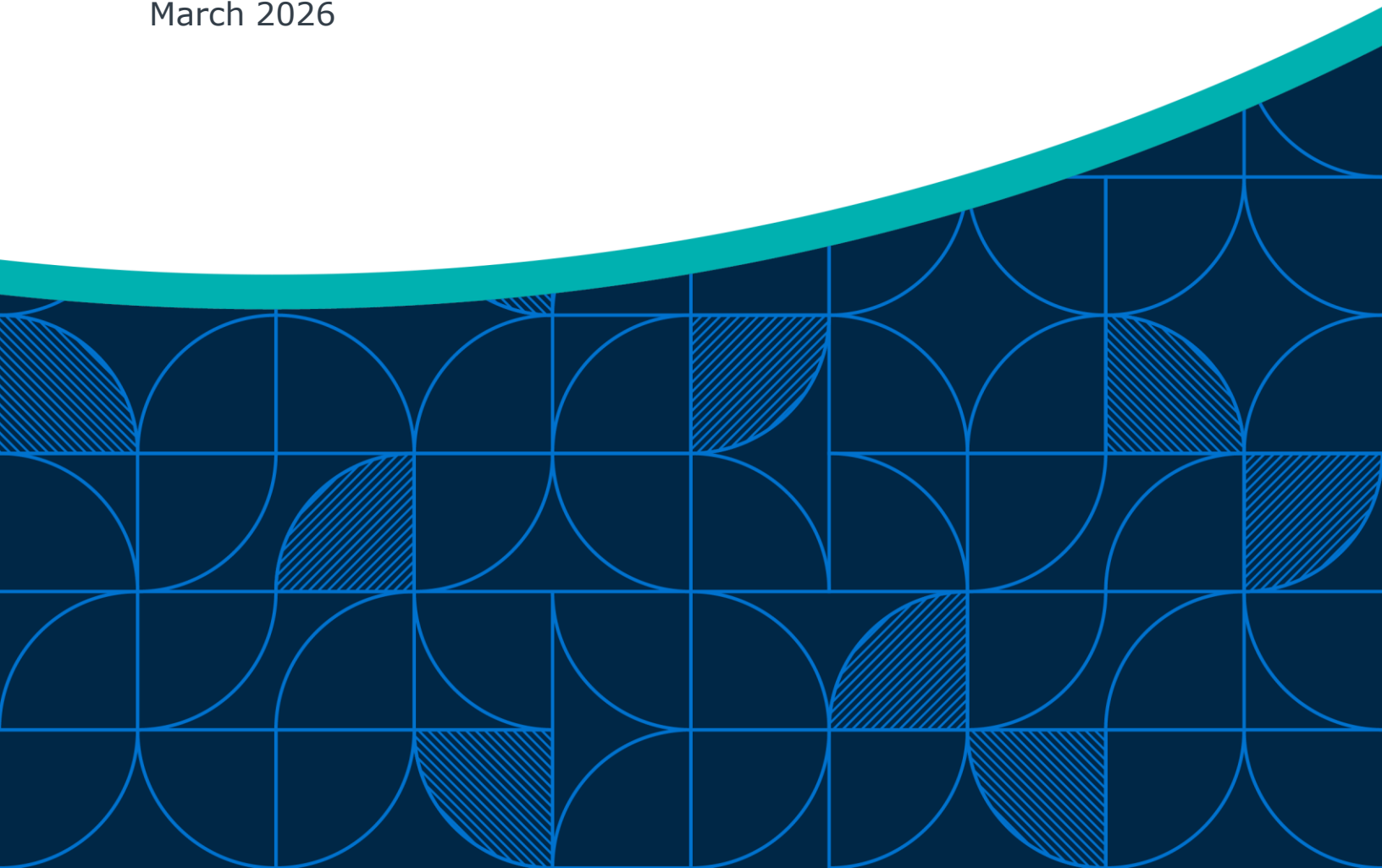




RESPONSIVE RESEARCH

Tuition Reset Realities and Risks for Small, Private Universities

Completed for the Requesting Institution
March 2026



Project Contributors

Strategic Leader

Kaci Bray

Project Director

Lauren Edmonds

Senior Research Associate

Sydney Moore

Associate Director

Katherine Murphy

Legal Caveat

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to partners. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, partners should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given partner's situation. Partners are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB Organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of partner and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Partners are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its partners. Each partner acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each partner agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a partner. Each partner is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each partner shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each partner shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each partner may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each partner shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each partner may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each partner shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.
5. Each partner is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a partner is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such partner shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

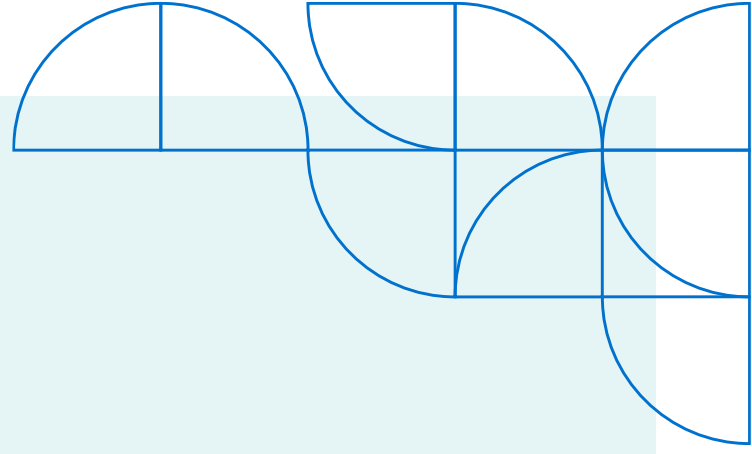


Table of Contents

Executive Overview	4
Research Findings	5
Requesting Institution’s Context for a Tuition Reset	6
Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets	8
Tuition Reset Evaluator	15
Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios	16
Appendix	22
Implementation Guidance	23
Research Methodology	25

Executive Overview

Research Request

An evaluation of the effects of a tuition reset through research and case studies for the Requesting Institution.

Analysis Includes:

- [Requesting Institution's Context for a Tuition Reset](#)
- [Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets](#)
- [Tuition Reset Evaluator](#)
- [Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios](#)

Research Approach

Analyze tuition reset impacts at small, private institutions and employ EAB's best practice research on tuition resets along with collected data on tuition, enrollment, and financial aid metrics from IPEDs to confirm the impact of a tuition reset on [small private institutions](#).

Evaluate these outcomes' alignment with the Requesting Institution's desired goal of increasingly financially viable student enrollment.

See the [Research Methodology](#) section for further details.

This research cautions against a tuition reset given the goals shared by Requesting Institution leadership. A tuition reset is not expected to increase enrollment or revenue long-term, requires significant investments in communications and marketing to impact enrollment in the short-term, and likely could increase the Requesting Institution's Pell-eligible population while risking insufficient resources to support an expanded Pell-eligible population.

Overall takeaways:

- Lowering tuition prices signals affordability and may increase [Pell-eligible student enrollment by up to 8%](#), suggesting a tuition reset is not the most effective strategy for attracting higher-resourced students.
- Tuition resets rarely produce durable enrollment or revenue gains. Most institutions' gains fade within five years, and revenue losses from returning students are common.
- Tuition resets primarily affect top-of-funnel consideration, not long-term enrollment conversion.
- To see even limited positive outcomes, tuition resets require significant investments in communications and marketing.
- While the Requesting Institution's tuition is [18.59%](#) higher than the average of regional small private institutions, the limited success of a tuition reset policy in case studies indicates lowering tuition is not an efficient long-term strategy for addressing declining enrollment.

If the Requesting Institution chooses to move forward with a tuition reset despite these findings:

- The Requesting Institution should verify through further market research that a sticker-price shift will boost interest, and that subsequently smaller financial aid packages will not capsize yield rates. If interested, your Strategic Leader can provide more information on how EAB can support this effort.
- Requesting Institution should then develop and fund a marketing and communications plan by which the Requesting Institution describes this tuition reset with a strong, campus-wide voice.



