

Successful Approaches to Admissions at Open Access Universities

Prepared for the University of Alaska Anchorage

In this report, Hanover Research examines the defining characteristics of public, open access higher education institutions in the United States and describes the admissions policies at nine such institutions that most closely resemble the University of Alaska Anchorage.

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Introduction and Key Findings

Open access universities play a vital role in the country's economy and the education of its citizens. A recent policy alert issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education states that:

The largest gains in graduation rates over the past decades have been accomplished at open-access or nearly open-access colleges and universities. In addition, states could see even bigger increases if they directed their policies and supports toward improving graduation rates at these nonselective institutions.¹

It goes on to explain that nonselective colleges and universities account for most of the increases in completion rates in 33 states, including nine of the top 10 states with the largest improvements in college graduation rates.² The report also discusses trends that are associated with graduation rates. For example, states with higher investments in student financial aid tend to have higher graduation rates, as do states with higher per-student appropriations.³ Graduation rates tend to decrease, though, as the percentage of young adults (18 – 24 years of age) increases, which indicates that institutions struggle with the correspondingly higher levels of enrollment.⁴

In this report, Hanover Research explores other such trends and characteristics of public, open access colleges and universities across the United States. In the first part of **Section 1**, we identify the variables most closely associated with 6-year graduation rates at all public, 4-year (or above) institutions in the United States through a regression analysis. In the second part of the same section, we identify nine such institutions that most closely resemble the University of Alaska Anchorage, and provide comparisons on a number of different variables. In **Section 2** of this report, we examine the admissions policies of these nine “peer” institutions in greater detail.

The key findings of our research are presented on the following page.

¹ Doyle, William R. “Open-Access Colleges Responsible for Greatest Gains in Graduation Rates.” The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, February 2010, p. 1.
<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED508992.pdf>

² Ibid., p. 2.

³ Ibid., pp. 1, 3.

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

Key Findings

- ❖ A regression analysis performed on more than 10 variables showed that four factors have a strong correlation with 6-year graduation rates at public, 4-year or above institutions with open admission policies. They are:
 - Tuition and fees
 - Instruction expenses per FTE
 - Student-to-faculty ratio
 - Percentage of undergraduates between the ages of 25 and 64

While it is impossible to draw conclusions about the four factors' potential to effect changes in graduation rates, it is valuable to compare the University of Alaska with similar open admission institutions in these categories.

- ❖ Only nine institutions in the United States can be considered “peers” of the University of Alaska as determined by three basic criteria (Carnegie Classification, Sector of Institution, and open admission policy). These institutions are as follows:
 - New Mexico Highlands University
 - Peru State College
 - Sul Ross State University
 - University of Maryland-University College
 - University of Texas at Brownsville
 - Wayne State College
 - Weber State University
 - Western New Mexico University
 - Youngstown State University

Of these, the three institutions most like UAA as determined through an analysis used in prior reports are the University of Texas at Brownsville, Western New Mexico University, and New Mexico Highlands University. The most dissimilar institutions are the University of Maryland – University College, Wayne State College, and Weber State University. **The former three institutions all have 6-year graduation rates lower than UAA's, while two of the latter three (Wayne State College and Weber State University) have significantly higher graduation rates.**

- ❖ UAA has a relatively low 6-year graduation rate for American Indian or Alaska Native students (7 percent as compared to 44 percent at Wayne State College or 25 percent at Youngstown State University).

- ❖ Financial aid is positively associated with graduation rates. At UAA, **the percentage of full-time first-time undergraduates receiving any financial aid is lower than at any of its open admission peers** (68 percent, as compared to 92 percent and 83 percent, respectively, at Wayne State College and Weber State University, the peer institutions with the highest graduation rates).
- ❖ **UAA has higher instruction expenditures per FTE than any of its nine open admission peers** (\$9,550 as compared to \$7,963 at Western New Mexico University, the next highest, or \$3,937 at Peru State College, the lowest). It also has a **relatively low student-to-faculty ratio** (16).
- ❖ UAA's instruction expenses as a percentage of total core expenses are 48 percent, higher than five of its peers' but lower than four, and 43 percent of its total FTE staff is in instruction/research and public service.
- ❖ At most of UAA's open admission peers, **ACT or SAT scores are not required for admission but are used for the purpose of course placement**. If students do not submit ACT or SAT scores, many institutions accept (or require) the COMPASS® placement test. Other placement tests in use at UAA's open admission peers include the Accuplacer and the THEA (in Texas). The **“cutoff” scores (below which students must take remedial courses or participate in special programs) for all of these tests vary** among the institutions.
- ❖ Beginning in Fall 2013 at New Mexico Highlands University, **submission of SAT or ACT scores will be mandatory for all first-time applicants**. This policy stands in contrast to that of the University of Maryland – University College, which requires neither official transcripts nor ACT or SAT scores to gain admission (transcripts may be submitted later, and all students are required to take placement exams).
- ❖ It is uncommon at UAA's open admission peer institutions to use GPA for tiered admissions or course placement purposes. However, **New Mexico Highlands University does distinguish between “regular admission” students, who have entering GPAs of 2.0 or above, and students with lower GPAs, who are admitted upon approval by a committee review or are granted probationary admission**. Students entering with low test scores or GPAs must attend tutoring services and receive additional support from other institutional programs and entities. Also, as of May 2012, **Youngstown State University will place incoming students with low ACT or SAT scores or low GPAs in an “at-risk” category, and they will be required to participate in a number of success-oriented activities**.

Section 1: Characteristics of Open Access Higher Education Institutions in the United States

In the pages that follow, we describe a regression analysis used to identify the factors most closely correlated with 6-year graduation rates at public, 4-year or above institutions. We then compare the defining characteristics of nine institutions that meet criteria that make them similar to the University of Alaska Anchorage.

All data used in our analyses were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). We used 2010 data in order to reflect the most current and complete status of each institution. (2011 data are available, but incomplete at the time of writing.)

Regression Analysis

In order to determine which attributes of open admissions higher education institutions in the United States are most closely related to their 6-year graduation rates, Hanover performed a regression analysis with the statistical program Stata. We discuss this process, and its results, in the following paragraphs.

Using IPEDS, we created a list of all institutions that met the following criteria:

- ❖ *Sector of Institution:* public, 4-year or above
- ❖ *Open admission policy:* Yes

In 2010, there were 114 public, 4-year or above institutions that reported an open admission policy to IPEDS. Of these, only 68 reported their 6-year graduation rates; the remaining 46 were excluded from the analysis. The variables that were examined for possible correlations with 6-year graduation rates included:

- ❖ Graduation rate (percentage attaining Bachelor's degree within 6 years, total student population)
- ❖ Total enrollment
- ❖ Percentage of total enrollment full-time
- ❖ Percentage of total enrollment part-time
- ❖ Percentage of total enrollment undergraduate
- ❖ Percentage of undergraduate enrollment part-time
- ❖ Percentage of undergraduates between the ages of 25 and 64 ("percent nontraditional undergraduates")
- ❖ Instruction expenses per FTE (GASB)
- ❖ Instruction expenses as a percentage of total core expenses (GASB)
- ❖ Academic support expenses as a percent of total core expenses (GASB)
- ❖ Tuition and fees

- ❖ Student-to-faculty ratio
- ❖ Percentage of full-time first-time undergraduates receiving any financial aid

Four of these variables – **tuition and fees; instruction expenses per FTE; student-to-faculty ratio; and percentage of undergraduates between the ages of 25 and 64** – accounted for 93.7 percent of the variance in the observed graduation rates, or 93.1 percent when the number of factors included in the analysis are accounted for. **The regression is very significant; $F(4, 45) = 167.09, p < 0.0001$.** All of the factors are significant at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level. Based on the coefficients, the student-to-faculty ratio and the percentage of nontraditional undergraduate students have the greatest impact; for every unit increase in the student-to-faculty ratio, the graduation rate is predicted to rise 0.5. Similarly, for every unit increase in the proportion of nontraditional undergraduates, the graduation rate is predicted to *decrease* by 0.28. High tuition and expenditure per FTE student are associated with higher graduation rates, but do not have a very strong effect.

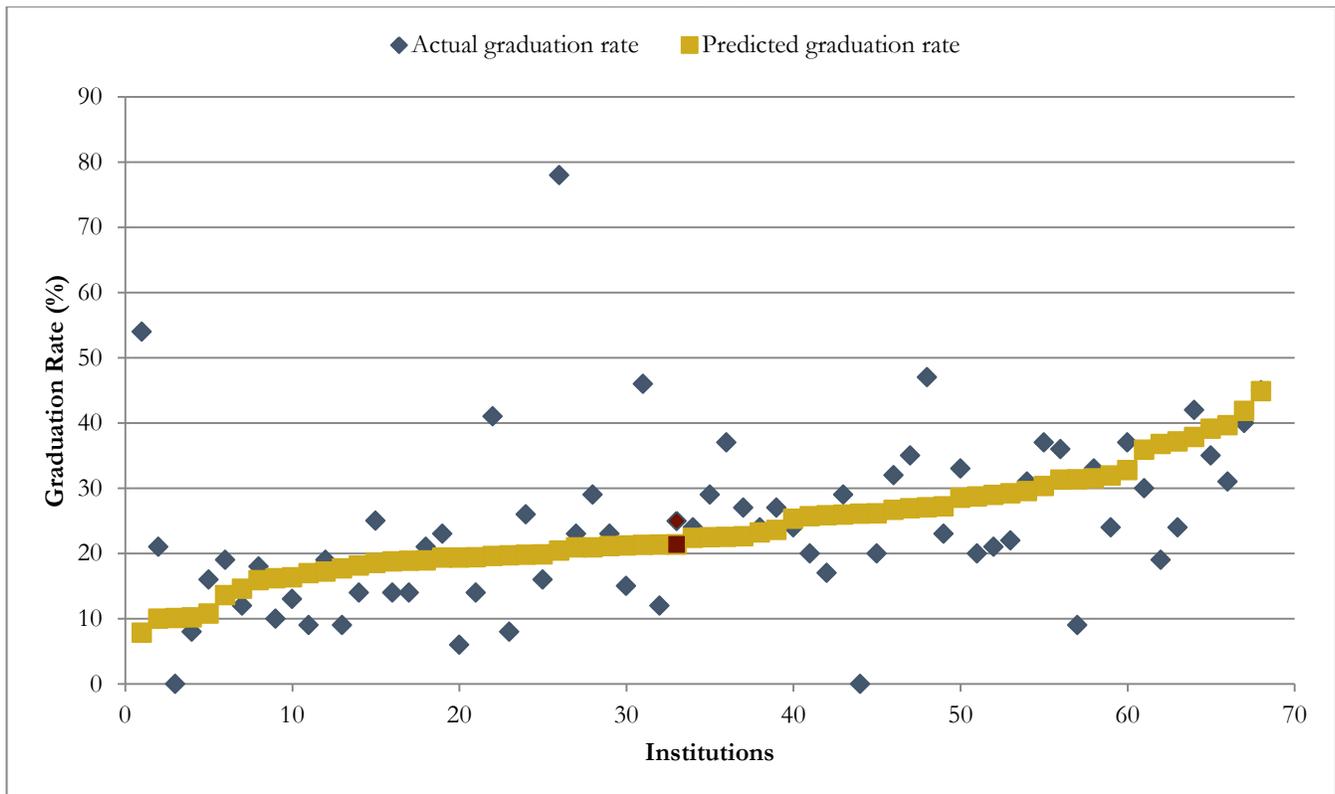
In this sample, neither the percentage of undergraduate students (of total enrollment) nor the percentage of part-time undergraduate students (of undergraduate enrollment) was a significant predictor of graduation rates. This may be in part because the percentage of part-time undergraduates is highly correlated with the percentage of nontraditional undergraduates; it is redundant to include both of them. Of the two, the percentage of nontraditional undergraduates is a stronger predictor. Additionally, as the constant did not make a significant contribution to the model, it was removed.

