



NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:

This month's polling insights from our students



We know the college application process can be a transformative, but challenging journey for students.

At ZeeMee, we help millions of students navigate this journey and choose the college that is right for them, as well as giving access to the most unique data and insights, and interactive tools, to help colleges drive students through the enrollment funnel.

As a team we have over 191 years of experience in Higher Ed, so we *really* know students and *really* understand the needs of colleges.



To better understand the obstacles and experiences students face, **we're conducting surveys every month** – exploring their opinions, major pain points, and feelings about key components of the admissions process.

This month, we focused on topics related to the college application process, stress factors and the Financial Aid application process.

We got *thousands* of responses overnight.

In total, **5,000 students answered our survey** and we've summarized our findings in this document.

Got anything you want to know from our millions of High School students?

Let us know!



Takeaway #1:

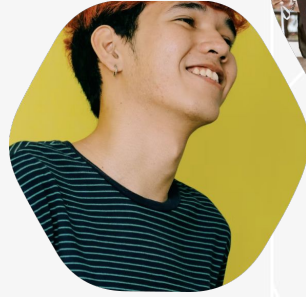
Financial Aid is still one of the most stressful aspects of college applications

- This ranked as the most significant challenge (77.1%) students face in the application process.
- Many students expressed concern about getting enough financial aid (35%), followed by confusion about filling the FAFSA out correctly, getting all the info they need, and getting info from parents.



Takeaway #2:

Surprisingly,
students are **more
stressed about FAFSA**
this year than last



- On average, applying students are 10% more stressed about financial aid this year than last year's applying students



Takeaway #3:

Speaking with other students has the most impact on college decisions



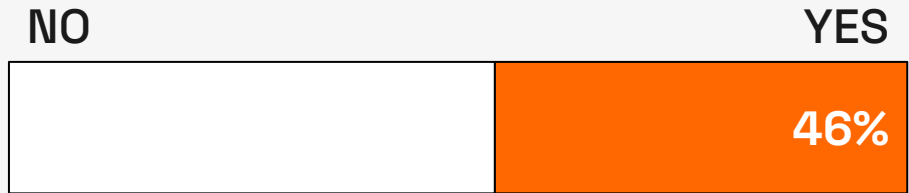
- 58% of responses marked speaking peer-to-peer as having the most impact on their decision, more so than official college websites / materials (56%) or campus visits (55%).
- Traditional Social Media (Facebook, Snapchat, Youtube, TikTok) was the lowest impact on decision making for potential students, with only 21%.



Takeaway #4:

Almost half of students are **still open to applying to different schools**

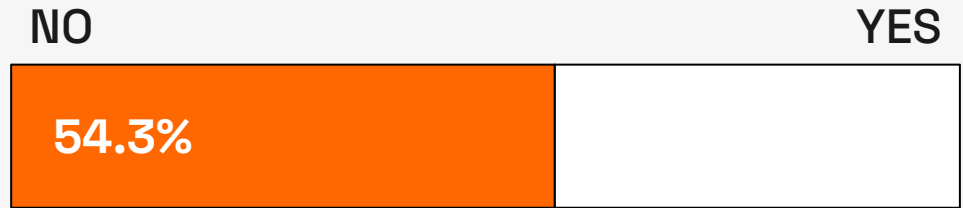
Are you still open to applying to other colleges?



Takeaway #5:

More than half of our students are **unlikely to change their mind** on which college to attend based on financial aid package

At this point, would you change your mind about which college to attend based on the financial aid package they give you?



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Leverage peer-to-peer engagement

- Prioritize and promote student ambassador programs, admitted student chat groups, and peer-to-peer engagement platforms (e.g., ZeeMee).
- Encourage current students to share authentic experiences through live Q&A sessions, virtual events, and chat groups.



2. Improve Financial Aid Support & Communication

- Provide clear, student-friendly guides, webinars, and Q&A sessions to help students navigate FAFSA and financial aid.
- Offer easy-to-access financial aid counseling and resources that break down key steps and deadlines.
- Devote website space in the admissions tab on your website to financial aid information.
- Start talking about the financial aid process/FAFSA with students early in the year to help relieve anxiety in students.



3. Strengthen Personalized Recruitment Efforts

- Since nearly half of students are still open to applying elsewhere, colleges should continue targeted outreach campaigns beyond early deadlines.
- If you have rolling admissions, make sure it's clear your application is still open!
- Ask your students to encourage their friends to apply and/or bring a friend to a visit day or even orientation.
- Make sure you highlight what makes the school unique beyond financial aid, such as career outcomes, student experience, and community engagement.



4. Reduce Application & Decision Stress

- Offer support and transparency in the application process to ease concerns.
- Provide peer-to-peer testimonials about how students managed their applications and financial aid process successfully.
- If you don't already have it, consider dedicating some financial aid staff to solely focus on new student recruitment.





LOOK OUT FOR NEXT MONTH'S DATA
on preferred communication
channels + a deeper dive into
students' thoughts on traditional
social media!