Research Findings



1

- Requesting Institution’s Context for a Tuition Reset
- Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets
 - Tuition Reset Risk
 - Analysis of 18 Institutions’ Tuition Reset Impacts
 - Attractive Reset Possibilities
- Tuition Reset Evaluator
- Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios

Requesting Institution's Context for a Tuition Reset

Tuition and Enrollment Compared to Fellow Small, Private Institutions¹

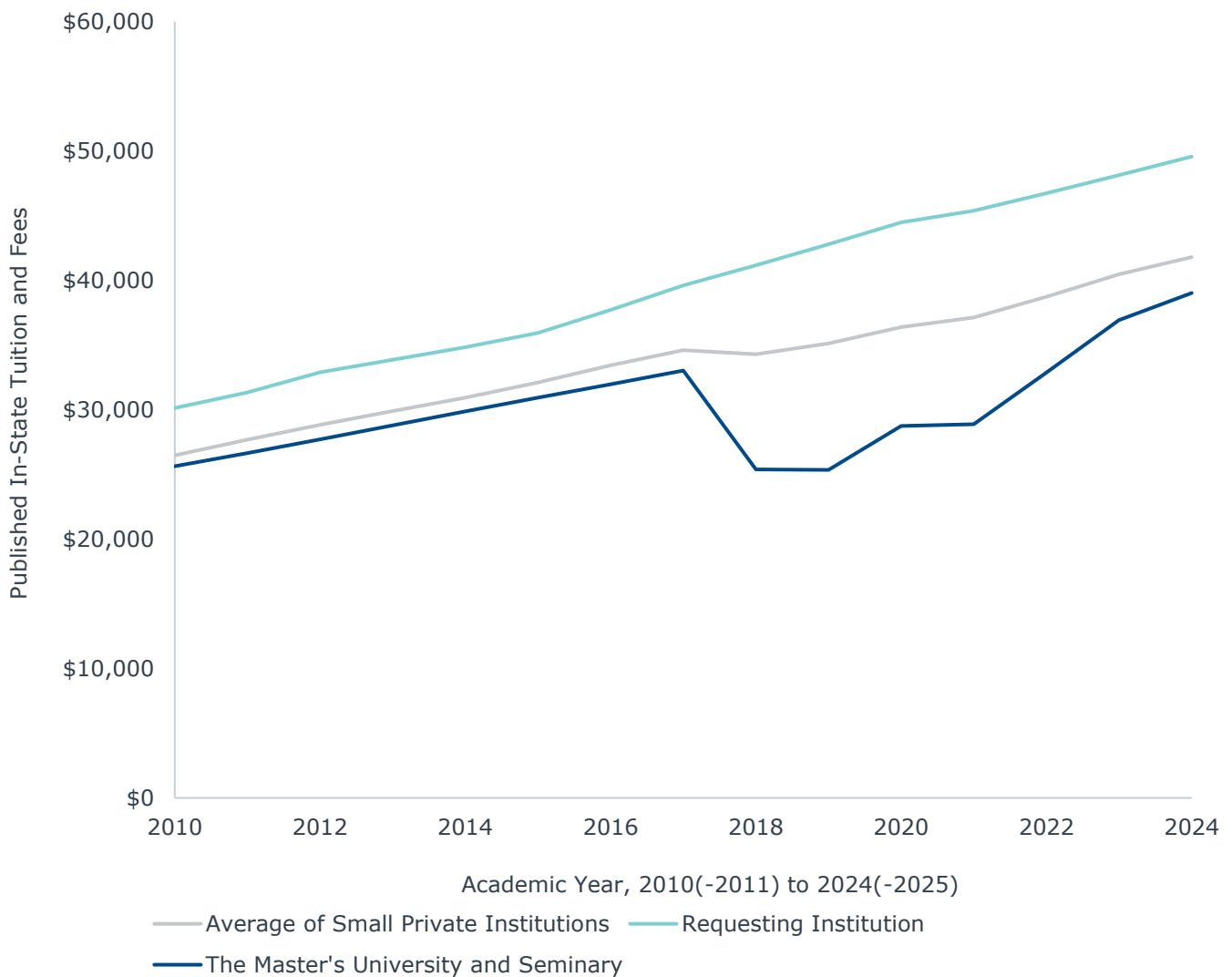
Requesting Institution's Tuition Exceeds the Average

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Requesting Institution's tuition was 18.59% higher than the average of fellow small, private institutions selected¹ (\$49,564 compared to \$41,795.34, respectively).

Of note, the Master's University and Seminary lowered tuition prices by 23.12% between the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years; however, by the 2023-2024 academic year, tuition rose above the price before the reset.

Tuition over Time at Small, Private Institutions

Published In-State Tuition and Fees, 2010-2024



1) To identify fellow small private universities, EAB looked at schools with the same Carnegie classification in California and at schools with similar enrollment sizes in large cities out West. Fellow small private institutions refer to Augsburg University, Bellarmine University, Edgewood College, Our Lady of the Lake University, and the Master's University and Seminary

Source: IPEDS.

Requesting Institution's Context for a Tuition Reset (cont.)

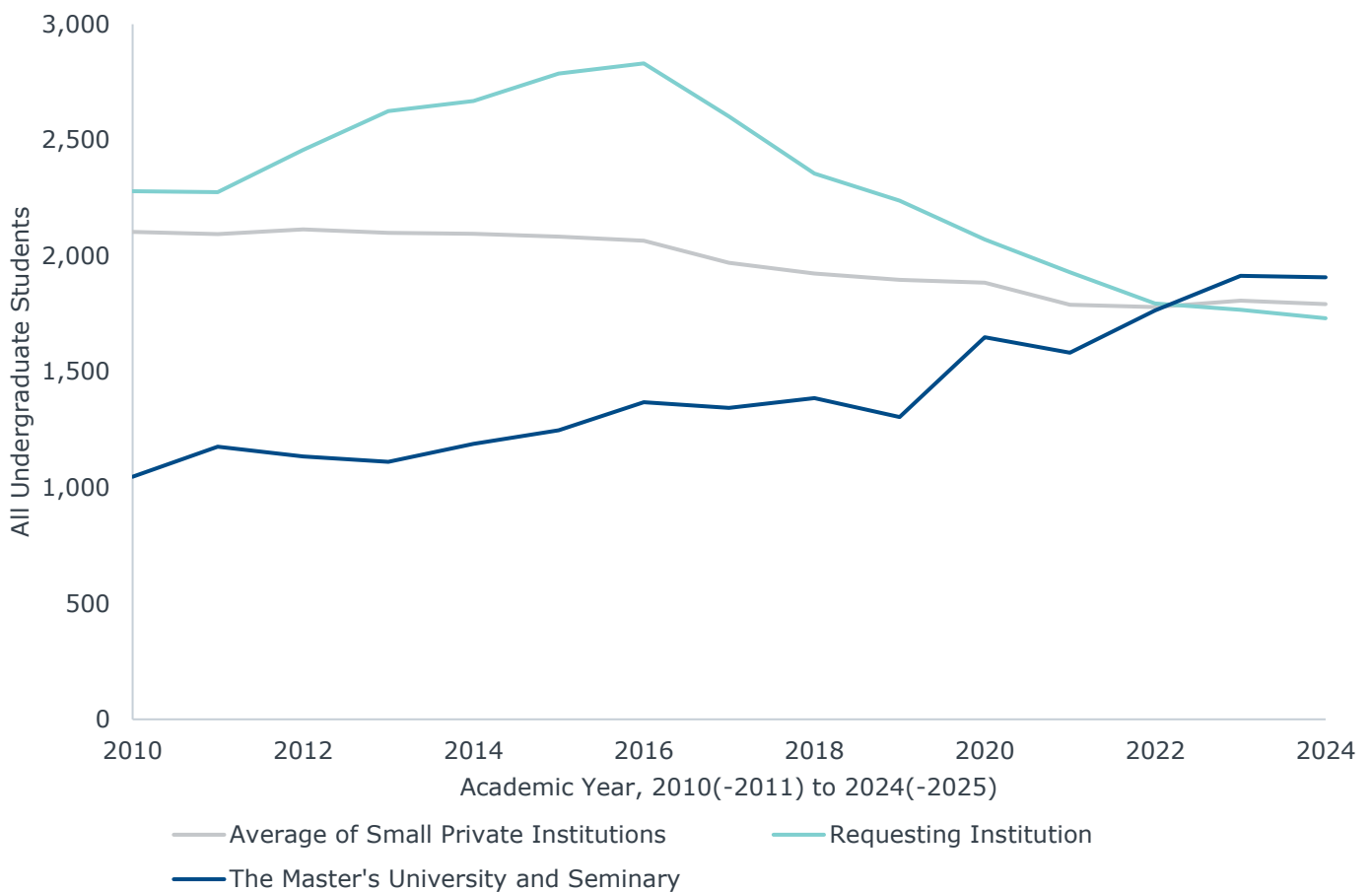
Tuition and Enrollment Compared to Fellow Small, Private Institutions¹ (cont.)

Enrollment Declined Post-2016 at the Requesting Institution

Enrollment declined at fellow small, private¹ institutions. While the Requesting Institution saw some growth between the 2011-2012 and 2016-2017 academic years, only The Master's University and Seminary saw a net increase in enrollment (82.23%) between the 2010-2011 and 2024-2025 academic years.

Enrollment over Time at Small, Private Institutions

All Undergraduate Students, 2010-2024



Despite Net Enrollment Growth Overall, the Tuition Reset Effect Diminished After the Initial Surge. The Master's University and Seminary, which reset tuition prices in the 2017-2018 academic year, saw a spike in enrollment two years later from 1,305 to 1,649 students. After the initial spike, enrollments continued to trend towards a slower growth rate.

