



Northeastern University  
Office of the Faculty Senate

**Final Report of the Standing Committee for Enrollment and Admissions Policy  
2015-2016**

Professor Gloria Barczak–DMSB  
Professor Maura Iversen-BCHS (Co-Chair)  
Professor Ben-An Khaw-BCHS  
Professor Joanne Miller-COS  
Professor Jeff Ruberti-COE (Co-Chair)  
Vice Provost Bruce Ronkin, Undergraduate Education

On November 18<sup>th</sup> the standing committee received its charge from the Senate Agenda Committee. The committee met on the following dates (12/6, 1/14, 1/27, 2/16, 2/25, 3/17, 3/25) to develop a plan and to review data gathered from various constituents to address the charge. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, representatives from the EMSA (Ronne' Patrick-Turner and Tony Erwin) team met with the committee to discuss their admissions process.

**Charge of the committee and amendments to the charge**

**Committee Charge**

- 1) In collaboration with Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA), this Committee shall review patterns of freshman enrollments over the last five years in the colleges/schools across the university in comparison with match universities;
  - a. **Amendment:** The committee elected to evaluate the trends independently from the matchmate university data due to difficulty in acquiring corresponding data from matchmate institutions with resolution similar to that which could be obtained from in-house sources. The committee believes that this does prevent drawing inferences relative to competitor performance, however, the trends of the in-house data provided ample material for analysis.
- 2) The committee shall investigate the impact that admission policies and practices have had on undergraduate and graduate student (national and international) yield at each college/school across the university; and
  - a. **Amendment:** The committee limited the analysis to the undergraduate population of the university. This decision was driven by recognition of the heterogeneity and diversity of admissions policies applied by individual graduate programs. Merely collecting the data would have taken the full effort of the committee.
- 3) The committee shall solicit information to understand factors and implications of policies and financial aid which contribute to freshman admissions and yield in STEM and non-STEM fields and the implications of that balance for the mission of the university and the composition of NU's undergraduates.

4) Other priorities, to be determined by the Senate Agenda Committee, may be charged as they arise.

**Findings and recommendations:**

**General admissions strategy and effects**

Northeastern has made tremendous progress in recruiting high caliber freshman applicants. EMSA's recruiting strategy and admissions process is highly selective and, in combination with other factors (e.g. marketing, improved infrastructure, improved research visibility, etc.) has led to substantial increases in SAT scores (see Appendix) and GPAs over the last five years. Indeed, some of the data the committee obtained show substantial gains in SAT scores of both admitted and enrolled students without loss of enrollment from 2011 to 2015 (see Appendix: College of Engineering, College of Science, School of Business, College of Computer and Information Science and Undeclared). However, the data also show that the admissions strategy (and other factors) has also led to substantial losses in enrollment across other colleges including in the Bouvé College of Health Science, the College of Arts Media and Design and the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. Thus, a consequence of the admission policy is a shift in enrollments in colleges and subsequent imbalances in faculty and financial resources for colleges to meet the academic needs of students. For example, Bouvé College's yield and number of applications are level while their enrollment has dropped substantially. This suggests a decline in admissions rate (Please refer to corresponding graph). Within Bouvé, some programs have excellent yield (e.g. Physical Therapy has one of the highest university yields at 32%) yet low enrollments. We were advised that EMSA employs a holistic approach to applicant review that considers every aspect of the applicant's profile (essays, extra-curricular activities/leadership, SATs, GPA and recommendations) with the goal of ensuring that enrollees are qualified to pursue any field of study at any college or department at the university. Realized enrollments are applicant-specific. Thus, once an offer is made, the decision resides with the candidate and there is no exact science to estimate the number who will accept based on the number of offers made.

**Class Shaping**

While admission decisions are based primarily on student holistic quality, modified by diversity and geographic consideration, they are not fully independent of university goals or local college and department enrollment targets. After applicant screening (by full and part time readers then by territory managers) EMSA meets with the Provost regarding the "shape" of the class. It was not clear to the committee what particular factors, (geographic, diversity, STEM etc.) drive the admissions decisions during this phase of the process. We were also advised that each fall, EMSA meets and obtains information from Deans and Associate Deans to determine target enrollments for each college. Again, it was not clear what mechanism was used to ensure that these targets are factored into the final admissions decisions.

**STEM**

The effect of the admissions policy has led to a positive impact on the STEM college enrollments. Computer Science, the College of Engineering and the College of Science have all increased or maintained enrollment levels while their selectivity and student quality have improved dramatically. The admissions policy has concurrently led to reduced enrollments in some non-STEM Colleges. However, the committee was unable to determine whether or not the holistic approach of EMSA combined with class-shaping process produced this effect intentionally.

**NUin**

The NUin program is a relatively new admissions program designed to help the university meet enrollment targets without impacting reported gains in selectivity. Applicants selected for NUin are in

the second tier of qualified candidates and enter in January. Thus their SAT scores are not factored in external university reporting mechanisms. This program has the added benefit of meeting the university's mission of global student engagement. However, to meet the 2800 undergraduate enrollment target and continue to achieve a high level of selectivity in admissions, offers for admission may or may not be sufficient to meet recommended targets for each college.

### **Financial Aid and NU Scholar Program**

The NU Scholars program was designed to match other comparable university scholarship offerings. There is no specific deadline as to an end date for this program.

