

Does an Increase in Applications Equal an Increase in Student Enrollments?

Recently, there has been a wealth of discussion regarding the increasing number of applications being submitted to colleges and universities. What these discussions and articles are missing is how the rise in applicants is affecting the bottom line—student enrollment. There are a variety of constraints that can prevent application increases from becoming enrollment increases. A few of the common constraints include:

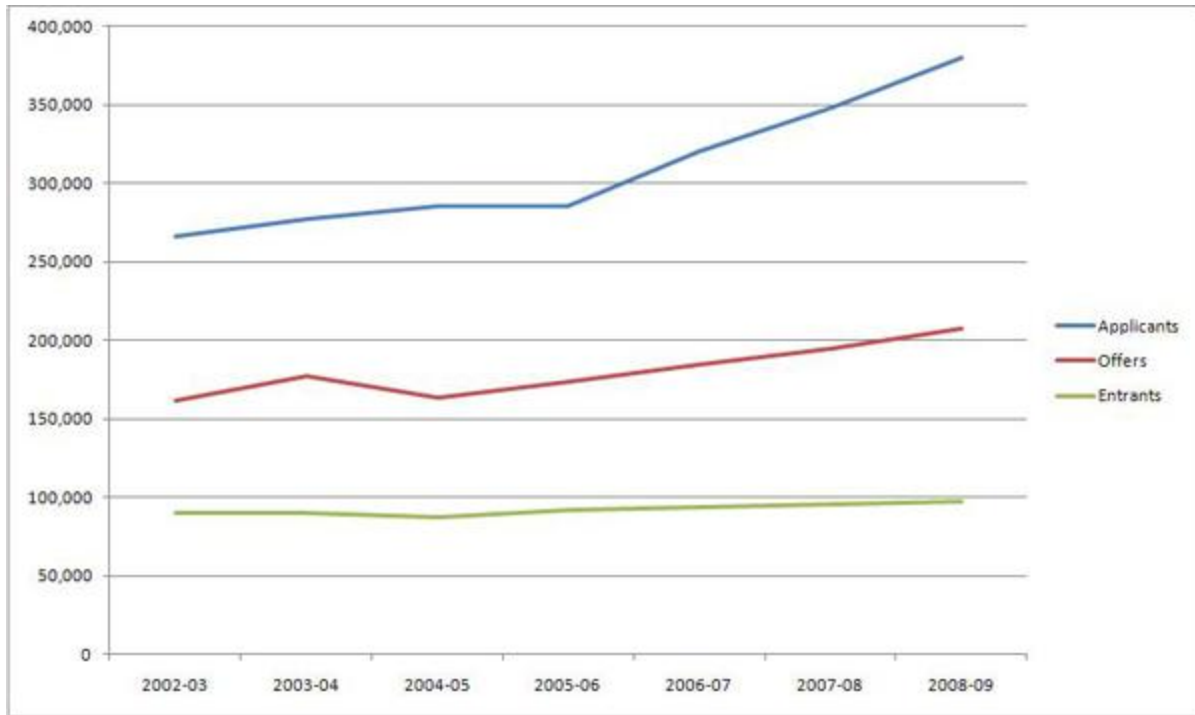


- **Resources:** It is important to remember that even with an increase in the number of applications, schools may not have the required resources (e.g., facilities, faculty, and administrative staff) to support more students.
- **Admission Requirements:** No matter how many applications a school receives for a program, the requirements for admission will gate how many individuals can move into the offer or entrant stage. There is some research that suggests that in a slow or down economy, the quality of applicants diminishes.
- **Recruitment:** Perhaps a school has the resources to support growth and has high-quality applicants. In this case, the constraints may originate from the students themselves. Most incoming students apply to multiple schools and then decide among the offers they receive. It is possible that anything from sports programs to on-campus living styles to the surrounding community could be at play in these decisions.

In the annual AACSB International Business School Questionnaire (BSQ), AACSB requests data on admission for applicants, offers of admission, and entrants who become students at a school. The figures below illustrate the direction and quantity of change for undergraduate, master's, and doctoral level programs controlled for schools that have complete data from 2002–03 through 2008–09.