The final model is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \textbf{Graduation rate} = & \\
 & (0.0030918 \times \textit{Tuition and fees}) \\
 & + (0.0010888 \times \textit{Instruction expenses per FTE}) \\
 & + (0.5047052 \times \textit{Student - to - faculty ratio}) \\
 & - (0.2785053 \times \textit{Percentage of nontraditional undergraduates})
 \end{aligned}$$

Figure 1.1, below, compares the 68 institutions' actual graduation rates with those predicted by the regression model. The two points corresponding to the University of Alaska Anchorage are marked in dark red.

Figure 1.1: Predicted vs. Actual Graduation Rates at Open Admission Institutions



Source: IPEDS, Stata analysis.

As mentioned above, the regression analysis revealed strong correlations between four different factors and institutions' 6-year graduation rates. These correlations, however, do not necessarily indicate *causation*. For example, tuition and fees is positively correlated with 6-year graduation rates in the model, but this does not mean that increasing tuition and fees will result in a direct increase in 6-year graduation rates. Rather, it is likely that other (possibly interrelated) factors play a role that the regression model is unable to take into account. It is also important to note that, while we considered more than 10 variables in our analysis, others that were not considered may also be correlated with 6-year graduation rates.

Characteristics of UAA Peers

Hanover also examined only institutions that could be considered, at a basic level, peers of the University of Alaska Anchorage. In order to do this, we selected a set of basic criteria to generate a list of similar institutions with open admission policies. To qualify for this list, institutions had to meet the following criteria:

- ❖ *Carnegie Classification 2010: Basic*: Master's Colleges and Universities (medium and larger programs)

- ❖ *Sector of Institution:* public, 4-year or above
- ❖ *Open admission policy:* Yes

Only 10 institutions met all three criteria. They are as follows:

- ❖ New Mexico Highlands University
- ❖ Peru State College
- ❖ Sul Ross State University
- ❖ University of Alaska Anchorage
- ❖ University of Maryland-University College
- ❖ University of Texas at Brownsville
- ❖ Wayne State College
- ❖ Weber State University
- ❖ Western New Mexico University
- ❖ Youngstown State University

In order to gauge the degree to which each institution resembles UAA in its key characteristics, Hanover employed a methodology developed in previous reports produced for UAA entitled “Peer List Development and Benchmarking” and “Comparator Peer Benchmarking.” We reproduce our description of the methodology in the following paragraphs.

Using data available from IPEDS, we created two new variables. First, we calculated the percentages of undergraduate and graduate students attending part-time. We also combined degree conferral data for “Certificates of less than 1-year” and “Certificates of 1 but less than 2-years” to create a variable for the total number of certificates awarded below the baccalaureate level.

The next step was to determine how closely each of the potential peer institutions matched UAA for each characteristic. We selected variables that accurately represent the university’s unique qualities, and then used the following calculations to gauge similarity:

$$\frac{\text{Peer Value} - \text{UAA's Value}}{\text{UAA's Value}}$$

The absolute value of the result for each variable represents the percentage difference from the target institution’s value. Variables for which this percentage was calculated included:

- ❖ Number of certificates awarded below the baccalaureate level (2010)
- ❖ Associate degree conferrals (2010)

- ❖ Total undergraduate enrollment
- ❖ Total graduate enrollment
- ❖ Percentage enrolled part-time (undergraduate):
- ❖ Percentage enrolled part-time (graduate)
- ❖ Percent American Indian/Alaska Native (total enrollment)

We then applied different weights to each of the above percentages using the following formula:

$$(\text{Value A} * \text{X}\%) + (\text{Value B} * \text{Y}\%) + (\text{Value C} * \text{Z}\%) \dots = \text{Weighted Similarity Score}$$

The following weights were used in this formula:

- ❖ Number of certificates awarded below the baccalaureate level: **20%**
- ❖ Associate degree conferrals: **20%**
- ❖ Total undergraduate enrollment: **5%**
- ❖ Total graduate enrollment: **5%**
- ❖ Percentage enrolled part-time (undergraduate): **20%**
- ❖ Percentage enrolled part-time (graduate): **10%**
- ❖ Percent American Indian/Alaska Native (total enrollment): **20%**

As shown above, the weighted similarity score was based on four general criteria: **number of certificates and degrees conferred** (40 percent), **student population** (10 percent), **part-time attendance** (30 percent), and **concentration of American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) students** (20 percent). The values for undergraduate certificates awarded and associate degrees conferred were assigned relatively high weights (20 percent each) because institutions that confer large numbers of these levels of awards resemble UAA in one of its distinguishing characteristics. Part-time attendance variables also received high weights (20 percent for undergraduate, 10 percent for graduate) in an effort to identify peer institutions with large percentages of students attending part-time at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The high weight assigned to the percentage of AIAN students allowed institutions with a large AIAN enrollment to be receive higher standing in the peer list even if they might not have received high standing as a result of other variables. Finally, student population was only assigned a total weight of 10 percent (5 percent each for undergraduate and graduate enrollment) because we determined that it was more important to identify institutions with similar qualitative characteristics rather than a similarly-sized student population.

The final similarity scores for each of the 10 institutions (including UAA) are presented in Figure 1.2 below. The institutions are listed in order of similarity to UAA.

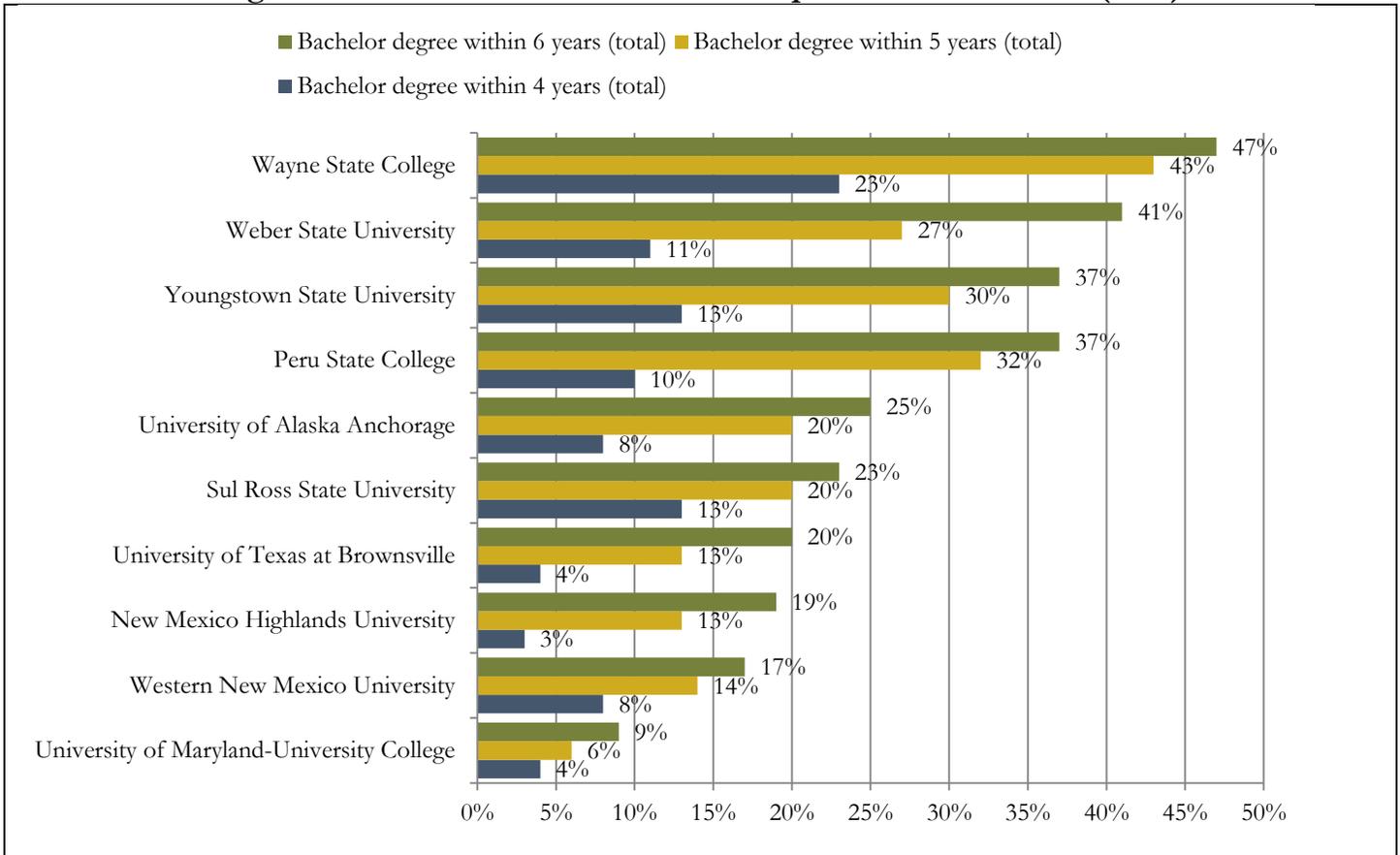
Figure 1.2: Similarity of Open Admission Peers to University of Alaska Anchorage