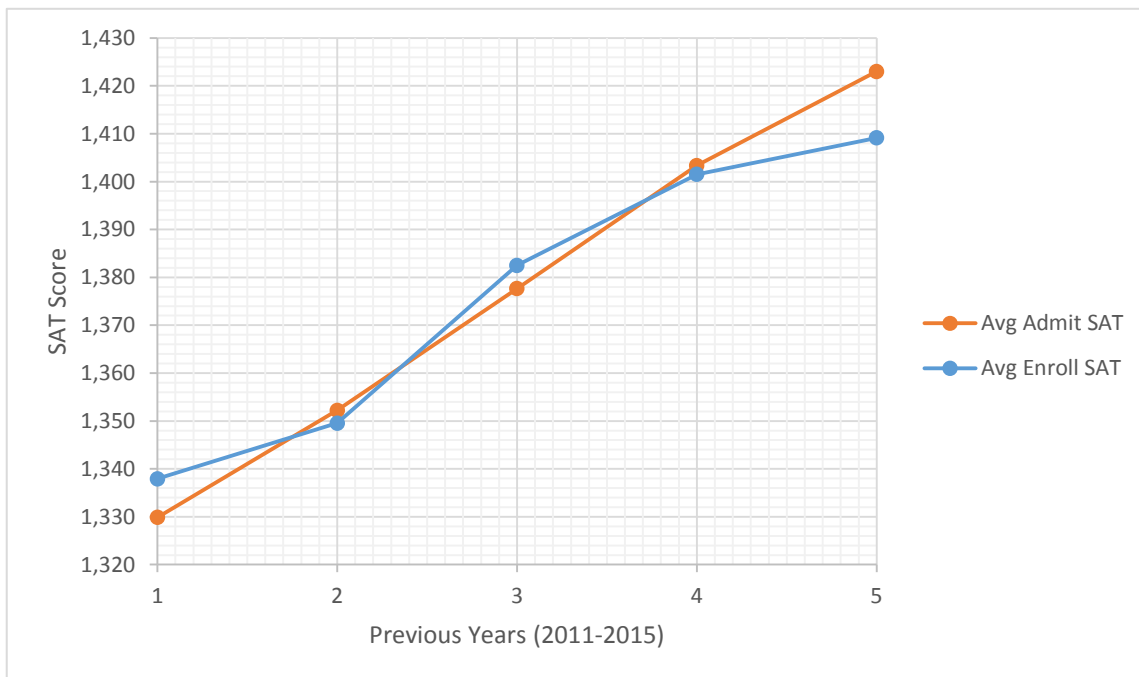
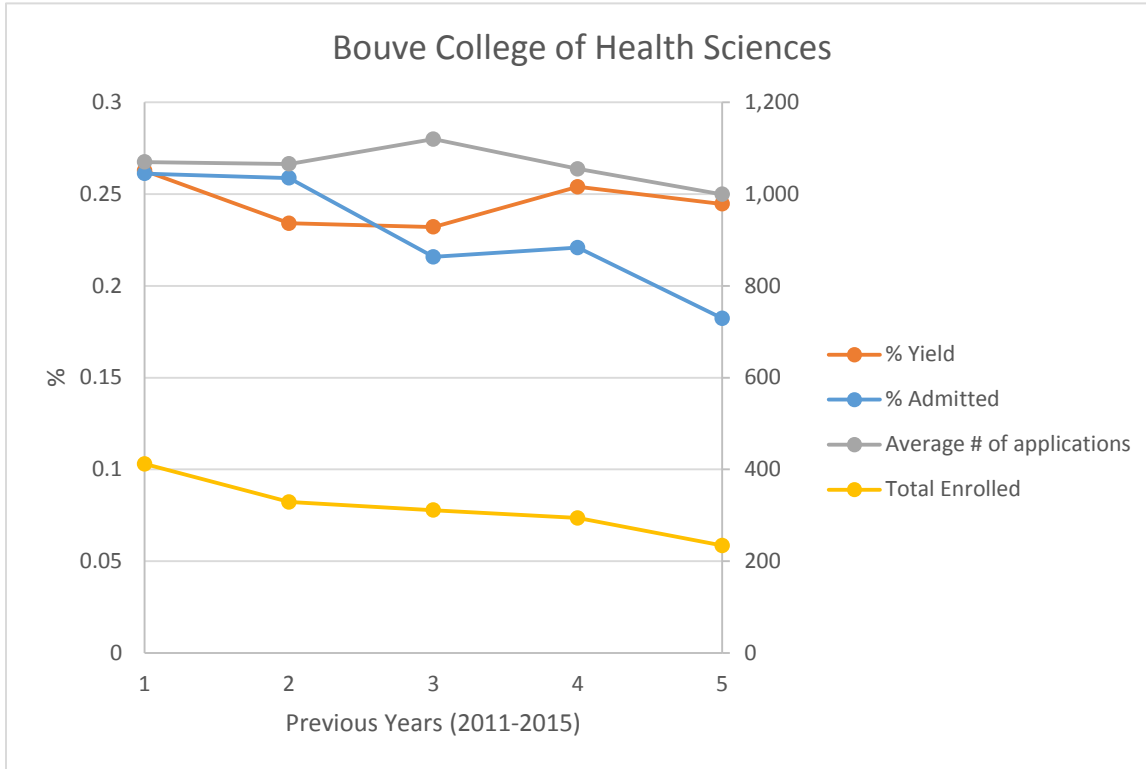
There are two forms of financial aid, need based or merit based aid. All accepted US students may receive a need-based aid package (loans, work-study, grants, etc.) based on external criteria. Merit based financial aid is based on student accomplishment and profile. This form of financial aid is used to create a high quality student body.