1) To identify fellow small private universities, we looked at schools with the same Carnegie classification in California and at schools with similar enrollment sizes in large cities out West. Fellow small private institutions refers to Augsburg University, Bellarmine University, Edgewood College, Our Lady of the Lake University, and the Master's University and Seminary.

Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets





Tuition Reset Aspirations

Leaders Lower List Tuition Price to Enter More Prospects' Consideration Sets, Ideally Eventually Increasing Headcount

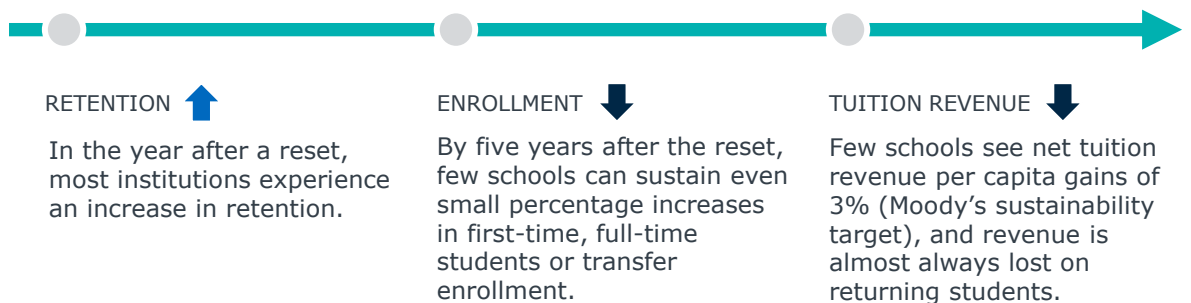
A tuition reset lowers the published list price, shifting an institution's pricing model away from the traditional high-price, high-discount model. Institutional leaders generally use this strategy to attempt to grow tuition revenue by increasing headcount rather than raising prices. The biggest boost a tuition reset can provide, however, is limited to the top of the funnel: breaking into the consideration sets of more students, especially those who are deterred by sticker price.

While a tuition reset can appear a fairly straightforward solution, it is more complex in practice. Institutions might see gains in retention and applications in the year following a reset, but mixed long-term enrollment and revenue results often mitigate initially positive impacts.

Tuition Reset Goals and Typical Impact

Improvement Target	Impact	
Consideration	Highest	
Application	Lowest	
Yield	Lower	
Retention	Higher	

Realities of a Tuition Reset: Despite Appeal, Not Consistently Effective



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets (cont.)

Tuition Reset Risks

Tuition Resets Do Not Drive Net Tuition Revenue Gains, Achieve Only Short-Term Enrollment Boost

In the first year, a tuition reset can attract high interest from prospective students as an exciting new initiative, but in future years, the Requesting Institution may instead be well-accepted as a low-tuition institution. As the data in this report suggests, researchers at [Springer Nature](#), in “Resetting Prices: Estimating the Effect of Tuition Reset Policies on Institutional Finances and Enrollment,” also found minimal evidence that these policies increase student enrollment in the long run, but that there may be short-term impacts. They also find that net tuition revenue appears unchanged, suggesting that, on average, colleges’ financial circumstances do not improve following a reset.

EAB Analysis Underscores Inconsistent Enrollment Gains and Concerning Net Tuition Revenue

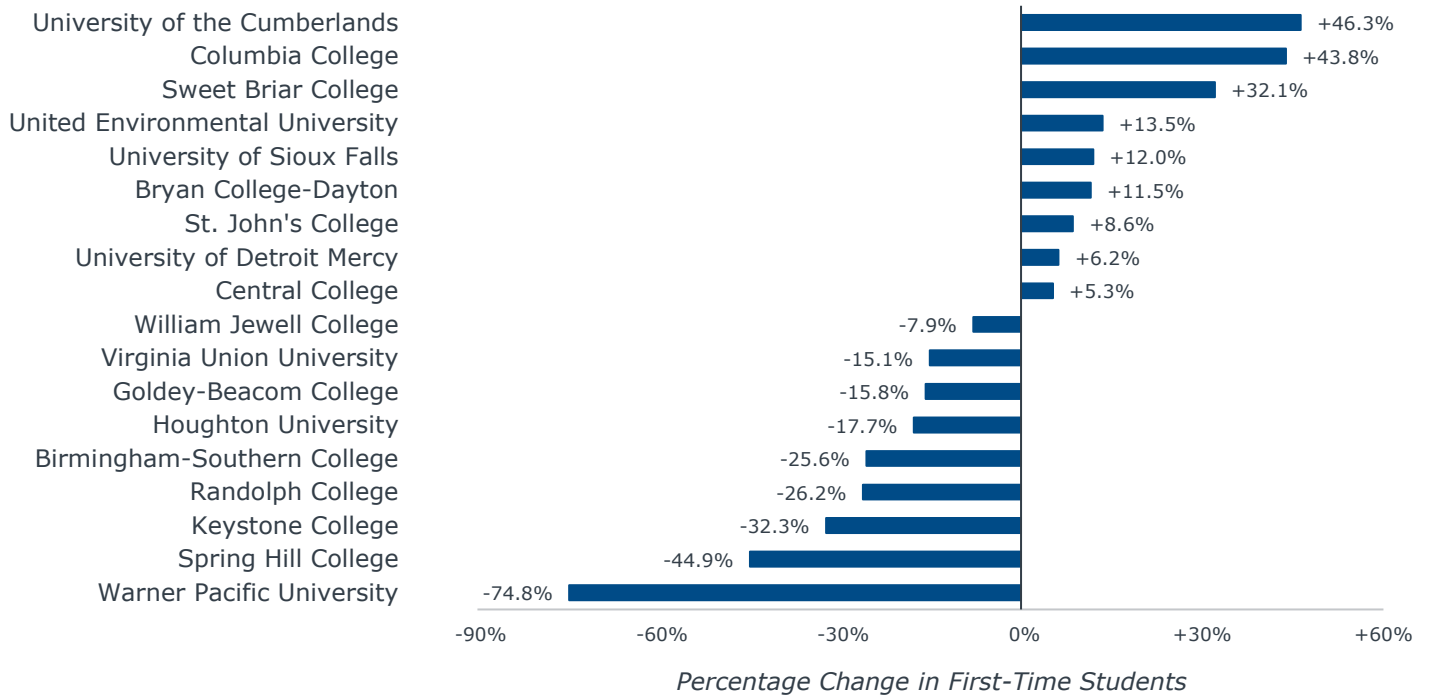
EAB identified 18 private, non-profit institutions that reduced published tuition prices by 10% or more and had a 10-percentage point or greater decrease in discount rates between 2016 and 2021. Analysis suggests that attempting to grow tuition revenue by increasing headcount at a lower tuition rate has mixed results:

- **Only Half of Institutions Grew Enrollment by 2021.** Only nine of the 18 institutions increased their first-time enrollments by 2021 compared to 2016 levels. Three institutions experienced gains of greater than 30%. The remainder of institutions saw first-time enrollments decline, with many experiencing declines of 25% or greater over this period.
- **Nearly All Lost Revenue.** More concerningly, almost all institutions in this group lost net tuition revenue from their first-time students compared to 2016 levels, after adjusting for inflation. Excluding Sweet Briar College, which benefited from a surge in alumni financial support, no institution experienced significant revenue growth.

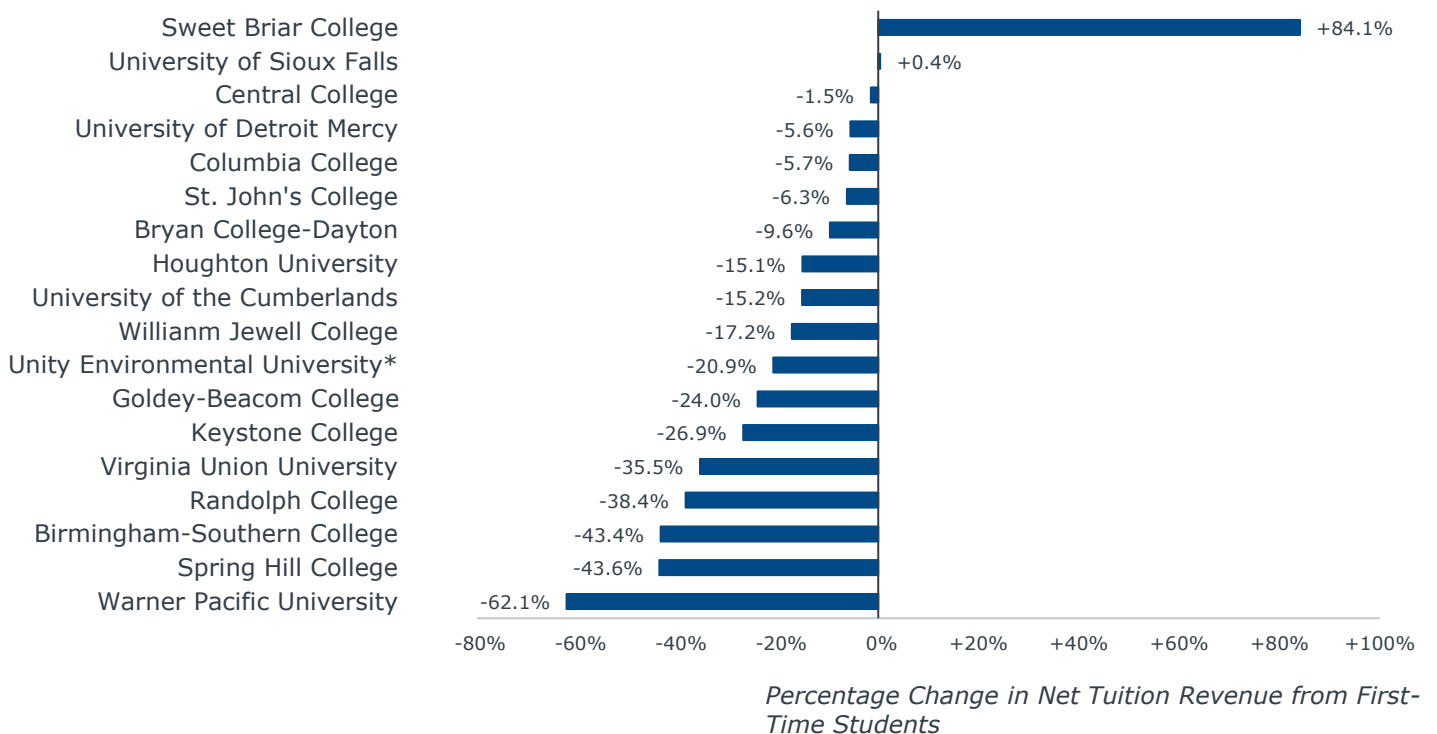
Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets (cont.)