Figure 1. Undergraduate Level Admissions

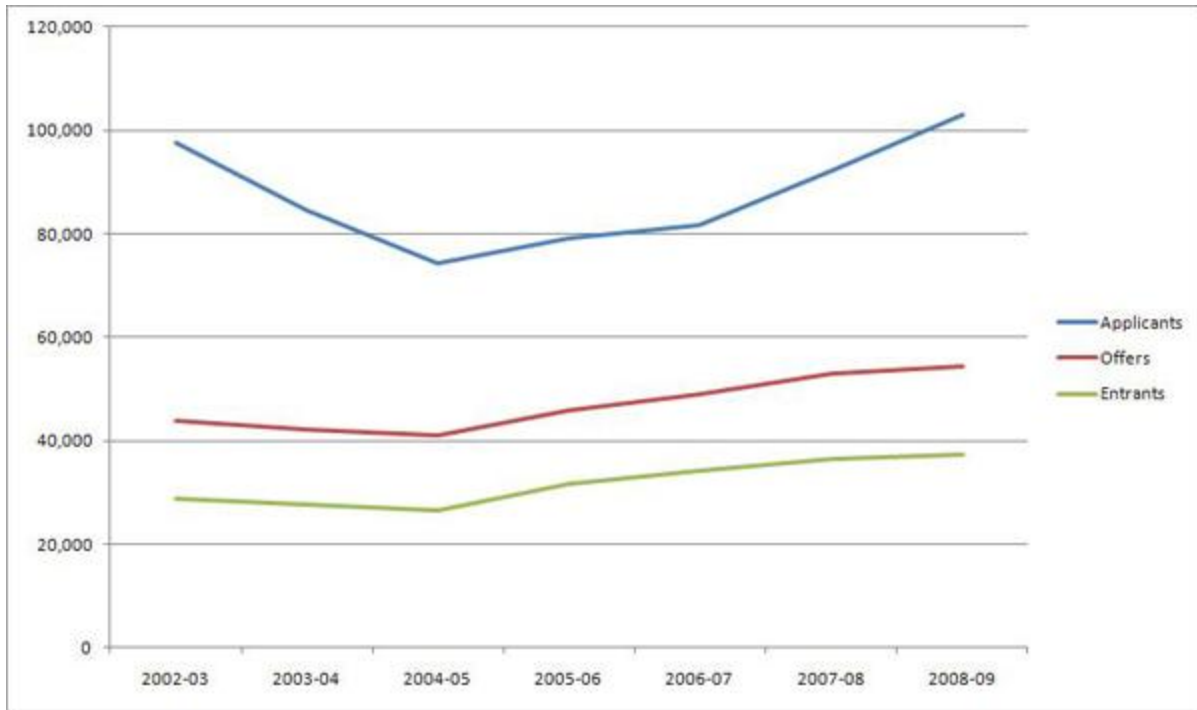
(DataDirect: Based on AACSB Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) controlled data set, 161 schools with complete undergraduate data for all years)



Source: AACSB International. (2009). DataDirect.

Figure 2. Master's Level Admissions

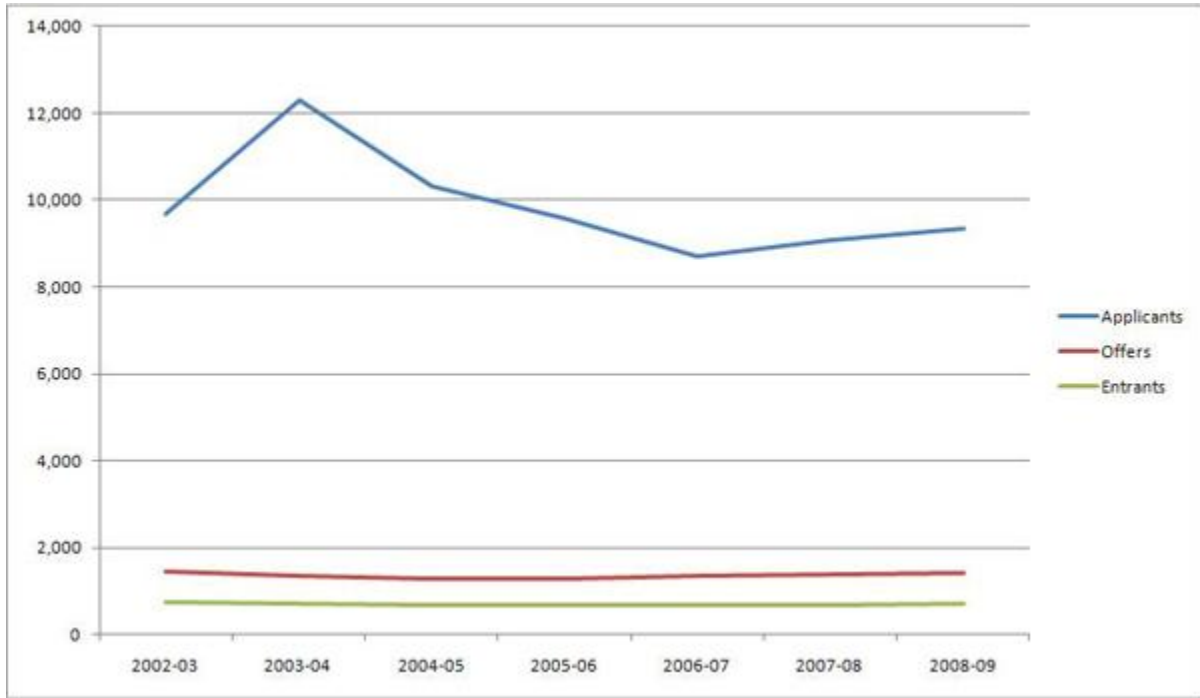
(DataDirect: Based on AACSB Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) controlled data set, 165 schools with complete master's data for all years)



Source: AACSB International. (2009). DataDirect.

Figure 3. Doctoral Level Admissions

(DataDirect: Based on AACSB Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) controlled data set, 52 schools with complete doctoral data for all years)



Source: AACSB International. (2009). DataDirect.