### **Recommendations:**

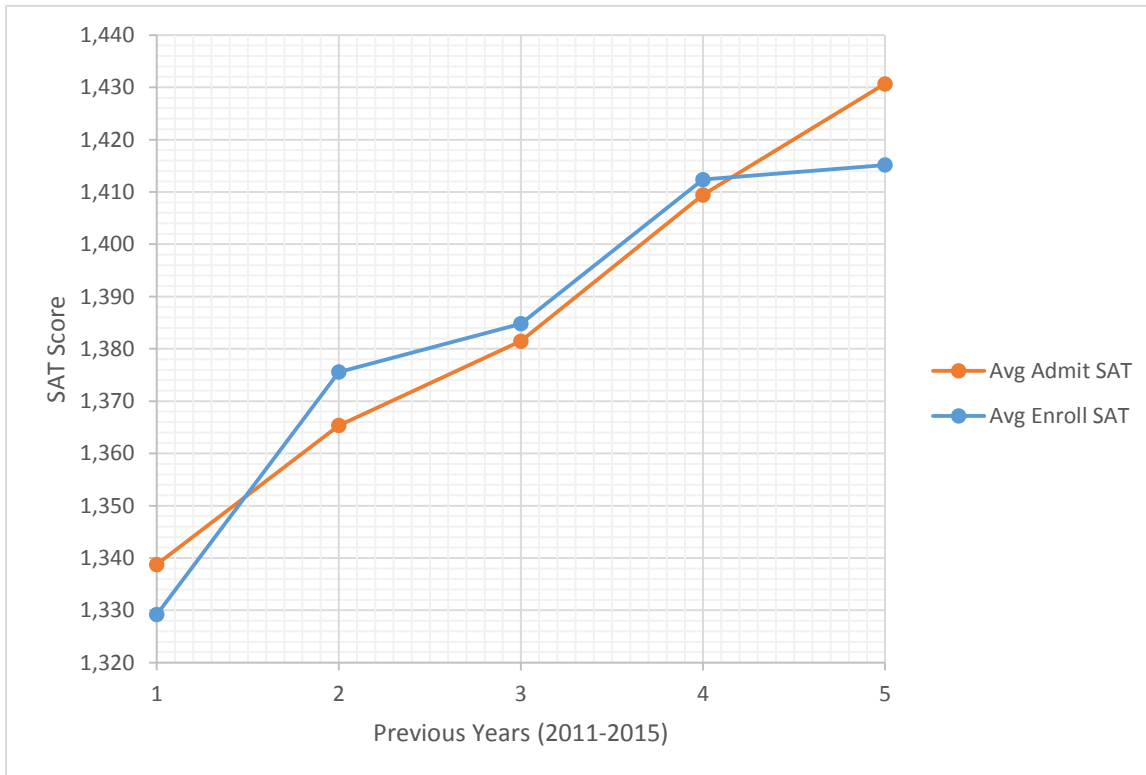
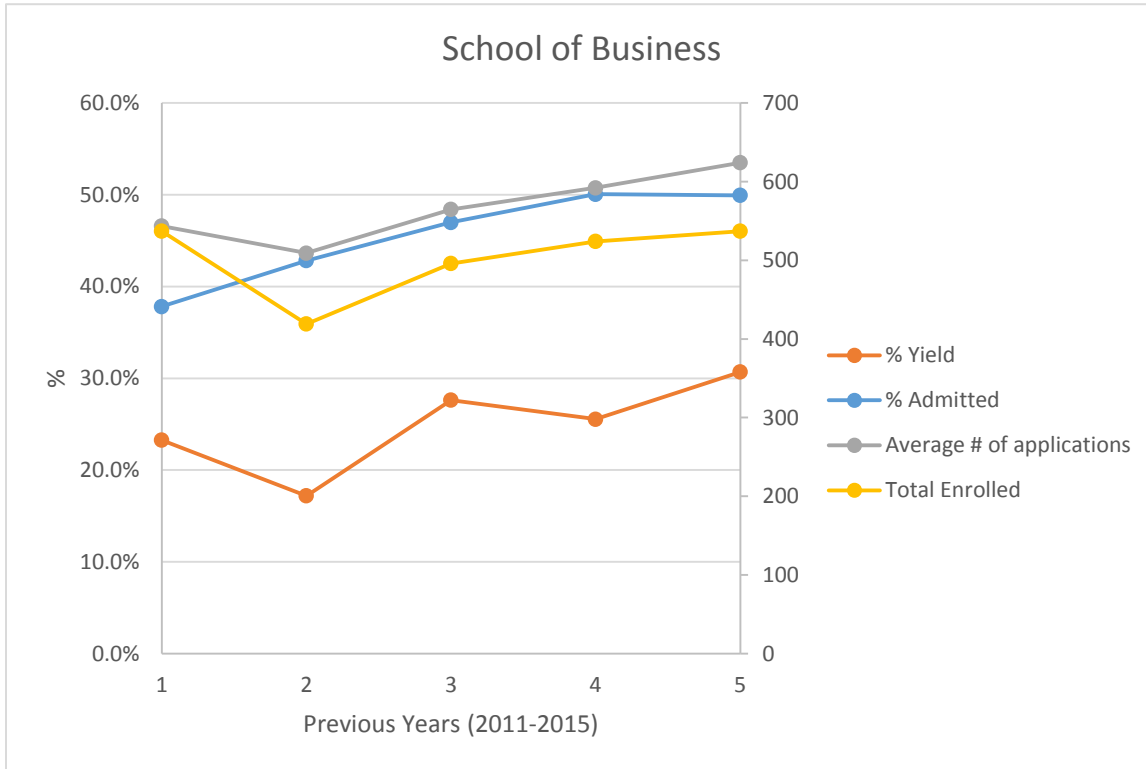
- 1) We recommend consideration of targeted scholarships for specific programs that may not meet their undergraduate target of high caliber students to ensure program viability.
- 2) We recommend more transparency regarding how the goals of the university are used to shape the class including the role that Deans and Associate Deans play in establishing and meeting target enrollment goals for their respective colleges.
- 3) The Financial aid office and scholarship programs, including the NU Scholars program, have demonstrated success in recruiting the highest caliber students. We recommend continuing the NU Scholars program as it is successful in recruiting the top applicants to the university.
- 4) We recommend that EMSA continue its holistic evaluation, mindful of applicants' differing opportunities.
- 5) We recommend that EMSA provide more transparency into the process including information to the faculty as to how particular elements of an application are weighted.

**Appendix:** General Trends in Enrollment and Student Quality. SAT scores stratified by college and by admission group (applicant, admitted, enrolled and yield). Values are weighted by Department (not student volume). Total enrollments are absolute numbers)