Institution	Undergrad Certificates	Associate Degrees	Undergrad Enrollment	Grad Enrollment	Part-time (Undergrad)	Part-time (Grad)	AIAN Enrollment	Total Similarity Score
University of Alaska Anchorage	176	702	17,081	1,073	54.7%	76.8%	7%	--
University of Texas at Brownsville	208 <i>18.2%</i>	1,021 <i>45.4%</i>	14,335 <i>16.1%</i>	895 <i>16.6%</i>	53.3% <i>2.5%</i>	81.2% <i>5.8%</i>	0% <i>100.0%</i>	35.4%
Western New Mexico University	14 <i>92.0%</i>	65 <i>90.7%</i>	2,902 <i>83.0%</i>	604 <i>43.7%</i>	44.0% <i>19.4%</i>	78.6% <i>2.4%</i>	3% <i>57.1%</i>	58.4%
New Mexico Highlands University	0 <i>100.0%</i>	2 <i>99.7%</i>	2,259 <i>86.8%</i>	1,491 <i>39.0%</i>	29.1% <i>46.7%</i>	57.9% <i>24.6%</i>	6% <i>14.3%</i>	60.9%
Youngstown State University	15 <i>91.5%</i>	243 <i>65.4%</i>	13,800 <i>19.2%</i>	1,284 <i>19.7%</i>	22.1% <i>59.6%</i>	60.4% <i>21.4%</i>	0% <i>100.0%</i>	67.4%
Peru State College	0 <i>100.0%</i>	0 <i>100.0%</i>	2,210 <i>87.1%</i>	308 <i>71.3%</i>	42.8% <i>21.7%</i>	80.2% <i>4.4%</i>	1% <i>85.7%</i>	69.8%
Sul Ross State University	11 <i>93.8%</i>	5 <i>99.3%</i>	2,237 <i>86.9%</i>	892 <i>16.9%</i>	35.9% <i>34.2%</i>	79.6% <i>3.6%</i>	0% <i>100.0%</i>	71.0%
Weber State University	64 <i>63.6%</i>	1,850 <i>163.5%</i>	23,401 <i>37.0%</i>	647 <i>39.7%</i>	51.9% <i>5.1%</i>	54.1% <i>29.6%</i>	0% <i>100.0%</i>	73.2%
Wayne State College	0 <i>100.0%</i>	0 <i>100.0%</i>	2,938 <i>82.8%</i>	631 <i>41.2%</i>	7.4% <i>86.5%</i>	92.2% <i>20.1%</i>	1% <i>85.7%</i>	82.7%
University of Maryland-College	0 <i>100.0%</i>	295 <i>58.0%</i>	25,686 <i>50.4%</i>	13,891 <i>1,194.6%</i>	85.8% <i>57.0%</i>	97.9% <i>27.5%</i>	0% <i>100.0%</i>	128.0%

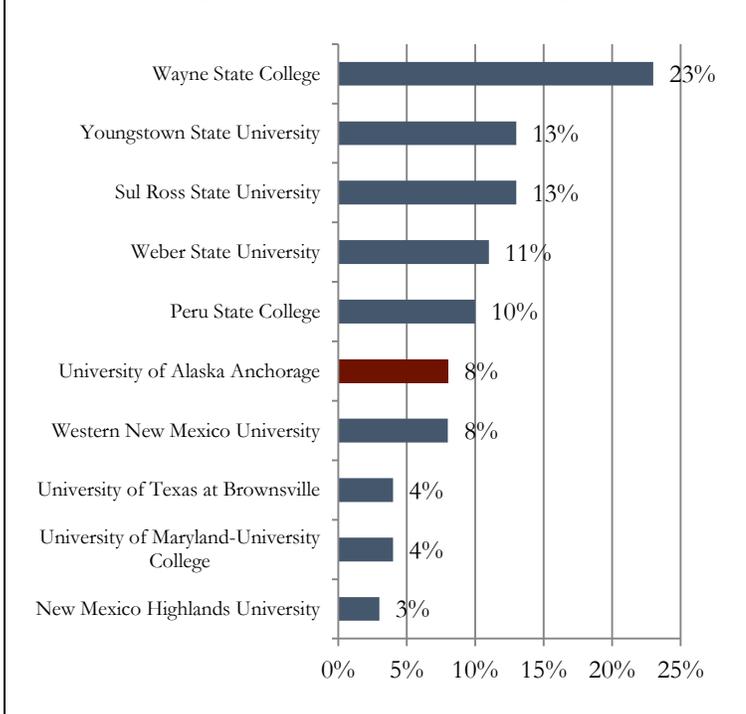
Source: IPEDS.

Figure 1.3, on the next page, illustrates the 6-year, 5-year and 4-year baccalaureate graduation rates at UAA and each of its open admission peers. In the largest plot, the institutions are sorted from highest to lowest 6-year graduation rate (green bars), but their 5-year and 4-year graduation rates do not necessarily reflect the 6-year graduation rate, as seen in the smaller plots below.

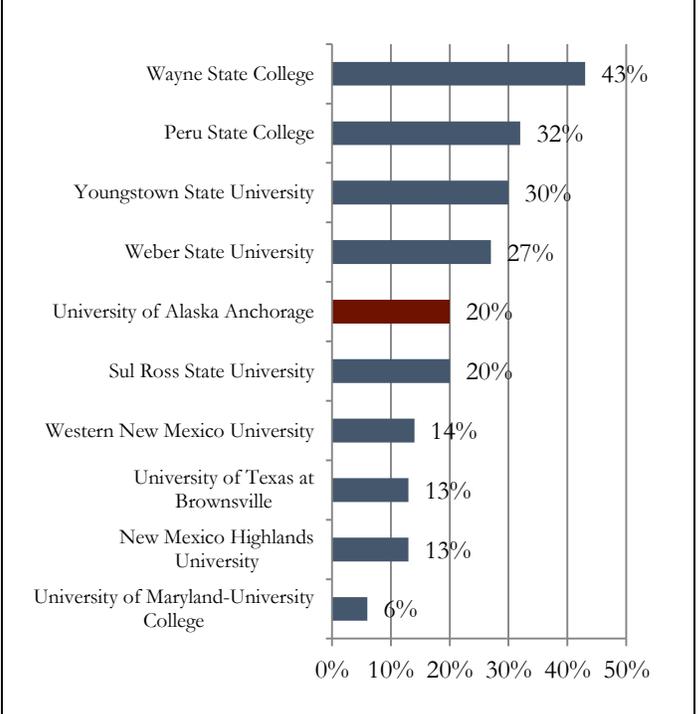
Figure 1.3: Graduation Rates at UAA's Open Admission Peers (2010)



4-year Graduation Rates Only



5-year Graduation Rates Only



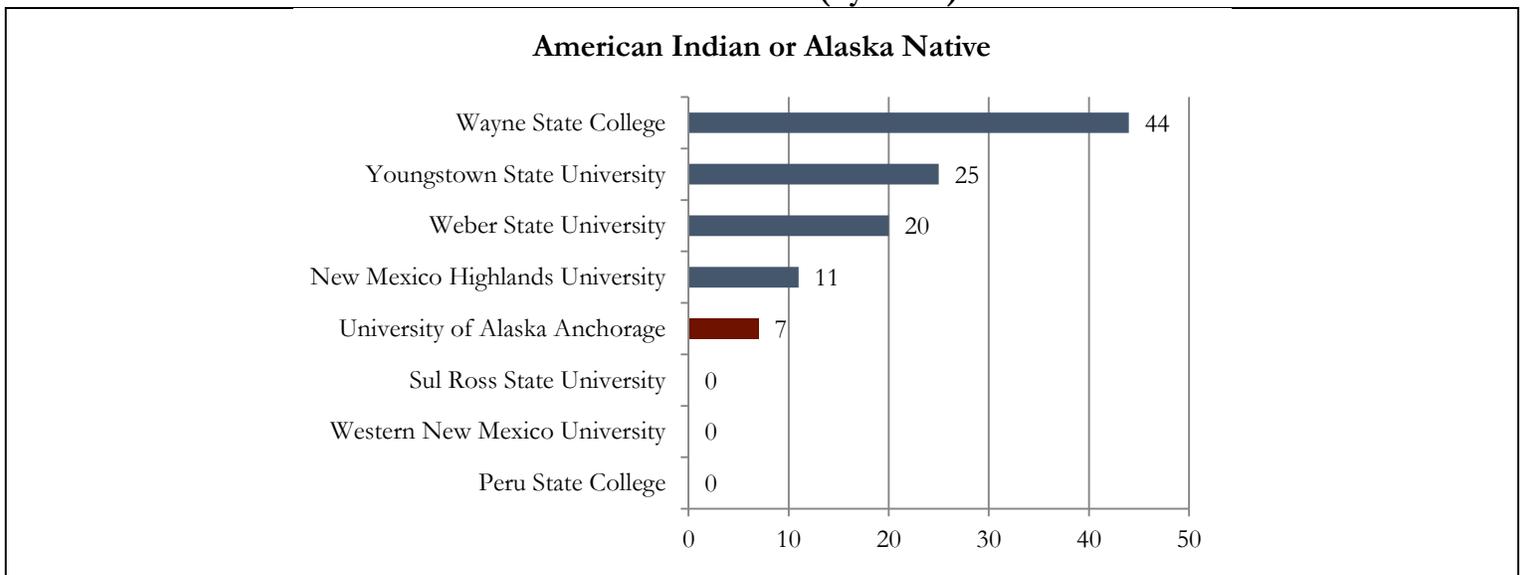
Source: IPEDS.

In comparison with other universities with open admission policies and the same basic Carnegie classification (Master’s College and Universities, medium and larger programs) and sector (public, 4-year or above), UAA’s 6-year graduation rate, at 25 percent, is neither low nor high. The institution with the highest 6-year graduation rate is Wayne State College, followed closely by Weber State University and Youngstown State University.

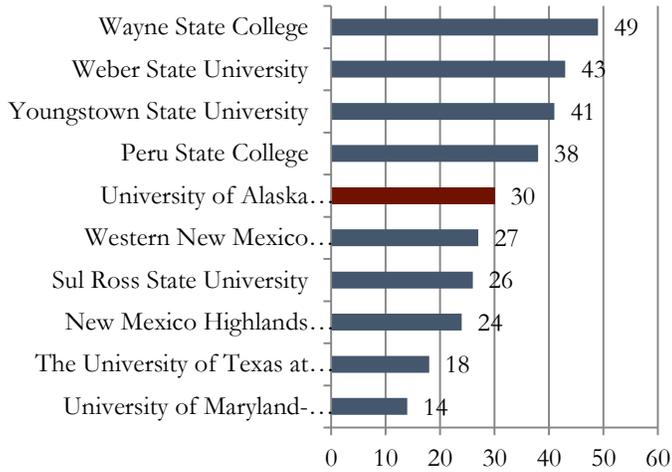
Notably, these three institutions are not among the institutions most similar to UAA; indeed, Weber State University and Wayne State College have relatively high difference scores compared to the other institutions on the list. The institutions most similar to UAA – the University of Texas at Brownsville, Western New Mexico University, and New Mexico Highlands University – all have lower 6-year graduation rates than UAA (20 percent, 17 percent, and 19 percent, respectively).

Other variables serve to provide a clearer picture of UAA’s characteristics relative to its open admission peers’. Figure 1.4 below shows the 6-year graduation rates by race at UAA and its peers. Note that where no value was submitted, the institution was not included in the chart; if an institution reported a value of “0,” however, it is included.

