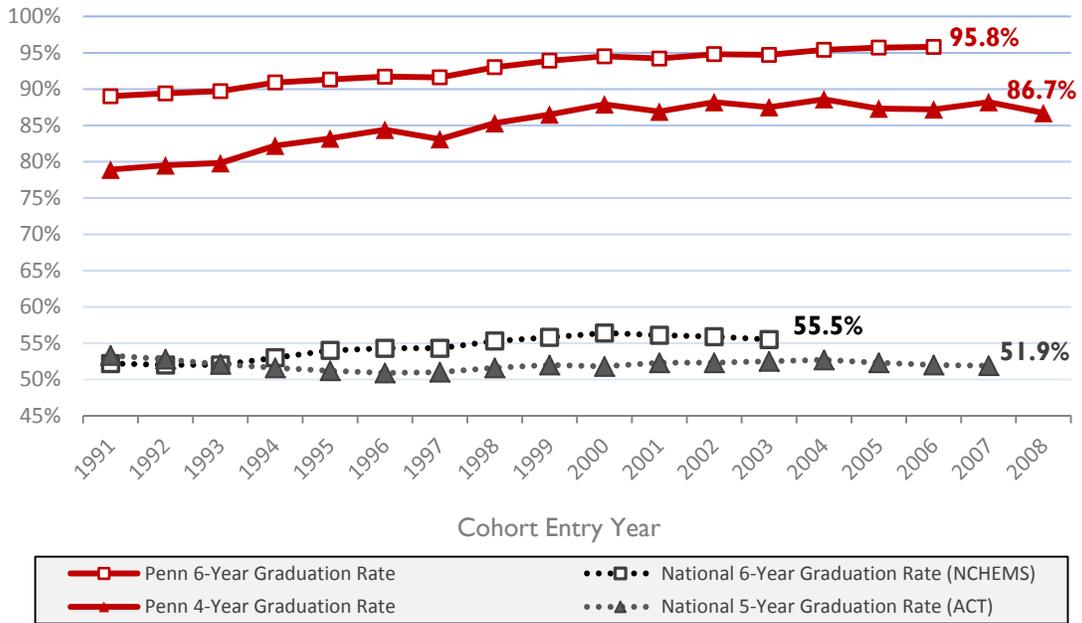


Figure 2.11
 Retention Rates - Penn and National Average
 Fall 1991 - Fall 2011 Cohort Entry Years

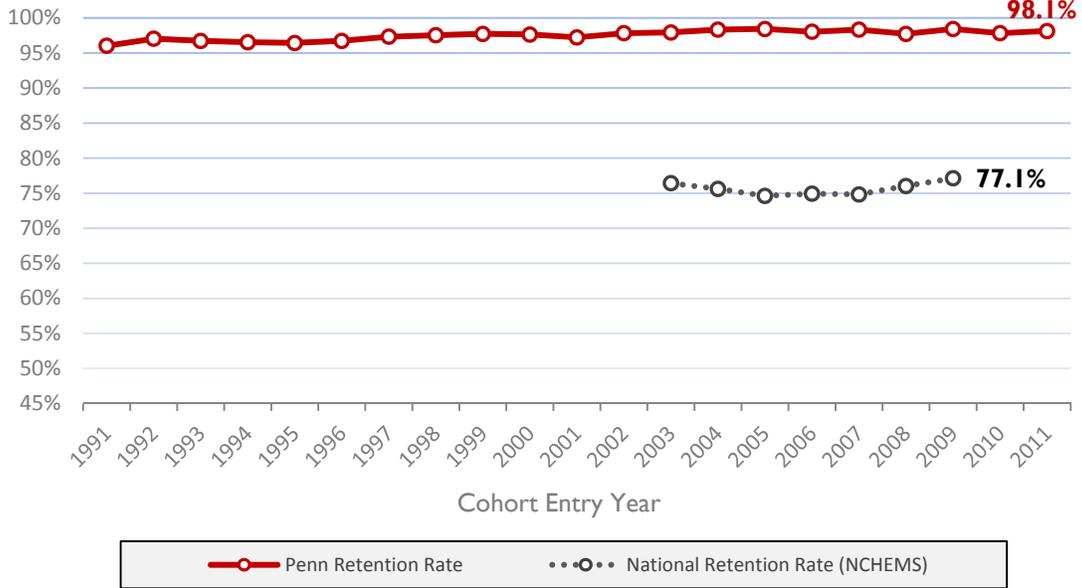


Figure 2.12
 First Year Retention by Race/Ethnicity Group
 Fall 2002 - Fall 2011 Cohorts