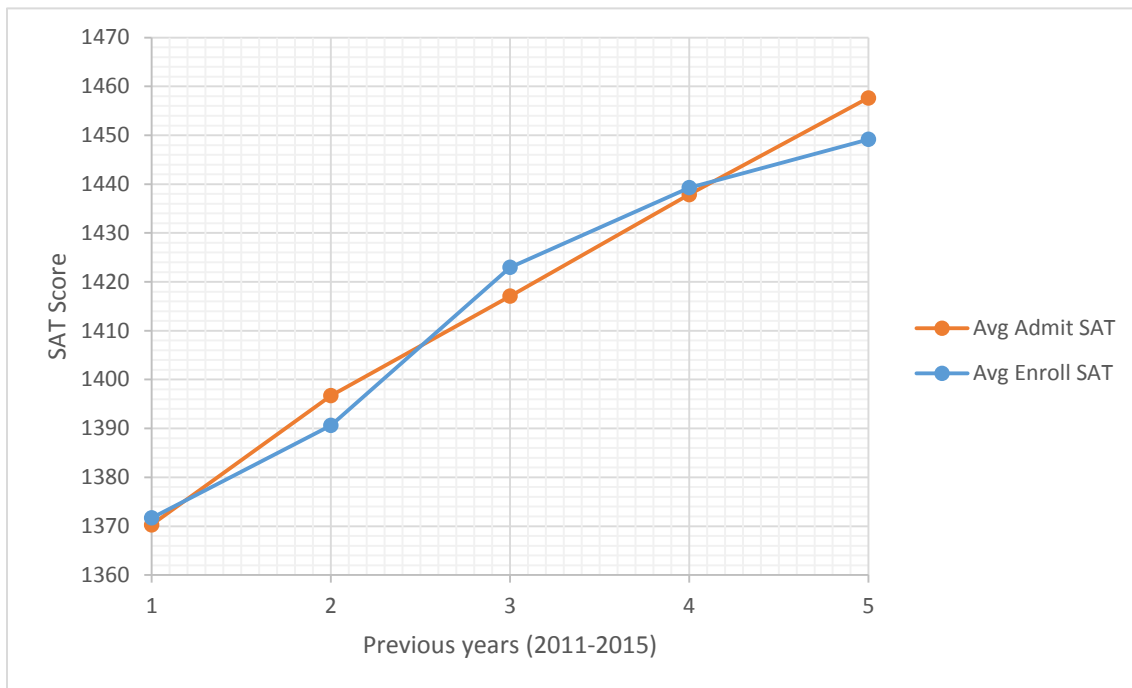
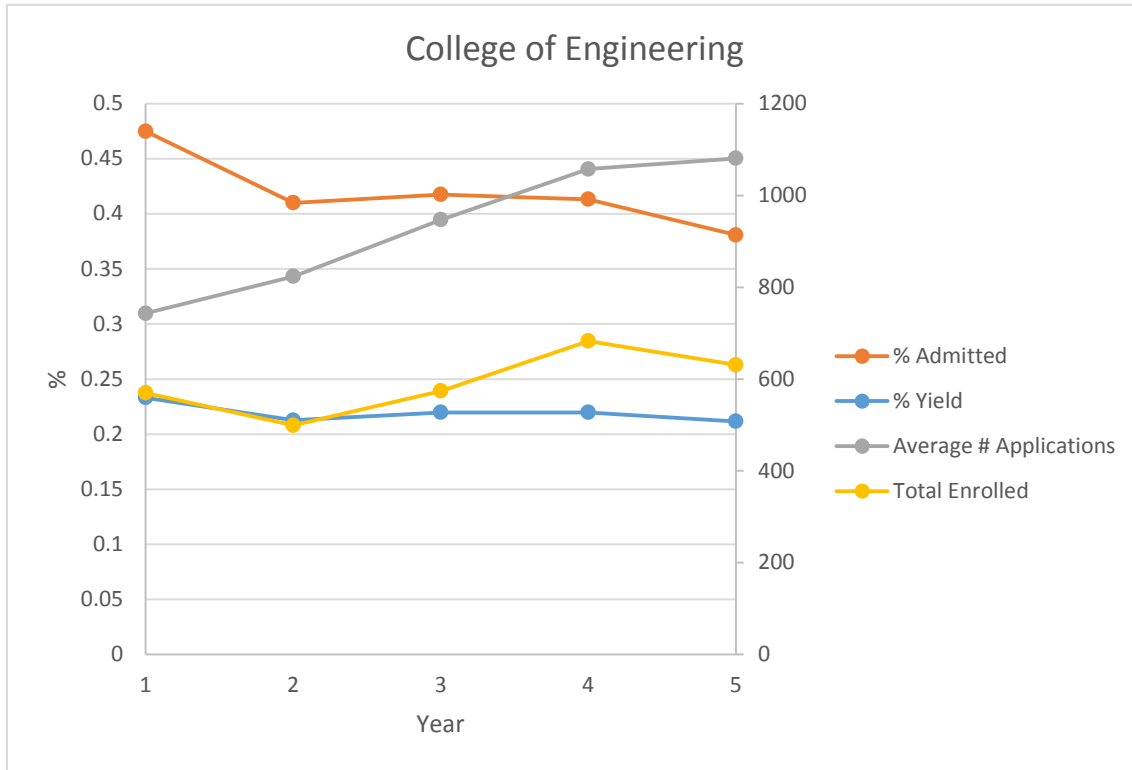
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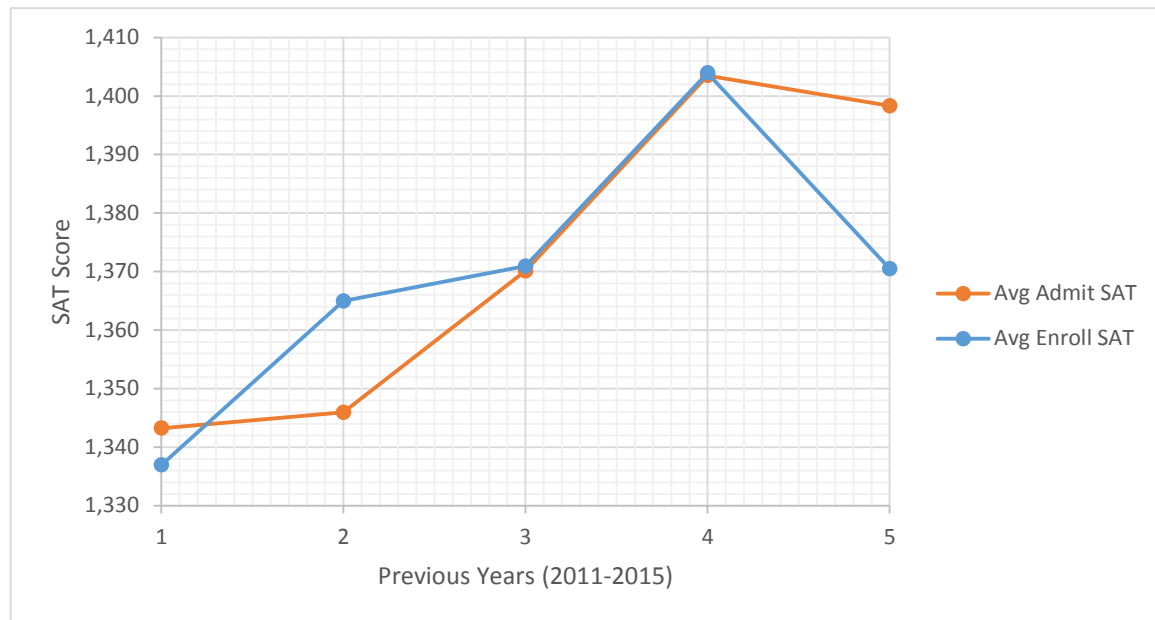
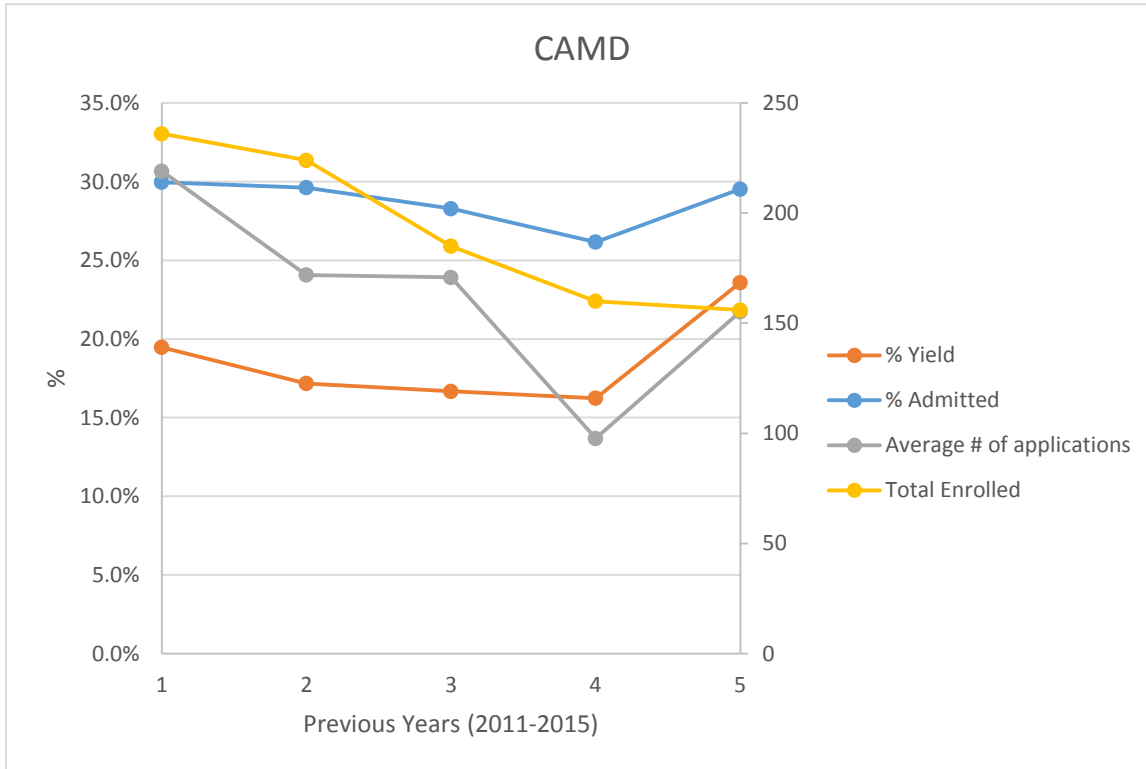
School of Business