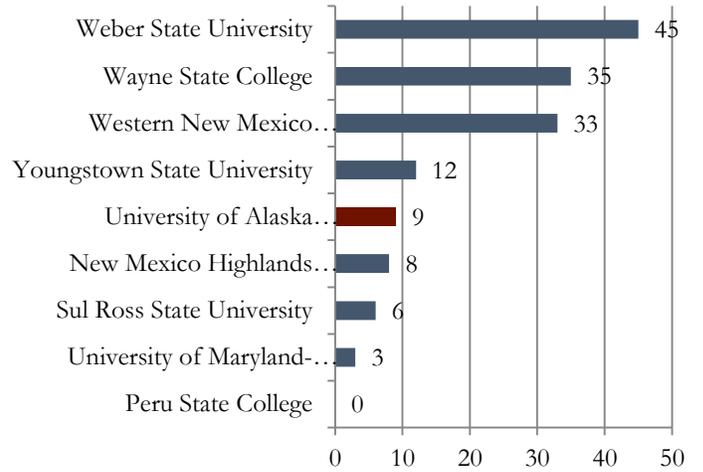
Figure 1.4: 6-year Graduation Rates of Subpopulations at UAA’s Open Admission Peers (by Race)



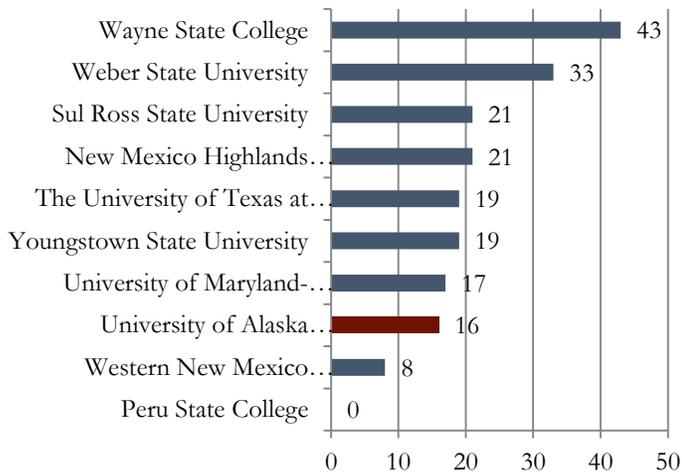
White non-Hispanic



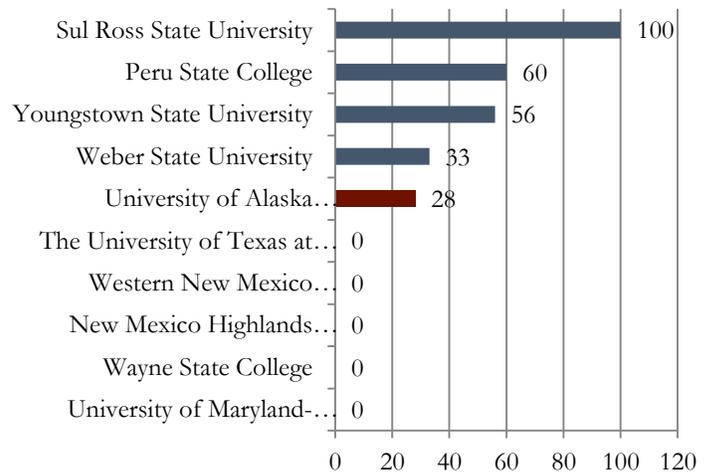
Black non-Hispanic

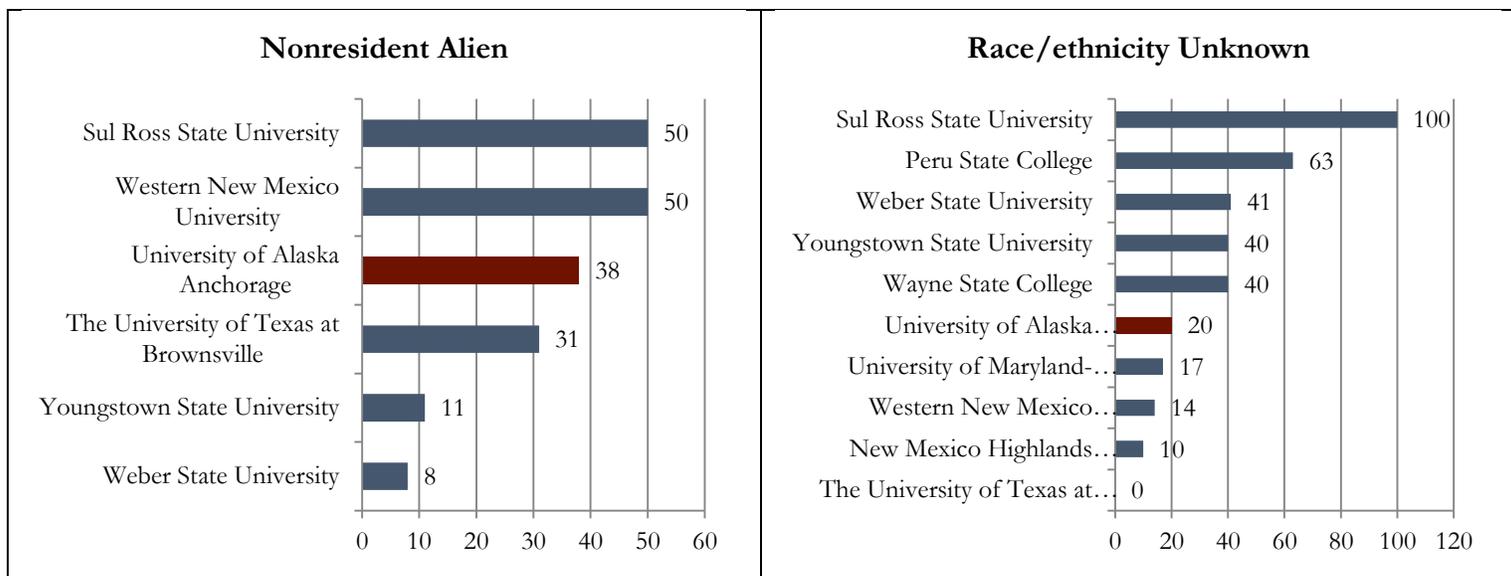


Hispanic



Asian or Pacific Islander



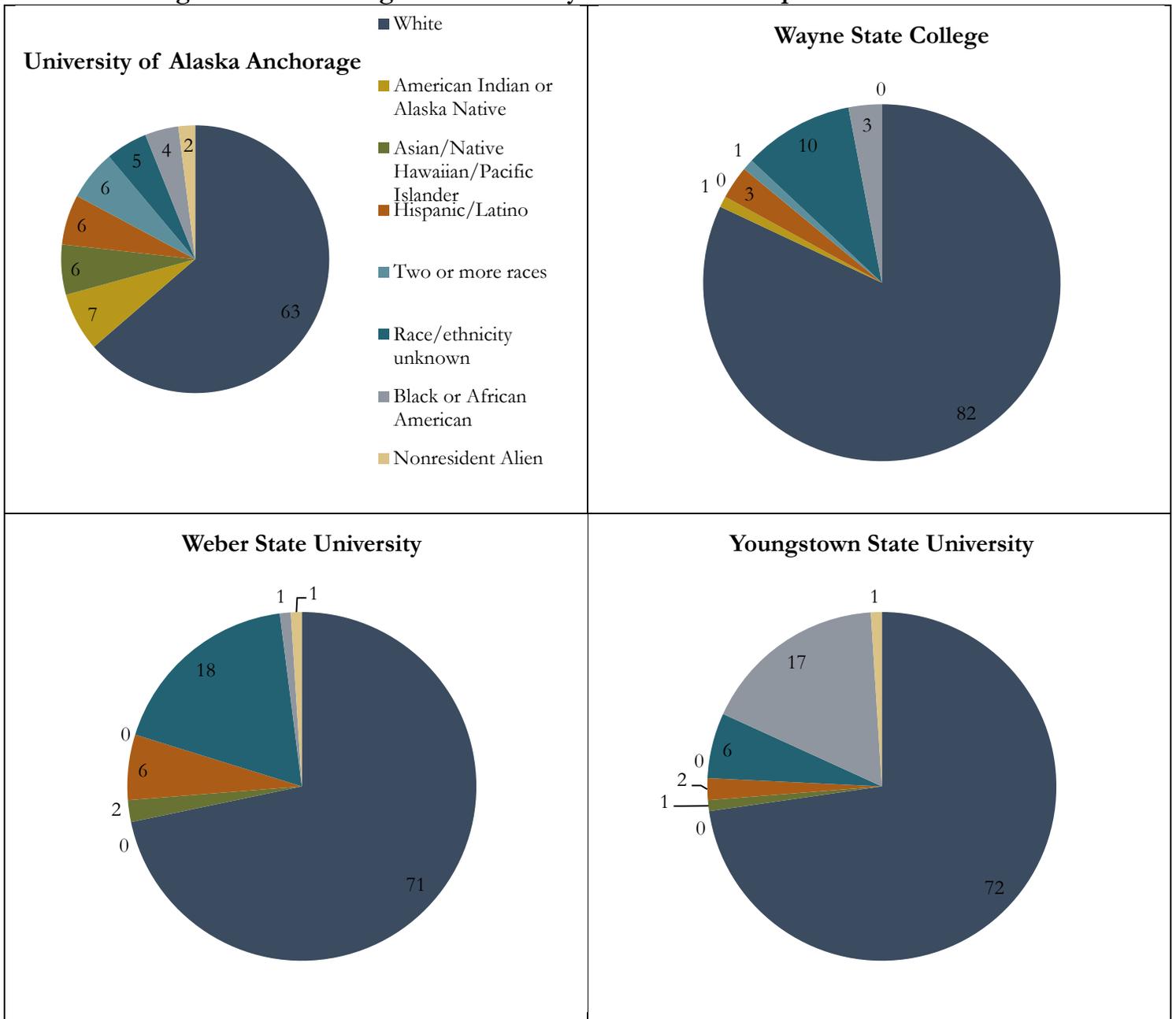


Source: IPEDS.

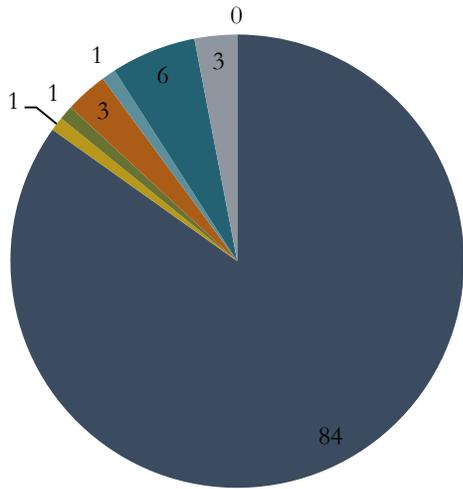
The graduation rates for different racial subpopulations of the undergraduate student body at UAA are neither unusually high nor unusually low in most cases. However, of the five institutions that reported the graduation rates of their American Indian or Alaska Native student subpopulation as being more than 0, UAA has the lowest (7 percent), while Wayne State College has the highest (44 percent). The graduation rates of Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander students at UAA are also lower than at most of its peer institutions (16 percent and 28 percent, respectively). In general, the graduation rates for specific race subpopulations tend to reflect the general graduation rate of the institution. Wayne State College and Weber State University, for example, have the two highest overall 6-year graduation rates, and they also have among the highest graduation rates for AIAN, White, Black and Hispanic students.

In order to better understand the graduation rates at UAA and its peer institutions, it is useful to examine the racial composition of the 10 institutions under consideration. Figure 1.5, on the next page, contains charts that illustrate the proportions of different student subpopulations at each of the institutions.

