

Bennington College Announces Class of 2021

AUGUST 31, 2017

This September, over 220 first-year students will arrive at Bennington College, in Vermont. This will be the largest incoming class on record for the College and is representative of the growing recognition the College is receiving for its innovative approach to the liberal arts as well as its commitment to making a Bennington education more accessible than ever.

"We believe that a Bennington education can be life-changing for any student, and should therefore be accessible to any student," said Hung Bui, Vice President and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.

The class of 2021 hails from 31 states and 26 different countries. Of the incoming class, 26% of students have international or dual citizenship, 21% are domestic students of color, 20% are the first student in their family to attend college, and 23% are Pell eligible. This class places Bennington squarely among the leaders in higher education in terms of access and diversity.

"A Bennington education -- which asks students to chart a path without a predetermined route -- has never been more relevant than it is now, and it is fitting that more students than ever want to attend Bennington," said President Mariko Silver. "Our students blend living and learning, their work on campus and in the world; their classmates and housemates are collaborators, critics, and inspiration. Our growth will happen incrementally, and the impact on our education will be the

marker of the ideal size for what is and will always remain a small, tight knit community.”

The increase in applicants and incoming students is a result of several initiatives taken by the College.

Last fall, the Admissions team traveled to 22 states and 19 countries representing a total increase in travel of 38%. This travel included extensive work with our partners such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) and the United World College (UWC) Scholars Program.

The College also took steps to remove barriers to application. Two years ago, Bennington waived its \$60 application fee for all undergraduate applicants. Students could traditionally apply for a fee waiver, but this meant an extra step in the application process and also reminded students with limited means that an exception was being made for them. In addition to waiving the application fee, Bennington now allows students to apply through the Dimensional Application, an open-form alternative to the Common Application that allows students maximum freedom and creativity in choosing the materials and format that best demonstrate their readiness for a Bennington education.

All of this work yielded 1,456 total applications - a record number for Bennington and an 18% increase from the prior year. This is the second consecutive year of a double-digit increase in applications.

“We are seeing an increasing number of students drawn to Bennington’s progressive educational philosophy. Students are inspired and excited to be the architect of their education,” said Bui.

This application growth allowed the College to be more selective in our admissions process, but more importantly, to build a more diverse class at a size that is sustainable and creates a strong foundation for Bennington’s future. The admit rate declined to 56% from 60%. In addition, the size of the applicant pool did not mean that it was any less engaged: 25% of applicants included supplementary portfolio materials with their applications, and 43% chose to interview with an Admissions Counselor, which is on par with previous years.

Students arrive on campus on August 29th.

About Bennington College

Bennington College is a liberal arts college in southwestern Vermont that distinguished itself early on as a vanguard institution in American higher education. The College was the first to integrate work in the classroom with work in the field and the first to include the visual and performing arts in a liberal arts education. To this day, Bennington stands apart in requiring that every student—every winter term—get a job, complete an internship, or pursue an entrepreneurial experience. Bennington students work intensively with faculty to forge individual educational paths around their driving questions and interests. The College graduates students who, regardless of their chosen field of study, are notably confident and accomplished.