

Faculties of the Future

Interim Report

26 February 2025

Acknowledgements

Project lead Lisa Philipps, Senior Policy Advisor to the President, would like to thank the more than 1,000 faculty, instructors, staff, students, union executives, and administrators who have so far met with her or written to share their experiences, questions, concerns, and ideas in response to the Discussion Paper on Faculties of the Future since it was released in September 2024. Thanks are also due to members of the [Faculties of the Future Working Group](#) who have been generous with their time in joining or leading engagement sessions and sharing perspectives from different constituencies of the University.

This Interim Report is a synthesis of and reflection on extensive input received from community members to date.

Introduction

The Faculties of the Future Discussion Paper was released in September 2024 to launch a collegial discussion of how our academic unit structures at York University might be further evolved to uplift the vision, priorities and values expressed in our [University Academic Plan \(UAP\)](#) in a changing context for higher education. The paper called for this discussion to be driven by colleagues and units themselves, and the new ideas they are already putting into action across the institution.

The project methodology has been developed iteratively to gather as many perspectives as possible and to pursue deeper conversations with specific groups and individuals at the Department level who express an interest in doing so. Among the issues raised by participants thus far has been the need to build trust among academic units and with different levels of administration through engagement that is meaningful, attentive to diverse views and critiques, and transparent about the process and its goals.

The main purposes of this Interim Report are to share back with the community a synthesis of questions, concerns, and contributions that participants have brought forward to date, to reflect on broad themes that are emerging, and to encourage further unit-level discussions over the coming weeks to assess the feasibility and acceptability of different ideas that have been raised. It was positive for the project team to learn that some units have already launched strategic planning or other working groups, or have embarked on their own discussions of Faculties of the Future. These local conversations will hopefully generate further input that can inform the final report and recommendations, anticipated in May or June 2025.

A key observation of many participants to date has been that rearranging academic unit structures is not an end in itself, but rather an enabling step. The larger goal of any reorganization must be to strengthen York's ability to deliver on our core mission and values - by adapting to changes already happening in higher education and positioning ourselves to lead further transformations to come. As stated in the Discussion Paper itself, restructuring will not achieve very much "unless it facilitates other critical work on program innovation to appeal to learners of the future, enhances research excellence, improves our student experience, retention and outcomes post-graduation, and delivers administrative support services more effectively and efficiently." To this list can be added cultural change, as expressed by many participants, to become a more collaborative, agile, and responsive institution. The need to enhance York's overall reputation was also regularly mentioned as an overarching priority.

At the same time, the consultations have brought to the surface just how much the York community is already innovating. York faculty, instructors, and staff have done an extraordinary job of not only keeping up but often leading the sector with new programs, courses, modes of learning, student experiences, spaces, research clusters, networks, and platforms for creativity and innovation. The successful launch of several new cutting edge programs at the Markham Campus in fall 2024 is but one example, along with past and ongoing initiatives to reconfigure academic units at the Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies/Faculty of Arts, Glendon College, Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change (EUC), the School of Arts, Media, Performance & Design (AMPD), the Faculty of Health, and the Faculty of Science/Lassonde School of Engineering. Participants acknowledged this process of institutional evolution is inherently an ongoing one and urged that we take advantage of learnings from past iterations of restructuring in determining the best way forward. A great many exciting initiatives are already underway at York and colleagues are keen to find ways to keep building on them.

Community members with further thoughts to share are encouraged to reach out to [Lisa Philipps](#) as Senior Policy Advisor to the President, to a Working Group representative from their faculty or constituency group, or to the project email fof@yorku.ca. We welcome additional input and conversation in response to both the original Discussion Paper and this Interim Report.

Context: What is the Scope and Mandate of Faculties of the Future?

Some community members have asked for clarification about how this project relates to other initiatives underway at York. As a reminder, Faculties of the Future is one of 17 projects that make up the [YorkU Forward Action Plan](#), a University-wide strategy put in place to enable York to advance our University Academic Plan and achieve financial sustainability in light of unexpected policy directions and other changes affecting the future of higher education. The Action Plan was derived from considerable input across the divisions and faculties and incorporated the recommendations from the audit of York by the Auditor General of Ontario. The 17 projects are divided into three streams as depicted below:

Program Enhancement and Sustainability Projects	Enrolment Recovery Projects	Administrative Projects
1: Course Enrolment Optimization	7: International Strategic Enrolment Management Group (ISEM)	13: Administrative Service Efficiencies
2: Faculties of the Future	8: New Out of Province Strategy	14: E-License Optimization
3: Redesigning the Undergraduate Degree Framework	9: Student Housing Working Group	15: Space Optimization
4: Program Sustainability Review	10: New Pathways to Degrees	16: HR Initiatives
5: Supporting Program Innovation	11: Collegial Forum on UG Student Retention	17: Diversification of Revenues/Asset Monetization
6: SMA: Improve Metrics Performance	12: Expand Capacity in Programs with Unmet Demand	

Further information on the nature and status of each project is available on the [Action Plan website](#). Faculties of the Future (project #2) is focused on revisiting the current organization of academic units at York, consisting of Faculties and Departments, which themselves have emerged from previous rounds of organizational restructuring since York was founded in 1959. It is asking how this structure should be evolved further to best position York as a higher education leader in the future.

The 17 projects are linked in many ways. Like any conceptual structure, the Action Plan is designed to break down a set of inherently interconnected topics to enable closer analysis of different parts of a wider system. Some of the interconnections are discussed below in this Interim Report. It is also relevant to note that the Action Plan has been incorporated into the existing operational plans of the University that are intended to advance the University Academic Plan. Various recommendations coming out of the Action Plan might therefore be picked up in subsequent discussions regarding the next University Academic Plan 2025 – 2030.

Each project is proceeding differently depending on the nature of the issues being examined. Faculties of the Future has had the widest scope of community engagement at the outset, because it is revisiting the overarching structure of the Academic Division which makes up the bulk of the University. Other projects necessarily require deeper analysis first by smaller teams of individuals, before moving into their appropriate processes for consultation, decision making, and implementation.

Relationship to School of Medicine Planning

Consultations suggest it will also be useful to clarify the relationship between Faculties of the Future and planning for a School of Medicine. The former is a pan-University initiative that will continue independently of the latter. As stated in the Discussion Paper,

...the need to reconsider academic unit structures exists separate and apart from any decisions on a future School of Medicine...pathways to sustained academic leadership and financial resiliency [must be] clarified for our current array of academic units, regardless of any new ones to be created. (p.7)

Further, the Faculties of the Future is not meant to reallocate University resources away from current units to fund a School of Medicine. The senior administration of the University has confirmed that School of Medicine operations will be supported by new, incremental funding from the Ontario government, which is available only for medical education, and not by taking away from the operating budgets of existing Faculties. Capital infrastructure for the School of Medicine will also be funded from sources that do not impact the operating budgets of existing Faculties, and without adding to the University's debt (further information is available via the [FAQs](#) on the School of Medicine website, and in the School of Medicine proposal in principle considered by Senate in [January](#)).

Of course, creating a School of Medicine would itself constitute an organisational restructuring. In January 2025 the Faculty of Health Council, and then Senate, approved in principle a recommendation from APPRC to establish the School as a new unit within the Faculty of Health. Assuming this decision is formalized later this spring through a statutory motion in Senate and the Board of Governors, it will entail altering the structure of the Faculty of Health. This is a major academic initiative and as shared below, it understandably affects how colleagues in both the Faculties of Health, Science and elsewhere are thinking about the timeliness of considering other possible restructuring moves in the short term.

What We Heard (So Far): Synthesis of Major Themes

Consultations are still in progress with several meetings yet to come. Some clear themes are already emerging that are worth sharing now, for consideration and further input from the community.

Theme #1: Change should be driven primarily by a forward-looking academic vision and strategy that honours our values versus short term cost efficiencies.

Many participants called for academic reorganizations to be led primarily by a positive vision about how we want to reinvent ourselves to meet the knowledge needs of the future as a University and in particular areas of strength. Though recognizing the need to address our financial challenges, placing too much emphasis on immediate cost efficiencies is seen as short sighted. Indeed many felt the time and effort required to restructure, from both staff and faculty, may exceed short term cost savings. Reorganization will be far more compelling and fruitful if it is advancing a shared sense of purpose to further our positive impact on students and the world. There is a widely shared desire to uphold and amplify York's core values of access, social justice, excellence, and impact, in all of our activities from the most foundational and research-oriented through to more professional and applied academic work.