Tuition Reset Risks: Analysis of 18 Institutions' Tuition Reset Impacts

How Did First-Time Student Headcounts Change From 2016-2021?



How Did Net Tuition Revenue Change From 2016-2021?



1) Unity Environmental University was formerly known as Unity College. The college transitioned to its current name in 2017 as a part of its growing focus on sustainability and environmental science.

Source: IPEDS Data.

Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets (cont.)

Tuition Reset Risks (cont.)

Low-Tuition/Low-Aid Model Eliminates Psychological Value of Discount

Resetting tuition reduces the size of scholarships, which students and families see as communicating the college's estimation of the student's value. As expected, institutional aid decreases and varies directly with the size of the sticker price reduction. Colleges decrease financial aid expenditures, in total and on a per-student basis, following a reset. The average net price students pay decreases, but this effect may also be driven by changes in the estimated non-tuition elements of the total cost of attendance.

Moreover, analyzed institutions¹ that reduced overall discount rates and offered limited scholarships struggled to attract admitted students. Yield rates fell by an average of 9% at the five institutions² where the discount rate fell below 30%. Other institutions held yield rates steady on average. Only three institutions with net tuition revenue declines of 20% or greater allowed discount rates to rise by more than five percentage points above this target level, which might suggest uncalibrated discount targeting.

Failed Tuition Resets Make an Institution Less Attractive

Among the analyzed institutions¹, most achieved their goal of reducing discount rates by enough to hold net tuition revenue steady as long as enrollment held steady. Misjudged audience interest in resets may have undercut net tuition revenue expectations, however, as six of the eight institutions where net tuition revenue decreased by 20% or more experienced a *decline* in applications.

While Reset Retains At-Risk Students, Lower Tuition Leads to Revenue Loss. Returning students tend to be a revenue pillar, and they bring less revenue in the year of the reset and beyond.

1) Analyzed institutions refer to the 18 institutions that implemented tuition resets from 2016 to 2021, as seen on pages 10 and 12.

2) The institutions referred to here are Virginia Union University, Randolph College, Birmingham-Southern College, Spring Hill College, and Warner Pacific University.

Sources: [Springer Nature](#) article, AI-assisted content reviewed and finalized by EAB researchers.

Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets (cont.)

Tuition Reset Risks: Analysis of 18 Institutions' Tuition Reset Impacts

Tuition Resettlers' Funnel from 2016 to 2021

>5% misses highlighted in orange

Institution	Sticker Price Change	App Change	Yield Change	Discount Rate vs. Target ¹	First-Time Enrollment Change	Net Tuition Revenue Change
Sweet Briar College	-37%	25.5%	3.4%	-23.0%	32.1%	84.1%
University of Sioux Falls	-27%	38.3%	-0.6%	-0.5%	12.0%	0.4%
Central College	-44%	-43.5%	9.4%	-3.6%	5.3%	-1.5%
University of Detroit Mercy	-24%	-2.4%	-1.3%	-1.0%	6.2%	-5.6%
Columbia College	-37%	143.0%	-15.2%	13.8%	43.8%	-5.7%
St. John's College	-28%	58.0%	-12.2%	5.0%	8.6%	-6.3%
Bryan College-Dayton	-29%	NA	NA	4.9%	11.5%	-9.6%
Houghton University	-46%	-6.1%	-3.5%	-15.9%	-17.7%	-15.1%
University of the Cumberlands	-57%	-4.1%	7.1%	35.3%	46.3%	-15.2%
William Jewell College	-41%	-32.6%	11.0%	1.3%	-7.9%	-17.2%
Unity Environmental University	-54%	192.9%	-14.2%	27.1%	13.5%	-20.9%
Goldey-Beacom College	-46%	-30.6%	4.2%	-3.4%	-15.8%	-24.0%
Keystone College	-31%	31.6%	-11.1%	-7.2%	-32.3%	-26.9%
Virginia Union University	-21%	-33.5%	-6.6%	5.7%	-15.1%	-35.5%
Randolph College	-27%	-4.4%	-5.8%	3.1%	-26.2%	-38.4%
Birmingham-Southern College	-42%	-33.9%	-3.2%	6.9%	-25.6%	-43.4%
Spring Hill College	-41%	-75.2%	3.7%	-5.8%	-44.9%	-43.6%
Warner Pacific University	-13%	-40.1%	-9.3%	-7.8%	-74.8%	-62.1%

Tuition Reset "Failures"
 Net tuition revenue declines by more than 20% from 2016 to 2021

1) We calculated the 'target' discount rate as the rate needed to maintain net tuition revenue per student at the new price point.

Source: IPEDS Data.

Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets (cont.)

Tuition Reset Risks (cont.)

Tuition Reset Can Increase Pell-Eligible Enrollments, Requiring Readiness to Increase Relevant Student Supports

Student success leaders must anticipate increased demand for supports serving Pell-eligible students. [Researchers](#) have found the proportion of students receiving a Pell grant to be 42% at reset institutions and 34% at non-reset institutions when comparing the two sets. Tuition reset colleges experienced increased enrollment of Pell recipients by roughly seven percent. In this way, tuition resets [may effectively convey affordability to lower-income students](#) who are particularly susceptible to sticker shock. Institutional leaders need to consider how to expand resources required by their Pell-eligible students ahead of this potential growth.