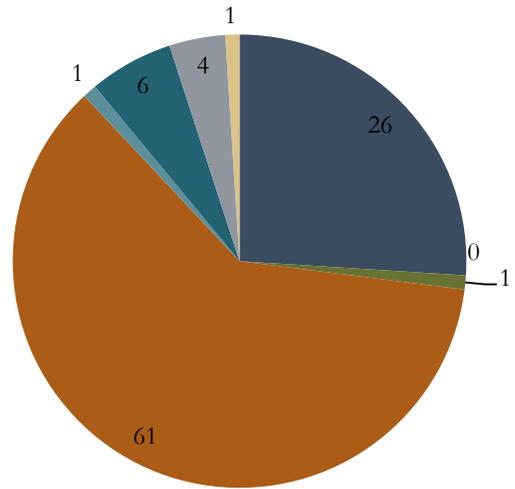
Figure 1.5: Percentage Enrollment by Race at UAA's Open Admission Peers



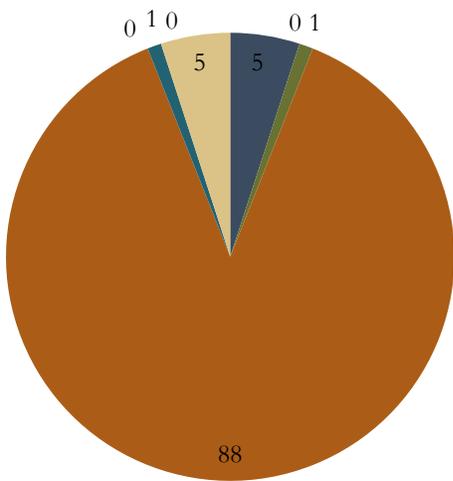
Peru State College



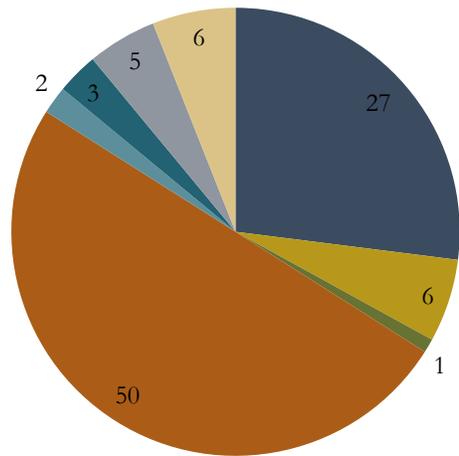
Sul Ross State University

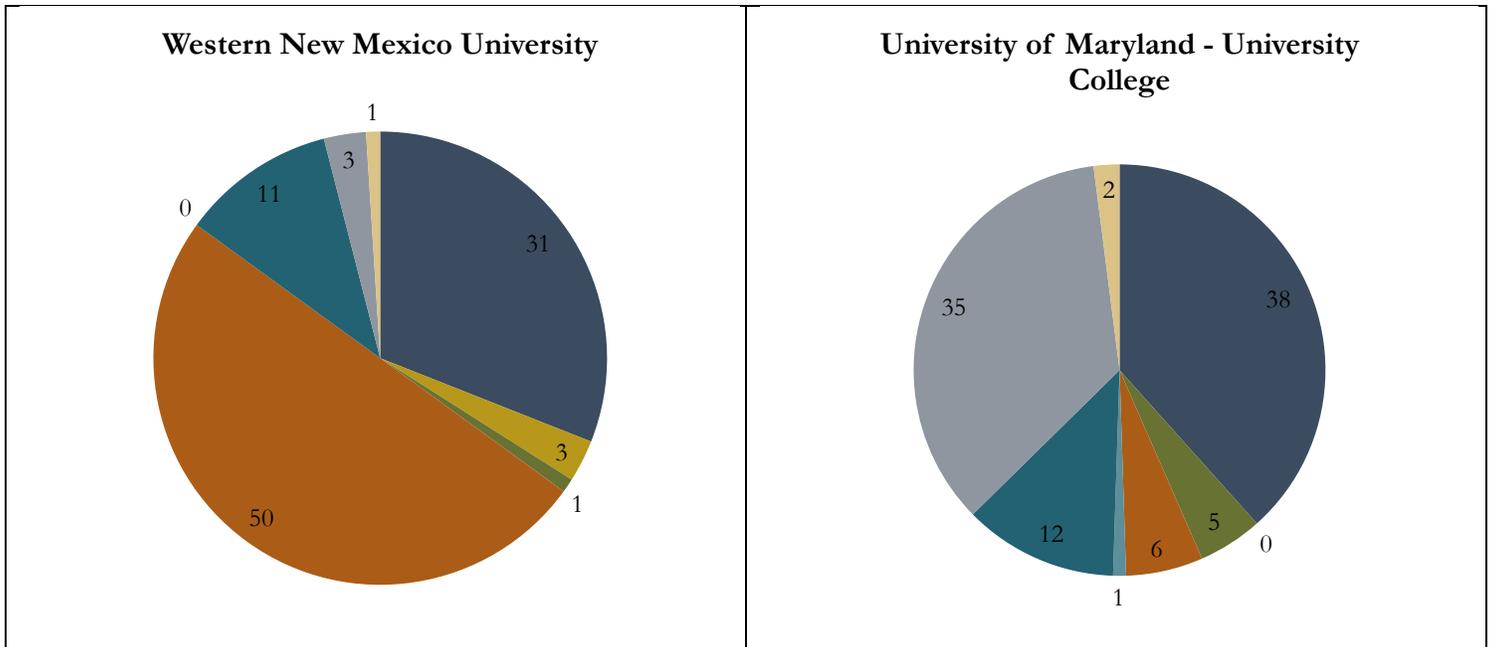


University of Texas at Brownsville



New Mexico Highlands University





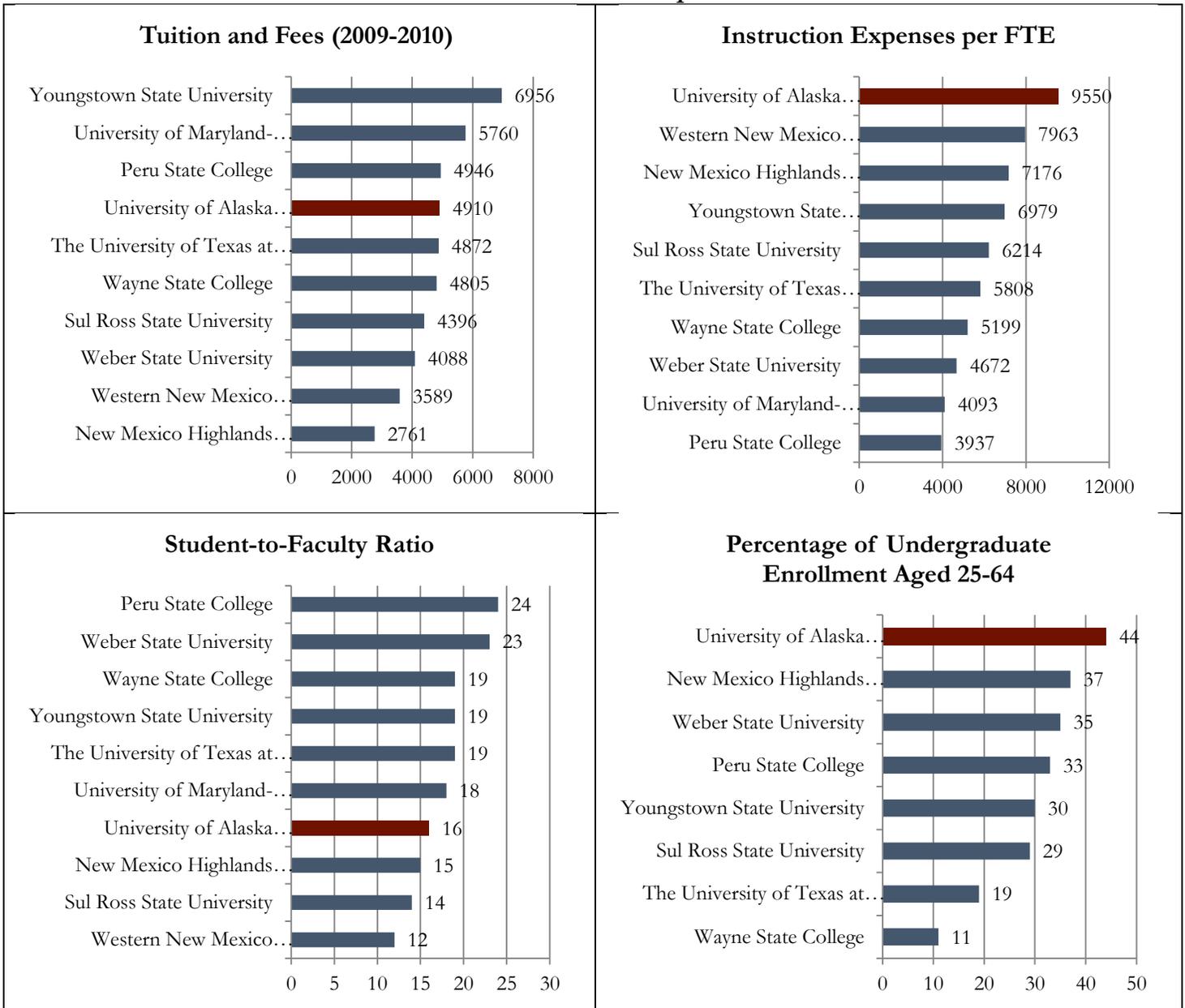
Source: IPEDS.

In the preceding section of this report, in which we discuss the regression analysis that was used to determine several institutional variables that are closely correlated to 6-year graduation rates, four factors were determined to be most highly correlated with the 6-year graduation rates of the 13 that we examined. These were:

- ❖ Tuition and fees
- ❖ Instruction expenses per FTE
- ❖ Student-to-faculty ratio
- ❖ Percentage of undergraduates between the ages of 25 and 64

In Figure 1.6, on the following page, we compare the values for each of these factors of UAA and its nine open admission peers.