The importance of empowering and giving voice to early career faculty in shaping the development of forward-looking academic strategies was repeatedly noted. We heard often how important the faculty renewal of recent years has been in energizing units and putting new ideas into play. Many of our new colleagues were hired to develop emerging areas that are vital for disciplines to remain relevant and responsive to current student interests and societal needs. While highly motivated to contribute, some early career faculty expressed that they cannot do this without the support of more senior colleagues to adapt programs, share service obligations, and let go of some past practices. The latest generation of faculty to join us have the most at stake in the future of York and we were frequently reminded of the need to give them greater voice and support to lead us into the future.

To inspire future strategy, many participants sought a clearer statement of institutional direction to inform Faculties of the Future. With the University Academic Plan 2020-2025 in its culminating year, and given the dramatic pace of change in our sector and in the world, there is a widely felt need to revisit how York should evolve in order to stay relevant and remain a leader in addressing the learning and knowledge needs of today and tomorrow. The second major theme emerging from these consultations suggests the beginnings of an answer to this question.

Theme #2: Meeting student learning needs for the future is the most urgent priority for the University at this juncture with attention to the unique characteristics and diverse backgrounds of our student population.

The consultations brought forward repeatedly that evolving what we offer to students, and enhancing student outcomes, should be the most important goals and success criteria that we pursue in any reorganization of academic units.

Participants expressed the need to involve students and centre their educational best interests in the way we build York as a forward-looking institution. Some observed that it is largely our students and the communities we serve that give York its distinct identity. This point is echoed in the current UAP which states, “[a] core value of York University since its inception has been to provide access to all eligible students so that no talent is left behind...it is this vibrancy and promise that attract many people to come to York or to support our work.” We heard that this principle of centring students should apply to all levels and types of study encompassing undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree programs that have increasingly attracted mature learners to York.

This commitment to prioritize students does not imply becoming a vocational school, devaluing research, scholarship, and creative activities, or reducing our engagement with other sectors locally and internationally to achieve positive change. To the contrary, York promises its students access to “a high quality, research intensive University committed to the public good,” and the consultations reaffirmed support for the full breadth of this vision. Our community believes passionately that it is precisely the dynamic connections among research, teaching and community engagement that provide the deep value and versatility of a York education, giving our graduates the widest range of essential skills and future opportunities, and grounding our overall reputation and distinctiveness as a University.

However there is also a recognition that the educational aspect of our mission currently faces greater pressures than any other dimension. In addition to concerns about enrolment shortfalls and student feedback, many of us are troubled by our performance relative to peer universities on metrics such as undergraduate retention and graduation rates, and graduate completion times and rates. Declining first and second choice applications to some of our programs is also cause for concern.¹ Faculty and staff are acutely aware of these challenges and actively engaged in responses such as the Collegial Forum on Retention (project #11 within the Action Plan)..

Although not directly the focus of this report, it is important to acknowledge concerns that have been raised about collegial engagement and organizational culture as we move these discussions forward. Many participants spoke to the negative impact of past labour disruptions on student progression and its cumulative effect on York’s reputation among prospective students. While

¹ See the Appendix to this Interim Report which provides supplementary data on these metrics.

there are of course different views on this topic many encouraged the University to continue striving for better relations with employee groups, building on our collective commitment to student-centred decision-making.

What exactly are the learning needs of the future that York should focus on? The specifics will vary and must be informed by relevant disciplinary expertise. However in general terms we heard wide support for York to intensify and accelerate current efforts to provide more of the applied and work integrated learning experiences that students are increasingly seeking, based on the most recent survey data of applicants and non-applicants to York. This input aligns with previous recommendations from the collegial Task Force on the Future of Pedagogy and is fully consistent with the priorities articulated in the UAP.²

Opening doors of social and economic opportunity, particularly to students from less advantaged backgrounds, is part of York’s commitment to access and leaving no talent behind. Participants noted the importance of supporting students’ career advancement and employability, and improving industry-university partnerships to help programs stay abreast of how technological changes are impacting their fields.

At the same time, many suggested now is the time for York to lean into the need for essential skills such as critical thinking, ethical judgment, rigorous research, and clear communication, to ensure graduates across all disciplines are carrying these vital human capacities and “soft skills” into their future workplaces and civic spaces. The value of breadth and cross-disciplinary learning for grappling with social and economic complexity was also frequently mentioned as an area where York should take leadership, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. These observations are salient for Project #3 in the Action Plan on Redesigning the Undergraduate Degree Framework. Further, many participants expressed a growing sense of urgency to rethink traditional degree formats and to create more modular, flexible, and “just in time” offerings to address diverse needs of both younger and mid-career learners.

Bringing all of this together, the concept of bridging fundamental learning to professional skills development could be worth pursuing in the next UAP, 2025-2030, as one possible way to capture at a high level the kind of education that York wants to be known for. This could be expressed for example as: guiding our students from wherever they start to discover their full potential and agency in the world, by bridging critical knowledge and skills into practical applications and career path development.

To summarize this theme, there is broad consensus that better meeting the changing learning needs of students should be at the heart of what we seek to achieve with any reorganization of

² The Task Force on the Future of Pedagogy was established in 2023 jointly by APPRC and ASCP, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost & Vice-President Academic. Further information on the membership, mandate, and preliminary recommendations of the Task Force is available here: <https://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/academic-policy-planning-and-research-committee/joint-apprc-ascp-task-force-on-the-future-of-pedagogy/>. Both Senate Committees have signalled an intention to resume discussion of steps to implement Task Force recommendations as a priority for 2024-25.

academic units. Participants recognized other potential benefits, such as enabling research collaboration within and across disciplines, strengthening faculty support networks, sharing service responsibilities more evenly, building staff capacity and mutual support, and allocating available resources more efficiently toward academic priorities. But based on our consultations, colleagues will be most open to reorganizing if there is clear evidence it can help us to enrich and improve student learning opportunities and outcomes.

Theme #3: Unit reorganization must go hand in hand with curricular reform.

Many participants confirmed that they contend with fragmented and siloed curriculum planning, and that they would welcome any steps to lower the barriers to cross-unit coordination to enhance learning opportunities for students and smooth their progression. There is broad acknowledgement that existing collegial and administrative processes have not been sufficient to prevent internal competition, a proliferation of similar programs and courses, and complexity of degree requirements. This fragmented planning has many unintended consequences but what participants most strongly agreed on is the need first and foremost to ensure students can understand their academic options, pursue their interests, and complete their programs.

Some asked if organizational restructuring is the right solution to these challenges, or whether our efforts should focus more directly on reforming degree programs to be simpler and more inter-operable, with more coordination to reduce scheduling conflicts and internal competition. One way this was expressed is (to paraphrase) “the problem is not the number or size of units but the number of separate programs”.

At the same time, unit reorganization may in some cases be a necessary precondition for meaningful curricular reform. Programs are mounted by units, and each academic unit traditionally has sought to offer its own degree program or programs. Many colleagues confirmed how difficult it is to triangulate planning for programs across Department or Faculty lines. Even herculean personal efforts of this kind have too often been frustrated, unravelled over time, or fallen short of desired outcomes. The transaction costs of collaborating are often prohibitive, such that colleagues tend to default to unit-based planning even where they can see the commonalities and potential for building something larger and better across units.

Seizing opportunities for faculty members to teach outside their unit of appointment is equally challenging and exceptional, especially at the undergraduate level. In some cases consolidating tenure stream faculty with related expertise into a single unit would enhance their ability to collaborate in the design and also the delivery of shared programs, in a manner that increases their collective presence across all levels of study.

Certainly if colleagues had smoother mechanisms for inter-unit collaboration, there would be less need to consider reorganizing units. Many participants expressed a desire to solve this problem, regardless of how the Academic Division is organized. No structure will ever bring together in a

single unit all those who want and need to collaborate in delivering innovative, cross-disciplinary programs. There is a widespread perception that the current SHARP budget model contributes to our challenges by creating incentives for units to compete with each other, instead of collaborating on shared program delivery. This input has been provided to the Finance team currently reviewing the SHARP model, and they are considering how the model could be revised to provide more incentives for collaboration. However, participants also acknowledged that issues of internal fragmentation and duplication predate the introduction of SHARP in 2017-18, and indeed were a key motivator for previous academic reorganizations under other budget models.