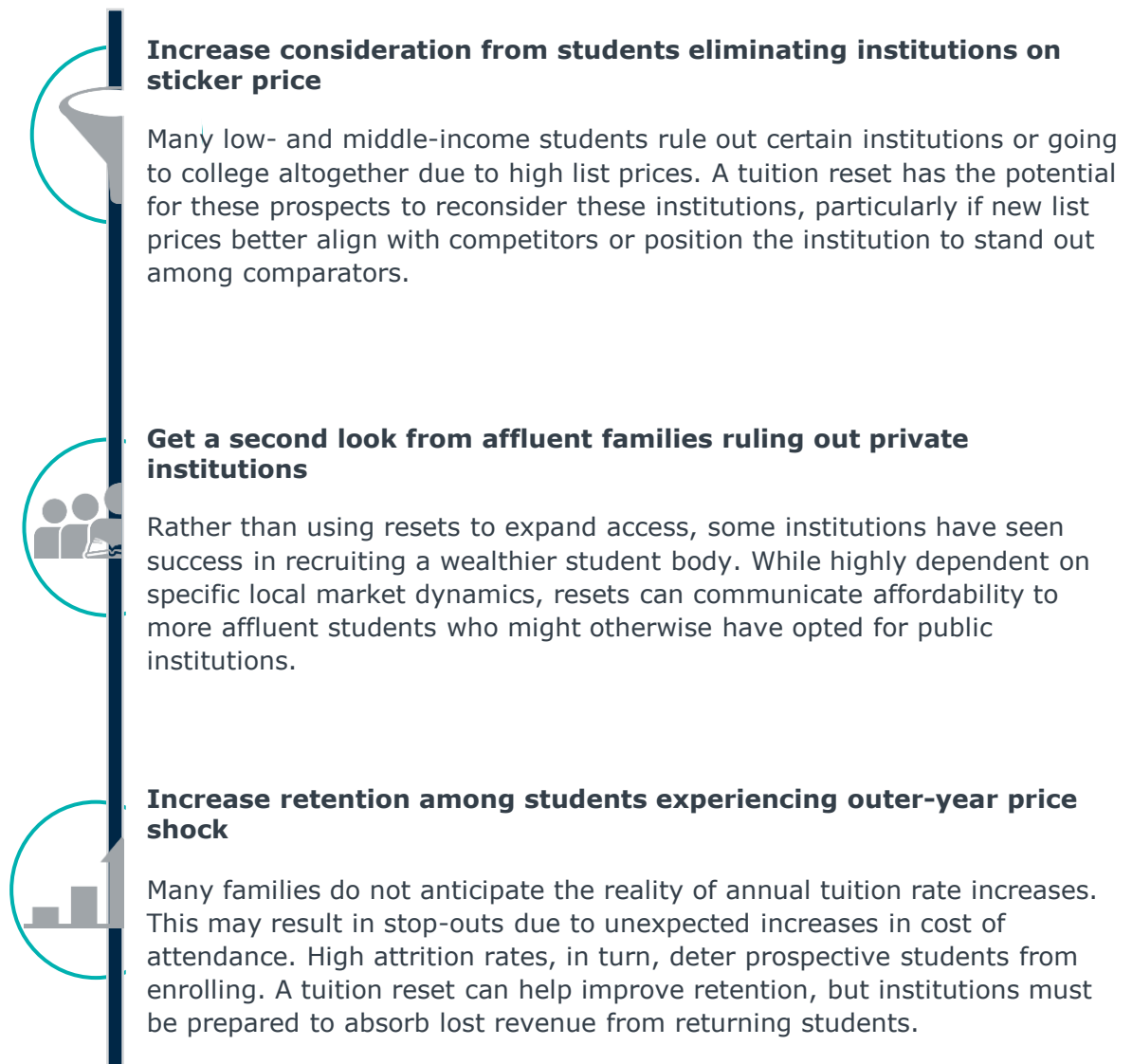
Expectations and Realities of Tuition Resets (cont.)

Potential Positive Outcomes of a Tuition Reset

With Planning and Strong Execution, Resets Can Inflect Some Top-of-Funnel Interest

Under the right circumstances, a tuition reset can work. But institutional leaders must develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to offset potential revenue losses if headcount growth falls short. A tuition reset fundamentally changes an institution's market position, requiring a deliberate repositioning strategy and sustained navigation of a new competitive set. Because a reset primarily expands top-of-funnel consideration, sustained enrollment gains depend on a comprehensive campaign that continues well beyond initial implementation.

Positive Outcomes of Well-Executed Tuition Resets



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Tuition Reset Evaluator

Is a Tuition Reset Right for Our Institution?

This checklist is designed to assess whether a tuition reset is the right strategic move. It synthesizes key insights on pricing, enrollment trends, student mix, and financial risk to clarify what outcome institutional leaders seek to achieve. The checklist’s goal is to determine whether a reset addresses the root drivers of current performance challenges and aligns with long-term enrollment and revenue objectives, not specifically advocate for or against a reset.

Evaluate the Requesting Institution’s Alignment with Tuition Reset

Check If Yes	Indicators a Tuition Reset Aligns with Institutional Goals and Context
_____	We can invest in a large-scale, long-term marketing and branding campaign to promote the tuition reset and overcome misconceptions of lowered price indicating lowered quality.
_____	Data indicates more affluent students among our target population are opting for public institutions or lower-cost private alternatives, given perceptions of the Requesting Institution as high cost.
_____	We successfully carry interested students through the enrollment funnel from considering our institution to enrolling and expect, with an increased top-of-funnel population, we can maintain these conversion rates to achieve a larger enrolled student body.
_____	We are ready to support an increased Pell-eligible student population, even if net tuition revenue remains largely stagnant.
_____	We lose students to unexpected high tuition costs in later years and are prepared for the overall decrease in revenue from returning students if we implement a tuition reset and improve our retention.

Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios

Profiled Institutions' Tuition, Enrollment, and Net Price¹

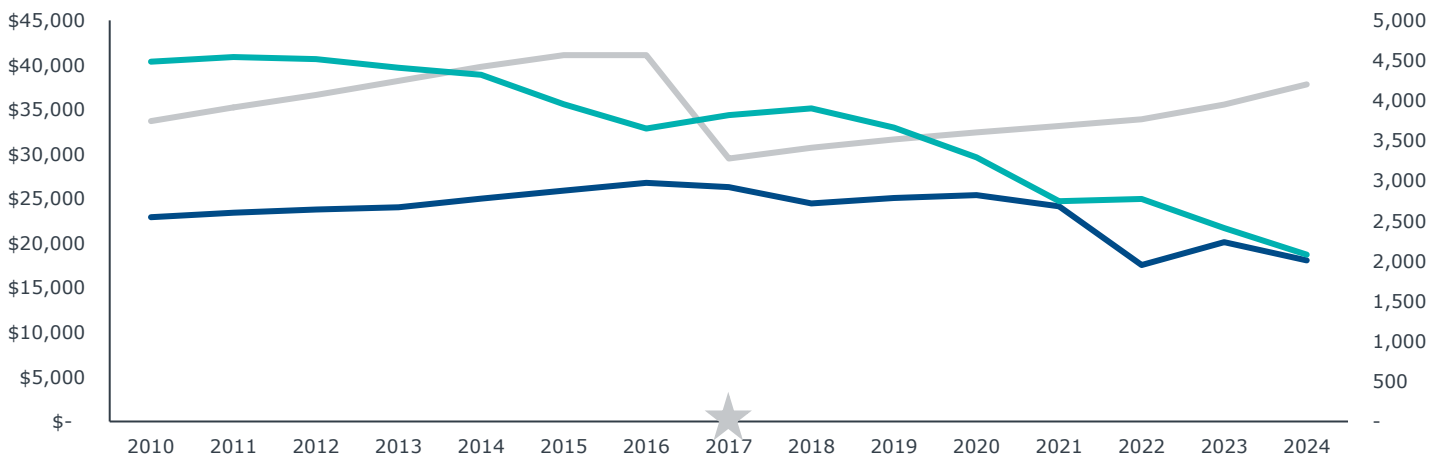
Tuition Largely Remained Below Price at the Reset Point While Enrollment Saw Short-Term Gains

Three small private institutions captured early success in tuition resets through careful execution, though none sustained enrollment gains in the long term.

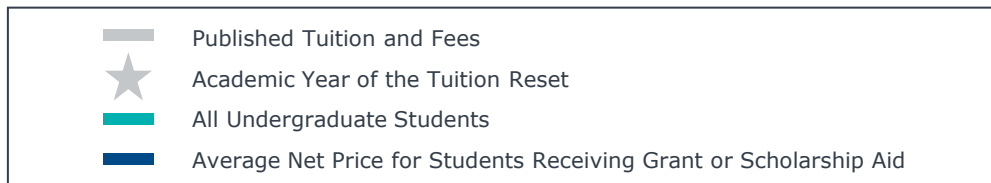
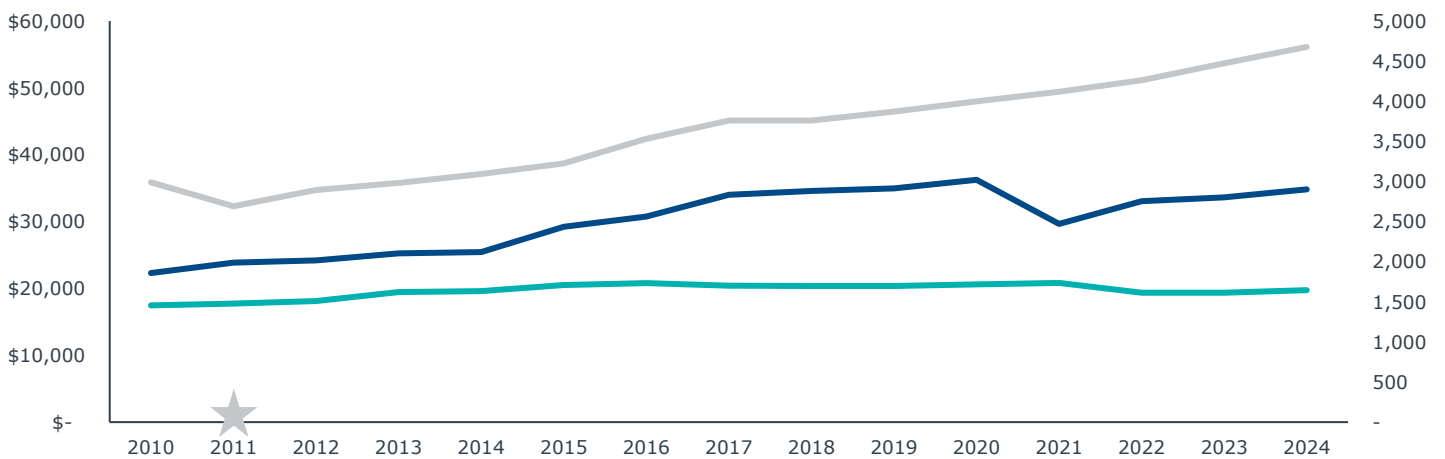
Tuition, Enrollment, and Net Price over Time at Profiled Institutions

Published In-State Tuition and Fees, 2010-2024

LaSalle University



Sewanee, University of the South



1) Net price refers to the cost to students once financial aid is subtracted from the published tuition.

