

# College Choice in the Middle of a Pandemic – a Study of Summer Melt

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# Fall 2020 Enrollment: Findings from the National Student Clearinghouse

Sources:

National Student Clearinghouse (Dec. 2020), Current Term Enrollment Estimates Fall 2020.

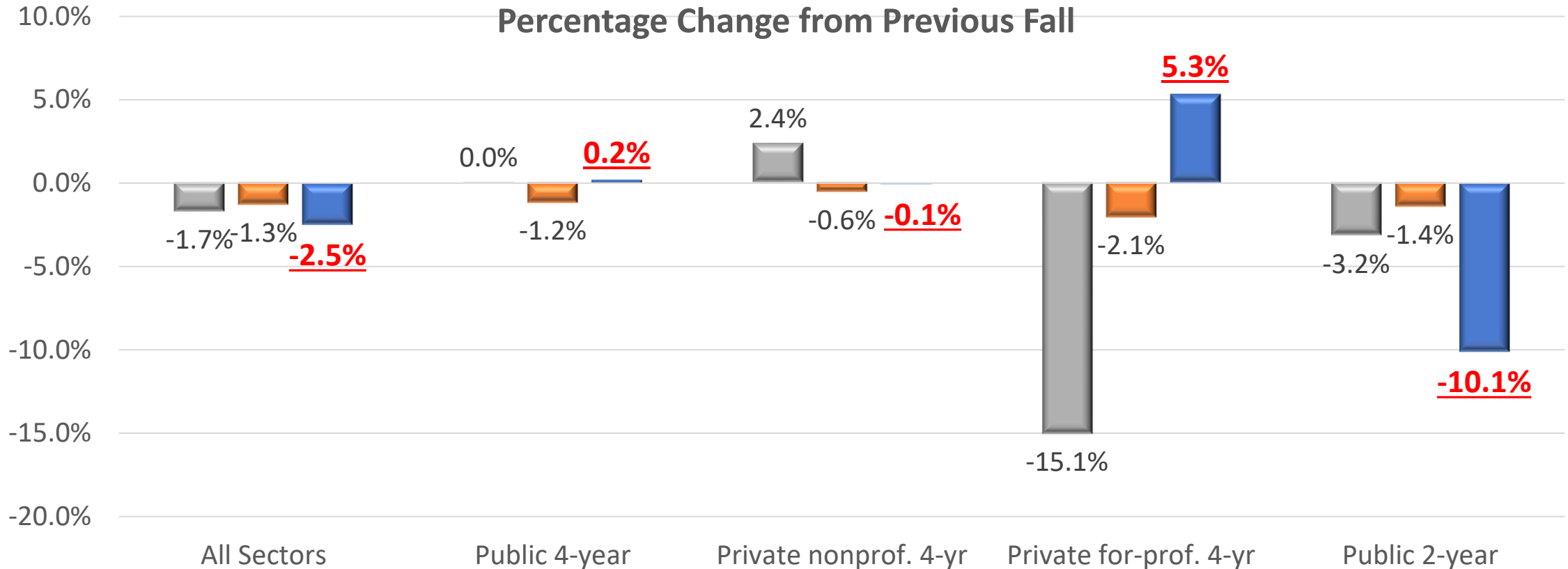
[https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE\\_Report\\_Fall\\_2020.pdf](https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2020.pdf)

National Student Clearinghouse (Dec. 2020), High School Benchmarks 2020.

<https://nscresearchcenter.org/high-school-benchmarks/>

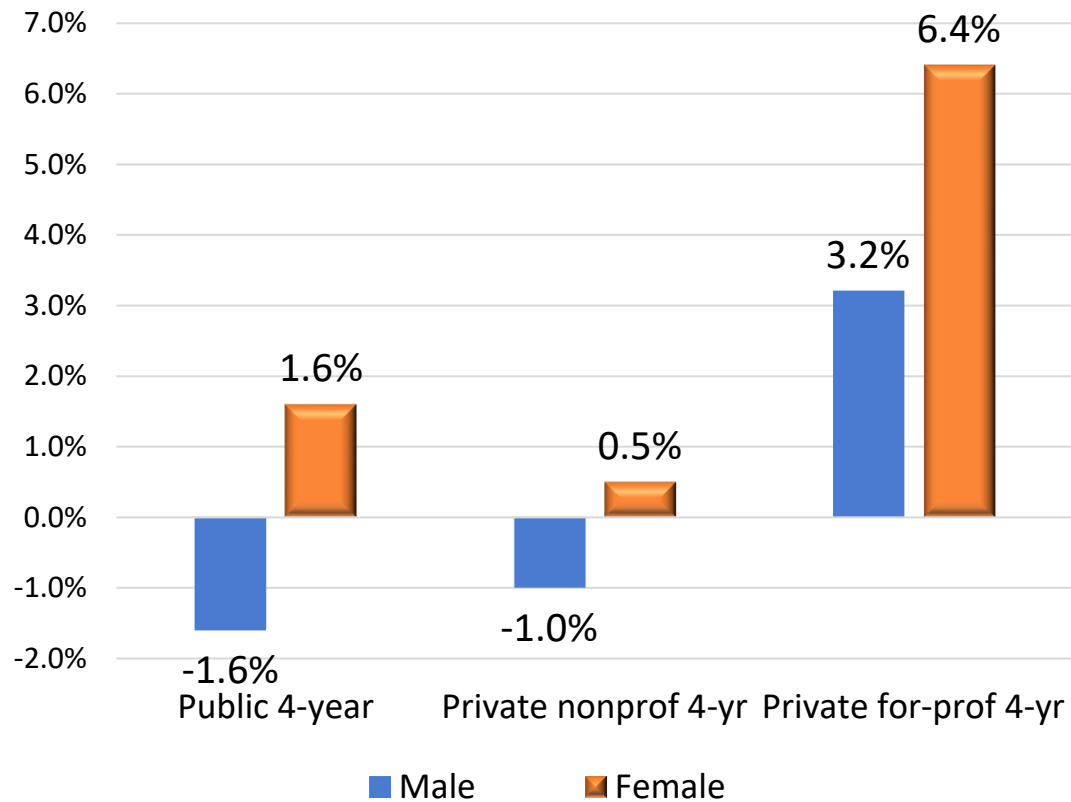


# Fall 2020 Overall Enrollment Down by 2.5% from Fall 2019



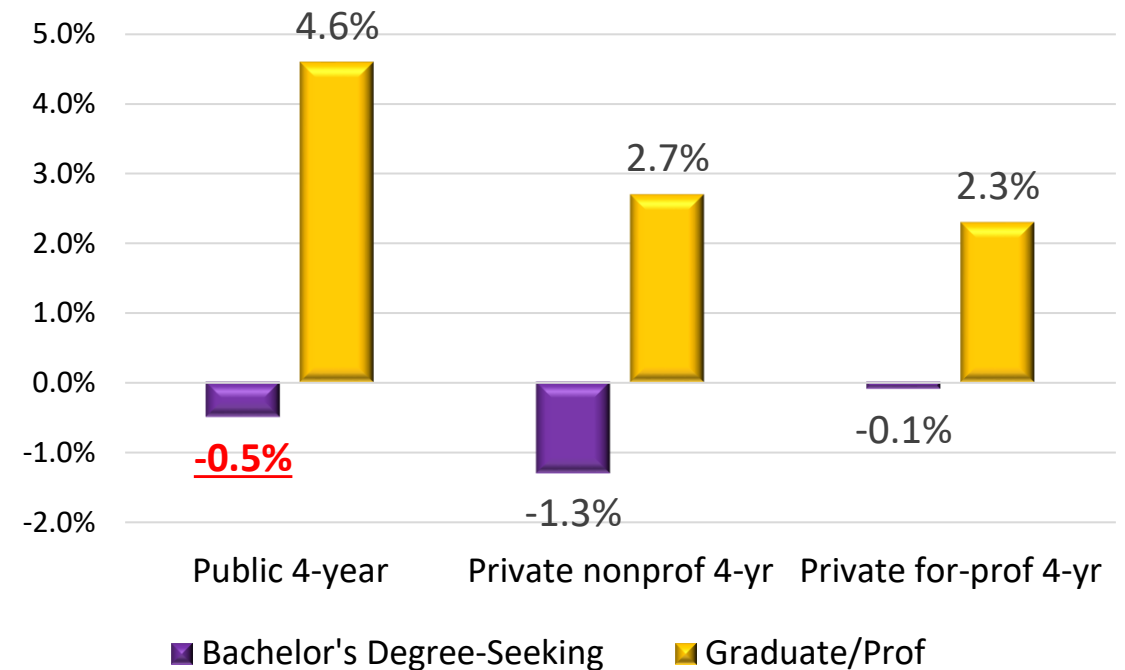
# Fall 2020: 4-Year Institution Enrollment Change (%) from Fall 2019

## One Year % Change by Gender\*\*



\*Note: Includes all enrolled students regardless of degree level.