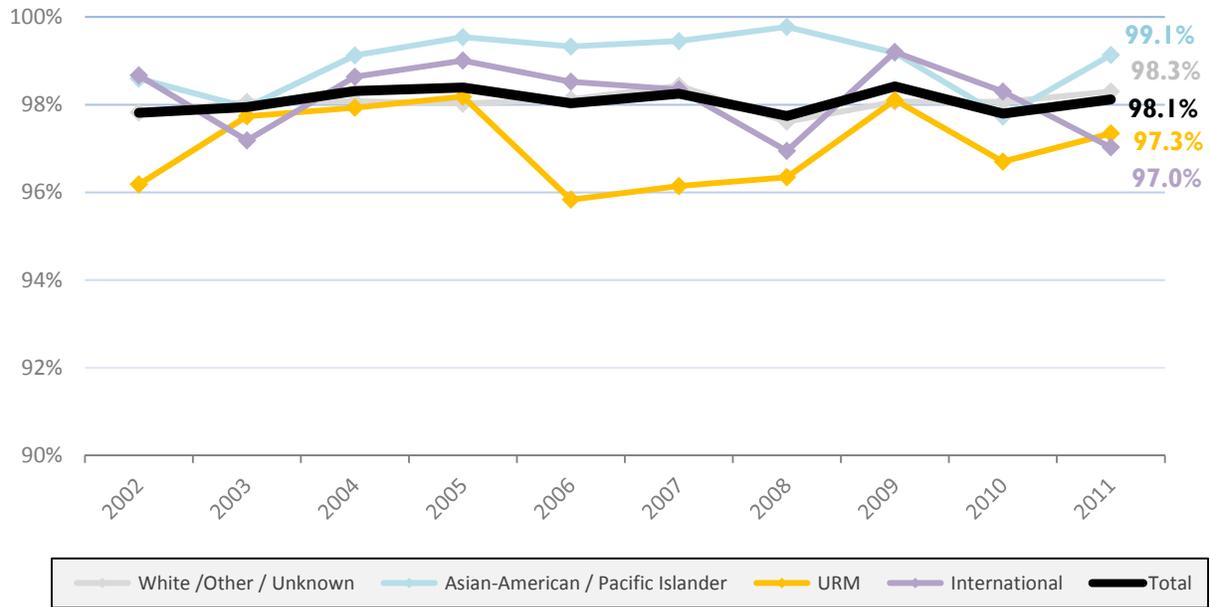
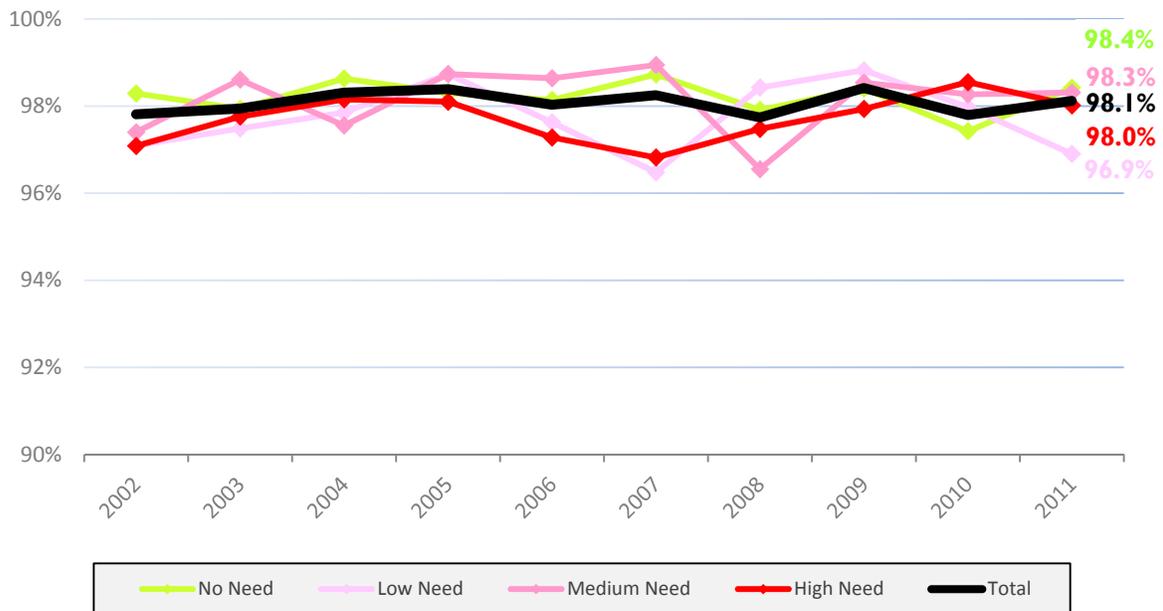