Glendon's departmental restructuring provides one example of how unit restructuring can enable curricular harmonization. Though only in its first year of implementation, we heard that the newly merged units are already finding they have greater visibility to prevent scheduling conflicts and to share courses among programs. As discussed below, however, Glendon continues to experience challenges in coordinating with cognate units at the Keele campus.

To conclude this section, existing academic units should be encouraged and supported to look at whether they can cooperate to simplify and share curriculum with or without a formal merger of units if that is preferred. This would require a commitment by adjacent units to harmonize program requirements, reduce the total number of courses offered through greater recognition and cross-listing of equivalent courses in other units, and assign teaching to tenure stream faculty wherever possible whether inside or outside their home unit. However in some cases where there is a high degree of overlap in programs, students, and expertise, a merger or other reorganization of units will be the most effective way to enable this reconciliation and coordination of curriculum.

Theme #4: The need for some degree of cross-subsidization is accepted, within reasonable and manageable limits.

There is a broad recognition that some degree of internal redistribution of funding will always be needed to support academic fields that are inherently more costly to deliver, or that need temporary support while they introduce new programs or otherwise respond to changes in student demand. The next iteration of the SHARP budget model will seek to embed relevant revisions to the formulae that more adequately account for unavoidable costs of programs not covered by the associated tuition and/or grant revenue – studio and lab-based programs are examples.

At the same time, there is a growing view that when a Faculty seems unable to make progress in reducing a significant structural deficit, or where departments have experienced low or declining student demand for several years in a row, it is not unreasonable to ask if a different organizational structure could enhance sustainability. In these circumstances the option of consolidating units or collaborating more closely should be actively considered as a strategy for growing revenues and/or reducing operating costs through greater synergies and development of shared

curriculum, faculty, and administrative infrastructure. Such changes should be pursued if they can reduce the need for cross-subsidization, even if they cannot entirely eliminate it.

Participants observed this is not just a matter of fairness, but vital to manage overall risks to the University. There is a broad commitment to support all areas of demonstrated academic excellence at York. However Faculties and Departments with high demand for their programs expressed frustration that their own challenges are not always recognized. These areas are subject to intense competitive pressures, and often relatively high student: faculty and student: staff ratios. Their ability to continue attracting students and delivering quality programs and research cannot be taken for granted, and will suffer if they are not able to invest in needed faculty, instructors, staff, equipment, and continuous program development. Asking these units to continually cut their expenditures and defer investment in order to provide more funding to others will prevent them from innovating, jeopardizing their future success and with it, that of the entire University.

Theme #5: Local context matters and a tailored, selective approach should be taken to further evolving our organizational structure.

Many participants have emphasized the need to take into account the diverse histories and circumstances of the Faculties, Departments, and disciplines that comprise York. Local needs vary and what works in one neighbourhood of the University may not work in others. Further, given the size and complexity of York, and the number of important initiatives underway, there is a concern that attempting to reorganize many units en masse could overwhelm the community's capacity to manage change.

In some areas there is more appetite for organizational change and even excitement about the potential, and participants have consistently called for a tailored approach that can be designed from the ground up with sensitivity to local context. The importance of collegial ownership of the process has been emphasized, balanced with clear guidelines, expectations, and assessment of progress. Others believe a reorganization of their unit at this time would be untimely or carry significant risks of distracting from key initiatives the unit has already launched. The clear message from the community is not to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to creating a new organizational model. An important qualification is the desire that colleagues also shared to clarify as soon as possible what changes are being contemplated over the next few years, so that units can invest their efforts wisely based on accurate assumptions about how other units will be structured in future. Continued uncertainty imposes its own costs.

Based on this input, the question is how to determine those areas where there is a more compelling and urgent case for academic units to evolve and potentially consolidate with others. Given the diversity of our institution there is no one simple metric or set of metrics that can answer this question. A guiding principle has emerged, however, that we should avoid major disruption in units that are currently thriving both academically and financially, at a time when so many are struggling. The focus should be on those areas that are most impacted by low or

declining student demand, and where there is most overlap in programming and expertise across units.

Ideally, units will self-identify in discussion with their Dean, that they are a candidate for some form of reorganization.

Diagnostic Questions for Academic Units

Themes 1-5 above suggest a set of questions that each academic unit of the University could be asking itself:

- A) Is there potential to enhance York's overall impact as a leader in addressing future knowledge needs in a particular area of study, by bringing units and faculty members together in a larger and more cohesive unit? Could this also enable more effective resource sharing to allow for investment in the unit's aspirational vision?
- B) Alternatively, is there a case for paring down or unbundling certain units to allow for more focus and cohesion in the pursuit of excellence?
- C) From a student-centric point of view, would a consolidation with other units enable better coordination of curriculum and options for students to progress through their program while exploring related areas of interest? Is it possible to achieve enhanced student experience and outcomes while remaining separate units?
- D) Would a consolidation of units provide a more secure base for retaining areas of curriculum that are vulnerable due to persistent low enrolment? Could these areas be supported more easily and perhaps achieve greater impact within a larger unit, whether as separate degrees or by converting them into a stream, minor, or set of courses within a larger degree program?
- E) Would a consolidation of relatively small units allow more effective sharing of staff, faculty, and other resources to enhance the overall operating capacity and resourcing of the combined unit? Or, is it possible to achieve this resource sharing by other means?
- F) Is there potential to expand the unit to incorporate selected faculty members from other parts of the University, who could add teaching and research capacity to a unit with higher demand for its programs? How could the additional colleagues be received in a way that assures them they will have a voice in the unit's future evolution and are recognized for what they can contribute to making it stronger?
- G) What concerns or fears do colleagues have about the potential impacts of restructuring their unit at this time?

The final section of this Interim Report offers suggestions about supportive processes by which these questions can be explored within and among units. Units are encouraged to be proactive in holding their own discussions, so they can inform the final report and recommendations on Faculties of the Future towards the end of the current academic year.

Views from the Faculties

As noted at the outset, consultations are ongoing and inevitably there are diverse views within any Faculty or Department. Without suggesting any uniformity, it is worth sharing some themes that have emerged since September 2024 based on input from faculty, instructors, staff, students and administrators in particular Faculties, whether through Council meetings, participation in other group meetings, or individual conversations. This synthesis will evolve as consultations progress.

Arts, Media, Performance & Design

- Discussions of organizational structure should take into consideration that AMPD is somewhat unique in Canada because of the breadth of areas it covers, combining theory and creative practice, and research creation along with more traditional forms of academic scholarship.
- The fragmentation and proliferation of creative arts and culture-related programming across multiple Faculties is seen as creating significant challenges for AMPD, as well as missed opportunities to combine forces to build greater reputation as an international leader in areas such as Media, Theatre and Performance, and various forms of artistic expression.
- Cross-unit collaboration on research and creative practice has been facilitated by ORUs such as Sensorium, but is much more challenging on curriculum, course offerings, and creating excellent student experiences.
- There is an interest in building more scale and range in cognate fields by inviting relevant faculty, programs, and units to join AMPD or to co-create a new Faculty that projects York's distinctive strengths and identity in the realm of arts and culture
- AMPD has successfully implemented a merger of two relatively small departments into one, and there may be value in pursuing additional steps to further streamline the departmental structure or share resources across it
- Studio and professional arts and design programs are relatively costly to deliver and despite significant cross-subsidization, thin resourcing and low enrolment are placing quality at risk in some areas of AMPD; some believe that as the School forms its strategy for the future it will be necessary to focus more tightly on areas where York has distinctive strengths compared to peers in the sector, and areas where its early career faculty are driving curriculum renewal. There is concern that attempting to maintain all past offerings regardless of current take up and faculty capacity may jeopardize quality across the board.

