

**Report I for Lumina  
On Access, Tuition Discounting and Pricing  
Overview of the Data Base**

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**Overview**

The Lumina funded project on tuition discounting and pricing has produced many very interesting results concerning the importance of pricing and discounting variables relative to access to higher education for high school seniors in the fall and spring of their senior year of high school.

**Methodology**

The project design provided for the development of a survey to be administered to high school seniors and their parents in the fall and spring of the student's senior year. Parents and students were both included in the survey based on the industry understanding that they both contribute significantly to the student's college choice. The study design assumed it was important to see if there were significant differences in perception on a variety of issues between parents and students as both play important roles in the college decision-making process. The hypothesis is that where there are differences between groups, it is important to understand how to address the concerns of each group

Lucie Lapovsky hired Stamats in January, 2006 to conduct the market research for the study. Together, they developed the study methodology and survey instruments. The decision was made to conduct the survey by telephone rather than mail or web in order to get a random sample of respondents. The survey instruments were designed in spring 2006 and were field tested in May, 2006. After completion of the field testing with four populations:

- high school seniors
- parents of high school seniors
- high school juniors
- parents of high school juniors

the survey instruments were finalized. In the field test, high school juniors were used as a proxy for high school seniors in the fall as they were the closest group to fall H.S. seniors and we didn't want to wait until the fall to field test this survey with them

A list of 20,000 rising high school seniors who had indicated that they intended to go to college was purchased from NRCCUA in August, 2006. A sample size of 750 students and 750 parents was decided upon to provide sufficient data to have statistically significant results and to be able to have adequate representation by gender and race/ethnicity to do cross tabs by specific demographic groups in the fall of 2006 and in the spring of 2007.

For the spring survey, the first approach was to return to those who had responded in the fall. We were able to get responses from 200 students and 203 parents who had completed the fall survey. We then moved on to other students and parents on our original list to replicate a sample with similar demographics to the fall sample. The results that are presented represent those from the entire spring survey group. The responses from the group that were surveyed in both the fall and the spring are not significantly different than those from the additional 500 spring respondents. Therefore, there appears to be no respondent bias (both in terms of demographics and survey responses) among those completing both the fall and spring survey compared to those only completing the spring survey.

The fall had 794 completed student surveys and the spring had 750. In the spring, 848 students completed the study but only 750 of them planned to go to college in the fall and knew what college they would attend. The spring survey was only completed for those who could identify the college that they would attend in the fall. The fall response rate on the student survey was 47% and the spring response rate for completed surveys was 26%. The fall response rate was much higher than initially expected; the spring response rate was more in line with what our expectations were. The sampling error for both students and parents in the fall and spring is estimated at  $\pm 3.5\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. The demographics for the student survey are shown below along with comparable data from NCES for full-time traditional age college students.

	Fall	Spring	NCES Data
Female	58%	59.5%	57.2%
Male	42%	40.5%	42.8%
Caucasian	49%	51%	66.1%
Black or African-American, non-Hispanic	21%	21%	12.5%
Hispanic	17%	14%	10.5%
Asian	7%	7%	6.4%
Mixed or no dominant race	4%	4%	---
Other	2%	3%	4.2%

When comparing the gender and race/ethnicity between my samples and NCES data on full-time undergraduate students we see that by gender, the sample mirrors the population. In terms of race/ethnicity, I oversampled minorities so that I would have a large enough numbers of minorities to be able to have valid results for different sub-populations of the data. Thus when comparing the sample population with the NCES data, Caucasians are underrepresented. In many of the future reports, the results are weighted by race/ethnicity to mirror the NCES population.

### Family Income

Student Responses Household Income	Fall	Spring	Parent Responses	Fall	Spring
< \$25,000	15.9	8.8		16.6	9.9

<b>\$25,000 - \$49,999</b>	26.4	19.9	29.9	18.5
<b>\$50,000 - \$74,999</b>	18.1	17.7	19	20.5
<b>\$75,000 - \$99,999</b>	7.9	10	12.8	15.1
<b>\$100,000 - \$150,000</b>	4.7	6.9	7.1	10.3
<b>&gt;\$150,000</b>	1.9	2.9	7.1	5.1
<b>Don't Know/Won't Answer</b>	25.1	33.7	7.6	20.5

When we look at the data by family income, we see that 25% of the students in the fall and 34% of them in the spring either don't know their family's income or refused to respond to the question. Among parents surveyed, 8% in the fall and 21% in the spring either didn't know or wouldn't answer this question. The most important finding is that the representation among low income households falls between the fall and the spring. This is consistent with other studies which have shown that many more low income students aspire to college than actually follow through with their plans to attend college.

There were 779 surveys completed in the fall by parents of high school seniors planning to go to college and 764 in the spring. The gender of the parents completing this survey was 73% female and 27% male in the fall and 74% female and 26% male in the spring. The response rate on the parent's survey was 28% in the fall and 17% in the spring for completed surveys. In the spring, 940 parents responded to our survey but only 764 had children who were going to college and had chosen the college they were going to attend; this is the number that was used to calculate the response rate.

#### **Gender of the students of these parents:**

	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>NCES</b>
Female	55%	59.5%	57.2%
Male	44%	40.5%	42.8%

#### **Race/Ethnicity of the Parents**

Caucasian	50%	56%	66.1%
Black or African-American, non-Hispanic	25%	20%	12.5%
Hispanic	12%	12%	10.5%
Asian	7%	7%	6.4%
Mixed or no dominant race	3%	4%	
Other	4%	3%	4.2%

#### **Reports**

The data that these surveys provide is rich and extensive. A series of reports will be written that explores the results. The data base will be available to researchers who want to further explore the results and mine the data.