Figure 2.13
 First Year Retention by Need Level
 Fall 2002 - Fall 2011 Cohorts



Students admitted to Penn have a very high probability of completing a degree program regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, and/or financial need. Graduation rates for Penn undergraduates are among the highest in the nation. The University’s six-year graduation rate (Figures 2.14 and 2.16) has shown significant improvement over time, increasing from 89 percent for the 1991 cohort to 95.8 percent for the 2006 cohort. In particular, there have been dramatic gains for URM students, whose graduation rates are now close to the average for the University (96%). We are proud of these improvements and vigilant in our efforts to improve. For example, the drop in the number of URM students from 95 percent in the 2005 cohort to 93 percent for the 2006 cohort could reflect a statistical fluctuation for the smaller URM group or it could represent an area for concern, such as economic stress or student support issues. The rapid dissemination of these data to schools, departments, faculty, advisors and student support centers allows the University to address potential problems and concerns more quickly than had previously been the case. This notion is further supported by examination of the 4-year graduation rate (Figures 2.15 and 2.17). These data show that the gap between URM and majority student graduation rates is clearly decreasing but not yet completely closed. The 4-year graduation rates of international students, meanwhile, have varied over time and in general been slightly lower than those of domestic undergraduate students (Figure 2.15). Whether the most recent rate reflects this variability or signals a trend calls for additional examination, particularly in light of the fact that these students’ 6-year graduation rate remains high (Fig 2.14).

Figure 2.14
Six Year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity Group
Fall 1991 - Fall 2006 Cohorts