Education

- Internal experience of students with respect to course choice across Faculties is disjointed and siloed; students struggle to see how the parts relate to the whole; many would like more exposure to a broader liberal arts context
- There is frustration with the small faculty complement in Education given the high demand for its programs and provincial mandate for teacher education, but inadequate funding; limited faculty and staff numbers make it hard to function let alone improve quality or innovate; concern about service loads falling especially heavily on women, people of colour, and early career faculty
- Faculties of the Future needs to be more explicit about operationalizing commitments to TRC, equity, diversity, inclusion; and upholding York's historical role in providing high quality education and career pathways to first generation students
- Some participants were more skeptical about how the specific needs of teacher education would be met within a larger structure. There are also questions about how the Faculty's graduate programs will be impacted by restructuring and worries about limited autonomy over their management.
- Some see potential to bring additional intellectual vitality and diversity to the Faculty by broadening the range of colleagues and programs within it. It could be a place for all "teaching-related" (e.g. TESOL) and/or child and youth and/or human services professional programs
- There could also be benefits to creating a larger cluster of staff, a larger faculty complement to share collegial service, and a larger and more diversified resource base.

Environment and Urban Change

- EUC restructuring (drawing together Environmental Studies, Geography, and Urban Studies since 2020) has achieved strong academic outcomes in terms of student learning opportunities, experiential education, research impact, enhanced interdisciplinarity; curriculum has been designed to remove siloes and is delivered almost entirely by tenure stream faculty who teach across programs
- EUC has been experiencing challenges with meeting enrolment targets and with financial sustainability and there is a sense that further solutions are necessary to build enrolment – for example is more central recruitment support possible?
- the visibility of EUC course offerings currently is also a concern and inaccessibility to students in other Faculties
- Concerns about loss of capacity if retiring faculty are not replaced
- Some are open to further evolution of the organizational structure to gain access to additional enrolment and academic synergies, and to share resources more easily
- Desire to see any further organisational restructuring be informed by core academic values and mission of York, and of EUC
- Desire to see restructuring address undergraduate and graduate student interests and needs

- Concerns about further disrupting the organization noting the “sunk costs” of establishing EUC were significant and formation of shared culture still a work in progress
- Process of creating EUC entirely bottom up, consensus-based approach; collegial decision-making (too?) lengthy while administrative support inconsistent during EUC formation; consider providing parameters for discussions to make best use of collegial time and energy
- Disbanding or disbursing is undesirable; loss of identifiable EUC would damage York’s distinctive academic strengths, reputation, collaborative/alumni networks
- Strong case for EUC programs and collegium to remain whole given restructuring and successes to date. Opportunity to invite more programs and clusters of faculty in related areas to join EUC; another option is for EUC to remain whole and become a School within another Faculty.

Graduate Studies

- Having a Faculty of Graduate Studies is important not only for the shared services it provides, but as a collective voice and champion for graduate education at York
- Concerns from GPDs and graduate students about continuity of access to experienced staff who have program-specific knowledge, as a critical support to graduate education
- Many GPAs and GPDs feel stretched; student mental health is a major issue that demands attention
- Co-creation of new structures will be helpful to bring people along; moving away from rigid structures could be positive but recognize people’s attachment to and identification with existing units; draw on experience in Faculties from past restructuring
- be careful to assess any reorganization to avoid unintended impacts to graduate programs, experience of graduate students, and attractiveness to prospective students
- will graduate students be left competing for fewer TAs or other opportunities if units are merged?
- Concerns from GPDs that distinctive graduate programs and pedagogy have a voice in major change.
To be competitive with peer universities, need for continued work to enhance graduate student support and reduce times to completion

Glendon College

- The value of an immersive French language and bilingual community space at Glendon was emphasized, along with concerns that online learning or taking more courses at Keele may dilute this value as students and faculty are less present on the campus.
- Some see potential to grow Glendon as a site for advanced or specialized learning opportunities in English, aimed at highly qualified students, akin to the “honour college” programs found at some U.S. universities; this would need to avoid duplicating existing offerings at York

- The implementation of four multi-disciplinary departments following a robust collegial process is progressing relatively smoothly, albeit with some challenges, and is beginning to facilitate better coordination of curriculum within Glendon; so far it is not providing a solution to declining demand as applications are down compared to last year
- There has been less progress in tackling coordination challenges with units at the Keele campus. The process of aligning requirements and seats for Glendon students who want to take relevant Keele courses, or vice versa, remains laborious and uneven, impeding student learning opportunities and pathways to program completion.
- There is little movement of full-time faculty across the two campuses to address teaching gaps or to enhance student opportunities to learn from leading experts (apart from graduate programs where some Glendon faculty teach at Keele).
- There is appetite at Glendon for taking further concerted steps to address the following recommendation from APPRC to Senate in May 2024:

“APPRC is convinced that cross-campus collaboration is an unmined source of rich opportunities for innovative and creative ideas on programming and partnerships that can bring pan-university benefits. Past calls for the development of robust Keele-Glendon relationships between cognate units have not been taken up with vigour; the opportunity to foster connections across the campuses presented through this revisioning exercise should be heeded at this time to maximize the momentum being created by this structural change at Glendon.” (May 15, 2024 Senate Agenda Package pp.24-25).
- Some Glendon colleagues are expressing interest in joining their cognate disciplines at Keele. Joining up all faculty with shared expertise into a single unit that operates across two campuses, is seen as having a number of benefits for both teaching and research. In particular, consolidating cognate Keele and Glendon programs to create one harmonized major with a bilingual stream delivered at the Glendon campus, could provide a more integrated student experience and an avenue to preserve bilingual programming in a more sustainable manner. Colleagues in Philosophy have taken early leadership to explore this model.
- It was noted some French universities have adopted a unified departmental model across multiple campuses following multi-university mergers, with benefits to research and collaboration. At York it is sometimes forgotten that the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies is a longstanding example of a single School operating across two campuses. The Markham Campus also now is a precedent for departments operating across two campuses.
- Colleagues asked for support from administration to accelerate progress in exploring this model as a potential second phase of reorganization at Glendon, building on positive results from changes thus far.

Health

- Current work to plan for establishing a School of Medicine as a new unit within Health needs to be recognized as a very significant initiative; any restructuring and collaboration with other Faculties at this time is acknowledged as a complex process that will require time and attention to ensure success.
- However there may be a case for consolidating or sharing resources across relatively small units in the Faculty with overlapping expertise, for sharing courses more effectively across units within the Faculty, or for welcoming others to join the Faculty to realize potential synergies as York expands its offerings in health in exciting new directions
- The overriding goals should be to further interdisciplinarity and inter-professional education to meet societal needs.
- Student: faculty ratios should be examined among units within the faculty, at both undergraduate and graduate levels
- There is a strong interest in better cross-Faculty and cross-campus (with Glendon) coordination. This does not always require a merger or reorganization but does require stronger collaboration mechanisms.
- Their experience with creating the Neuroscience program across three units in two Faculties raised both curricular and budgetary challenges; can activity-based budgeting be adjusted to better facilitate collaboration?
- Can we break out of traditional degree form and create more modular, short duration programs, that adult learners and others seem to find more appealing?

Lassonde School of Engineering

- Regardless of any reorganization of current units, we need a better platform or mechanism to offer new experimental programs that combine expertise from different units of the University
- Students should be part of designing new programs as part of a user-centric approach; many interested in combining areas; curating your own playlist instead of buying an album
- Higher education is going to change dramatically and program innovation is key; York can lead the transformation or be in its wake; doing new things entails risk but standing still is also risky
- Use data and clear benchmarks wherever possible to make decisions about change and measure its success; also don't lose site of qualitative goals like collaboration, synergies
- Establish a clear timeline for projects (avoid the Eglinton LRT scenario)
- Markham campus is an example of successful launch of several new programs at once; how can we create conditions for this kind of innovation at Keele?; Markham's success was fueled by open invitation across the University to create new programs, hiring new faculty to work on them, and insulating Faculties financially from start up costs
- How will we create seed funding to start up innovative new programs?