Figure 1.6: Comparison of Factors that Are Highly Correlated with 6-year Graduation Rates at UAA and its Open Admission Peers

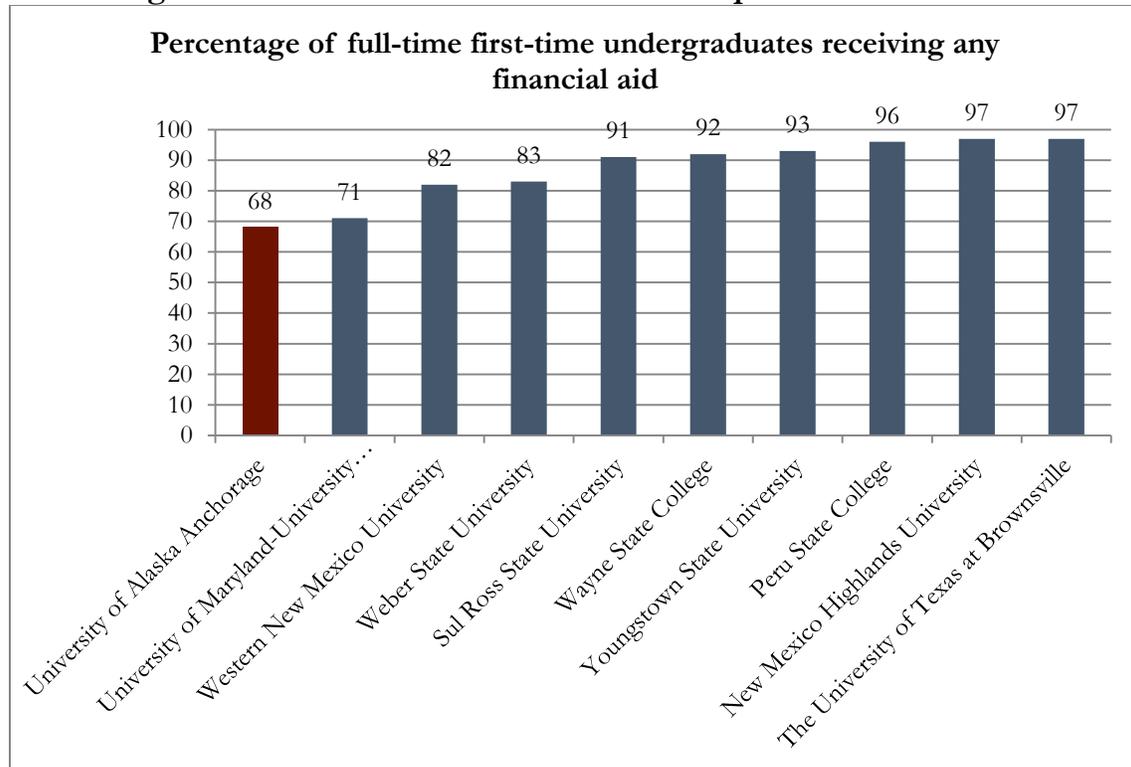


Source: IPEDS.

UAA has the highest instruction expenses per FTE and percentage of undergraduates aged 25-64 of all 10 institutions. It also has one of the lower student-to-faculty ratios in the group; only three institutions have a lower student-to-faculty ratio than UAAs, and UAA’s ratio of 16 is fully eight less than the value at Peru State College, which has the highest student-to-faculty ratio (24). Finally, UAA’s tuition and fees in 2009-2010 were lower than three institutions’, but higher than those of the remaining six.

Related to cost is the likelihood that a student will receive financial aid. Figure 1.7, below, shows the percentage of full-time first-time undergraduates at UAA and its open admission peers receiving financial aid of any type. At most of the 10 institutions under consideration, at least 90 percent of students receive financial aid; the highest proportion is 97 percent at the University of Texas at Brownsville and New Mexico Highlands University. At UAA, however, only 68 percent of full-time first-time undergraduates received financial aid.

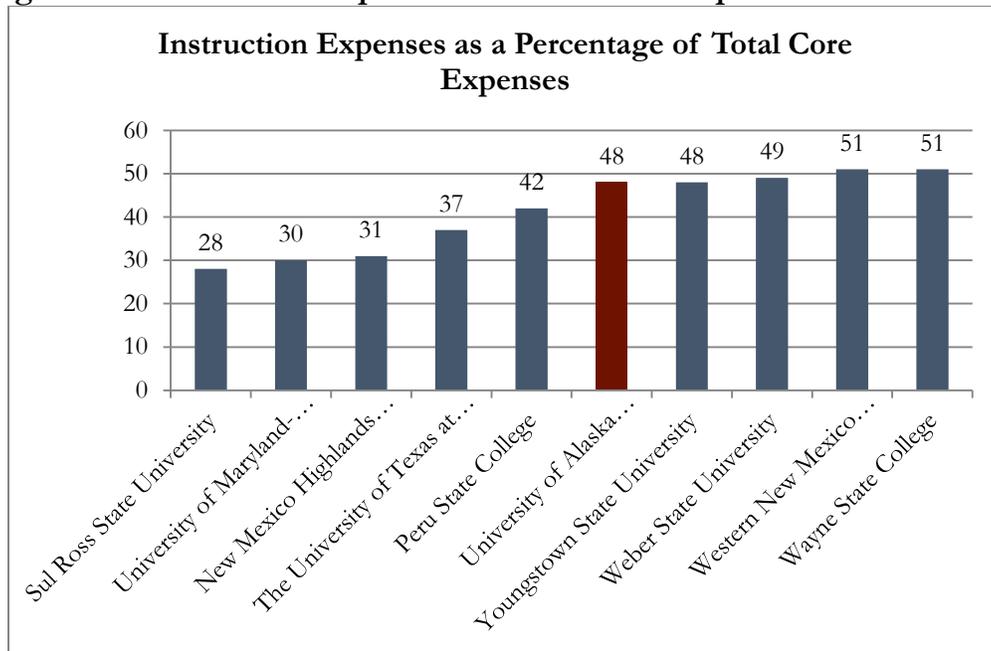
Figure 1.7: Financial Aid at UAA and its Open Admission Peers



Source: IPEDS.

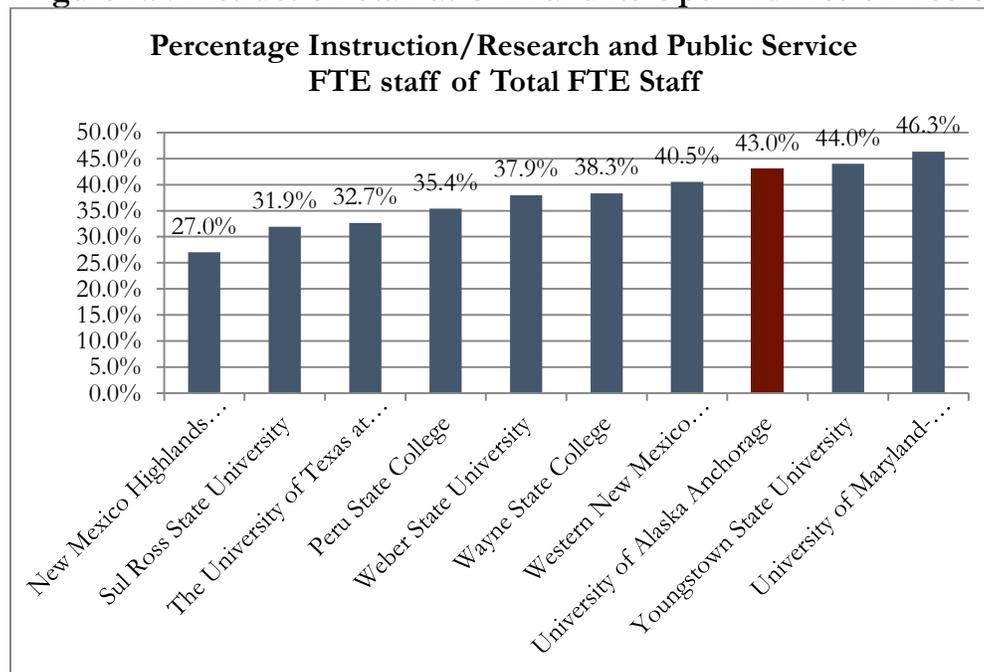
Another useful comparison factor is the proportion of resources that institutions devote to instruction. Figures 1.8 and 1.9, below, show the instruction expenses as a percentage of total core expenses and the percentage of instruction/research and public service staff members of the total staff at UAA and its open admission peer institutions.

Figure 1.8: Instruction Expenses at UAA and its Open Admission Peers



Source: IPEDS.

Figure 1.9: Instruction Staff at UAA and its Open Admission Peers



Source: IPEDS.

UAA is among the institutions that spend a higher proportion of core expenses on instruction. Forty-eight percent of UAA’s core expenses are used for instruction; at Wayne State College and Western New Mexico University, this figure is 51 percent, and at Sul Ross State University, it is 28 percent. There is a similarly broad range in

the percentage of total staff that are instruction/research and public service staff at UAA and its peer institutions. New Mexico Highlands University has the lowest proportion of instruction/research and public service staff (27 percent), while the University of Maryland – University College has the highest (46.3 percent). At UAA, 43 percent of the FTE staff work in the areas of instruction/research and public service.

Section 2: Admissions Policies at Open Access Higher Education Institutions in the United States

In this section, we examine in greater detail the admissions procedures at the institutions similar to the University of Alaska Anchorage with open admission policies. They are listed in order of 6-year graduation rates. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 summarize the institutions' admissions policies and associated fees.

Figure 2.1: Summary of Admissions Policies at UAA's Open Admission Peers

Institution	Requirements for first-year applicants	Admissions and placement considerations
Wayne State College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Application for admission ❖ High school transcripts ❖ ACT scores ❖ College transcripts (if applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ACT or SAT scores must be on file for the purpose of placement into courses and (if high) the College's honors program ❖ Students with lower math test scores may take the COMPASS® math placement test
Weber State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Application for admission ❖ High school transcripts or copy of GED score sheet ❖ ACT/SAT scores (not required for admissions, but used to determine placement in Math and English) ❖ Transcripts from any college or university where student has completed work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ACT or SAT scores are used to determine students' scholarship eligibility and placement into math and English courses ❖ Students with ACT scores below a certain level take the Accuplacer test to determine placement ❖ GPA is used for scholarships, but not for placement purposes ❖ WSU appears to have had a tiered admissions system in the past
Youngstown State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Completed undergraduate admission application ❖ Official high school transcript ❖ Official copy of ACT or SAT exam results* *ACT or SAT is not required if applicant graduates from high school more than 2 years prior to enrollment unless participating in varsity sports ❖ Official copy of General Education Development (GED) test results, if applicable ❖ Proof of passing all sections of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) - Ohio residents only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ As of May 2012, Youngstown will place incoming students with low ACT or SAT test scores or low GPAs in an at-risk category, and they will be required to participate in a number of success-oriented activities (e.g. meeting with their peer advisor at least once a week) ❖ The COMPASS® tests in math, reading and writing are used to place students with math or reading ACT scores below 25 in classes