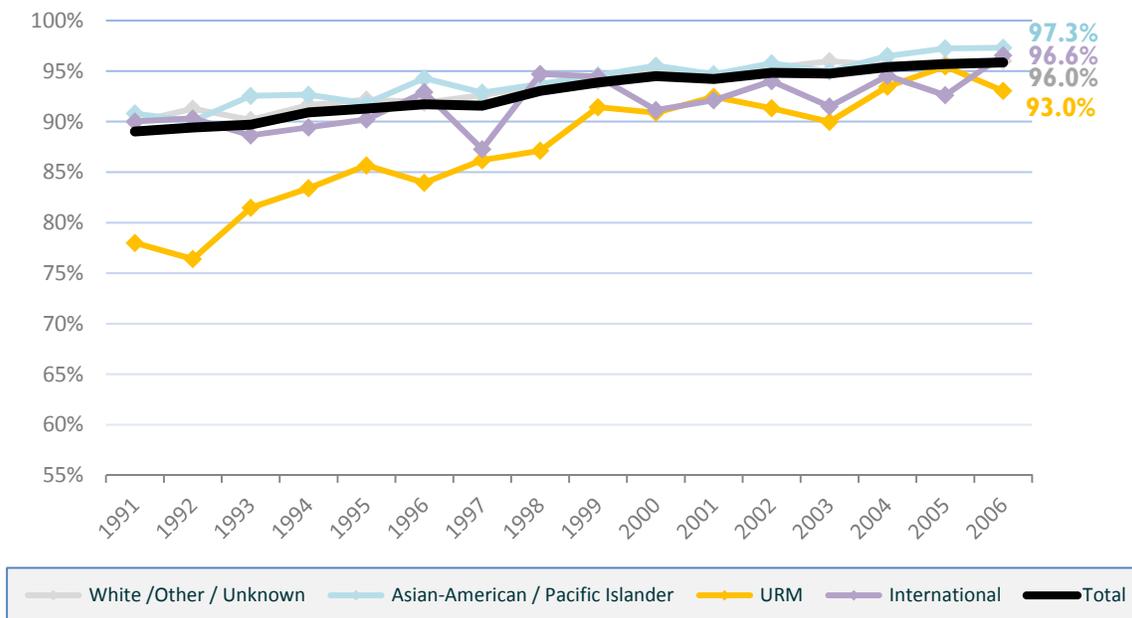
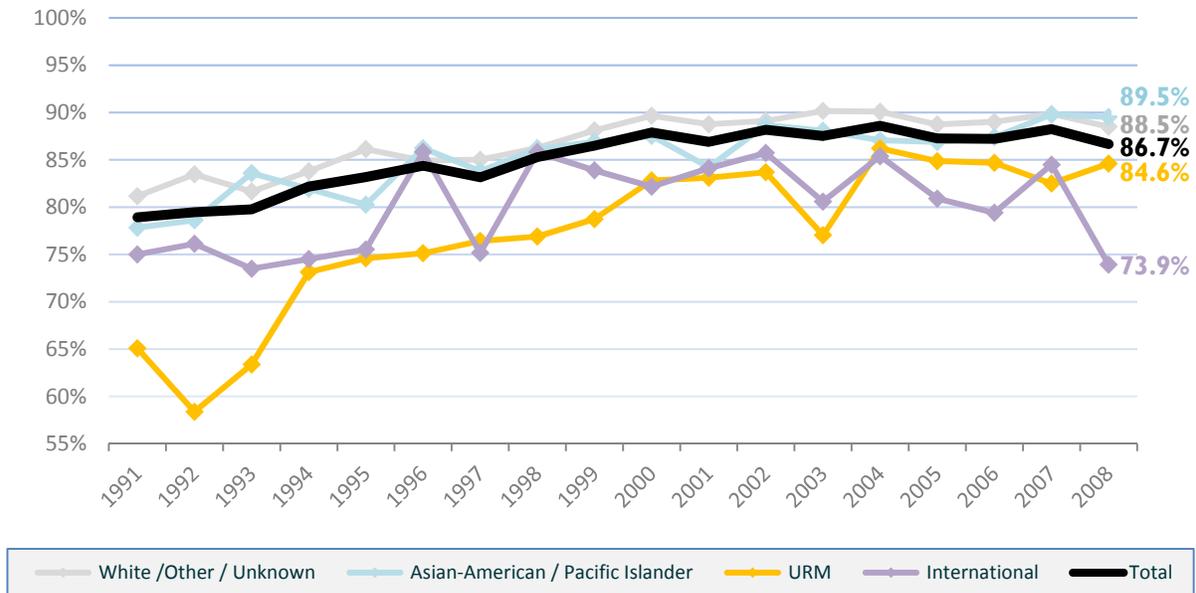


Figure 2.15
Four Year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity Group
 Fall 1991 - Fall 2008 Cohorts



Examination of graduation rates by financial need provides another perspective. First-year retention rates do not vary by need level (Figure 2.13) and, over time, the six-year graduation rate (Figure 2.16) has improved dramatically. With the exception of the 1998 and 2006 cohorts, the most significant improvements have been observed among students with the highest levels of financial need. There are by comparison considerable differences in four-year graduation rates by need level (Figure 2.17), and while there has again been some decrease in the gaps across need levels since the 1990s, they have remained largely stable throughout the past decade. For the 2008 entering cohort, the four-year graduation rate for students without financial need was 90.6 percent compared to 79.1 percent for high need students—an 11.5 percent difference. The difference between high-need and medium-need students is 5.6 percent. The implications for aided students—including increased time to degree, increased risk of not completing their degrees in 4 (or 6) years, and potential income disparities—merit additional study.

Despite Penn’s strong financial aid packages, many students must also find employment on or off campus, often in addition to any work-study job they hold. This factor could contribute to the somewhat lower 4-year graduation rates of high need students. While there is no way of tracking precisely the numbers of students who work off-campus or the reasons students do so, survey data and anecdotal information suggest that students seek work to subsidize expenses or lifestyle choices. In the 2012 Senior Survey, students who self-identified as growing up in a poor or working class household were much more likely than their peers to report working all four years of college (52.1% as compared to 24.6%). This group also identified spending nearly twice as many hours on average as their peers working for pay (10.85 hours/week as compared to 5.45 hours/week).

Reports from academic advisors suggest that, in some cases, this kind of employment has interfered with academic success and students' ability to participate fully in the intellectual life of the University. Also, some students report feeling compelled to help with the family contribution component of their financial aid awards. Other reports suggest that a number of highly aided students from very low socioeconomic backgrounds work to send money home to provide additional support for their families. Penn should continue its efforts to identify these students and provide appropriate mentoring and support to help ensure that work does not significantly interfere with their academic progress.