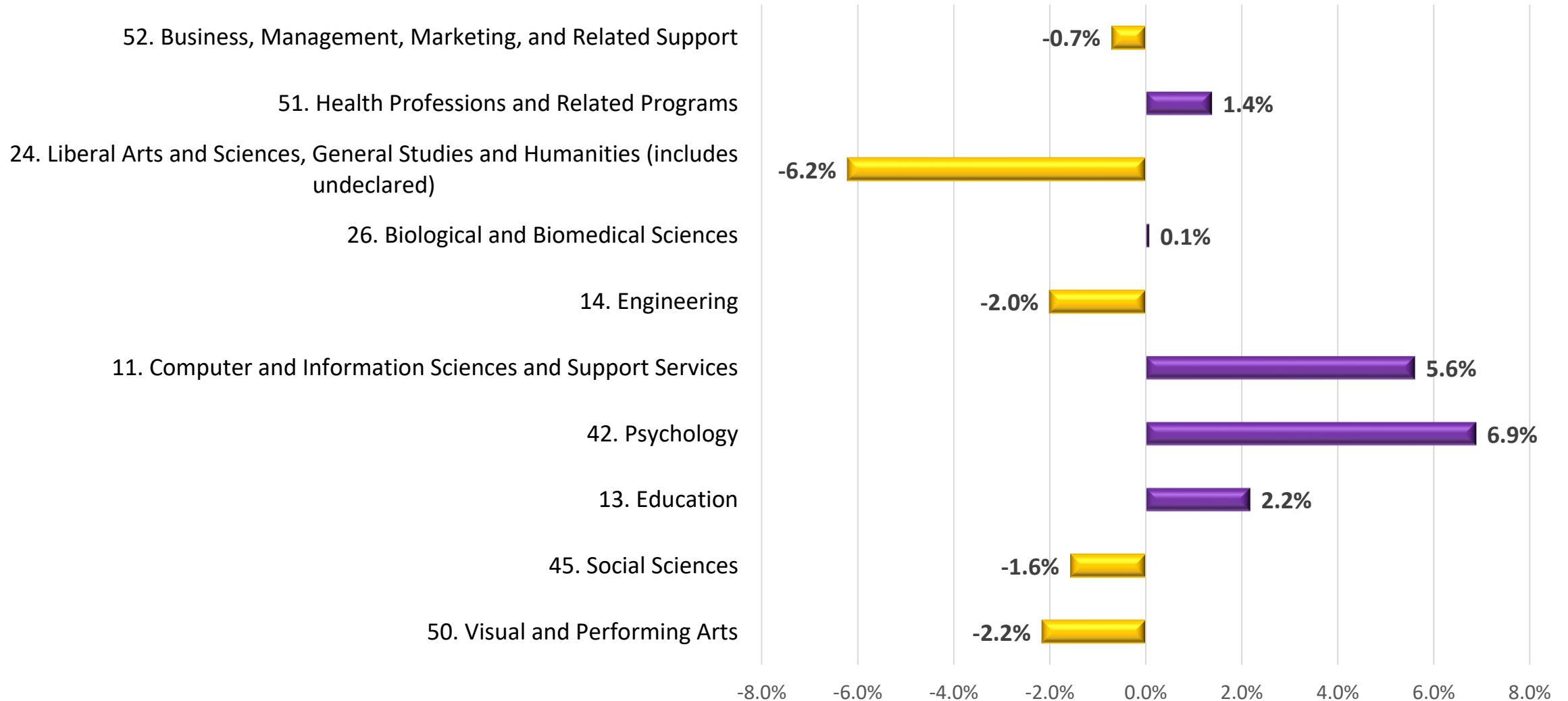
## One-Year % Change by Degree Level



\*Note: Associate degree-seeking and non-degree seeking undergraduate students are excluded above.

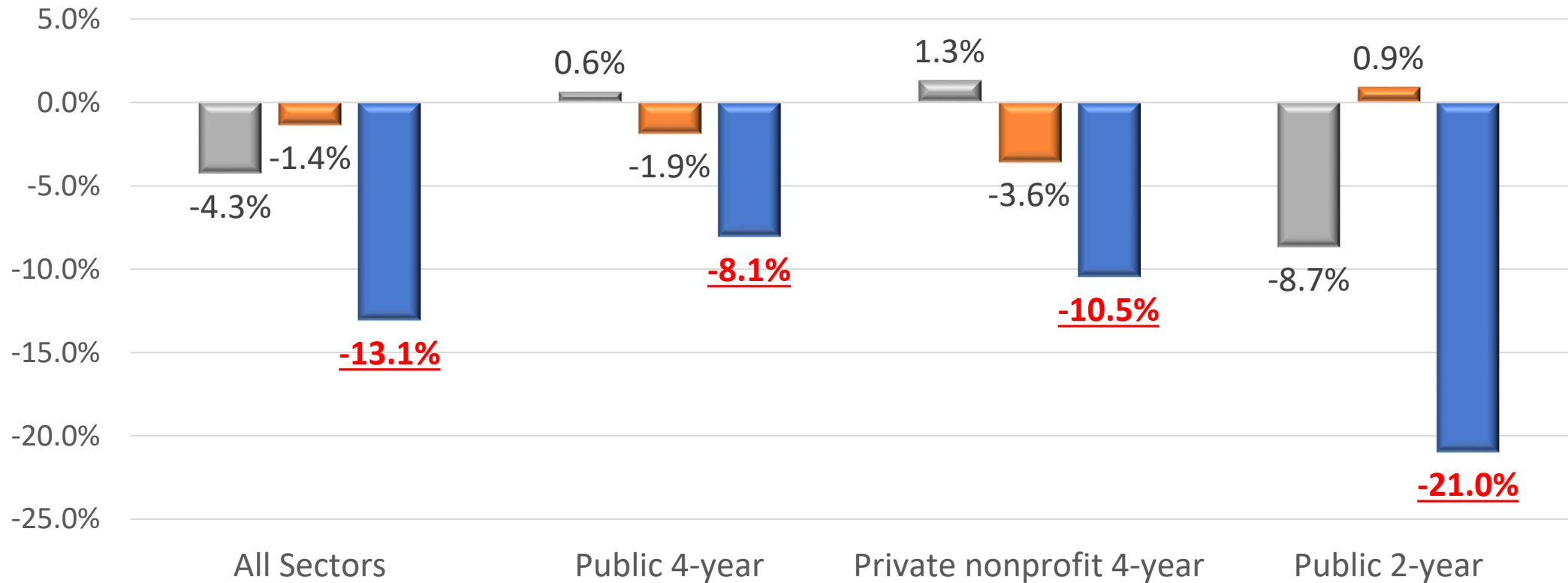
# Undergraduate Enrollment Change of Top Majors at Four-Year Institutions

Percentage Change from Fall 2019

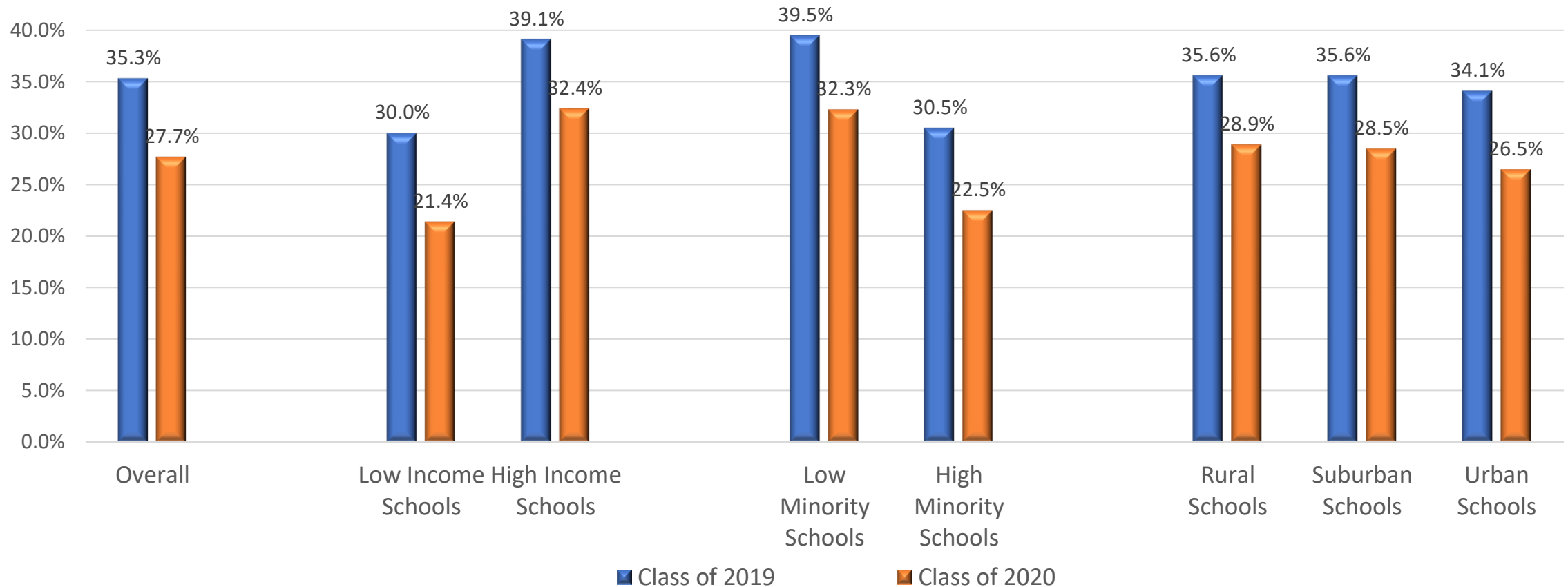


# Change in First-time Student Enrollment

Percentage Change from Previous Fall



# Preliminary Findings: Immediate College Enrollment Rate – Class 2019 and Class 2020



Note: Enrollment rates for the Class of 2020 are based on data submitted by 53% of the colleges that participated in the National Student Clearinghouse as of **Sept 18, 2020**. Results considered highly preliminary.

# UNC System Enrollment

Sources:

UNC System Stats, Data & Reports:

<https://www.northcarolina.edu/impact/stats-data-reports/>

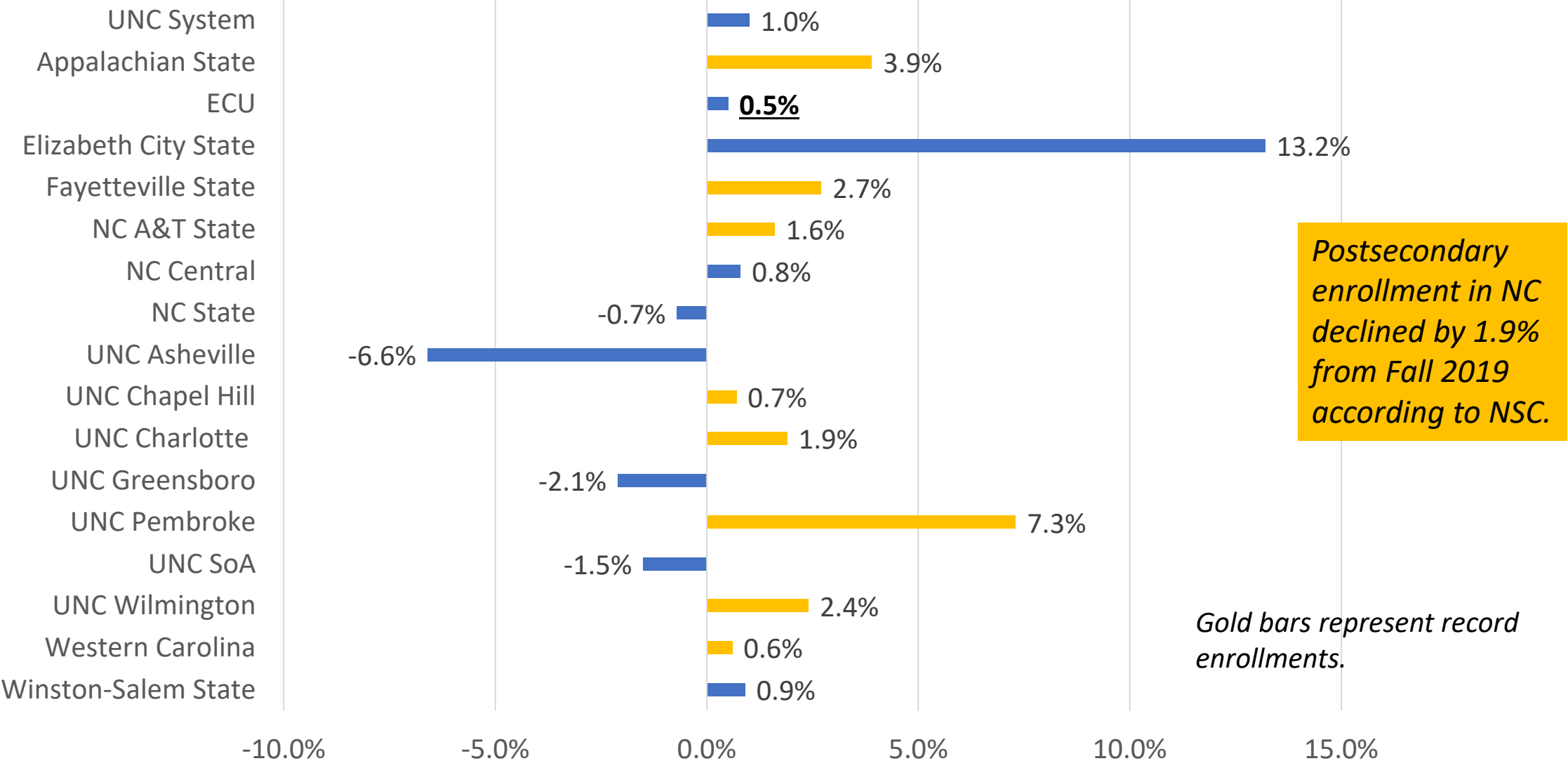
UNC System (Sept. 2020). [UNC System Announces Third Straight Year of Record Enrollment](#)