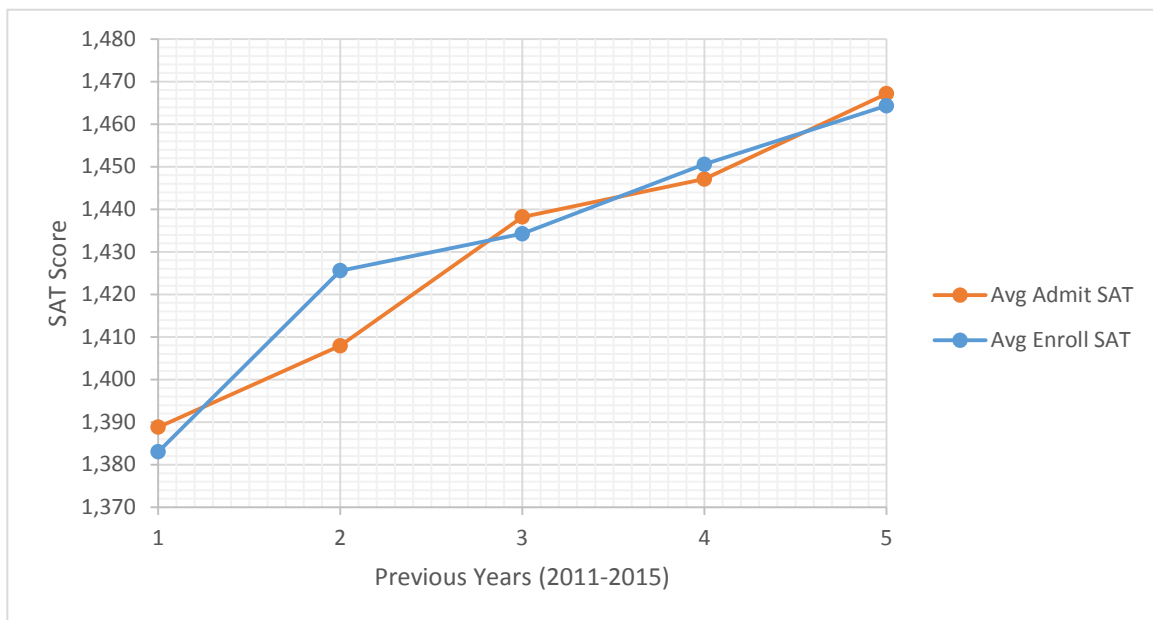
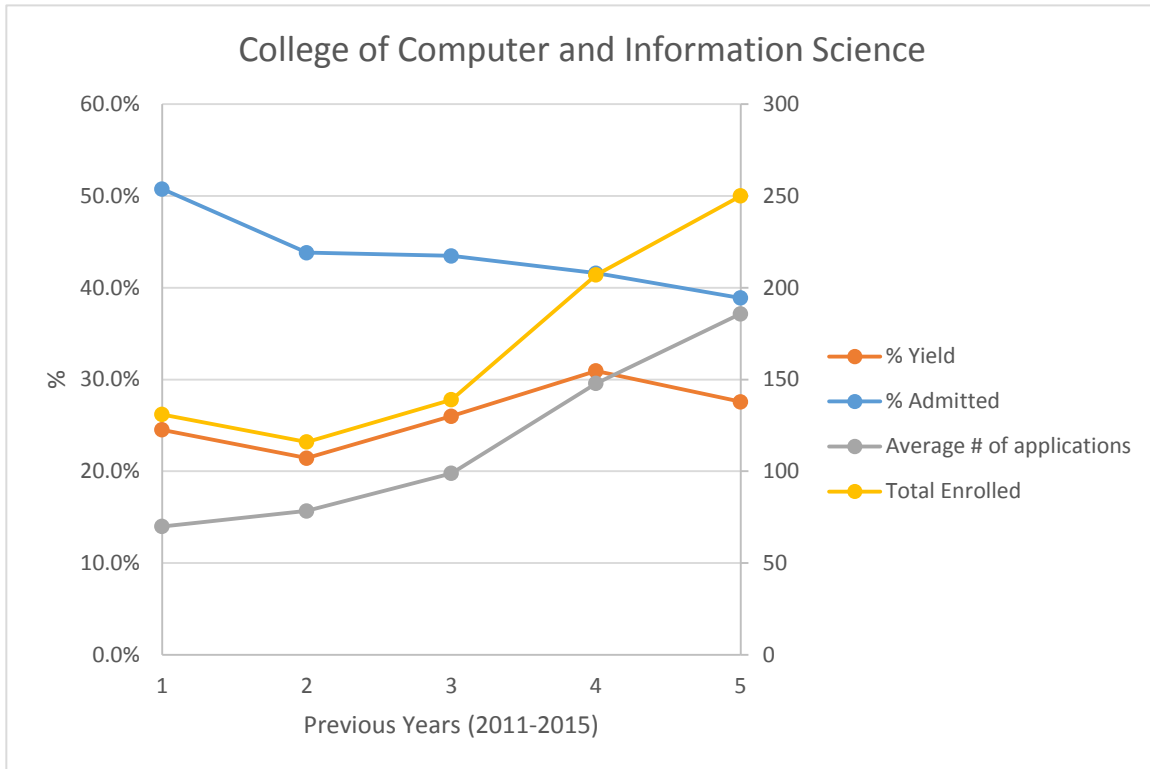
## College of Engineering