Figure 2.16
Six Year Graduation Rate by Need Level
Fall 1991 - Fall 2006 Cohorts

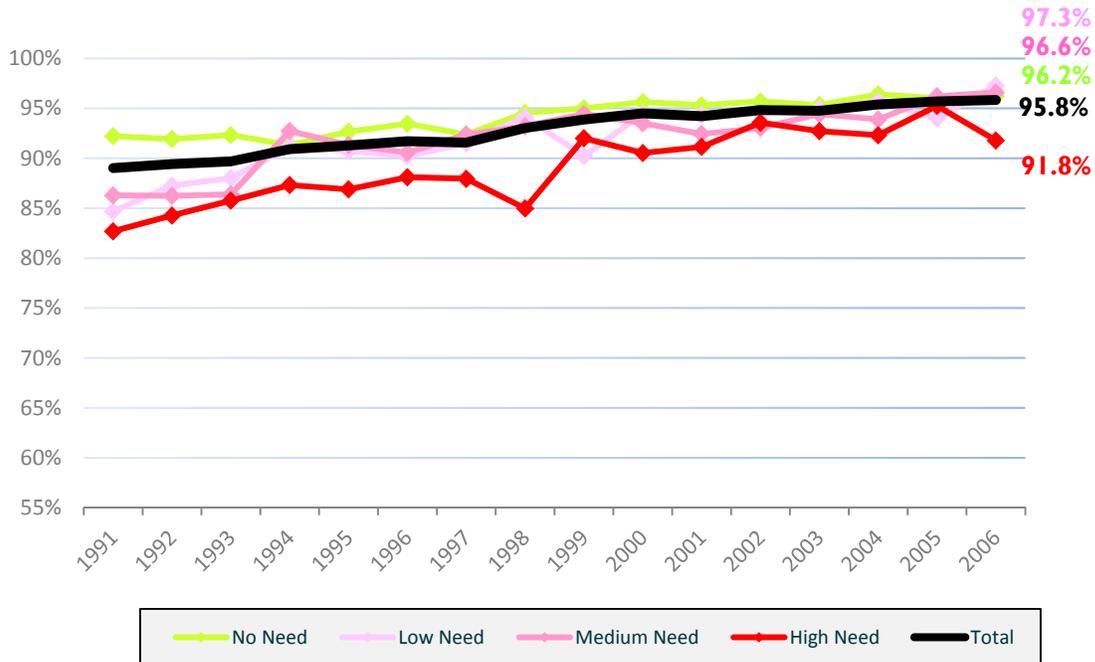
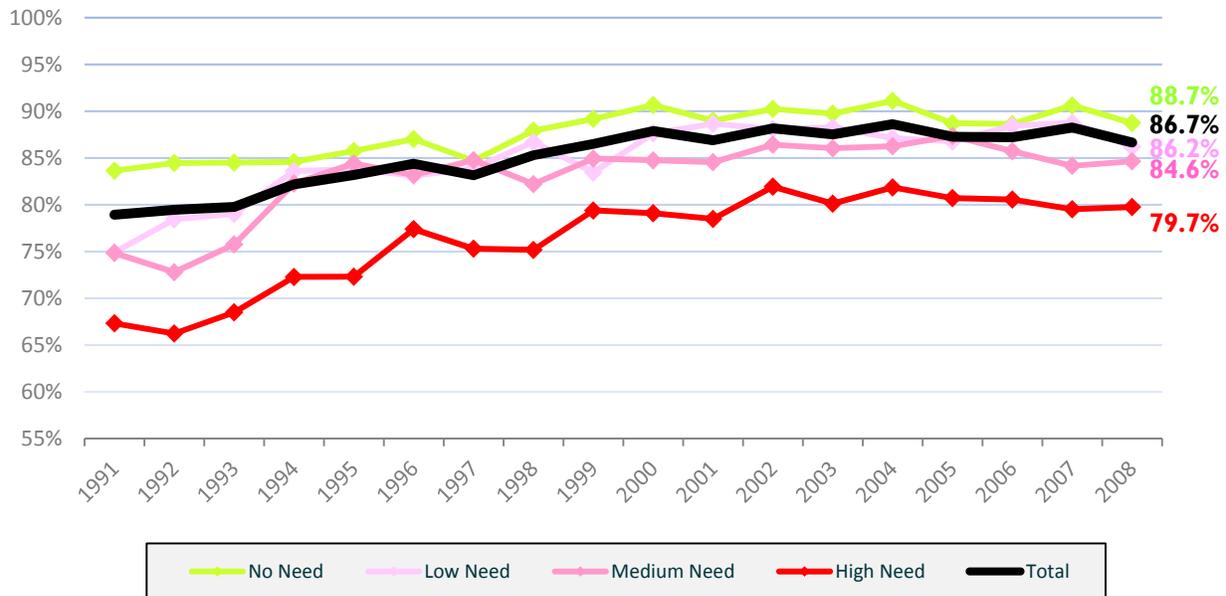