UNC Insight Enrollment Dashboards



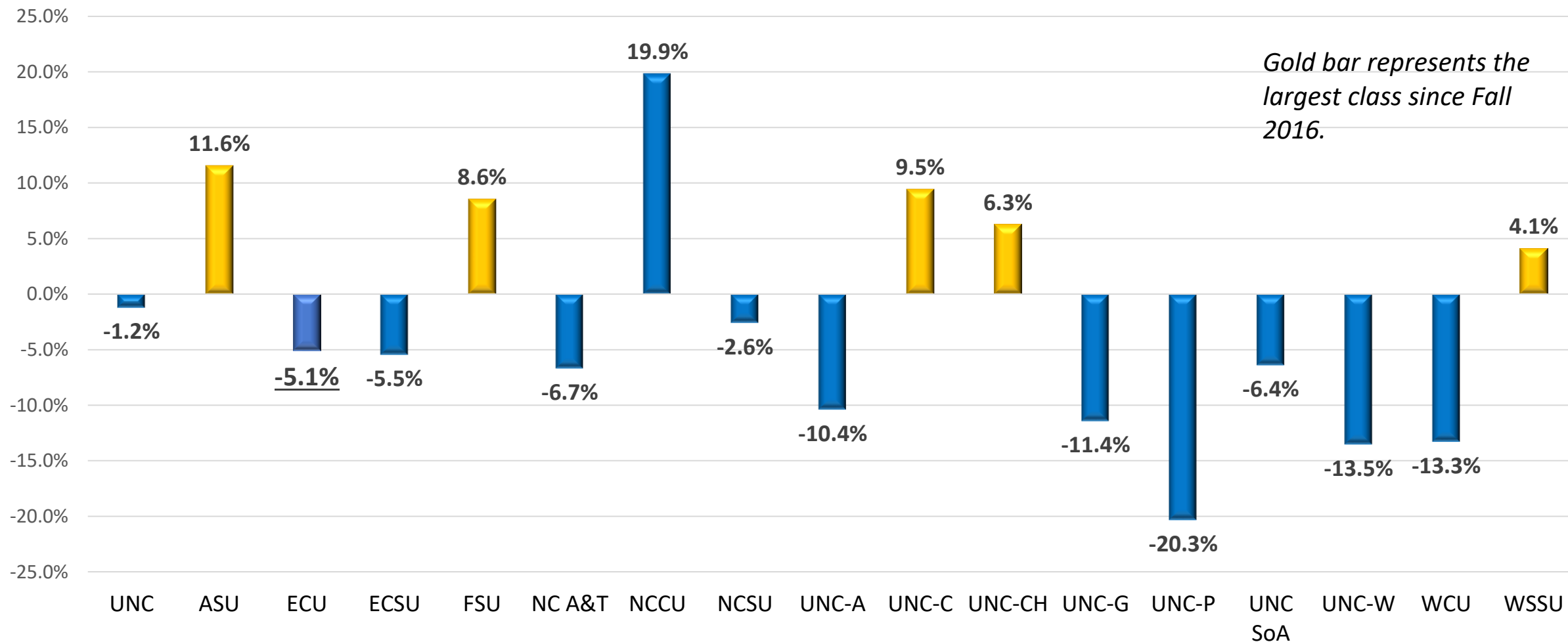


# UNC System Overall Enrollment Change Between Fall 19 and Fall 20



# Fall 2020: UNC System First-time Student Enrollment Change

Percentage Change from Fall 2019



# ECU First-time Student Enrollment

Source: Office of Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research

Data Resources: <https://ipar.ecu.edu/research/rsrch-data-resources>



# Factors that might have impacted Fall 2020 freshman enrollment

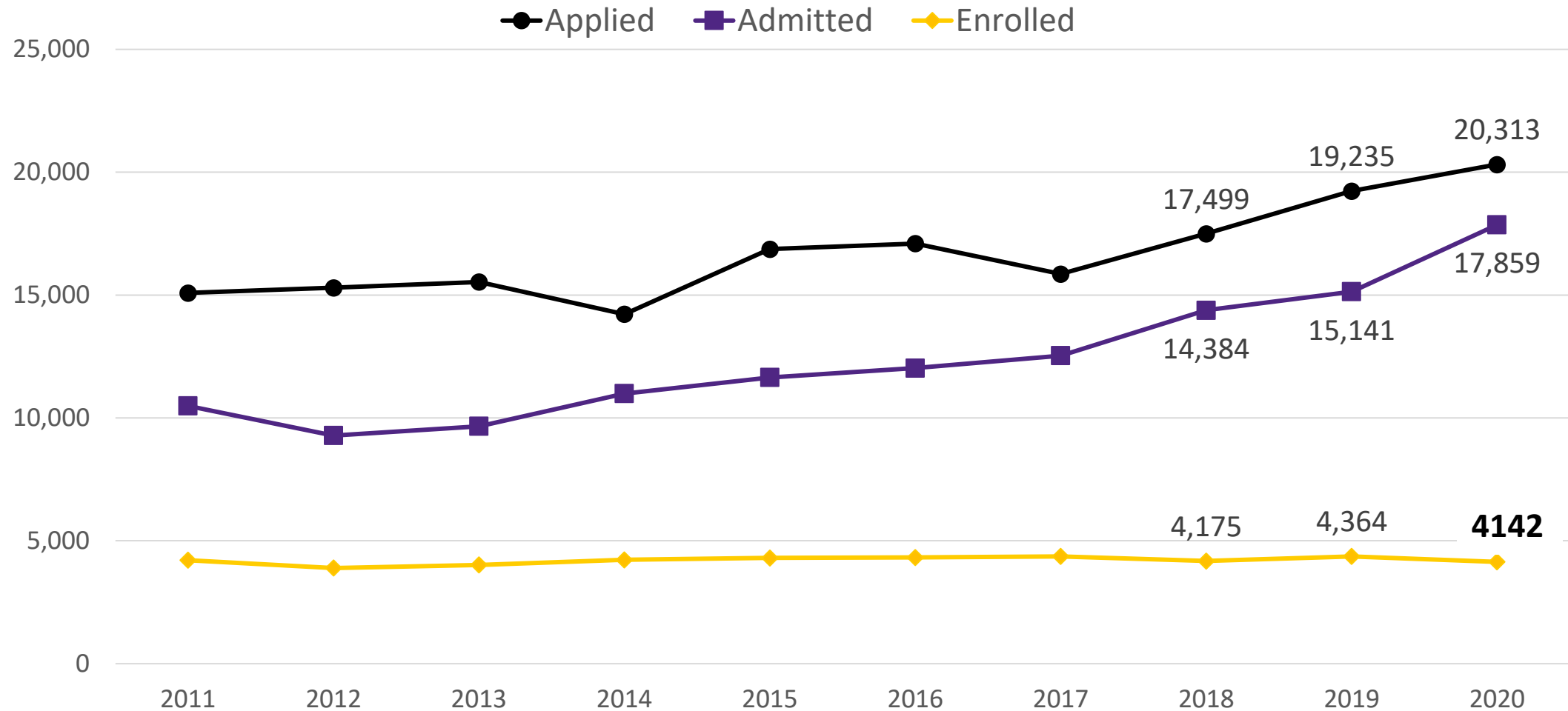
- National Association for College Admission Counseling changed rules regarding poaching
- ECU joined CFNC's College Application Week in 2019: waiving application fees between Oct. 21-25, 2019
- Board of Governors changed the minimum admission requirements: minimum weighted high school GPA of 2.5 OR a minimum SAT of 1010/ACT of 19
- Covid-19
  - Stay-in-place orders and limit in size of gathering
  - Unemployment, underemployment or other financial difficulties
  - Virtual yield events
  - Uncertainties around Fall 2020 re-opening



# Project Overview

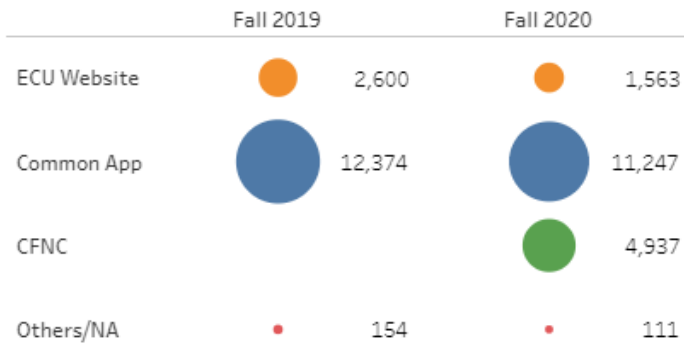
- Student Population
  - **Accepted** first-time freshmen (excluding students who were denied of admission)
- Data Sources:
  - ECU Admissions Data
  - The National Student Clearinghouse
    - Fall 2020 data retrieved on Dec 1, 2020
    - Fall 2019 data retrieved on Nov 1, 2019
  - IPAR Dashboards
- Comparison of Key Characteristics (Enrolled vs. Non-enrolled Students)
  - Demographic Characteristics
  - High School GPAs and Test Scores
  - Pell Status and Family Income
  - Geographic Location
  - High Schools
- ECU's Major Competitors for New Students
- Discussion: Challenges and Opportunities for Undergraduate Admissions