Source: IPEDS.

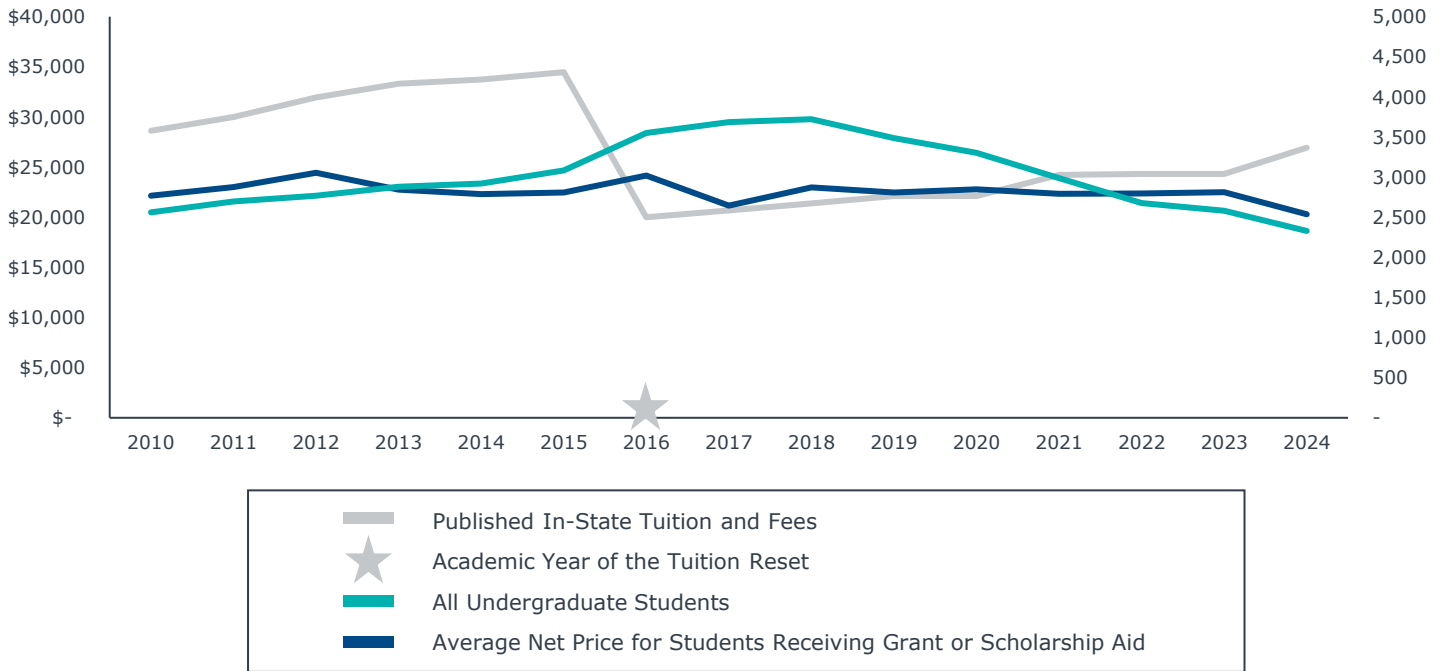
Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios (cont.)

Profiled Institutions' Tuition, Enrollment, and Net Price¹

Tuition, Enrollment, and Net Price over Time at Profiled Institutions

Published In-State Tuition and Fees, 2010-2024

Utica University



Net Price for Aid Recipients Was Largely Unchanged After the Reset

At the three institutions, students receiving financial aid saw limited change in net price after the reset. In practice, institutions often reduced institutional grant aid alongside the sticker price reduction, offsetting much of the intended benefit to students. As a result, net tuition revenue typically remains flat.

1) Net price refers to the cost to students once financial aid is subtracted from the published tuition.

Source: IPEDS.

Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios (cont.)

Profiled Institutions' Key Actions

Data-Informed Actions, Precise Timing, and Intensive Marketing Increase Reset Success in the Near Term

These three tuition reset case studies offer practices key to their early success. Learn from implementation practices and initial enrollment success at:

- LaSalle University, with a tuition reset in the 2017-2018 academic year
- Sewanee, the University of the South, with a 2010-2011 academic year tuition reset but now exceeds its pre-reset tuition cost and appears to have returned to a high-tuition/high-aid model
- Utica College, where tuition was reset in the 2016-2017 academic year

Even these institutions struggled, however, to retain gains long term.

Practices to Increase Likelihood of Tuition Reset Success



Attain an Empirical Understanding of Your Market

- Reveals disparities in prices and outcomes to help determine applicability of reset strategy
- May indicate that perceived benefits of a reset could have less of an impact in your market

Examples in Action:

- Survey audiences about list price impressions and understanding of aid availability
- Measure familiarity with the aid process among target families
- Gauge whether a change in price could result in a change in perceptions of quality



Enhance Impact with Precise Timing

- A 12-to-18-month lead time allows for ample planning and recruiter training
- Additionally, allows the incoming class to matriculate and pay bills while leaving as much time as possible to recruit the next incoming class

Examples in Action:

- Decide to pursue a tuition reset in the winter before it is publicly announced
- Announce reset between August and October the year before implementation



Sustain Momentum through Marketing and Recruitment

- Dispels misconceptions about equating price with quality
- Communicates affordability to priority markets
- Extends impact through predictability
- Elongates PR benefits of a tuition reset

Examples in Action:

- Couple with a new institutional branding campaign
- Train and place recruiters in high-priority markets
- Couple reset messaging with a commitment to not raise tuition more than the historical rate

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios (cont.)

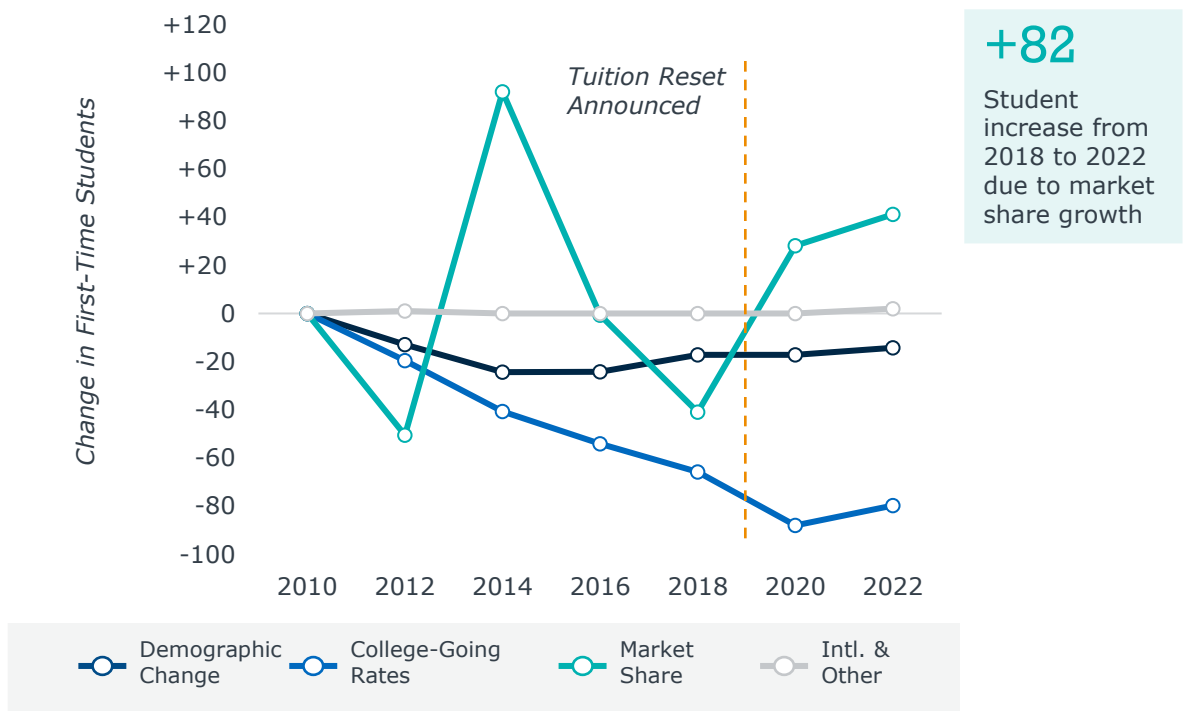
Case Study: Central College

Central College's Tuition Reset Correlates with Higher Enrollments Driven by Much Higher Yields

Central College presents an additional case study of a successful tuition reset that increased enrollment in the years directly following the reset.