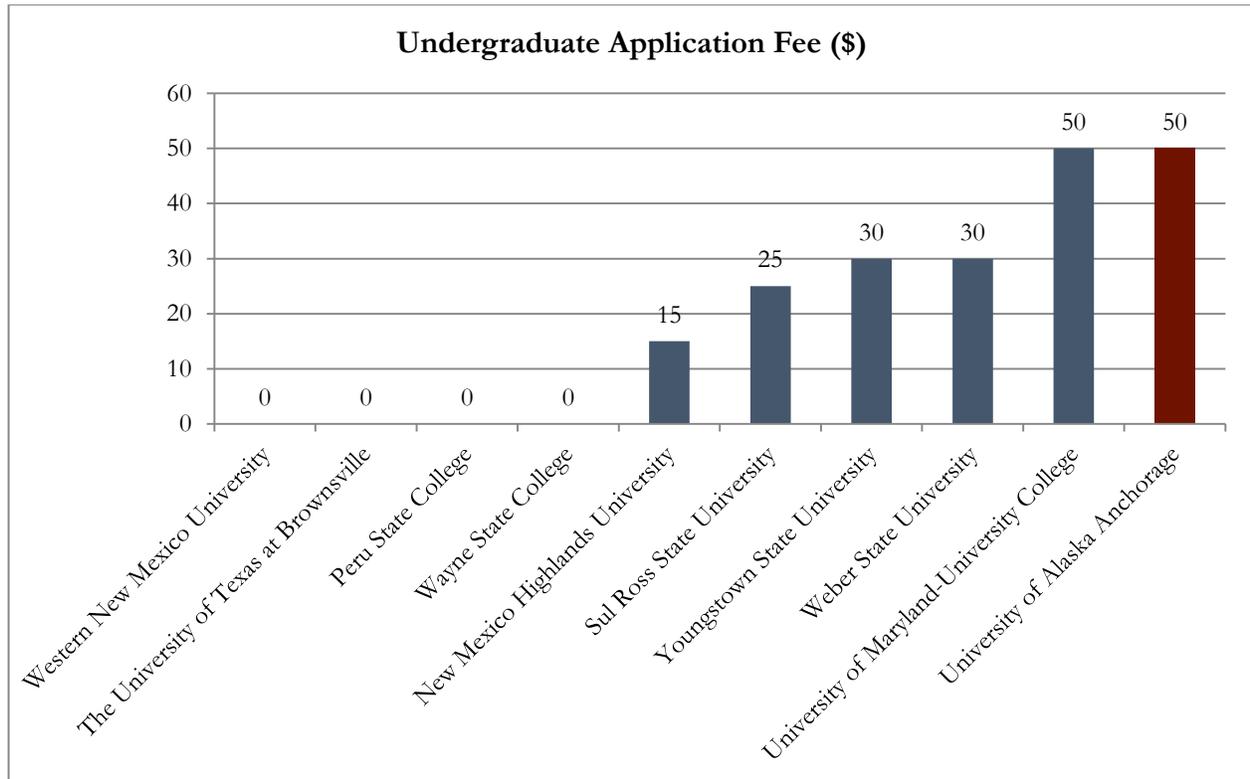
Institution	Requirements for first-year applicants	Admissions and placement considerations
Peru State College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Application for Admission & Scholarships ❖ Official high school transcript ❖ Official ACT or SAT test scores ❖ Medical Records Form ❖ Financial Aid documentation ❖ Residence Life Application ❖ Residence Life Contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Incoming students under the age of 21 must submit ACT scores for the purposes of placement in math and English classes ❖ The Accuplacer test is used to place students who wish to test into college-level classes or students who are above the age of 21 and have no college credit
Sul Ross State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Application for admission ❖ Official secondary school transcript or official copy of GED certificate ❖ Official college/university transcripts from all institutions attended ❖ ACT or SAT test results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No tiered admission policy, and no hard cutoff for admission based on ACT or SAT scores
University of Texas at Brownsville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Online Undergraduate Admissions Application ❖ Official high school transcript or GED certificate with scores ❖ Two proofs of Texas state residency for tuition purposes ❖ All incoming freshmen who are not exempt from a state-required test must take the COMPASS®/eWrite to comply with the Texas Success Initiative. ❖ Immunization records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Applicants are not required to provide their ACT or SAT scores, but may submit them if they wish to be exempted from the COMPASS® placement tests ❖ Students may also elect to take the Accuplacer or THEA, or a number of other placement and credit exams ❖ No “special success programs” for students with low GPAs or low test scores
New Mexico Highlands University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Application for Undergraduate Admission ❖ Official transcripts ❖ ACT/SAT scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students provide SAT or ACT scores for placement purposes, but those entering without SAT or ACT scores may take the COMPASS® test in math and English. Beginning in Fall 2013, submission of scores will be mandatory for all first-time applicants ❖ No minimum GPA for incoming students, but multiple categories of admission. “Regular admission” requires students to have a GPA of 2.0 or higher. If an applicant has a GPA lower than 2.0, they may be approved by committee review or be granted probationary admission ❖ Students entering with low test scores or GPAs must attend tutoring sessions, and receive support from

Institution	Requirements for first-year applicants	Admissions and placement considerations
		institutional programs such as Student Support Services
Western New Mexico University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Application for admission ❖ Official high school transcripts or GED scores ❖ ACT or SAT scores. These are not required for admission to WNMU, but are used to determine if the COMPASS® Placement Test is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Students provide ACT or SAT scores for placement purposes, and may have to take the COMPASS® placement test if these are too low ❖ Students with low test scores on the placement tests may be required to take developmental courses
University of Maryland – University College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Online application for admission ❖ Official documents of educational background at the time of an official evaluation (recommended within the first semester) that indicate that the student has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Graduated from a regionally accredited or state-approved high school or successfully completed the GED examination with a total score of 225 and no score below 40 on any of the five tests (if taken prior to January 2002) or a total score of 2250 and no score below 410 (if taken January 2002 or later). ○ A cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better on all college-level work attempted at other regionally accredited colleges and universities, including University System of Maryland institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Applicants are not required to submit official transcripts to gain admission, nor are they required to submit their ACT or SAT scores ❖ All students, regardless of GPA, are required to take placement exams. Students who have taken the AP exams may bypass the math placement exam, but all students take the writing test ❖ Students with low scores on the placement tests must take remedial courses

Source: Institutional websites and personal communication with staff members in admissions offices.

As illustrated in Figure 2.2 on the following page, UAA has one of the highest application fees of the institutions profiled in this report.

Figure 2.2: Undergraduate Application Fees at UAA and its Open Admission Peers



Source: IPEDS.

In the pages that follow, we discuss each of UAA's peer institutions' admissions policies in greater detail.

Wayne State College

Wayne State College's application is available online and is **free of charge**. The institutional website lists the requirements for first-time first-year applicants as follows:⁵

- ❖ Application for admission
- ❖ High school transcripts
- ❖ ACT scores
- ❖ College transcripts (if applicable)

Although first-year students are only required to present a high school diploma or GED for the purposes of admission, Wayne State College requires **an ACT or SAT test score to be on file for placement into courses**. These scores are used by advisors to determine the placement of students in math classes, and also eligibility

⁵ "Apply to Wayne State College." Wayne State College. <http://www.wsc.edu/admission/freshman/>

for the College's honors program. A staff member in Admissions Services stated: "It can work two-ways, for **higher placement or lower placement.**"⁶

Students with lower scores may be required to go into courses that teach general studies for succeeding in college. Wayne State College does not have any remedial courses, but "there are some that are geared towards students with a lower GPA or not a strong background in certain areas."⁷ Students with ACT scores below the minimum for Wayne State's math track may either take the **COMPASS® math placement test** or start at the lowest level of the progression. Math is the only subject that requires a test score to start the program, but many courses in other tracks have prerequisites; students must achieve a certain grade before moving on to the next level.

Weber State University

Weber State University's application is available online and costs **\$30.**⁸ The application requirements for first-year applicants are as follows:⁹

- ❖ Application for admission
- ❖ High school transcripts or copy of GED score sheet
- ❖ ACT/SAT scores (not required for admissions, but used to determine placement in Math and English)
- ❖ Transcripts from any college or university where student has completed work

As mentioned above, ACT and/or SAT tests are not required for admission to Weber State University, but the scores are used to determine students' scholarship eligibility and placement into math and English courses.¹⁰ If an incoming student has a **math ACT score below 23** or has not provided an ACT score, he or she must take the **Accuplacer test** in order to determine the appropriate beginning course. The case is slightly different for English. Weber State University's system is designed in such a way that it "places . . . a hold on their academic record."¹¹ It **prevents students from registering for English classes that are higher than their ACT score allows.** Students with English ACT scores below 12 "have to start right at the bottom."

Weber State University **does not take incoming students' GPA into consideration for course placement purposes,** but it does use this information for

⁶ Personal communication with Admissions Services staff member, Wayne State College, 18 May 2012.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Apply to WSU in 3 Steps." Weber State University.

<http://www.weber.edu/admissions/studentapplication.html>

⁹ "What documentation do I have to send to WSU?" Weber State University FAQs.

<http://www.weber.edu/Admissions/questions.html#documentation>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Personal communication with Admissions Office staff member, Weber State University, 18 May 2012.

scholarships. The University does not have in place success programs for low-scoring students or students with low GPAs, but does offer free tutoring for every class. Furthermore, students in developmental math courses must meet with their tutors on a weekly basis.

Although neither its current catalog nor staff members in its Admissions Office mentioned a tiered admission process, Weber State University's 2003-2004 Catalog suggests that the institution had a two-tier admission policy in the past. It states:

Upon acceptance for admission, students will be placed in either the College tier or the University tier based on ACT and/or placement test scores. Students placed in the College tier may register for only lower-division courses (courses numbered 2999 or lower). These courses are generally required for diploma, certificate or associate degree programs. Students in the University tier may also register for upper-division courses (courses numbered 3000 or higher and required for bachelor degrees). Students initially placed in the College tier are advanced to the University tier upon completion of the requirements listed below.¹²

Youngstown State University

Youngstown State University offers open enrollment for Ohio high school seniors; they are admitted regardless of their test scores, GPA, and class rank. However, certain classes and academic programs do require students to meet academic standards as judged by an evaluation of the high school transcript and test scores.¹³

Furthermore, as of May 2012, the admissions process will be such that “we’re going to have a conditional admission where students in certain ranges will still be accepted, but they’ll be put in an **at-risk category**,” according to the Director of Admissions.¹⁴ These students must participate in a number of success-oriented activities and meet certain expectations in order to progress. For example, they will be referred to the Center for Student Progress, and must sign a contract and meet with their peer advisor at least once a week. They must take their remedial courses before other courses, and are limited to 14 credit hours of coursework total. They must also have a GPA of at least 1.75 after the first semester in order to continue to the second semester.

In order to be classified as “at-risk,” incoming first-time students must have a composite **ACT** score of 16 or below, *or* an 810 math and verbal score on the **SAT**, *or* a high school **GPA** of less than 2.0. For transfer students, a 2.0 GPA or below

¹² “Student Recruitment and Orientation Services.” Weber State University, 2003.

<http://documents.weber.edu/catalog/0304/pages/admissions.htm>

¹³ “Admission Requirements.” Youngstown State University.

http://web.ysu.edu/gen/ysu/Admission_Requirements_m144.html

¹⁴ Personal communication with Admissions Office staff member, Youngstown State University, 18 May 2012.

suffices to put them in the “at-risk” category. It is possible for incoming first-time students who have been classified as being “at-risk” to test out of the restrictions placed upon them. They may take placement tests and place out of remedial coursework, in which case they would no longer be considered “at-risk”; this is particularly likely to occur in the case of an adult student or a student with poor test-taking abilities.

The reason for this change in the admission policies, the Director of Admissions said, was an increased focus on retention. Youngstown State University recognized that **students who used the Center for Student Progress were much more successful than students who did not**, but participation was suggested rather than mandated. The new policy “puts teeth behind the decision.”¹⁵

The placement of students who are not “at-risk” also depends on test scores. There are three tests: a **COMPASS**[®] math placement test, a **COMPASS**[®] reading test, and a writing test that is campus-based. If students achieve a score of at least 25 on the ACT, they do not have to take the math or reading placement test. If they receive certain scores on the SAT, they may not have to take the reading test. Every student, however, is required to take the writing test.