# ECU Freshman Application and Matriculation

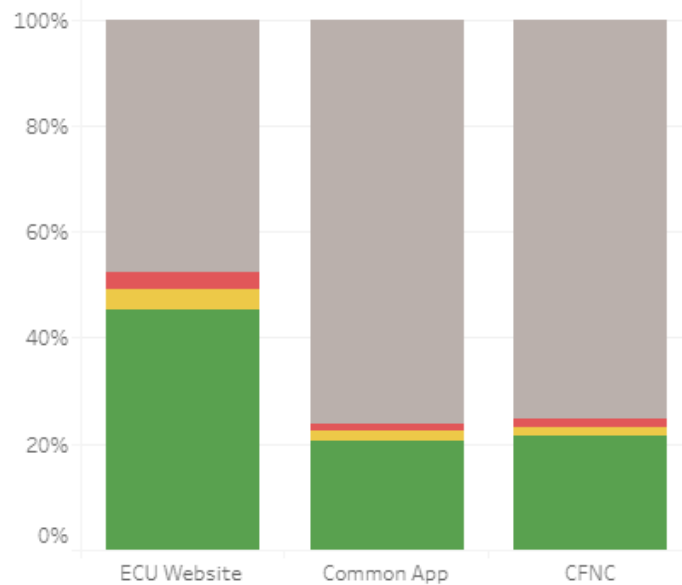


# Application

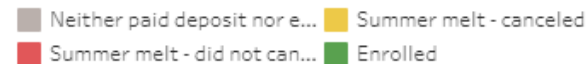
## Count of accepted admissions by term and type



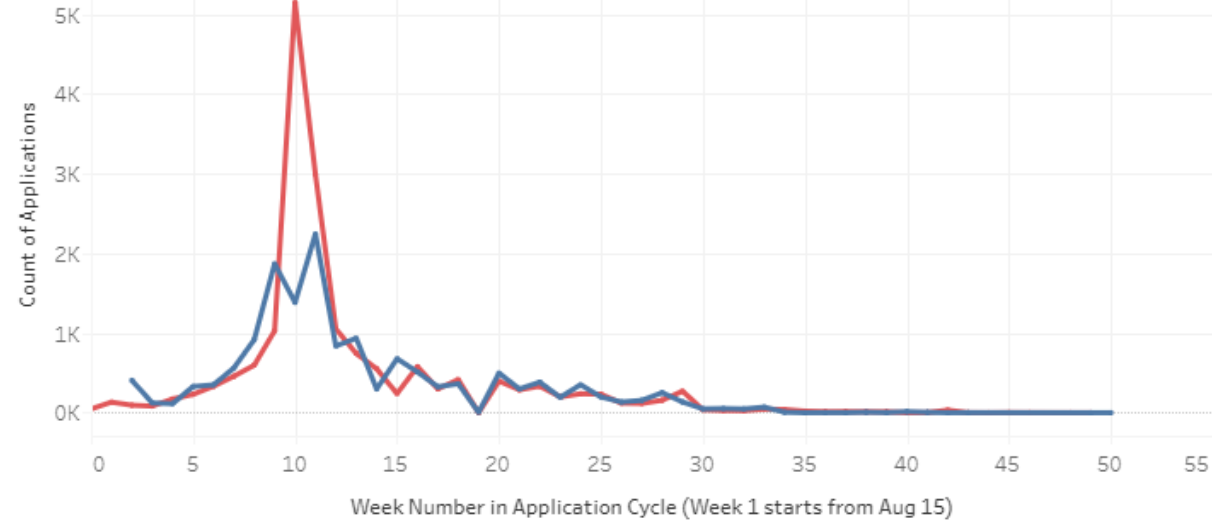
## Fall 2020 enrollment outcome by application type



Enrollment Outcome



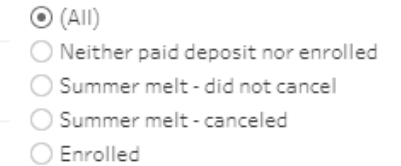
## Weekly admissions (admits only)



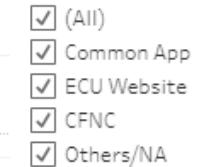
Term



Enrollment Outcome



Application Type



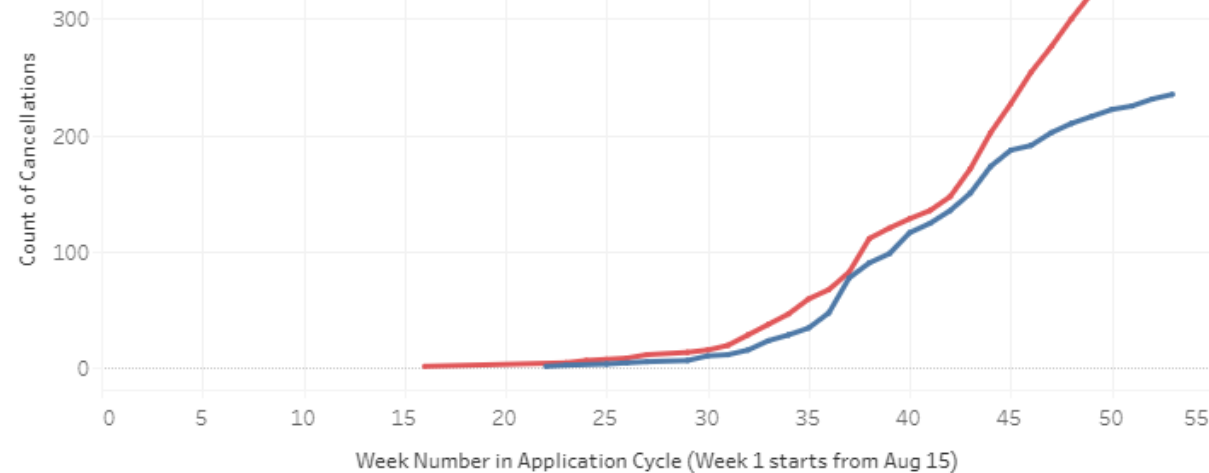
Cancel

Apply

Residency

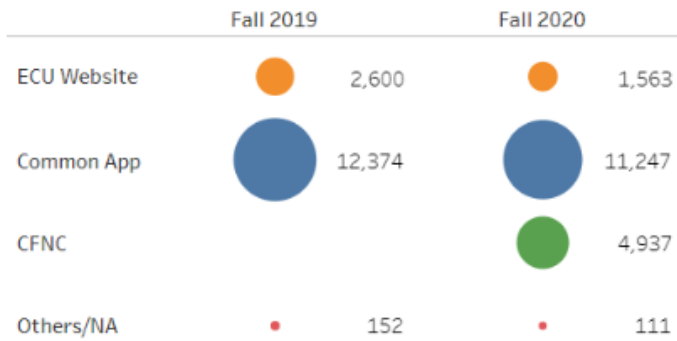


## Weekly cancellations (summer melt only)

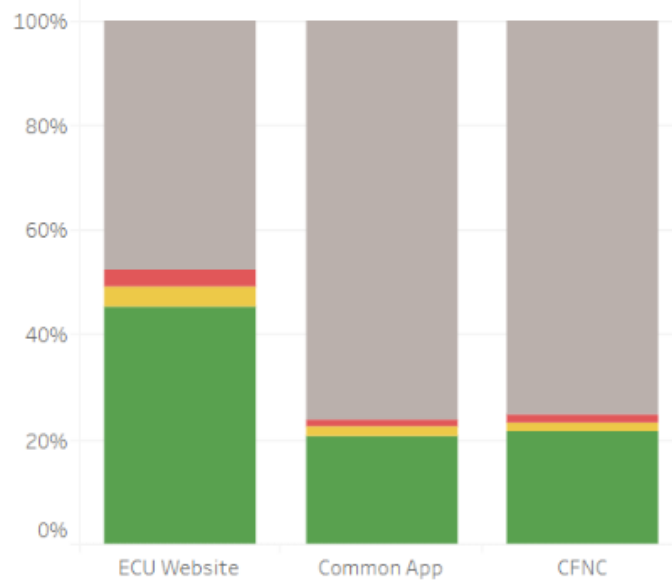


# CFNC Application: Fall 2020

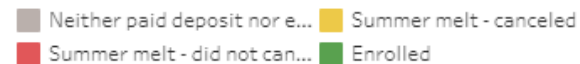
## Count of accepted admissions by term and type



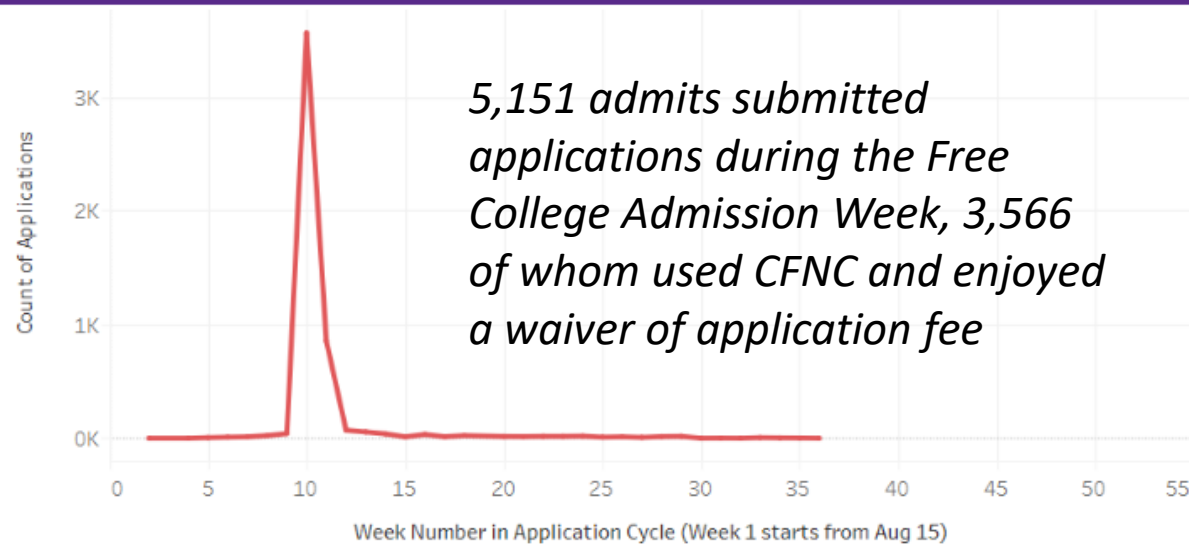
## Fall 2020 enrollment outcome by application type