- At Lassonde there may be a case to create a single department to hold all Engineering programs – would simplify accreditation and enhance focus on programs versus departments
- Heavy reliance on largest program (Computer Science) to support other areas creates risk of burnout and loss of colleagues; this area likely to be most impacted by AI
- Some in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science see a case for Computing to be its own Faculty; or to split up into engineering and science components; EECS as the largest Department in the whole University is facing severe strains from disproportionately high student:faculty ratios; low staff:faculty ratios; lack of access to graduate students and space threatens research funding, reputation, and progress of scholars at all career levels; yet innovation in this area is also critical to York’s future-readiness
- Research already crosses units much more fluidly; could ORUs be a model for Teaching Institutes?
- There could be benefits to bringing some elements of math, physics, and business into Lassonde
- There is a role for Lassonde to offer general education courses to other students at York but this is not possible with current systems

Liberal Arts & Professional Studies

- Some believe the Faculty is currently too large to enable effective governance through a single Faculty Council and its committees. Smaller units sometimes find it hard to stand out or to have a meaningful voice within such a large Faculty with such a wide range of disciplines.
- Many questions about the outcomes of Arts/Atkinson merger of a decade ago; widely shared view that the potential to “cross the ampersand” with combined programming has not been realized. Some believe that combining liberal arts with professional programs creates cultural challenges for all. Others recognize the benefits of this relatively unique combination, including for financial sustainability of liberal arts.
- Some professional studies colleagues find there is a lack of appreciation for their challenges as very large programs with high student: faculty ratios, that are relied on to support others, without adequate investment in their capacity or ability to define and pursue a clear strategy for differentiation and excellence.
- There is continued interest in finding ways to bridge professional skills and liberal arts, though some believe this could be done more effectively through separate Faculties organized along broad disciplinary lines, and that this would also give each “side” the ability to develop a more focused strategy and direction for the future.
- Students expressed a desire for greater interaction with faculty beyond the classroom; there are very different experiences of engagement with faculty for students depending on unit, program, and professor.
- Participants generally acknowledged and some provided examples of curriculum complexity, duplication, overlap, internal competition, and resulting barriers to student learning and progression. Current collegial governance processes designed to achieve

coordination within the Faculty are seen by many as unfortunately not working as intended; they are too often hindering, rather than facilitating, effective coordination and continuous development of curriculum. One example was de-cross-listing of courses, and questioning why this was being permitted.

- There is a view that combining disciplinary and inter-disciplinary departments is behind many of these challenges, because colleagues with similar training and expertise make up both and therefore tend to build broadly similar courses and programs. This is seen as a significant underlying cause of internal competition and complexity in the Faculty, and one that needs to be solved.
- Although faculty are deeply committed to interdisciplinarity as a key scholarly strength within LA&PS, many believe this is best rooted in strong disciplines. Some units defined around an academic discipline expressed interest and openness to welcoming additional faculty who are currently appointed to interdisciplinary units; but would generally have greater reservations about going in the other direction. There was less interest expressed in collapsing disciplines into larger interdisciplinary schools; participants most often expressed that would be counterproductive.
- There is a need to ensure that students can learn from faculty teaching in their areas of interest, without confronting so many navigational challenges because of requirements that vary from program to program and unit to unit.
- Some departments with cognate disciplines at Glendon are keen to address longstanding barriers to student mobility and progression, while reducing duplication of curriculum in some areas.
- Some departments are open to expanding to incorporate faculty members with common disciplinary backgrounds from elsewhere in LA&PS or at the University, and to bring more program offerings together in the same unit. This is seen as one way to consolidate and better define distinctive academic strengths at York, to provide students in the area with the best possible access to faculty expertise at all study levels, and/or to support smaller areas that nonetheless play a critical role in the overall breadth of offerings at York.

Osgoode

- The strong prevailing opinion is that Osgoode is thriving in its current form and there is not a good reason to alter its structure or subsume it into a larger unit; this would be highly atypical among Canadian law schools, and likely harmful to its visibility and stature relative to peer law schools and within the legal profession.
- There is interest though in further strengthening scholarly and pedagogical collaboration with other units at York; existing joint programs with EUC, Philosophy, and Schulich can be challenging to administer and have limited enrolment; are there other ways to increase circulation of graduate students outside their home Faculties, to offer York graduate students easier access to JD courses and seminars (and similarly for Osgoode students who wish to take courses elsewhere at York), or to create pathways that combine undergraduate programs with any of Osgoode's professional LLM degrees.

- There is potential for Osgoode to work more closely with social sciences and humanities units to support undergraduate recruitment.
- Osgoode recognizes York's strengths in the liberal arts and the importance of these disciplines in educating many of the people who later attend law school with the strong critical thinking skills that are also essential in legal education.

Science

- The establishment of a School of Medicine is seen as a major opportunity for the Faculty of Science, and there is an interest in maximizing the potential of this initiative before other restructuring initiatives are considered.
- Science colleagues mainly have voiced a desire to retain and build the Faculty's strengths in life and biomedical sciences, and to be an active contributor to the School of Medicine curriculum design and research strengths; some see a case for shifting some life sciences to join the Faculty of Health, but worry about where this would leave the Faculty of Science.
- The Faculty is already considering how undergraduate and graduate programming can be evolved to build more synergies with medicine and with the Faculty of Health.
- The possibility of reorganizing or sharing resources across smaller departments should be considered.

Schulich School of Business

- Strong prevailing view that Schulich is thriving as standalone Faculty and that moving it into a combined entity would be detrimental to reputation and alumni relationships, and ability to remain competitive among other business schools offering MBA and other signature programs that are ranked separately, have different expectations for prospective students
- Schulich also has a vested interest York's strategy and finding ways to work on new ideas with other units; UG BBA students already have more crossover interaction with other programs at York
- 4 + 1 admissions program with UG programs + Master of Management is an example of potential synergies to build on
- Traditional degrees are going to quickly lose their hold on students – look at market demand and where Schulich and York can differentiate, and shine based on our mix of strengths
- Council meeting upcoming in early March to gather additional input

Process and Next Steps

Over the next several weeks as engagement continues, individual units as well as faculty members are asked to explore actively any options for reorganization and relocation that they believe could have potential benefits. Faculties and Departments that wish to consider a possible reorganization can always hold their own collegial conversations. Units may also signal their possible interest in reorganizing to the Dean, and upon doing so should be eligible for time limited supports that could include within reason: access to relevant data, facilitation for design thinking sessions, curriculum development advice, advice on change management, and financial analysis to understand the potential resource impacts of different options. Deans should seek support from the Provost's office for cross-Faculty conversations, for example between Glendon and cognate units at Keele. Deans and/or the Interim Provost may also initiate conversations with colleagues, where they identify a case for reorganization.

Deans should work with units to establish clear guidelines on the timeframe for the discussion, expected outcomes in terms of enhancing both academic excellence and sustainability, and what investments could be made following a reorganization to advance the aspirational vision of the new or enlarged unit, keeping student learning opportunities at the centre.

Individual faculty members may always approach their Dean to express interest in transferring to another unit, and Deans are encouraged to consider these requests in light of the themes in this Interim Report, and the need to prepare York overall for the future of higher learning.

The Senior Policy Advisor will also pursue questions raised in the consultations, about how York could create a more dynamic and agile platform to support the interest of faculty members in being able to build and pilot experimental programming that draws on expertise across many parts of the University.

A final set of recommendations about Faculties of the Future is due to the President and Interim Provost in May or June, 2025 with the expectation that implementation will occur in 2025-2026 according to the necessary governance and approvals that will need to be pursued. Units are invited to provide updates to the Senior Policy Advisor before the end of April on any proposals emerging through local discussions, to help shape the recommendations coming out of this project. Implementation efforts may not all occur simultaneously and may be staggered depending on the complexity and number of changes being contemplated. Options for faculty members who may prefer different personal arrangements and a host of other considerations will need to be identified and resolved so the precise timelines will need to be determined.

To provide further input on the original Discussion Paper or on this Interim Report, or to request a consultation, please contact fof@yorku.ca.