Youngstown State University’s application can be filled out both online and in paper.¹⁶ The application requirements for first-year applicants listed on the institutional website are as follows:¹⁷

- ❖ Completed Undergraduate Admission Application
- ❖ Non-refundable \$30 application fee
- ❖ Official high school transcript
- ❖ Official copy of ACT or SAT exam results*
- ❖ *ACT or SAT is not required if applicant graduates from high school more than 2 years prior to enrollment unless participating in varsity sports
- ❖ Official copy of you General Education Development (GED) test results, if applicable
- ❖ Proof of passing all sections of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) - Ohio residents only

Peru State College

Peru State College’s application is **free** and can be completed online. On its website, it lists the requirements for first-year applicants as follows:¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Apply to YSU.” Youngstown State University. http://web.yzu.edu/gen/ysu/Apply_to_YSU_m140.html

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Admission Requirements – High School Students.” Peru State College. <http://www.peru.edu/admissions/highschool/requirements.htm>

- ❖ Application for Admission & Scholarships
- ❖ Official high school transcript
- ❖ Official ACT or SAT test scores
- ❖ Medical Records Form
- ❖ Financial Aid documentation
- ❖ Residence Life Application
- ❖ Residence Life Contract

Peru State College requires students under the age of 21 to submit **ACT scores** for the purposes of placement in math and English classes. Furthermore, if an applicant has not completed college math or English classes, he or she is automatically placed into Math and English 100, although there exists the possibility of testing into college-level classes by taking the **Accuplacer test**. Applicants above the age of 21 with no college credit (i.e. adult learners and non-traditional students) may also take the Accuplacer test.¹⁹

The “cut scores” – below which students are automatically placed in remedial math or English – are 19 for the ACT English test, 18 for the ACT math test, 450 for the **SAT** writing test, and 500 for the SAT math test. The College has also defined “cut scores” for the Accuplacer test. However, it **does not take GPA into account**.²⁰

Peru State College has a number of systems in place to promote student success. Students are closely tracked, and the College has “early warning systems in place as well to make sure these students get the help they need to be successful.”²¹ This help can come in the form of free tutoring or study tables for athletes, e.g.

Sul Ross State University

Sul Ross State University lists the following application requirements for first-year applicants:²²

- ❖ Application for admission
- ❖ Official secondary school transcript or official copy of GED certificate
- ❖ Official college/university transcripts from all institutions attended
- ❖ ACT or SAT test results
 - “For full admission, high school students not in the top 10 percent of their graduating class must meet one of the following requirements:

¹⁹ Personal communication with Admissions Office staff member, Peru State College, 18 May 2012.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Undergraduate Students.” Sul Ross University. <http://www.sulross.edu/pages/3023.asp>

- Present a composite score of at least 21 on the enhanced American College Test (ACT); or a 1010 or higher on the combined verbal and math scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).
- Graduate in the upper half of the graduation class with the Recommended or Distinguished program.”

The application fee at Sul Ross is **\$25**.

According to a staff member at the University’s Center for Enrollment Services, Sul Ross does not have different categories of admissions or a tiered admissions policy. Although the application requirements listed above indicate that there are minimum ACT and SAT scores for full admission to the university, the staff member said that she was unaware of a hard cutoff for admission.²³

University of Texas at Brownsville

The University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) has an online application that is **free of charge** unless it is submitted late, in which case the applicant must pay a **late application fee of \$15**. On its website, UTB lists the application requirements for first-year students as the following:²⁴

- ❖ Online Undergraduate Admissions Application
- ❖ Official high school transcript or GED certificate with scores
- ❖ Two proofs of Texas state residency for tuition purposes
- ❖ All incoming freshmen who are not exempt from a state-required test must take the COMPASS®/eWrite to comply with the Texas Success Initiative.
- ❖ Immunization records

Notably, UTB **does not require students to provide their ACT or SAT scores**. They can, however, be submitted by students who wish to be exempted from the **COMPASS®** placement tests (math, reading and writing), which are otherwise required. In order to be exempt, students’ SAT scores must be 500 or higher in both critical reading and math, and the combined score must be higher than 1070. The ACT composite score must be higher than 23, with minimum scores in math and English of 19.²⁵

²³ Personal communication with Center for Enrollment Services staff member, Sul Ross State University, 18 May 2012.

²⁴ “Admission Checklist for First-Time Freshmen – Fall 2012.” University of Texas at Brownsville, 2012. <http://www.utb.edu/em/adm/PublishingImages/12-087%20admissions%20checklist%20flyer%20update%20v3.pdf>

²⁵ Personal communication with Office of Admissions and Recruitment and Office of Testing staff members, University of Texas at Brownsville, 18 May 2012.

The COMPASS® test is not the only placement test used at UTB; students may also choose to take the **Accuplacer** or the **THEA**, e.g., and the University provides a list of other optional exams on its website.²⁶ While higher test scores may result in placement into higher-level courses, “there are **no special success programs for students coming in with low GPAs or low test scores**,” said a staff member in the Office of Testing.²⁷

It is also important to note that the institution’s open admission policy is not all-encompassing. The institutional website states, “admission does not guarantee admission to all programs. Admission to some TSC programs and UTB undergraduate programs have specific requirements.”²⁸

New Mexico Highlands University

New Mexico Highlands University accepts both online and paper applications. The application fee is \$15, and requirements for first-year applicants as listed on its website are as follows:²⁹

- ❖ Application for Undergraduate Admission
- ❖ Official transcripts
- ❖ ACT/SAT scores

The ACT and SAT scores provided by students are currently used solely for placement purposes; they are not required for admission to the University. Students who enter without ACT or SAT scores take the **COMPASS® test** in math and English. However, **beginning in Fall 2013, ACT or SAT scores will be mandatory for all first-time applicants**, though the University does not currently plan to implement a minimum score for admission.³⁰

There is also no minimum GPA for incoming students. However, there are multiple categories of admission. In order to be granted a “regular admission,” students must have a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Indeed, the institutional website states that this is a requirement for admission, although a staff member at the Undergraduate Admissions office stated that “usually they’re given a chance here.”^{31,32} Applicants

²⁶ “Test List.” University of Texas at Brownsville. <http://utb.edu/em/testing/Pages/TestingList.aspx>

²⁷ Personal communication with Office of Admissions and Recruitment and Office of Testing staff members, University of Texas at Brownsville. Op. cit.

²⁸ “Undergraduate Admission Policy.” University of Texas at Brownsville. <http://www.utb.edu/em/adm/Pages/AdmDepCriteria.aspx>

²⁹ “Application for Undergraduate Admission.” New Mexico Highlands University. <https://banweb.nmhu.edu/pdf/UndergradApp.pdf>

³⁰ Personal communication with Undergraduate Admissions Office staff member, New Mexico Highlands University, 22 May 2012.

³¹ Ibid.

³² “Undergraduate Admissions.” New Mexico Highlands University.

that do have a GPA lower than 2.0 might be approved by committee review upon further consideration or be granted probationary admission.

Students entering New Mexico Highlands University with very low test scores or GPAs **must attend tutoring**, and are further supported by the Student Support Services program and the Office of Academic Support. The Student Support Services program is intended for first generation, low income, and/or disabled students, and provides the following services:³³

- ❖ Academic Assistance
- ❖ Career & Major Development
- ❖ Personal Counseling
- ❖ Tutoring
- ❖ Peer Mentoring
- ❖ Supplemental Grant Aid
- ❖ Social, Educational and Cultural Enrichment Opportunities
- ❖ Financial Aid Assistance
- ❖ Assistance for Students with Disabilities

Western New Mexico University

The application for admission to Western New Mexico University, which is **free of charge**, can be completed both online and in paper format. The requirements for first-year applicants listed on the University's website are as follows:³⁴

- ❖ Application for admission
- ❖ Official high school transcripts or GED scores
- ❖ ACT or SAT scores. These are not required for admission to WNMU, but are used to determine if the **COMPASS® Placement Test** is needed.
 - “All undergraduate students new to WNMU must participate in placement testing if they have not completed college-level writing course at another university with a grade of “C” or better, a college-level mathematics course at another university with a “D” or better, or achieved an ACT sub-score of 21 or better (or SAT equivalent of 500) in mathematics, English, and social science.”³⁵

<http://www.nmhu.edu/admissions/undergraduate.aspx>

³³ “Student Support Services.” New Mexico Highlands University.

http://www.nmhu.edu/student_support_services/index.aspx

³⁴ “Admissions Checklist.” Western New Mexico University.

<http://www.wnmu.edu/NewStudents/Admissions%20checklist.pdf>

³⁵ “Undergraduate Student Enrollment Process.” Western New Mexico University.

<http://www.wnmu.edu/NewStudents/ugrad/UGEnrollProcess.shtml>

Western New Mexico University does not have tiered admissions. As mentioned in the application requirements listed above, **COMPASS**[®] tests (in math, reading and writing) are used to determine the placement of students who have not achieved sufficiently high scores on the **ACT** or **SAT**, and those students who receive low scores on the placement tests may be required to take **developmental classes**. The University has an “intrusive counseling system” and optional tutoring sessions that students may take advantage of.³⁶ There is also a first-year experience program for all first-year students that aims to promote success.

University of Maryland-University College

The University of Maryland-University College (UMUC) has an online application with a fee of \$50.³⁷ On its website, UMUC lists the requirements for first-year applicants as follows:³⁸

- ❖ Online application for admission
- ❖ Official documents of educational background at the time of an official evaluation (recommended within the first semester) that indicate that the student has:
 - Graduated from a regionally accredited or state-approved high school or successfully completed the GED examination with a total score of 225 and no score below 40 on any of the five tests (if taken prior to January 2002) or a total score of 2250 and no score below 410 (if taken January 2002 or later).
 - A cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better on all college-level work attempted at other regionally accredited colleges and universities, including University System of Maryland institutions.

According to its website,

The admission policies of UMUC are **designed to meet the needs of adult, part-time students**. Most applicants who have a high school diploma or the equivalent can be admitted and register for undergraduate courses. In most cases, neither transcripts nor test scores are required at the time of admission. By the end of the first semester, a student who plans to earn a degree at UMUC must make sure that official transcripts have been sent from each institution previously attended.³⁹

³⁶ Personal communication with Admissions Office staff member, Western New Mexico University, 22 May 2012.

³⁷ “Undergraduate Admission Requirements.” University of Maryland – University College. <http://www.umuc.edu/students/admissions/apply/undergrad.cfm>

³⁸ “How to Apply for Admission.” University of Maryland – University College. <http://www.umuc.edu/students/admissions/apply/>

³⁹ “Undergraduate Admission Requirements.” University of Maryland – University College. Op.cit.

Again, applicants are **not required to submit official transcripts to gain admission, nor do any students submit their SAT or ACT scores.**^{40,41} Rather, all students, regardless of their GPA, are required to take placement exams. Some high school students who have taken AP exams may be eligible to bypass the math placement, but even they still take the writing test.

There are no special tracks for incoming students with low test scores or GPAs, but transfer students with a GPA of 2.0 or below are admitted under provisional status for their first semester. This means that they can take a maximum of seven credits and must achieve a GPA of at least 2.0. Also, students who do not achieve adequate scores on the placement tests must take **remedial courses.**⁴²

⁴⁰ “How to Apply for Admission.” University of Maryland – University College. Op. cit.

⁴¹ Personal communication with Admissions Chat Center staff member, University of Maryland – University College, 18 May 2012.

⁴² Ibid.

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