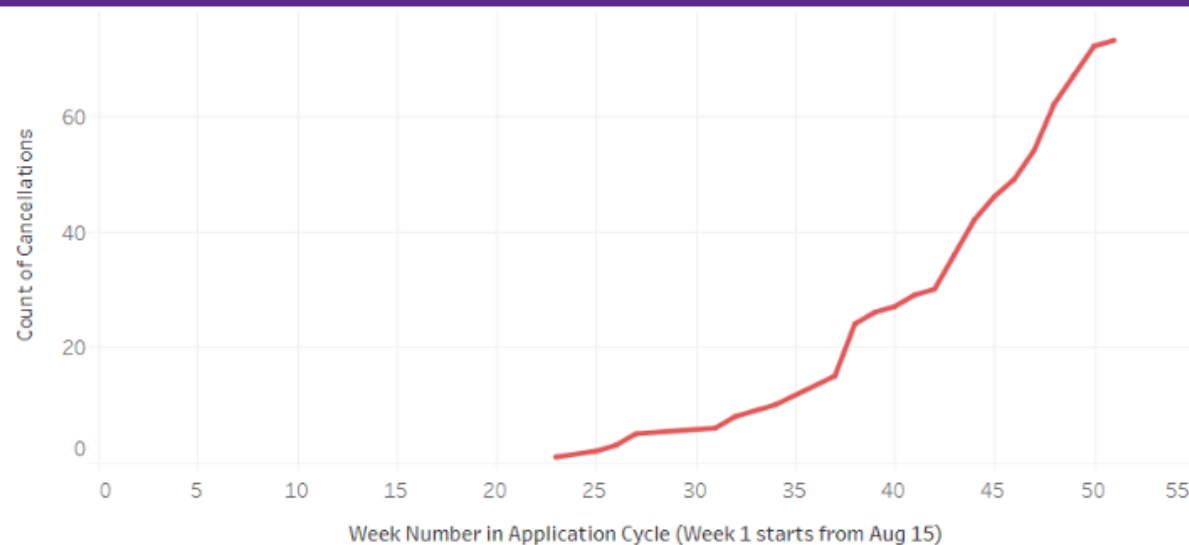
Enrollment Outcome



## Weekly admissions (admits only)



## Weekly cancellations (summer melt only)



Term

Fall 2020

Enrollment Outcome

- ☒ (All)
- ☐ Neither paid deposit nor enrolled
- ☐ Summer melt - did not cancel
- ☐ Summer melt - canceled
- ☐ Enrolled

Residency

- ☒ (All)
- ☒ In-state
- ☒ Out-of-state

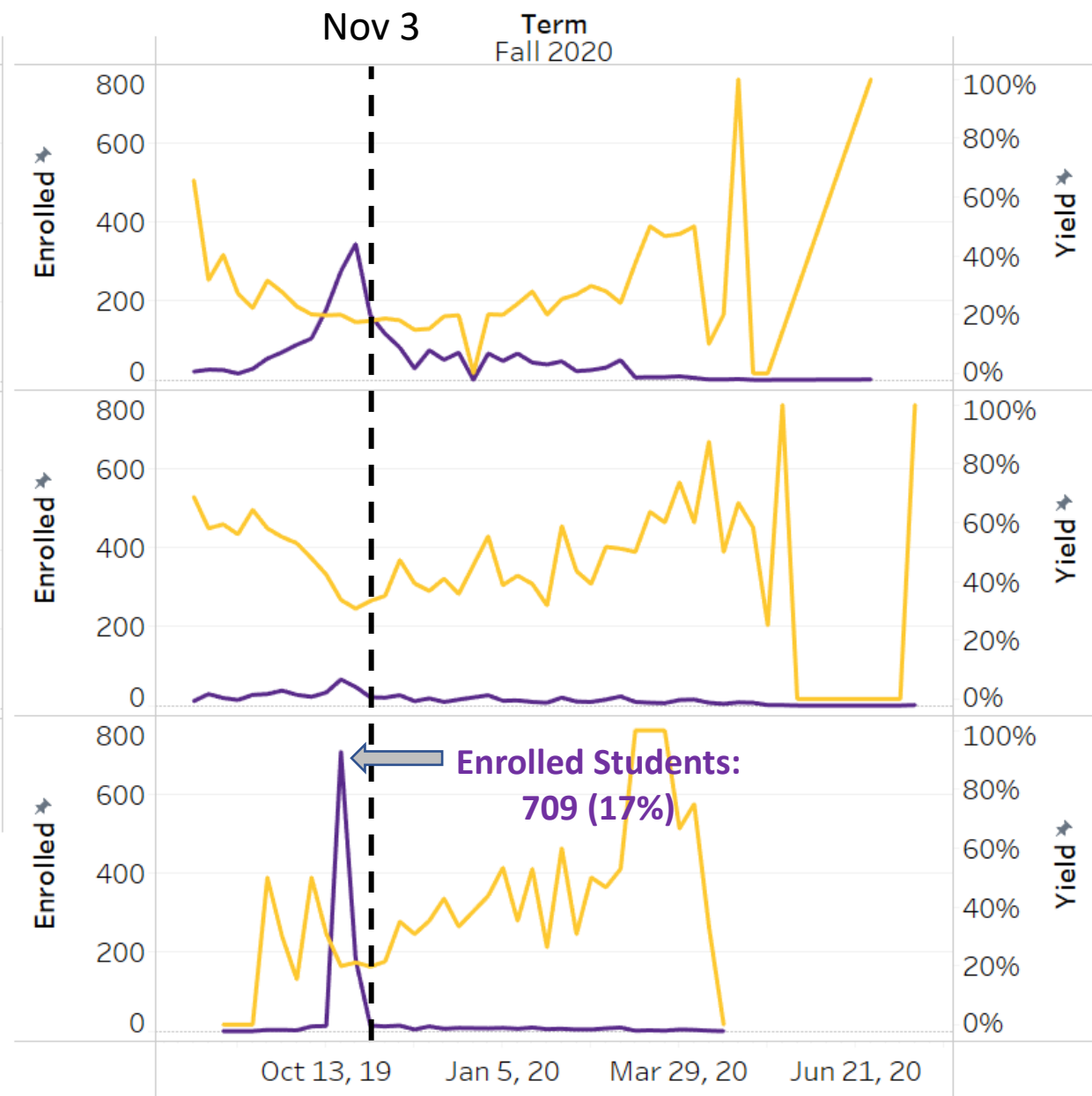
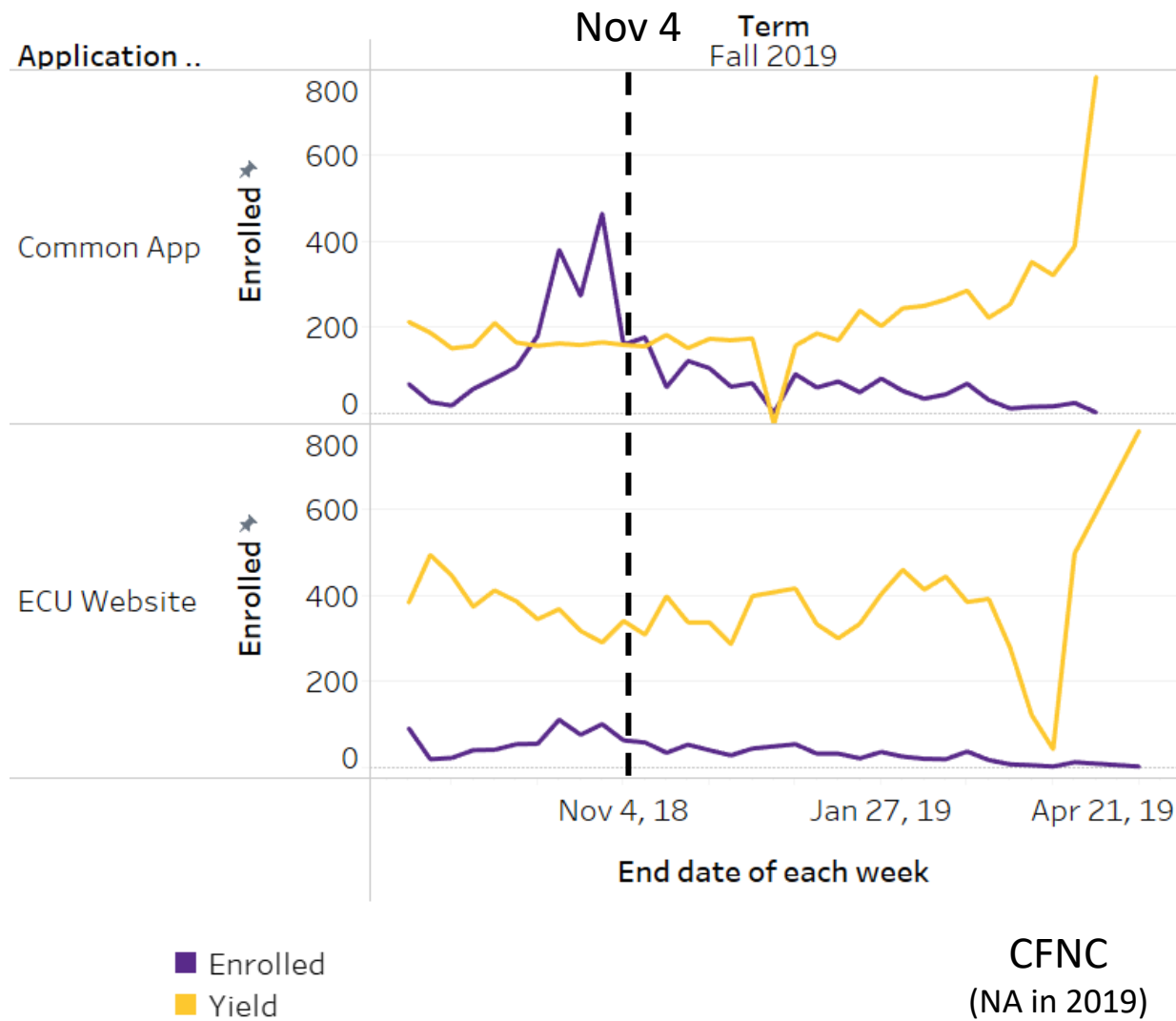
Application Type

