[Applications Soar, Academic Quality Climbs](#)

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Each day, undergraduate admission staff members monitor commitment deposits sent by students accepting the offer of admission to Tulane University for the fall semester. On Friday (April 30), the day before the May 1 deadline to commit, 1,634 students had sent in their deposits.

A record-breaking number of applications for undergraduate admission for fall 2010 is bringing a high-quality, diverse group of students to Tulane from all regions of the country. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Earl Retif, vice president for enrollment management, says that the work by the staff in an incredibly busy year "is very much a team effort."

Tulane had 44,000 applications for full-time [undergraduate admission](#) this year. That's a record-breaking number for Tulane and appears to be a greater number of applications than were received by any private university in the nation.

Applicants often apply to multiple schools, making the task of the undergraduate admission staff all the trickier and unpredictable, says Retif.

Admission staff members must deal with competing interests as they assemble an incoming class. They look for students with high SAT and ACT scores and top rankings in their high schools. Good grades count, of course. But so do extracurricular activities and diversity of all sorts ? geographic, ethnic and academic.

In step with the university's commitment to public service, students who show a dedication to community engagement have an edge on getting into Tulane.

Tulane tries to meet the financial-aid needs of all admitted students, says Retif. Even in the uncertain economy, Tulane is doing all it can, within reason, to help deserving, high-caliber students attend the university.

With the great number of applicants, "Our selectivity rate is the lowest it's ever been," says Retif. Lower is better in terms of selectivity because it means that Tulane has more highly qualified applicants from which to choose its incoming class.

"It's like a puzzle," says Retif. "You're just trying to put the puzzle together."