Cumulative Change From 2010 by Enrollment Force

EAB Analysis



Elements of Central College's strategy include:

- **A coordinated, heavily publicized message.** Central College's tuition reset received significant publicity and was even [featured on CNN](#). Additionally, the College's website devoted almost the entirety of the landing page to announcing the new tuition level.
- **A broader shift towards more targeted, personalized recruitment.** Central College reduced outreach to focus on more targeted efforts. Recruiters visited all 377 high schools in Iowa and emphasized in-home visits. The tuition reset helped recruiters more easily explain the cost of Central College to prospects and their families.

Source: IPEDs.

Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios (cont.)

Case Study: Central College (cont.)

Short-Term Gains in Enrollment Following a Reset

Transfers & In-State Enrollments Surged from 2019 to 2022

EAB Analysis

Student Group	Share of Total (2022)	Percent Change 19-22
Overall Entering Class	100%	+9%
White Students	85%	+19%
Non-White Students	13%	-30%
Men	54%	+3%
Women	46%	+16%
Transfer-in	10%	+85%
Out-of-State (FT)	27%	-21%
In-State (FT)	73%	+17%
Pell	24%	-18%
Adult (25+)	1%	0%
Part-Time	0%	0%

Yield Doubled from 2016 to 2021 – Driving Up Enrollments Despite Fewer Applications

EAB Analysis

Student Group	Change 2016-21	2021 Level
Sticker Price	-44%	\$19,800
Applications	-43%	1,970
Admit Rate	+1%	79%
Discount Rate	-30%	37%
Yield	+9.4 pts	22.49%
Enrolls	+5.3%	351
Net Tuition Revenue (NTR)	-1.5%	\$4.6M
NTR/Student	-6.1%	\$13,554

Source: IPEDs.

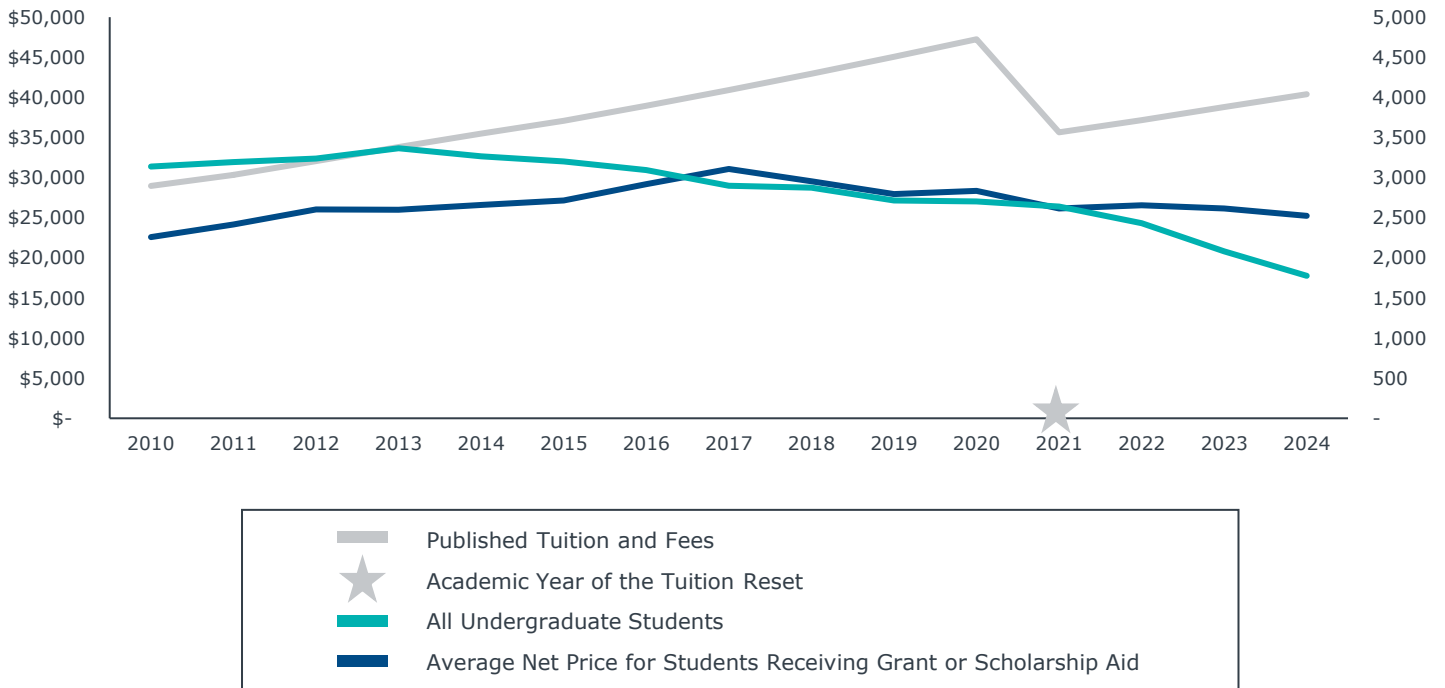
Examining Best-Case Tuition Reset Scenarios (cont.)

Case Study: Seattle Pacific University

Seattle Pacific University Offers a Cautionary Tale

Despite implementing practices associated with successful tuition resets, lowering tuition at Seattle Pacific University failed to stem an ongoing enrollment decline.

Seattle Pacific University



Source: IPEDs.



Appendix



- Implementation Guidance
- Research Methodology

2



Implementation Guidance If Pursuing Tuition Reset

Strategic Planning



Allow for Enough Lead Way for Biggest Impact

Planning and announcing a tuition reset requires precise timing. To get the most of one, announce a reset (i) after your incoming class has matriculated and paid their bills and (ii) with as much time as possible to market it toward the *next* incoming class. That means leadership should announce a reset between late August and early October. With at least six months of preparations necessary in the lead-up to the announcement, stakeholders involved would be best served by deciding to move forward with a reset between December and February of the year before.



Conduct Market Research

Engage in a price sensitivity and perception market study to gain a strong empirical understanding of the price and aid sensitivities of your particular market before any change in tuition strategy. This will help reveal how families react to different list prices, as well as whether their perception of quality might change with a change in tuition. Be sure to survey students and parents about their understanding of the availability of aid as part of this process. Ultimately, market research will support decisions on whether to move forward with a reset. For example, it may reveal that target families are more aware that they can receive aid, and therefore the benefit of “transparency” would have less of an impact.



Conduct Financial Modeling

Because the statistical model for aid awarding and yield estimation is based on historical data, its predictive power is diminished when foundational conditions change significantly. Most institutions will need a financial aid partner that can successfully model what a reduction in price and a reduction in aid will look like.



Recalibrate Discount Levels

Institutions will need to adjust their discounting strategy to avoid a decrease in net tuition revenue. Keeping per-student net tuition revenue consistent will require rigorous efforts, analysis, and recalibration by your financial aid team to lower financial aid awards.

Implementation Guidance If Pursuing Tuition Reset (cont.)

Comprehensive Marketing Strategy



Assign Central Message Ownership

Communication of a reset is essential. Leaders should ensure a coordinated, comprehensive approach by establishing a centralized team that controls the messaging around a tuition reset, with ownership over every aspect and decision. Given the expertise needed, consider partnering with a marketing firm to ensure that all communication materials (e.g., announcement, media strategy, institutional marketing, admissions marketing) are aligned.



Ensure Message Management

Because tuition resets largely inflect top-of-funnel consideration, marketing messages should clearly signal affordability and simplicity. Additionally, a tuition reset will allow institutions to respond to pushes on affordability and price opacity with a message of empathy about educational costs. Institutions may also consider communicating that a decrease in cost does not equate to a decrease in quality. While the trend is starting to change, some students may devalue the institution because they now perceive it as lower quality. We recommend running at this with proactive messaging about the quality of education and experience your institution offers.



Invest Continuously in Marketing

While the PR benefits of a tuition reset are fleeting, institutions pursuing a reset must invest in marketing to generate awareness and sustain momentum as much as possible. Targeted messaging strategies for a tuition reset campaign could include:

- Visibility campaigns to increase brand recognition ahead of the reset announcement
- Targeted outreach sent to prospective students, families, and high schools announcing the change and assuring recipients of quality. This could include on-the-ground recruiting
- Press announcements to publicize the tuition reset among the media
- Institutional website announcements that illustrate the affordability implications of the reset
- Counselors cross-trained to speak about financial aid and net price

Research Methodology

Project Challenge

The requesting Institution has significantly increased its discount rate in recent years while continuing to serve a largely Pell-eligible, first-generation student population. At the same time, the Requesting Institution hopes to expand its appeal to more affluent students and grow enrollment within that segment, to ensure the Requesting Institution can support students' success with available resources.