- ☐ (All)
- ☐ Common App
- ☐ ECU Website
- ☒ CFNC
- ☐ Others/NA

Cancel

Apply



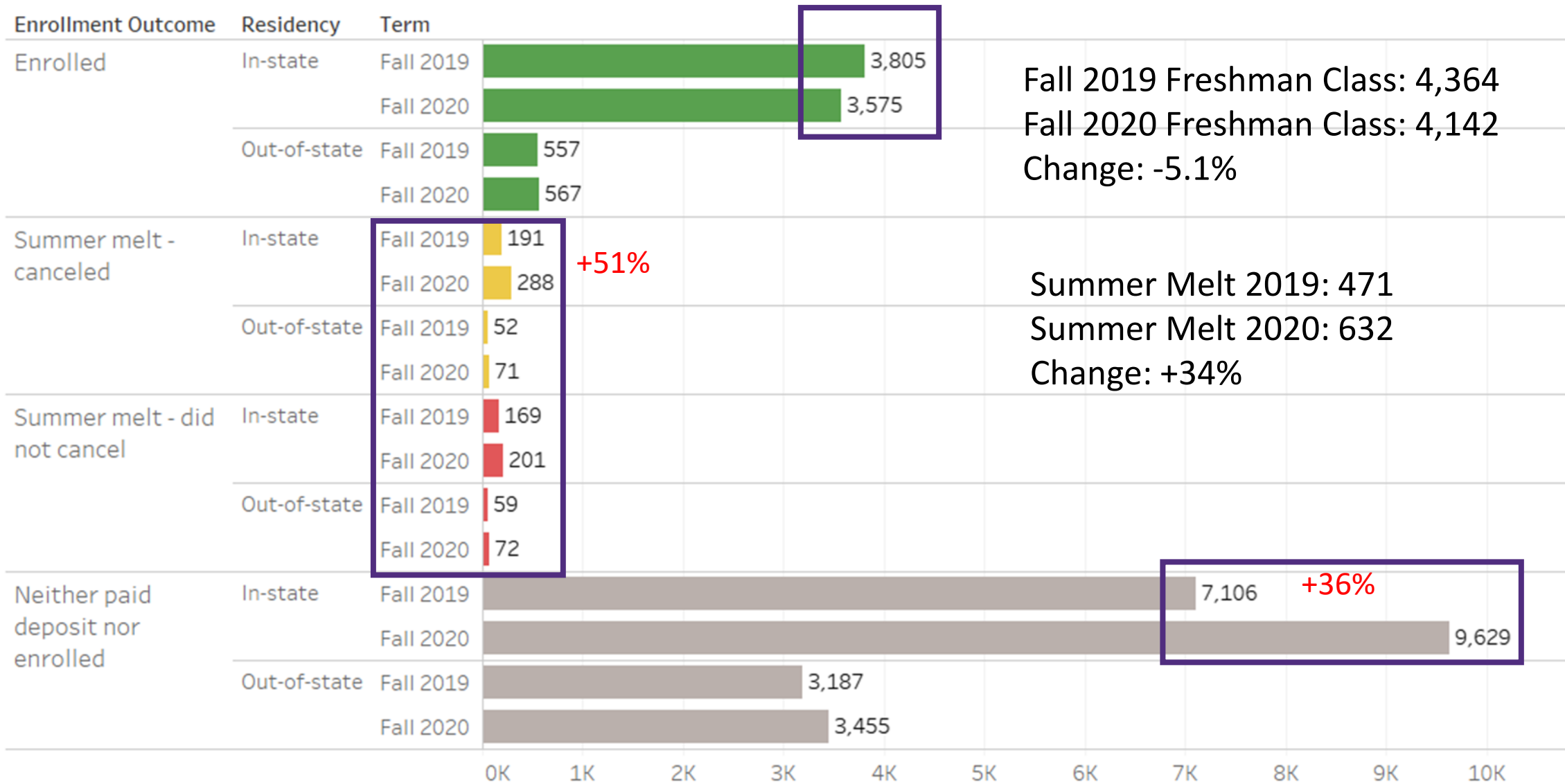


# Summer Melt: 2019 and 2020

Due to different data reporting methods and timelines, the results from the Summer Melt analyses may be slightly different from ECU official data.

# Definition of Summer Melt

- **Enrolled:** committed by paying an enrollment deposit and was enrolled on Census Day
- **Summer melt – canceled:** committed by paying an enrollment deposit but informed the university of their decision not to attend
- **Summer melt – did not cancel:** committed by paying an enrollment deposit, but did not inform the university of their decision not to attend
- **Non-enrolled:** did not commit and did not enroll



# Demographic Characteristics (19 vs. 20)

	Enrolled		Summer melt - canceled		Summer melt - did not cancel		Neither paid deposit nor enrolled	
	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Accepted	4,364	4,142	243	359	228	273	10,293	13,084
Weighted HS GPA	3.64	3.65	3.65	3.68	3.54	3.53	3.82	3.81
% Attend orientation	94%	96%	10%	18%	26%	38%	0%	1%
% Pell	34%	36%	7%	11%	25%	30%	21%	21%
Median Total Income	\$86K	\$85K	\$93K	\$106K	\$62K	\$71K	\$99K	\$97K
% Female	58%	61%	64%	57%	51%	53%	64%	65%
% White	66%	64%	69%	65%	58%	58%	62%	58%
% Black or African Americ..	15%	15%	10%	13%	15%	13%	13%	17%
% Hispanic	9%	10%	9%	10%	15%	15%	10%	11%
% Asian	3%	3%	5%	4%	3%	4%	6%	6%
% Other races/ethnicity	8%	8%	6%	8%	9%	10%	9%	9%

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% Hispanic	9%	10%	9%	10%	15%	15%	10%	11%
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% Black or African Americ..	15%	15%	10%	13%	15%	13%	13%	17%
% Hispanic	9%	10%	9%	10%	15%	15%	10%	11%
% Asian	3%	3%	5%	4%	3%	4%	6%	6%
% Other races/ethnicity	8%	8%	6%	8%	9%	10%	9%	9%

# Top Destinations - Fall 2020

## Summer melt - canceled

Unknown	45
UNC - Charlotte	28
UNC-Wilmington	27
Wake Technical Community College	26
NCSU	25
Appalachian State University	17
UNC-Chapel Hill	7
UNC-Greensboro	7
North Carolina A&T State University	5

## Summer melt – did not cancel

Unknown	89
Wake Technical Community College	16
UNC - Charlotte	7
UNC-Greensboro	7
UNC-Wilmington	7
NCSU	6
Appalachian State University	4
North Carolina A&T State University	2
UNC-Chapel Hill	2

## Other Non-enrolled

UNC - Charlotte	1,121
Appalachian State University	1,079
NCSU	1,019
Unknown	974
UNC-Chapel Hill	854
UNC-Wilmington	669
UNC-Greensboro	645
North Carolina A&T State University	292
Wake Technical Community College	257



# Top Majors - Fall 2020

\*Some schools do not report majors to NSC

## Summer melt - canceled

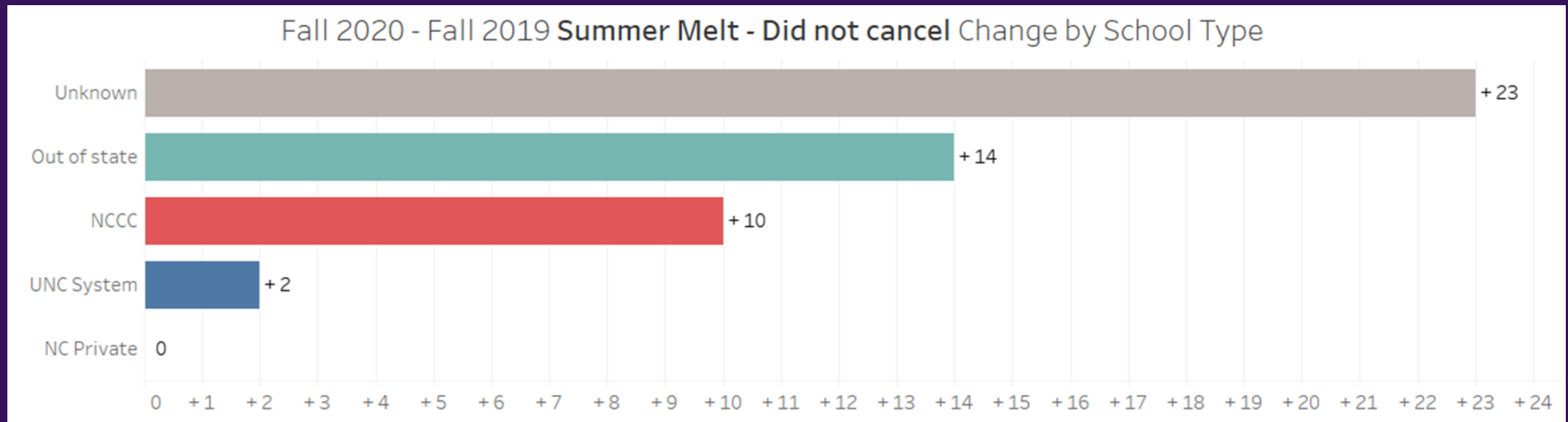
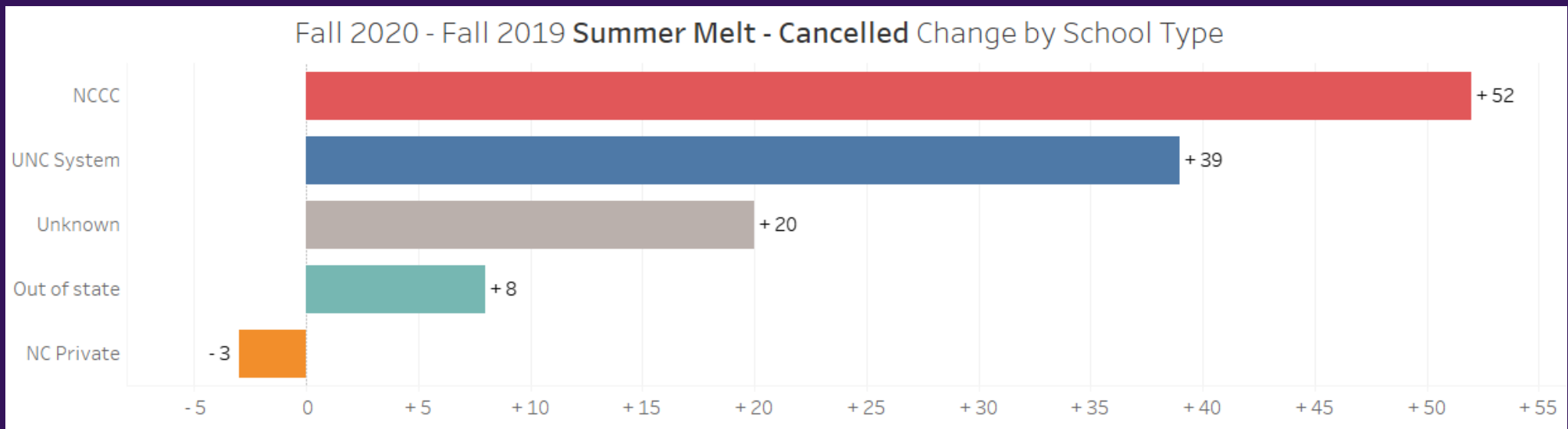
Associate in Arts	27
Associate in Science	19
Biology	10
Nursing	10
Business Administration	8
Undecided	7
Computer Science	5
Marketing	5
Psychology	5
Undeclared	4