Faculties of the Future Interim Report - Data Appendix

February 2025

Graduation Rate with Seven Years, Ontario Universities

Evaluation Year	2023-24
Reporting Year (Data)	2022-23
University	Graduation Rate
Queen's University	88.28%
University of Waterloo	86.41%
McMaster University	85.16%
University of Western Ontario	85.06%
University of Toronto	80.50%
Nipissing University	79.76%
University of Guelph	79.42%
Toronto Metropolitan University	77.05%
University of Windsor	77.01%
University of Ottawa	75.99%
Wilfrid Laurier University	74.44%
Brock University	74.00%
Lakehead University	72.81%
Carleton University	71.41%
Ontario Tech	68.90%
York University	68.88%
Laurentian University	67.95%
Trent University	66.01%
OCAD University	65.09%
Université de Hearst	62.96%
Algoma University	62.44%

(source: Ministry of Colleges and Universities data)

Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

All ▼

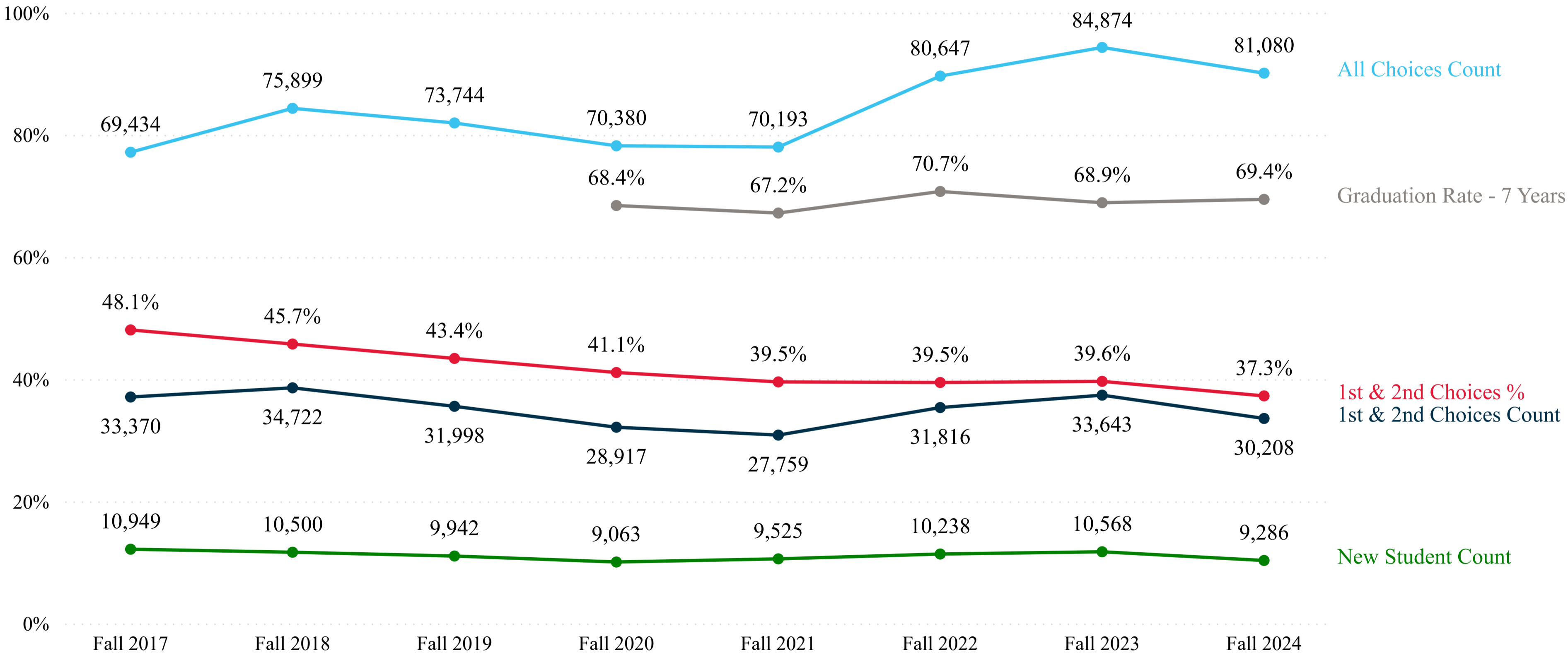
All ▼

All ▼

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

All Faculties

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



Notes:

- **1st & 2nd Choice %:** The proportion of first and second choice applications expressed as a percentage of all applications.
- **New Student Headcount:** The total number of students enrolling for the first time.
- **Graduation Rate %:** The overall percentage of Undergraduate students who complete their program of study and graduate within 7 years (inclusion: domestic, international, 101s, and 105s).
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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

AMPD

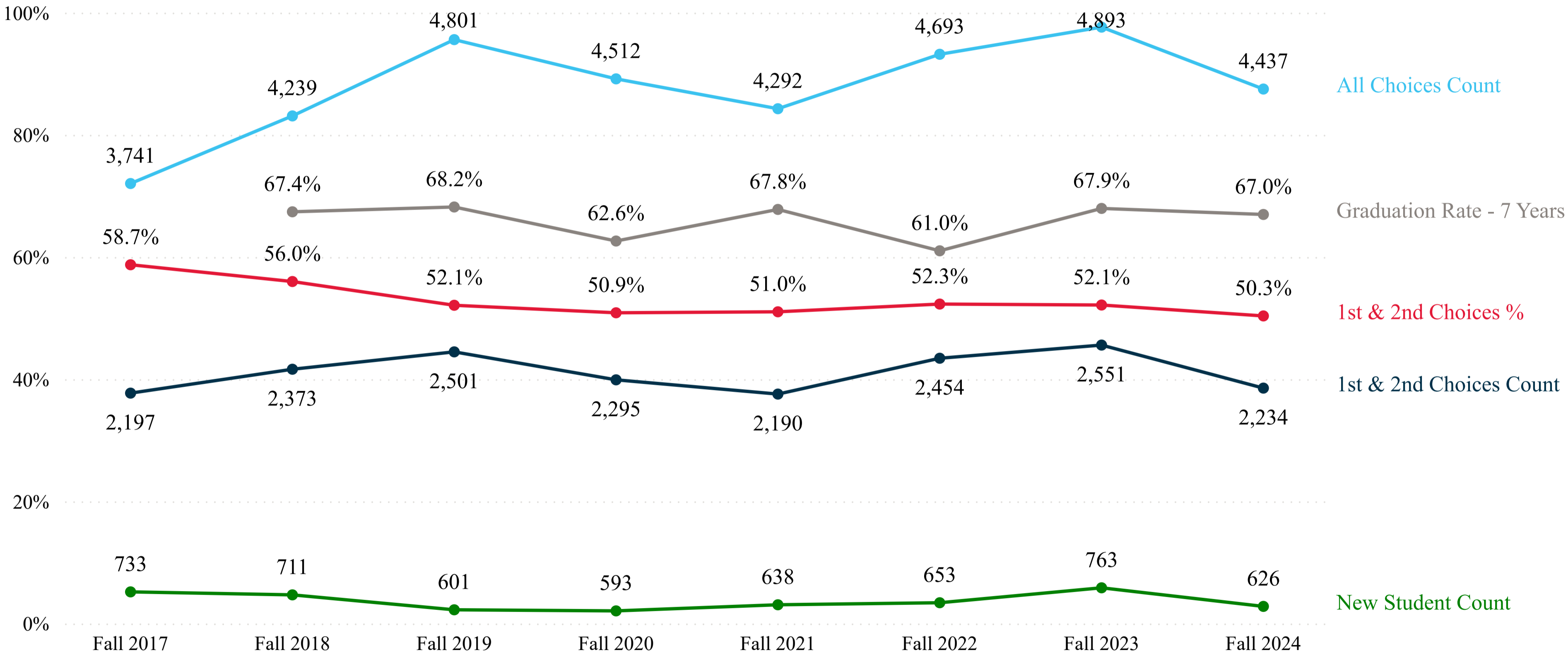
All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