College of Arts Media and Design

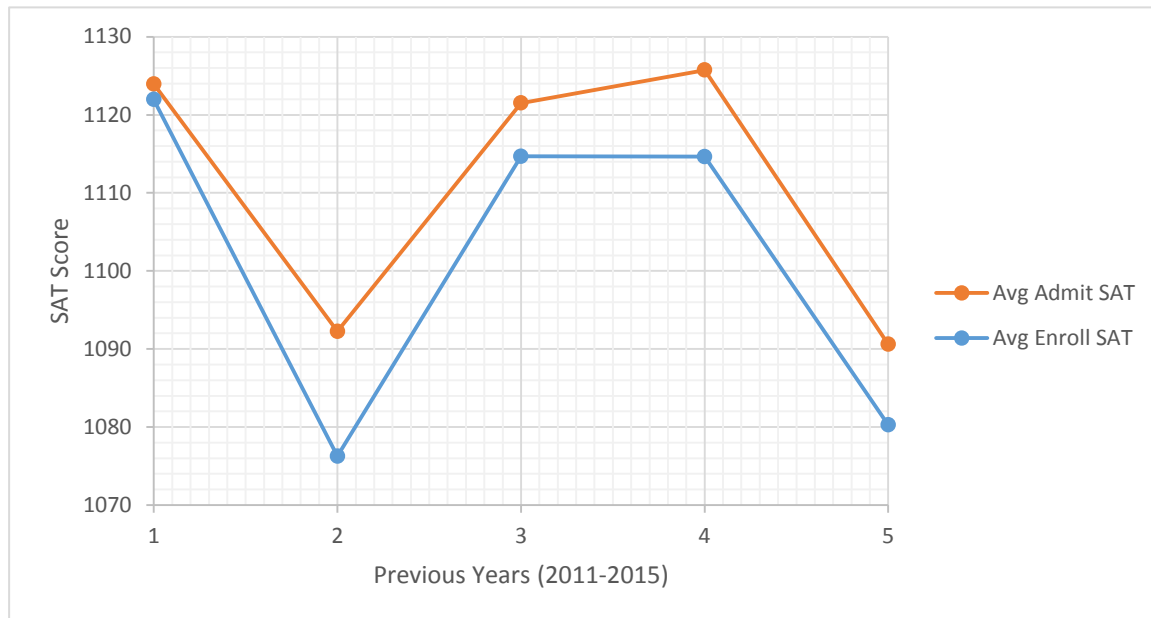
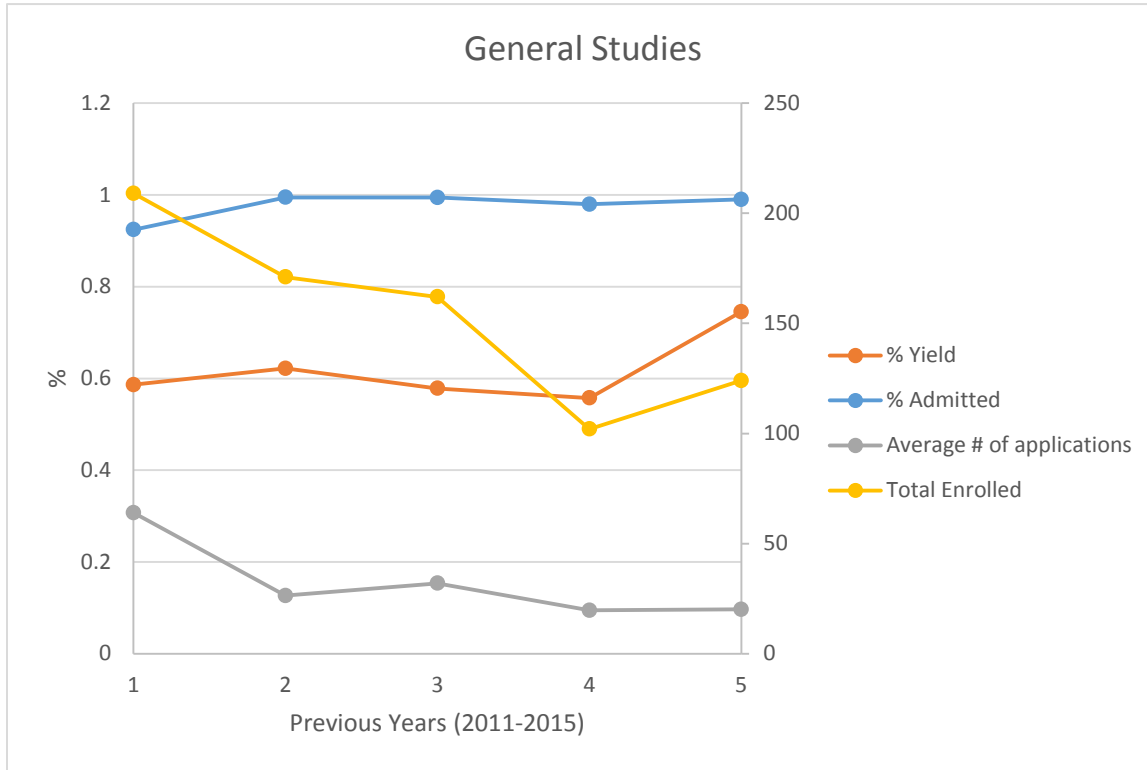