## Summer melt – did not cancel

Associate in Arts	27
Business Administration	11
Associate in Science	10
Nursing	10
Biology	6
Undeclared	5
Undecided	2
Computer Science	1
Marketing	1

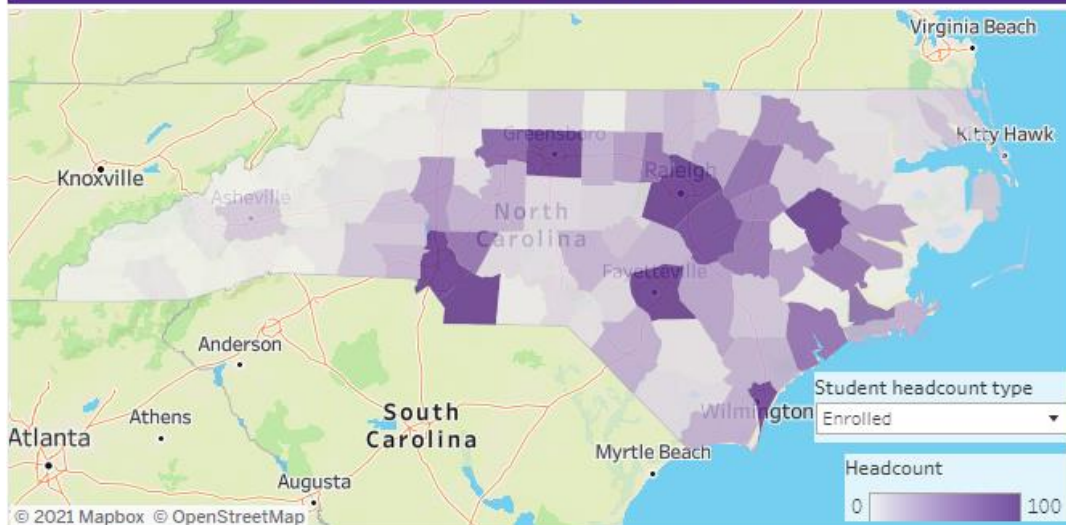
## Other Non-enrolled

Nursing	603
Biology	585
Undeclared	416
Psychology	414
Associate in Arts	367
Business Administration	360
Undecided	336
Associate in Science	233
Computer Science	205
Marketing	169

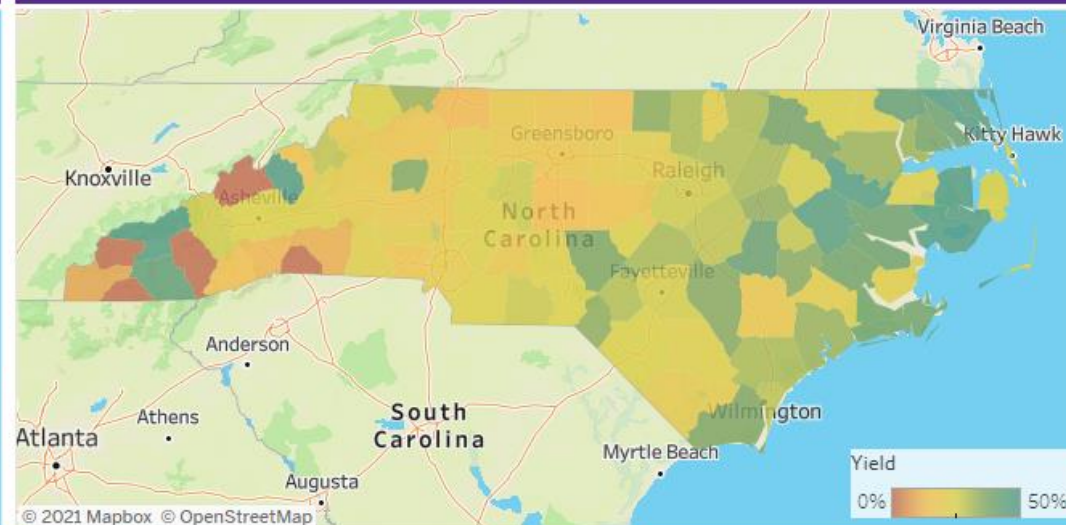


# Maps

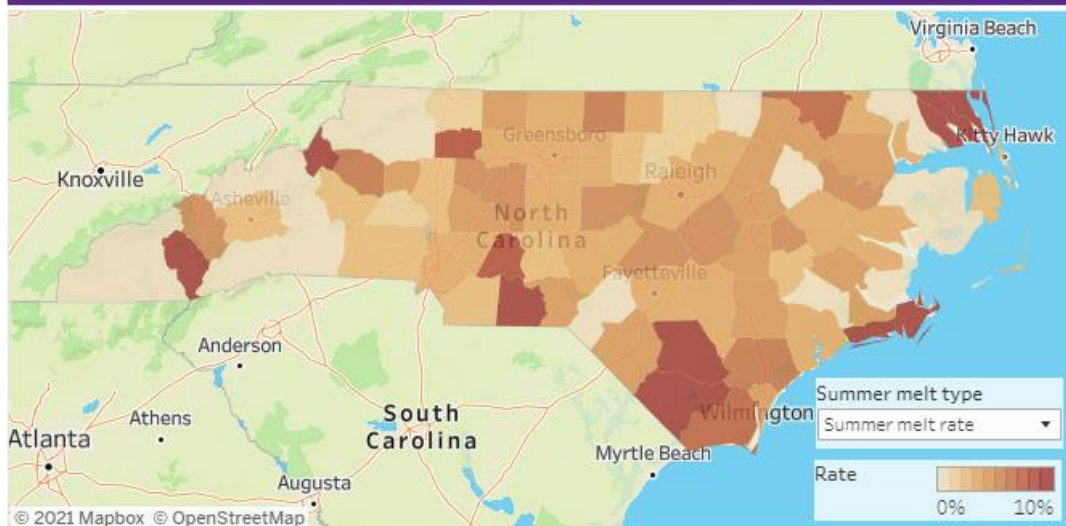
## Accept, Enroll, and More Headcounts



## Yield



## Summer Melt Rate



## County-level Table

County	Term	Accepted	Enrolled	Yield	Summer melt rate
Alamance	Fall 2019	136	36	26%	4%
	Fall 2020	154	30	19%	3%
Alexander	Fall 2019	13	4	31%	0%
	Fall 2020	21	7	33%	5%

Map Term

Fall 2020

Residency

☐ (All)

☒ In-state

☐ Out-of-state

State

NC

County

(All)

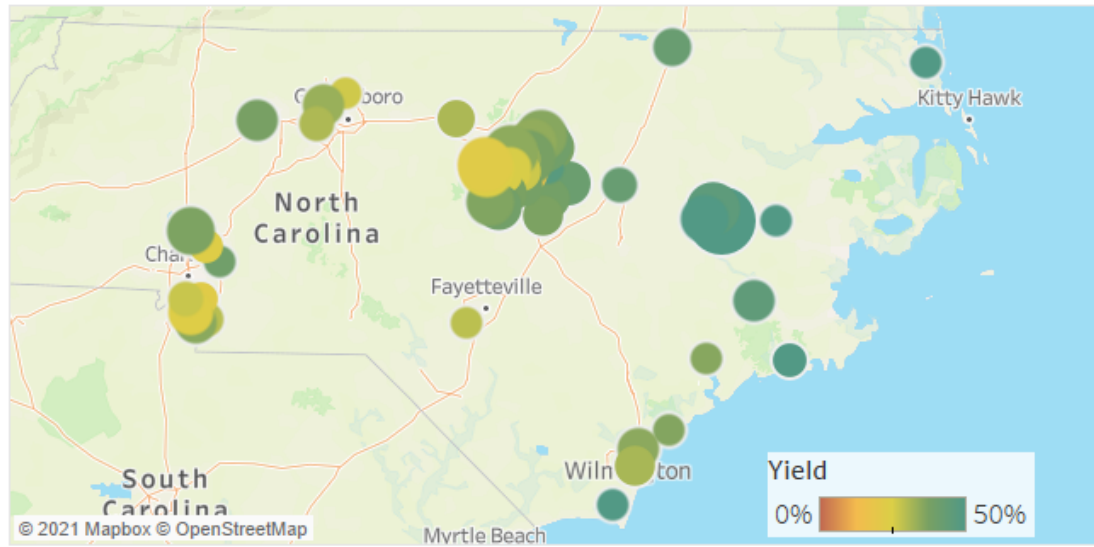
Note: Adjust both State and Residency to show out-of-state

## Destination Table

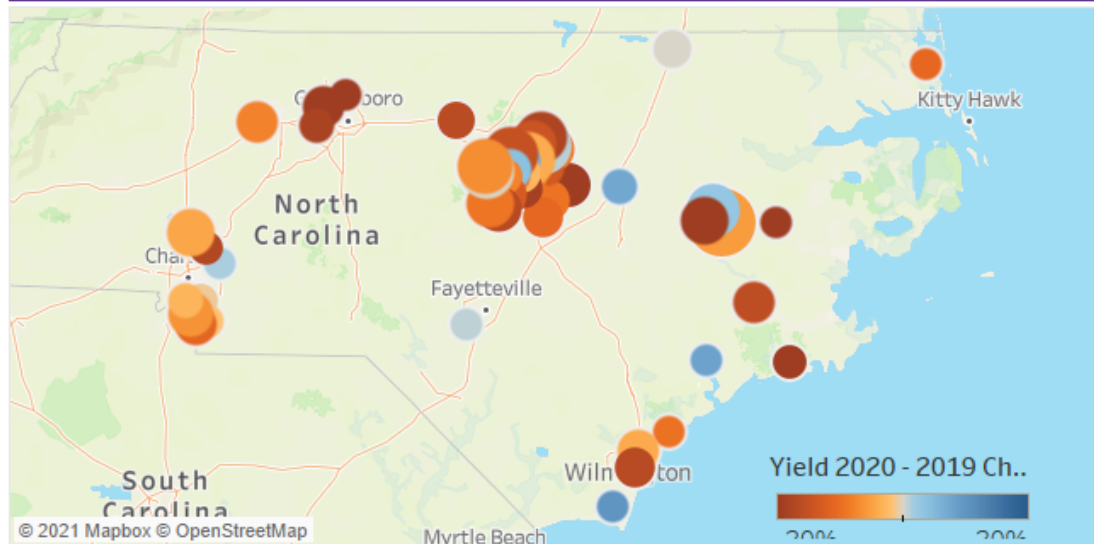
Destination	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
East Carolina University	3,680	3,408
University of North Carolina - Charlotte	776	1,052
Appalachian State University	702	1,048
North Carolina State University	789	954
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill	555	774