AMPD

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

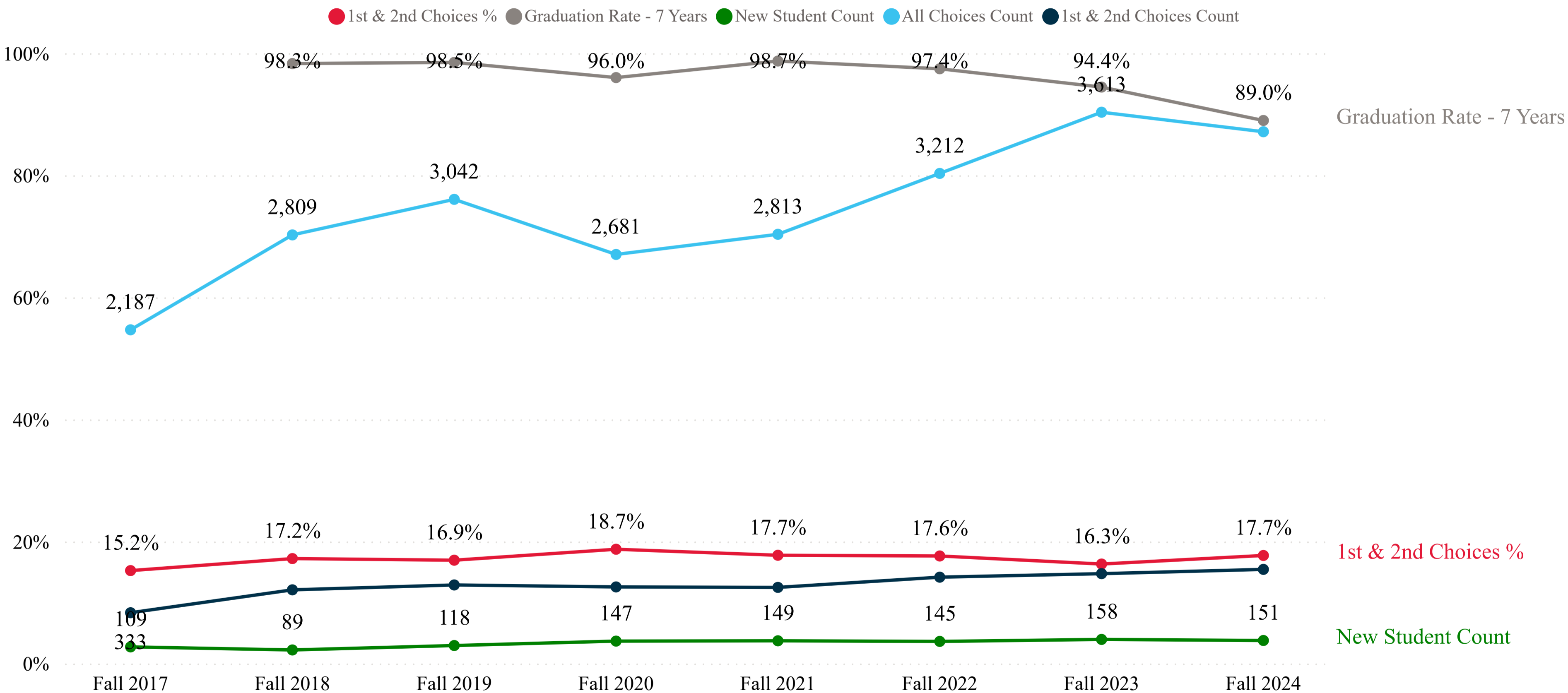
Education

All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

Education



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

EUC

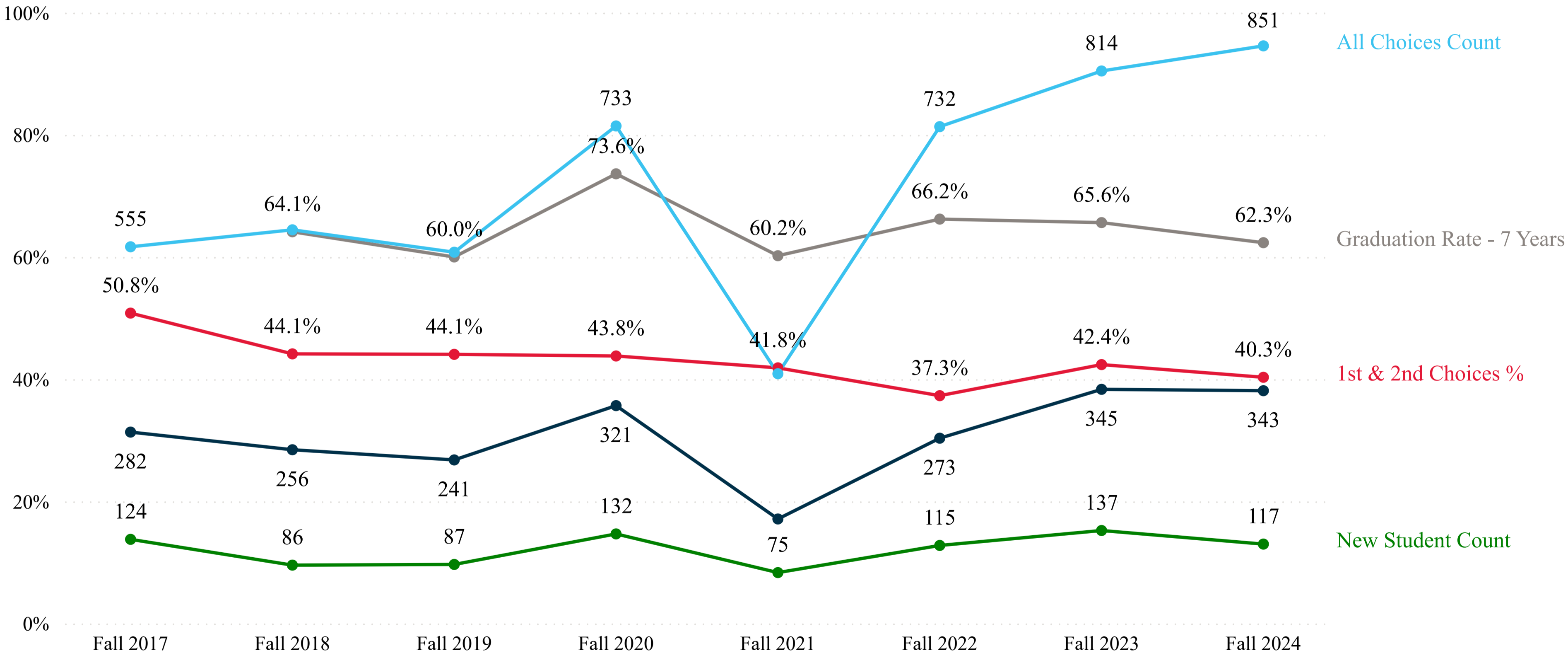
All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

EUC

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

Glendon

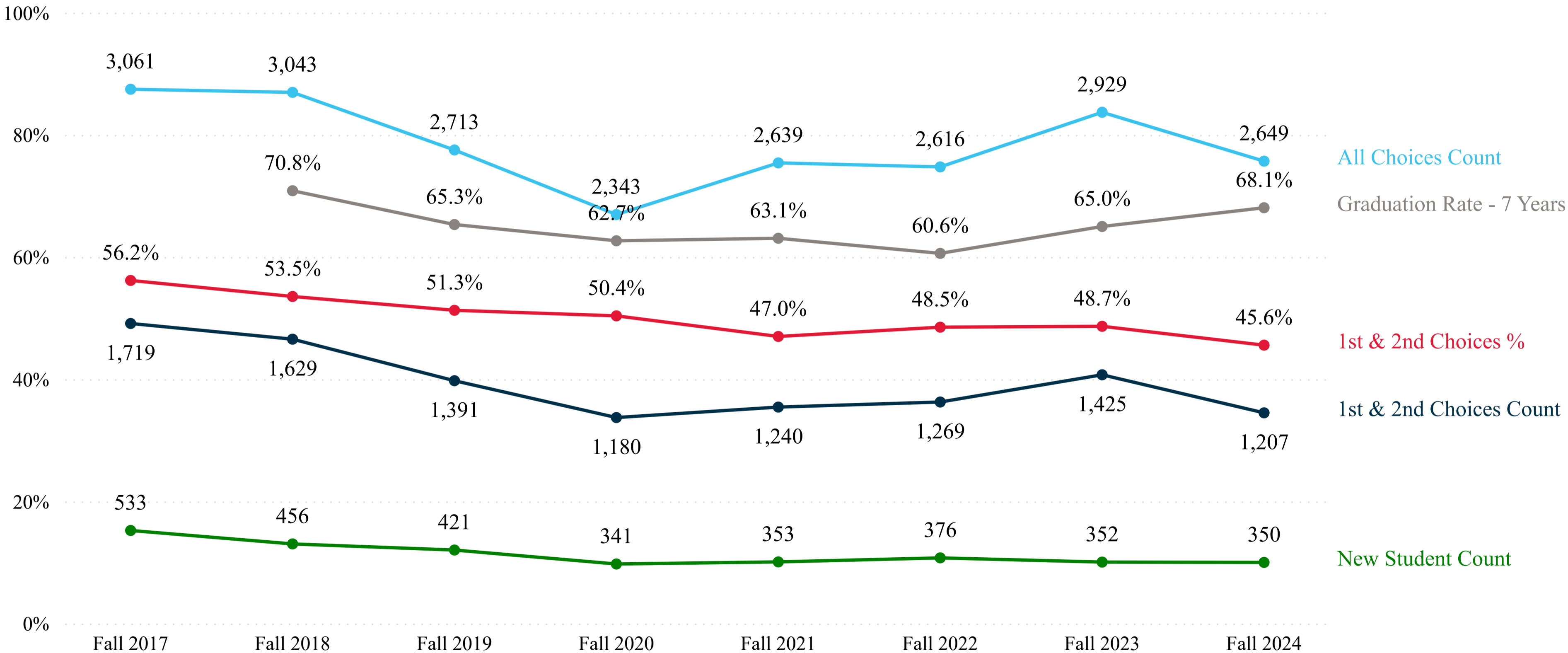
All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