Leadership has been considering a tuition reset for several years, and the Requesting Institution now requires a definitive, research-driven assessment of whether moving forward with a reset would meaningfully advance institutional goals—specifically growth in the higher-income student population and improved long-term financial sustainability

Research Approach

To address the project challenge, EAB analyzed IPEDS data on tuition, enrollment and financial aid metrics from comparable institutions with past tuition resets. To identify fellow small private universities, we looked at schools with the Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small Carnegie classification in California and at schools with similar enrollment sizes in large Western cities. See the following page for more information on the 27 institutions included in this report. Researchers supported this analysis with EAB's best practice research on tuition resets and research from [Springer Nature](#) and the [University of Toronto](#).

Research Limitations

COVID-19 significantly disrupted the higher education market and likely affected revenue and student behavior data found in this report.

Definitions

- Analyzed institutions refer to the 18 institutions that implemented tuition resets from 2016 to 2021, as seen on pages [10 and 12](#).
- Discount rate refers to the percentage of a college or university's gross tuition and fee revenue that is awarded to undergraduates in the form of grants and scholarships.
- NTR is net tuition revenue.
- Net price is published tuition minus aid.

Research Methodology (cont.)

Research Approach

Profiled Institutions

Private, Small Institutions, the Majority of Which Implemented Tuition Resets

Institution	Location	Enrollment (Undergraduate/ Total)	Carnegie Classification
Augsburg University	Midwest	2,500 / 3,200	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
Bellarmino University	South	2,200 / 2,900	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
Birmingham-Southern College	No longer open	No longer open	No longer open
Bryan College-Dayton	South	1,600 / 1,700	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small
Central College	Midwest	1,000 / 1,000	Mixed Baccalaureate
Columbia College	Midwest	5,200 / 5,700	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Medium
Edgewood College	Midwest	1,200 / 2,500	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
Goldey-Beacom College	Mid-Atlantic	700 / 1,000	Special Focus: Business
Houghton University	Northeast	1,200 / 1,200	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences
Keystone College	Mid-Atlantic	900 / 1,000	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small
La Salle University	Mid-Atlantic	2,000 / 3,200	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
Our Lady of the Lake University	South	1,100 / 2,000	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
Randolph College	Mid-Atlantic	700 / 800	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences

Research Methodology (cont.)

Research Approach (cont.)

Profiled Institutions (cont.)

Private, Small Institutions, the Majority of Which Implemented Tuition Resets

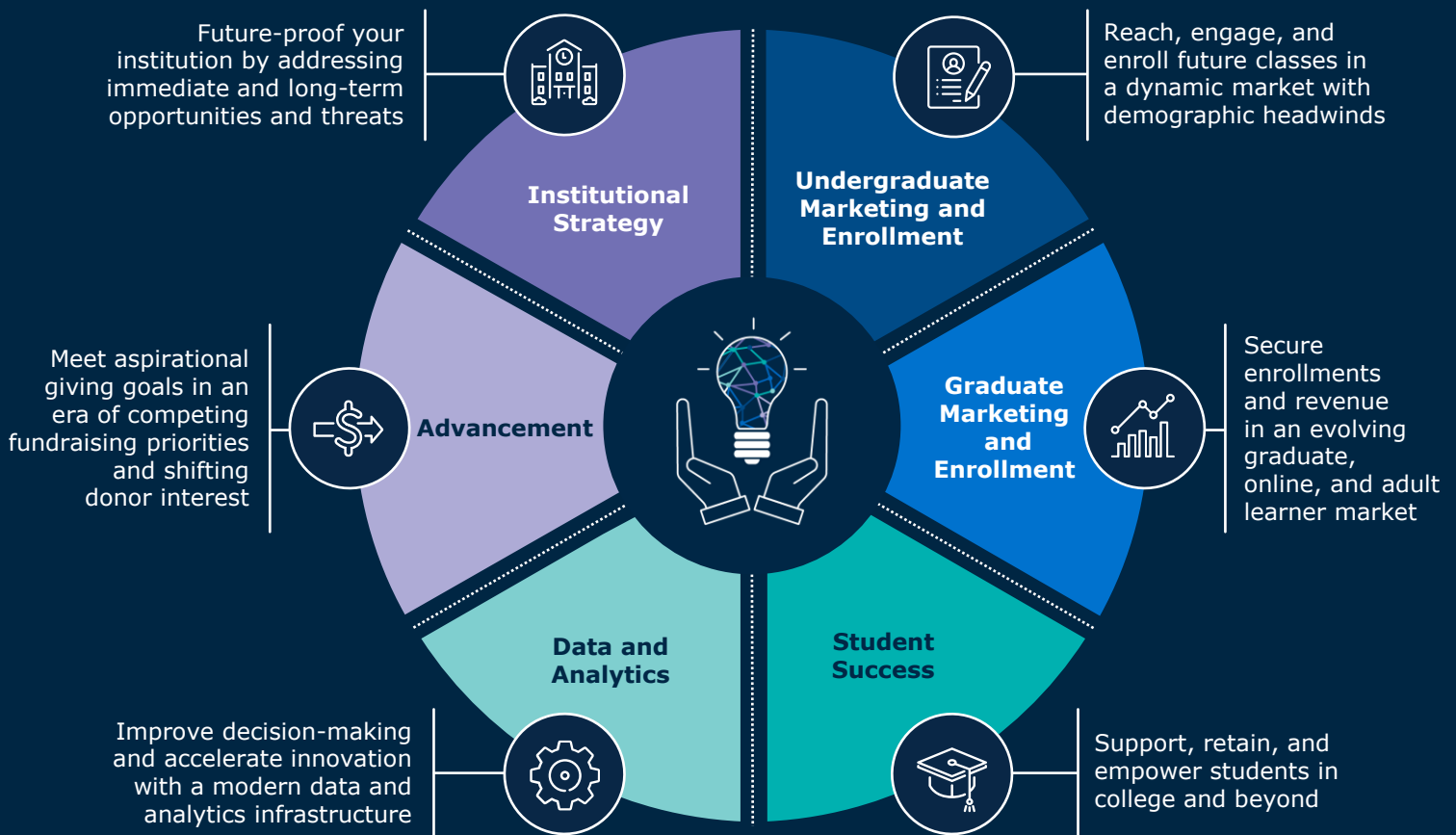
Institution	Location	Enrollment (Undergraduate /Total)	Carnegie Classification
Seattle Pacific University	Pacific West	1,800 / 2,300	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
Spring Hill College	South	800 / 900	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small
St. John's College	Mountain West	400 / 500	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences
Sweet Briar College	Mid-Atlantic	400 / 400	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences
The Master's University and Seminar	Pacific West	1,900 / 2,900	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
The University of the South	South	1,600 / 1,700	Special Focus: Arts and Sciences
Unity Environmental University (Formerly Unity College)	Northeast	6,500 / 7,200	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium
University of the Cumberlands	South	7,600 / 22,100	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large
University of Detroit Mercy	Midwest	3,400 / 5,600	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
University of Sioux Falls	Midwest	1,200 / 1,400	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small
Utica University	Northeast	2,300 / 3,600	Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
Virginia Union University	Mid-Atlantic	1,200 / 1,600	Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small
Warner Pacific University	Pacific West	100 / 400	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small
William Jewell College	South	900 / 1,000	Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small

Research Methodology (cont.)

Project Sources

- EAB's internal and online research libraries
- Corral, D., & Ward, J.D. (2023). An Overview of Tuition Reset Policies in the United States. Toronto: Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education, OISE-University of Toronto. <https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/site/sites/default/files/2024-10/Daniel-Corral-An-Overview-of-Tuition-Reset-Policies-in-the-United-States-1.pdf>.
- Deitz, B. (2021). Impact of Tuition Resets on Student Enrollment at Private Four-Year Not-For-Profit Colleges and Universities: A Quantitative Analysis of IPEDS Data. Western Michigan University. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/45a74343f6fc241ec1b959afccd0a6ed/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.
- Kellam, J.W. (2022). A Study of the Benefits and Detriments of a Tuition Reset at a Small, Private, Single-Gender, Liberal Arts College. Converse University. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/6c1c34c942948605a25b7b5b8b9196f2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.
- McLean, D. (2023). More colleges are resetting tuition. Does the strategy work? Higher Ed Drive. <https://www.highereddrive.com/news/tuition-resets-new-research-does-it-work/695811/>.
- Taphorn, Richard (2025). Tuition Resets: Impact on Finances at Private Higher Education Institutions. Union University. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/b044e063224bdb0fb7eb976feaa950e0/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.
- Ward J.D., & Corral, D. (2022). Resetting Prices: Estimating the Effect of Tuition Reset Policies on Institutional Finances and Enrollment. Springer Nature. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11162-022-09723-6>.

**Insight-Powered Solutions for Your Top
Priorities and Toughest Challenges**



We partner with **2,800+** institutions to accelerate progress, deliver results, and enable lasting change.

95%+ of our partners return to us year after year because of results we achieve, together.



202-747-1000 | eab.com

 @eab  @eab-  @WeAreEAB

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with more than 2,800 institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and advancement. We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.