Figure 2.17
Four Year Graduation Rate by Need Level
 Fall 1991 - Fall 2008 Cohorts



The FCAA has spent considerable time exploring the possible basis for the differences in 4-year graduation rates for URM students and students with the highest levels of financial need. Two important factors emerged from this review. First, even though these groups of students are graduating at outstanding rates, they are more likely to struggle in their first year when compared with other students (based on such criteria as GPA and credit units earned). Second, while the GPA and credit unit gap narrows considerably in the third and fourth years, URM and/or high-need students who required more than four years to complete their degree were less likely to accumulate additional credentials such as a dual degree, double major, or submatriculation master’s degree.

The FCAA examined gateway courses, particularly in STEM fields, and recommended that evidence-based pedagogical reforms in these courses be considered. This recommendation, combined with on-going faculty discussion about STEM teaching coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning, led to proposals from the faculty to revise introductory STEM teaching by adopting a “structured, active, in-class learning” model of teaching. In the summer of 2013, Penn was one of eight highly selective research institutions named as an American Association of Universities Project Site for the Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative—a multimillion dollar project that aims to improve the quality of teaching in STEM fields (Appendix 2.1). Approximately 40 percent of Penn’s faculty who teach introductory STEM courses have already agreed to test and adopt these methods. Over the next 5-10 years, Penn will engage in ongoing assessment of the results, which it hopes will show significant benefit to all students, and will specifically study URM students and high-need students to determine if changes in teaching are having the intended positive impact on the academic progress of these groups.

Efforts to Sustain Success

To help ensure the success of first-generation, high-need, and URM students, Penn devotes considerable attention to equity. The University gathers data to determine if these students are accomplishing their stated academic goals, and it tailors programs to address their needs. The Penn Pathways Team is a key partner in these efforts, representing administrators from the advising offices in the four undergraduate schools and their colleagues in the Division of the Vice Provost for University Life. This group has broad expertise in supporting multicultural programming and working with socioeconomically disadvantaged and URM students. It is charged with reviewing existing advising practices and exploring new ways to best serve the student population.

Many of the programs that directly support and sustain the success of undergraduates are housed in the Office of Equity and Access Programs in the Division of the Vice Provost for University Life. This office includes the Pre-Freshman/PennCap Program (PFP). The PFP is a four-week, residential, academically rigorous program for 100 admitted first-year students. Students from small towns, public urban high schools, athletes, first-generation college students, and students with high financial need are some of the diverse students who participate in the PFP. The Program offers a comprehensive set of services to support approximately 500 Penn undergraduates, most of whom are first-generation, high-need, and/or URM students. Other campus resources at Penn include the Pan-Asian Community House, the Makuu Black Cultural Center, the La Casa Latina Center for Hispanic Excellence, and the Greenfield Intercultural Center. These cultural centers play a key role in fostering a sense of community and providing networks and support for students from diverse racial and ethnic groups. For example, the Working Group found that URM students report the cultural centers to be safe havens for discussing financial concerns.

The re-opening of the University's Arts, Research and Culture House (ARCH) in January 2014, following a \$20 million renovation, is another example of Penn's commitment to diversity. The ARCH, located at the heart of the campus, will be home to three of the cultural resource centers—Makuu Black Student Cultural Center; La Casa Latina Center for Hispanic Excellence; and the Pan-Asian American Community House — as well as the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships. Thus, the ARCH will provide a physical space for the intersection of diverse student and faculty interests and activities, including a flexible, state-of-the-art auditorium/classroom and significant lounge and café space. The importance of these cultural organizations for URM students at Penn is highlighted by data from the 2012 Senior Survey. Sixty percent of URM students report participating in cultural/ethnic organizations for one or more years during their undergraduate education, twice the rate of participation by non-URM peers.

