

For Immediate Release

Nation's Economy Continues to Affect Student College Application Choices in 2010

Maguire Associates/Fastweb Survey Shows Students Looked Closely at Net Costs; Growing Percentage Saw Private Education as Attractive Option

CONCORD, MA - (June 8, 2010) – The recession may be officially over, but ongoing worries about the turbulent economy still influenced the college application choices of this year's high school seniors, according to the results of new research by [Maguire Associates](#) in association with [Fastweb.com](#), owned by Monster.com(R), the leading job matching engine and flagship brand of Monster Worldwide, Inc. (NYSE: MWW). The organizations surveyed high school seniors for insights into their college plans and priorities, and the effect of economic conditions on their application behaviors.

Two-thirds of the graduating seniors were still very concerned about the state of the economy; in fact, one out of five said that their parents had lost jobs. This had ramifications as they narrowed down their college/university choices. About two-thirds reported that their families' economic concerns "greatly" or "somewhat" influenced where they were applying to college.

Private Education Increasingly Attractive

The *2010 College Decision Impact Survey* revealed that students were most interested in attending a public college, especially those seniors who said financial issues had affected their application decisions. However, a notably higher percentage of seniors expressed interest in private education than in last year's survey. For example, 38 percent of seniors with GPAs of 3.5 or higher expressed interest in attending private institutions versus 29 percent in 2009.

"Many students and families will be willing to invest in colleges and universities that they are convinced will offer the most value or return on their investment," said Kathleen Dawley, President of Maguire Associates. "The challenge for colleges and universities is how to demonstrate the quality of their institution's educational experience."

"Families are increasingly focused on the out-of-pocket cost of the college education," said Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of Fastweb.com. "Non-profit colleges have been competing with public colleges by limiting tuition increases and offering more need-based grants in their financial aid packages. Money is having a bigger influence on the final choice of a college, with students switching their aspirations from non-profit colleges to public colleges and vice versa because of financial considerations."

Assessing Institutional Quality

The most important factors that students considered as measures of institutional quality included the variety and depth of courses in their field of interest, followed by availability/quality of academic facilities, percent of students employed after graduation, graduation rates, and student/faculty ratios.

“The emphasis on graduation rates was striking to us,” said Ms. Dawley. “As the financial impact of student retention becomes increasingly important to colleges, students appear to see it as a measure of an institution’s ability to deliver on its promises.”

Among additional findings:

- Respondents have become increasingly sophisticated about net costs. Among students who preferred to attend a private college or university, the listed tuition had less impact on whether or not they would submit an application in 2010 (33%), compared to 2009 (42%). And students who preferred a private education agreed most strongly with two statements: 1) they would weigh each college’s financial aid package (particularly the ratio of grants to loans and work-study opportunities) when making their decisions; and 2) they were more concerned with net costs after financial assistance from all sources had been determined.
- Over one-third of the respondents (37 percent) had already used a net price calculator on a college website, and almost half (48 percent) were interested in having that opportunity.
- Students’ willingness to consider alternative arrangements for college was not significantly correlated with their concerns about the status of the U.S. economy. As in 2009, this year’s seniors were most willing to consider working part-time or attending a less expensive public institution located in their home state. Relatively few were likely to consider an online or distance learning program, taking a year off to work, or working full-time and attending college as a part-time student.

Data collection for the 2010 College Decision Impact Survey took place in March 2010; more than 800 high school seniors were surveyed. All participants were Fastweb members at the time of the survey.

For more information, please visit Maguire Associates’ website at www.maguireassoc.com or call 978.371.1775.

About Maguire Associates

Maguire Associates is a research-based consulting firm that exclusively serves educational clients – close to 400 of them – from colleges and universities to independent and public schools, consortia and government organizations focused on education. For 25 years, the firm has applied innovations in market research, analysis, and predictive modeling to help clients understand the dynamics of past performance, apply insightful knowledge to sound decision-making, and attain desired outcomes. For more information, visit www.maguireassoc.com.

About Fastweb

Fastweb is the nation’s recognized leader in helping students pay for school, by providing scholarship and financial aid information, as well as jobs and internships. One out of three college-bound seniors use the site, and more than 50 million* members have benefited from Fastweb’s information and services. Fastweb lets students create a personalized profile that can be matched against its expansive databases of colleges and scholarships. As the oldest and most popular free online scholarship matching service, the database

has more than 1.5 million scholarships totaling over \$3.4 billion. (*9 million are active users of the site.) For more information, visit www.fastweb.com.

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