# High school

## Accepted Student and Yield by High School



## High School Fall 2020 - Fall 2019 Yield Change



## High School Table

High School	Accep..	Enroll..	Summe r melt	Yield	Summe r melt ..
William G Enloe High Sc..	278	49	3	18%	1%
Panther Creek High Scho..	435	96	12	22%	3%
Providence High School	158	35	6	22%	4%
Athens Drive Senior Hig..	162	37	8	23%	5%
Ardrey Kell High School	279	65	7	23%	3%
Cox Mill High School	145	34	2	23%	1%
Green Hope Hs	396	95	7	24%	2%
Apex High School	177	43	8	24%	5%
Cary High School	174	44	10	25%	6%
Cardinal Gibbons Meml ..	217	55	11	25%	5%
Northern Guilford High ..	121	32	5	26%	4%
Needham B Broughton H..	186	50	3	27%	2%
South Mecklenburg High..	146	40	4	27%	3%
Jack Britt Hs	107	31	7	29%	7%

## Destination Table

Destination	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
East Carolina University	3,713	3,440
University of North Carolina - Char..	781	1,058
Appalachian State University	704	1,050
North Carolina State University	793	959
University of North Carolina-Chap..	557	778
Unknown	484	754
University of North Carolina-Wilmi..	671	638
University of North Carolina-Green..	507	609

Term

(All)

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

Bubble size

(student headcount ..

Enrolled

Student headcount ..

30 485

Yield

0% 100%

Residency

☐ (All)

☒ In-state

☐ Out-of-state

State

NC

Intended Major

(All)

Accepted students

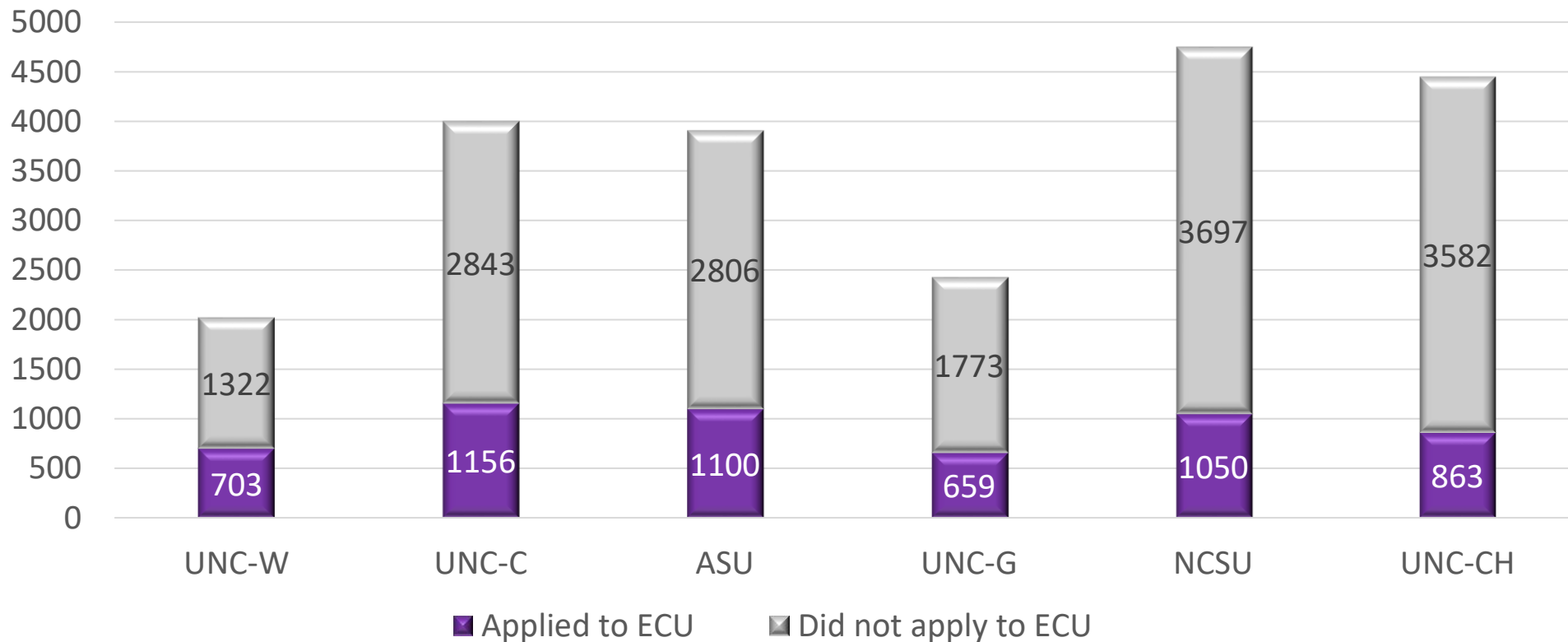
30  
40  
60  
80  
100  
120  
147

# Summary of Observations and Recommendations



# Applicant Pool Overlap with ECU: Selected UNC Schools

Fall 2020 First-year Students by Institution  
(Ordered by % of the First-year Class Also Applied to ECU, from high to low)



1/3 of first-year students at UNC-Wilmington were also accepted by ECU.

This is an underestimate of applicant pool overlap because some of ECU's enrolled students may have also been accepted by UNC-W.

# Observations Regarding Fall 20 Applications

- 2020 Applications and Yield: compared to Fall 2019
  - Total applications increased by 1,078 (5.6%); in-state applications increased by 1,798 (13%)
  - More applicants met ECU's minimum admissions criteria.
  - Total enrolled students dropped by 222 (5.1%); in-state students dropped by 219 (5.7%).
- 28% of accepted students applied to ECU through CFNC; many took advantage of the Free Application Week.
- Yield rate of accepted students:
  - ECU Website: 45%
  - Common App and CFNC: 21%
- Accepted students who applied very early or very late were more likely to enroll at ECU.

# Observations Regarding 2020 Summer Melt

- Accepted students who paid a tuition deposit
  - Fall 2019 (n=4,835): 9.7% did not enroll on Census Day
  - Fall 2020 (n=4,774): 13.2% did not enroll on Census Day
- Summer Melters
  - The number of “Summer Melters” increased by 161 (34%) in 2020
  - More than half of the “Summer Melters” informed ECU before the fall semester began (57% in 2020)
- Orientation
  - 26% of 2020 Summer Melters attended orientation, compared to 19% of 2019 Summer Melters.



# 2020 Summer Melters: Canceled vs. Not Canceled

- Summer melters who informed ECU:
  1. 35% minorities – comparable to enrolled students
  2. Had comparable High School GPAs to enrolled students
  3. Had significantly higher family income than enrolled students
  4. Were less likely to be Pell eligible than enrolled students (11% vs 36%)
  5. 18% attended orientation
  6. Enrolled at another UNC institution (35%) or a NCCCS school (30%)
- Summer melters who did not inform ECU:
  1. 42% minorities – higher than enrolled students
  2. Had lower High School GPA than enrolled students
  3. Had significantly lower family income than enrolled students
  4. Were less likely to be Pell eligible than enrolled students (30%)
  5. 38% attended orientation
  6. Did not enroll in a college (33%) or enrolled at a NCCCS school (30%)

# Reasons for Summer Melt

- Financial burdens
- College transition challenges and lack of support:
  - Difficulty navigating a new and complicated process
  - Interpreting award letters and tuition bills
  - Complexity of federal financial aid applications and process of applying
  - Difficulty completing paperwork
  - Lack of and/or limited access to counseling/guidance
  - Not knowing whom to reach out to on campus
- And, of course, the “unexpected” such as COVID (maybe the primary reason for Fall 2020 melt, according to students, exacerbating financial burdens & transition challenges)

# Possible Strategy – Connect & Communicate

(all of which are utilized by ECU UG Admissions & University Marketing)

- Engage with students early and continue to reach out to them proactively in the summer months.
- Utilize the power of technology, e.g., create digital messaging campaigns with reminders of important tasks and student resources; use social media to answer questions; etc.
- Be people first in your digital communication strategies by personalizing both messages and processes.
- Use “nudges” (personalized and timely messages to urge students to complete tasks and navigate processes).
- Continue to communicate the value of your institution and of a college degree.
- Connect (and maintain connection) with parents.

# Possible Strategy – Simplify

- Simplify the acceptance and post-acceptance processes & reduce information overload.
- Provide students with a checklist of all the tasks they need to do over the summer to prepare for college but engage students with one focus at a time. (Provided to ECU students through PiratePort)

# Possible Strategy - Support

- Engage current students by assigning them as peer mentors to incoming students.
- Create a social community where incoming students can connect with one another. (All new first-year students at ECU are invited to socially connect with other first-year students through the Class of 202X Facebook group.)
- Increase inter-campus collaboration to provide support and reassurance.

# Resources

- <https://blog.campus.app/how-to-reduce-summer-melt>
- <https://www.raise.me/blog/universities/5-proven-strategies-to-prevent-summer-melt-improve-yield-and-hit-enrollment-goals-this-year/>
- <https://www.bostondigital.com/insights/4-ways-decrease-summer-melt-your-university>
- <https://www.brazen.com/resources/4-simple-ways-to-stop-summer-melt>
- <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/call-action-marketing-and-communications-higher-education/warding-summer-melt>
- [https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/professional-development/guiding-the-way-to-inclusion/2018-presentations/b4\\_freezing-summer-melt.pdf](https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/professional-development/guiding-the-way-to-inclusion/2018-presentations/b4_freezing-summer-melt.pdf)

# Questions and Discussions

# Contact Information

Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research: <https://ipar.ecu.edu/>

University Dashboards: <https://ipar.ecu.edu/dashboards/>

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Ying Zhou, [zhouy14@ecu.edu](mailto:zhouy14@ecu.edu)

Beverly King, [kingb14@ecu.edu](mailto:kingb14@ecu.edu)