The 2012 Senior Survey provides solid evidence that Penn students are highly satisfied with the Penn undergraduate experience (Figure 2.18). Overall, the majority of Penn students are satisfied with the availability of tutorial help and other academic assistance and advising. Given slightly less satisfaction with these services among URM and Low SES Students (Figure 2.19 and 2.20), these figures suggest that there may still be some room for improvement in the academic support services for URM and high-need students. Additional research (perhaps through more detailed interviews) might assess the reasons for any student dissatisfaction and suggest appropriate means of better addressing identified needs.

Figure 2.18
Overall Satisfaction with Undergraduate Education
2012 Senior Survey

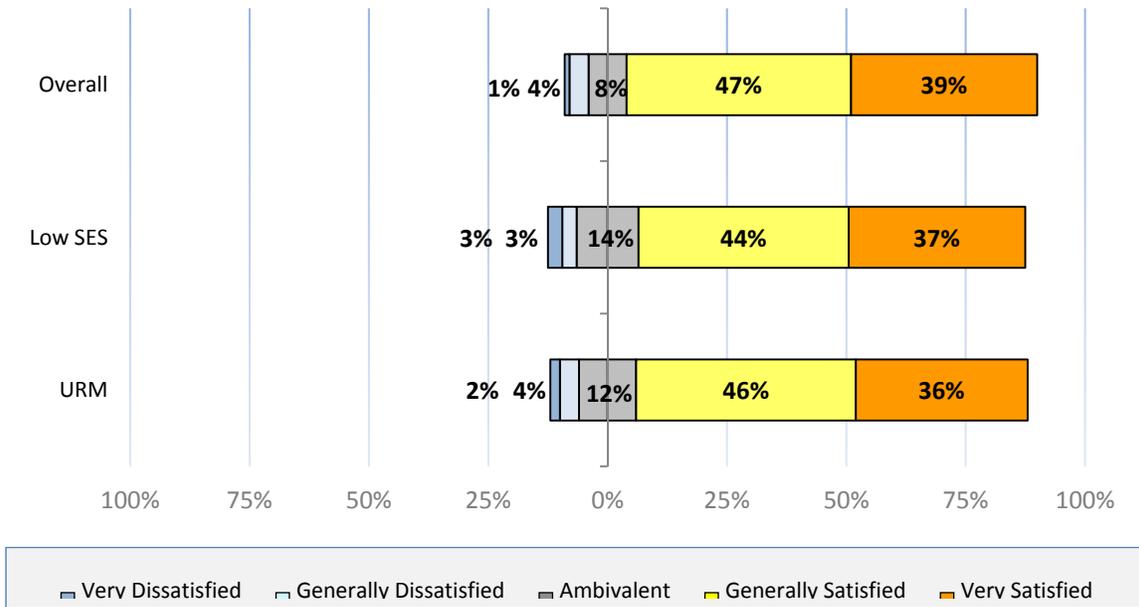


Figure 2.19
Satisfaction with Quality of Advising
2012 Senior Survey

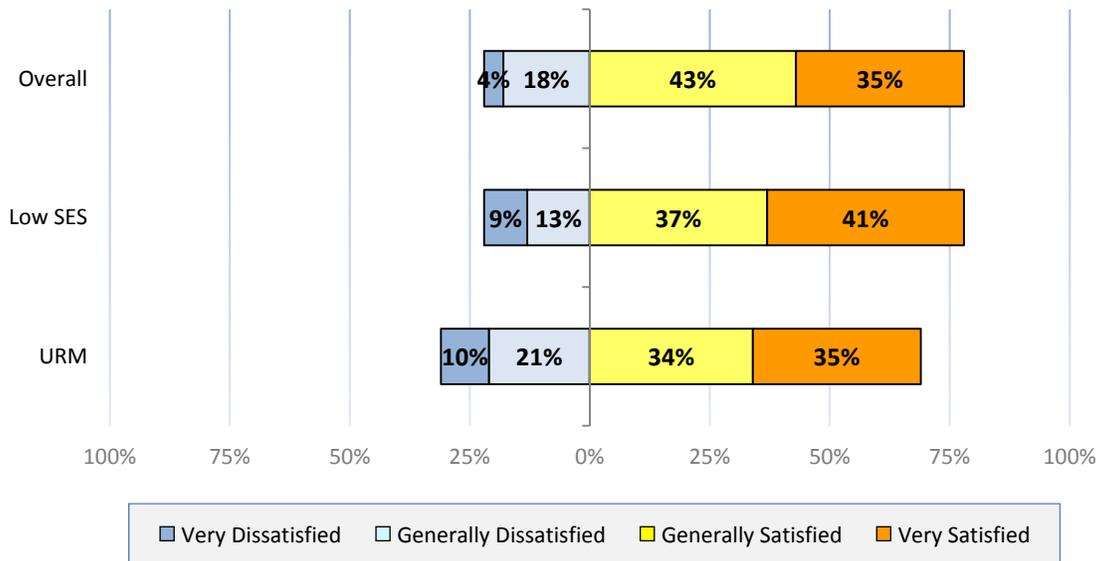
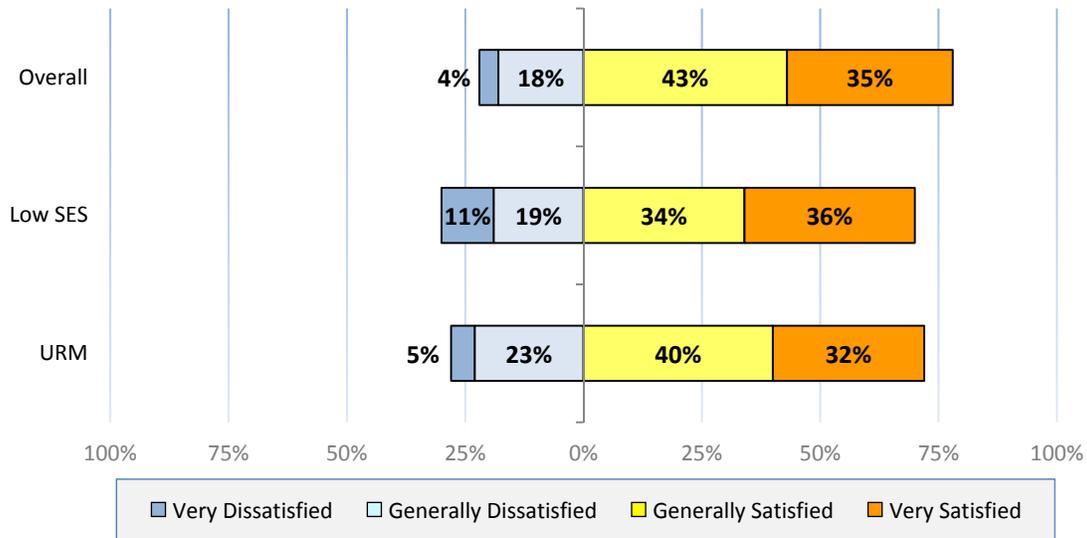


Figure 2.20
Satisfaction with Availability of Tutoring and Other Help
2012 Senior Survey



Recommendations

To build on Penn’s demonstrated success, outreach in admissions should continue in ways that further increase the diversity and excellence of its applicants, with a particular focus on applications from underrepresented minority students, including LGBT students, and students eligible for Pell grants. In light of Penn’s all-grant, no-loan policy, all students who know early in their senior year that they want to enroll at Penn can and should be encouraged to apply for early decision.

Need-blind admissions, need-based financial aid, and the all grant, no loan policy are important contributions to the quality of undergraduate education at Penn, creating a diverse student body of academically talented men and women. Undergraduate financial aid ought to remain one of Penn’s highest institutional and fundraising priorities. Even with Penn’s all-grant, no-loan policy, some undergraduates still choose to take out loans, and further study of those students is important.

Beyond providing direct financial support to students, Penn should continue to encourage collaboration among schools and central units that offer advising and student support, particularly for those in underrepresented populations. For example, the Division of the Vice Provost for University Life should continue to play a strong role in supporting URM and other specific populations, in both academic and co-curricular contexts.

Penn undergraduates have a very high probability of completing a degree program. This is true regardless of a student’s gender, race/ethnicity, and/or financial need. It is important that Penn continue to monitor

its four-year and six-year graduation rates—especially those for high-need, underrepresented minority, and international students—and develop appropriate strategies to address any issues identified.