College of Computer and Information Science

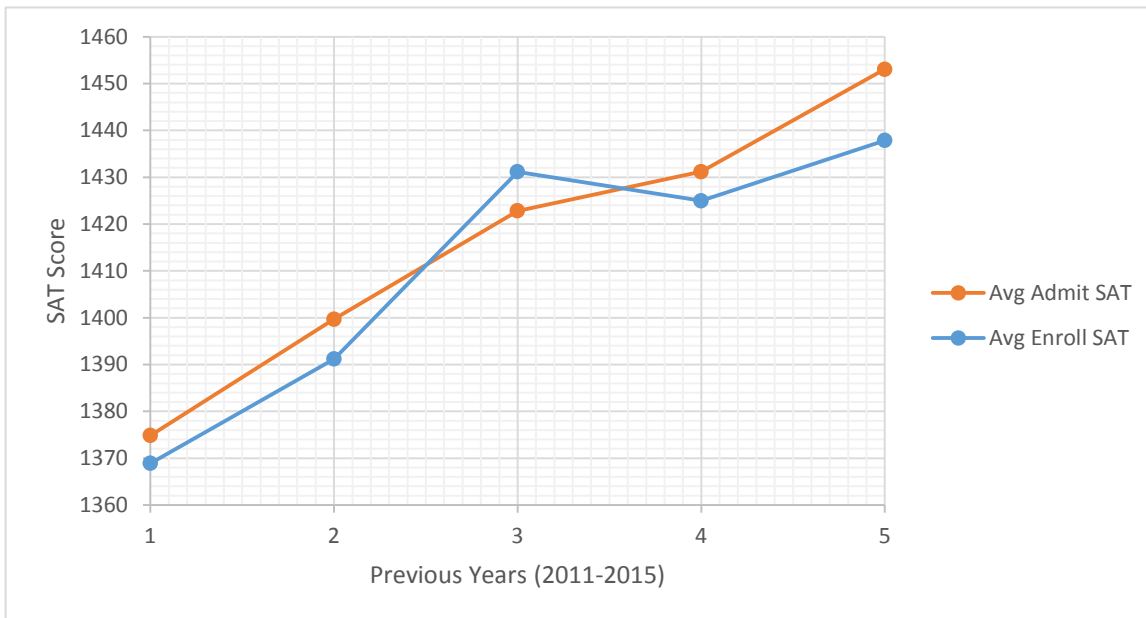
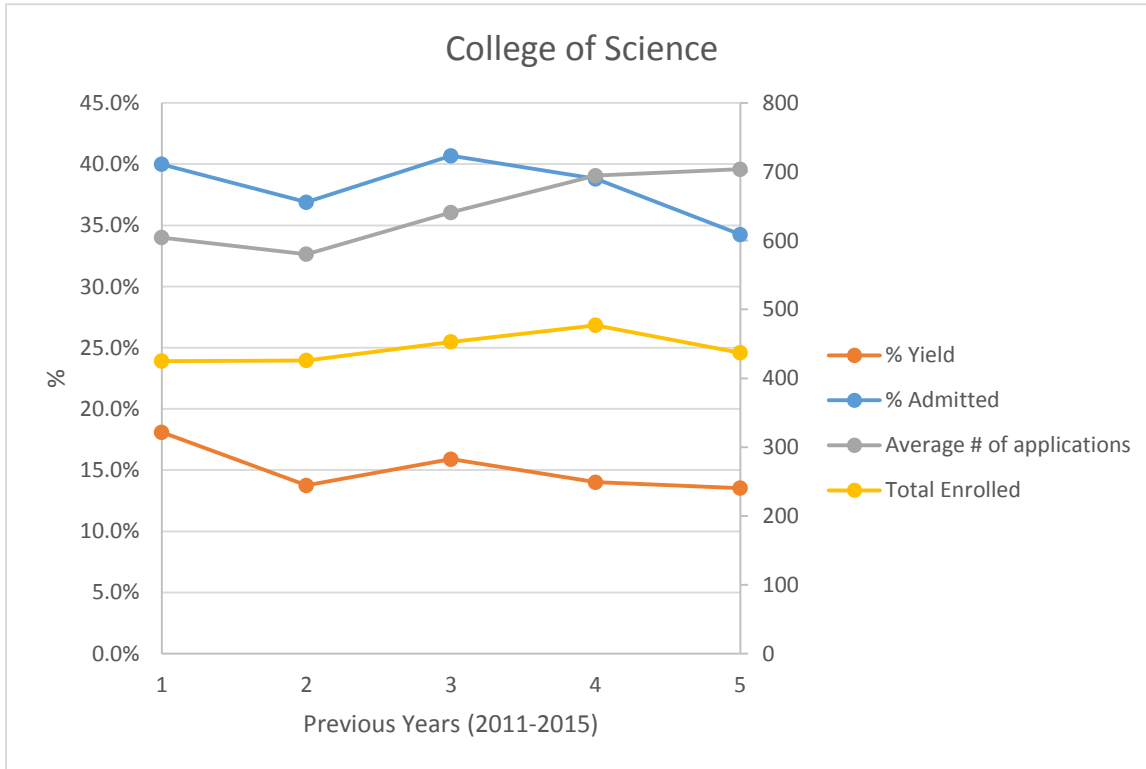




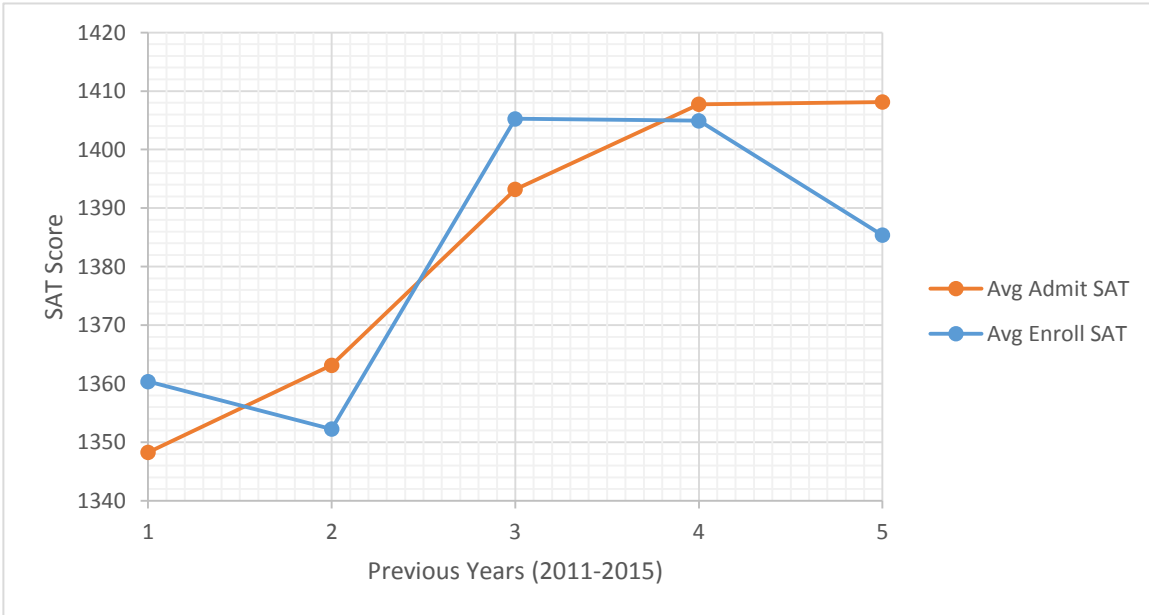
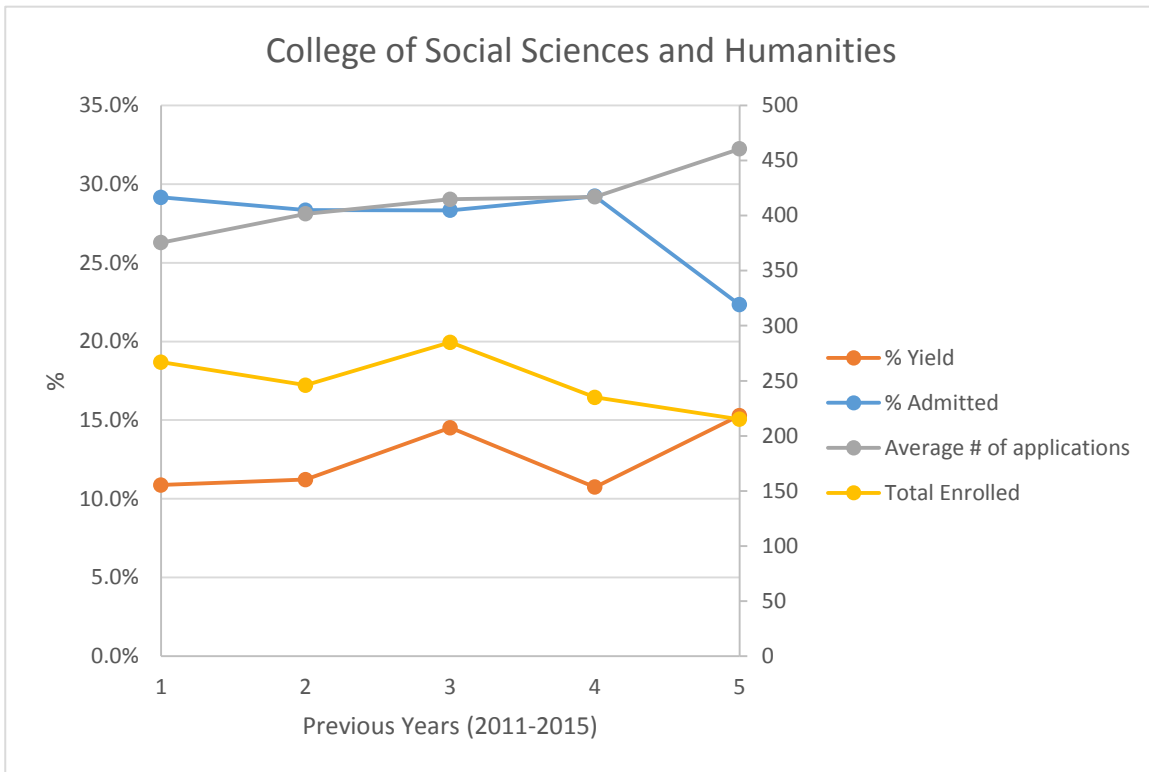
General Studies



College of Science



College of Social Sciences and Humanities



Undeclared