Glendon

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

Health

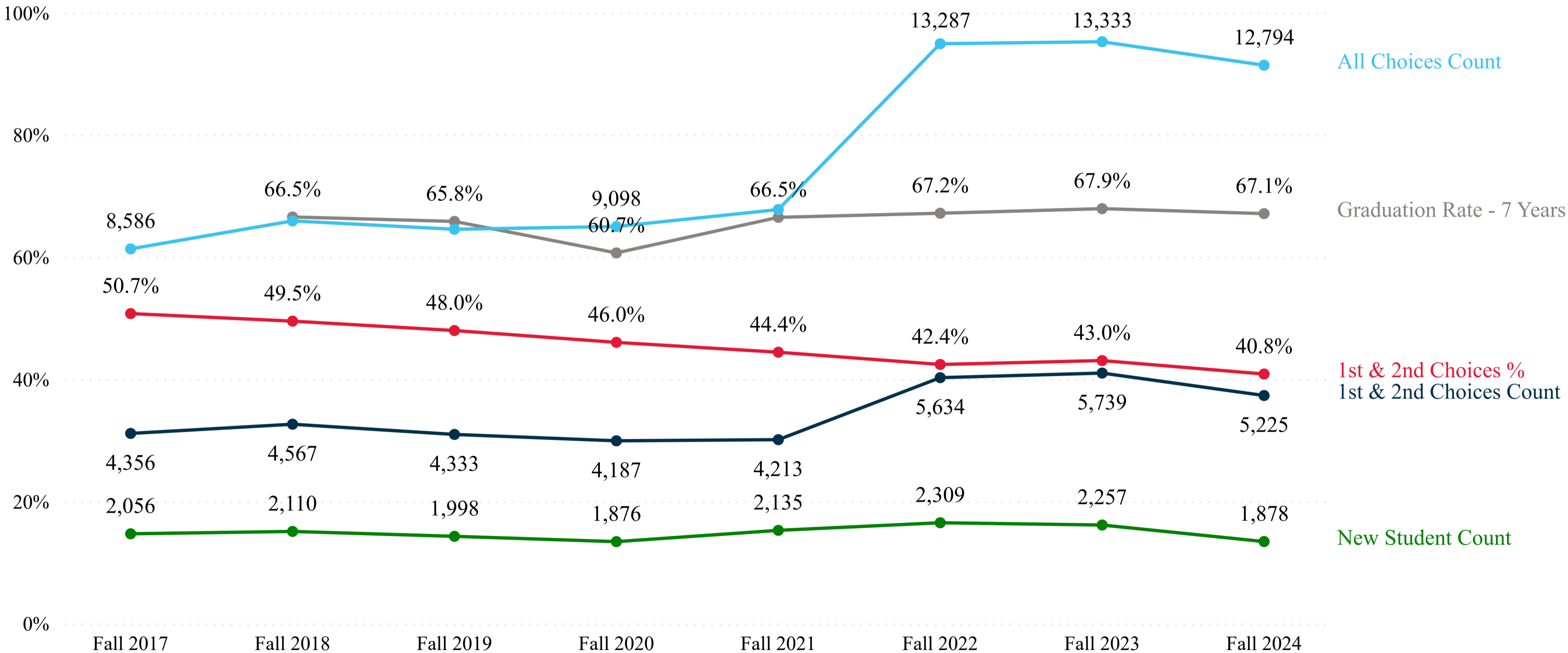
All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

Health

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

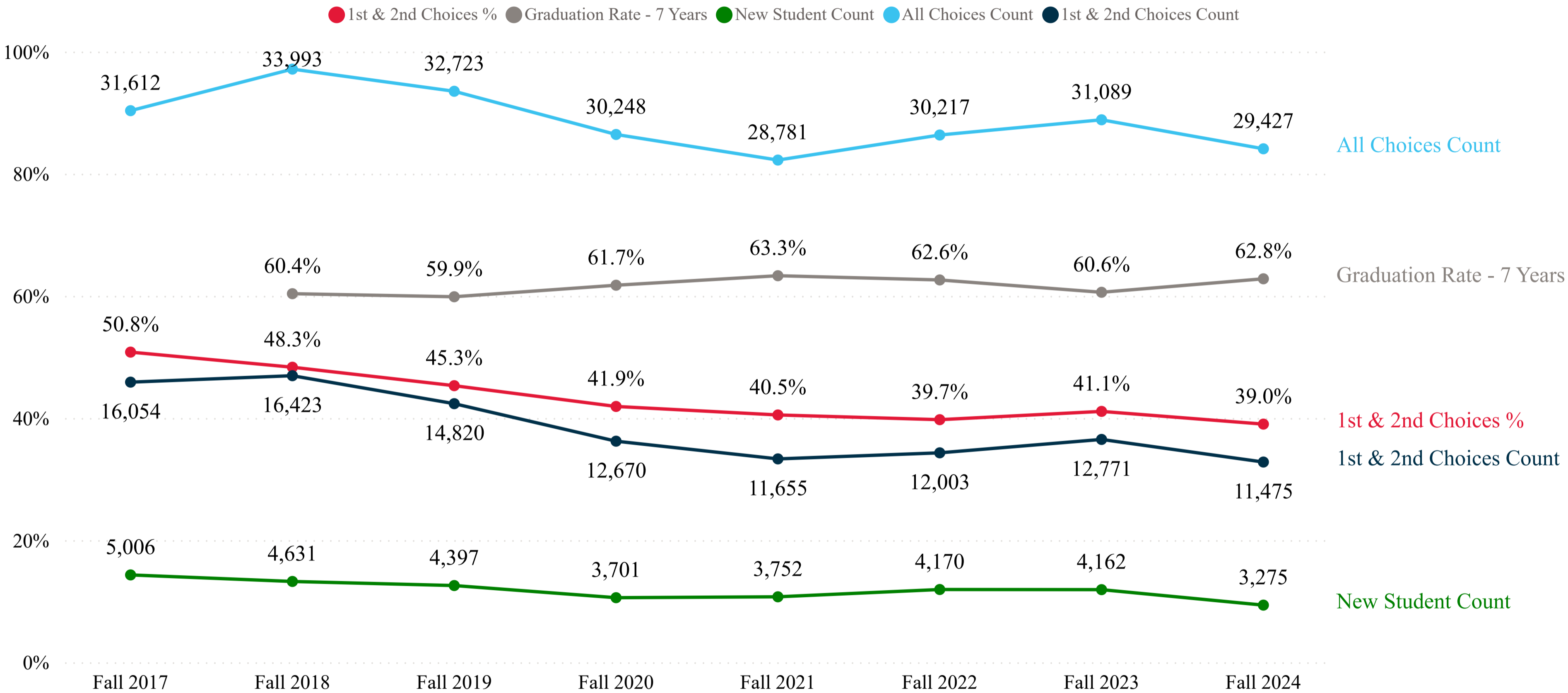
LA&PS

All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

LA&PS



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

Lassonde

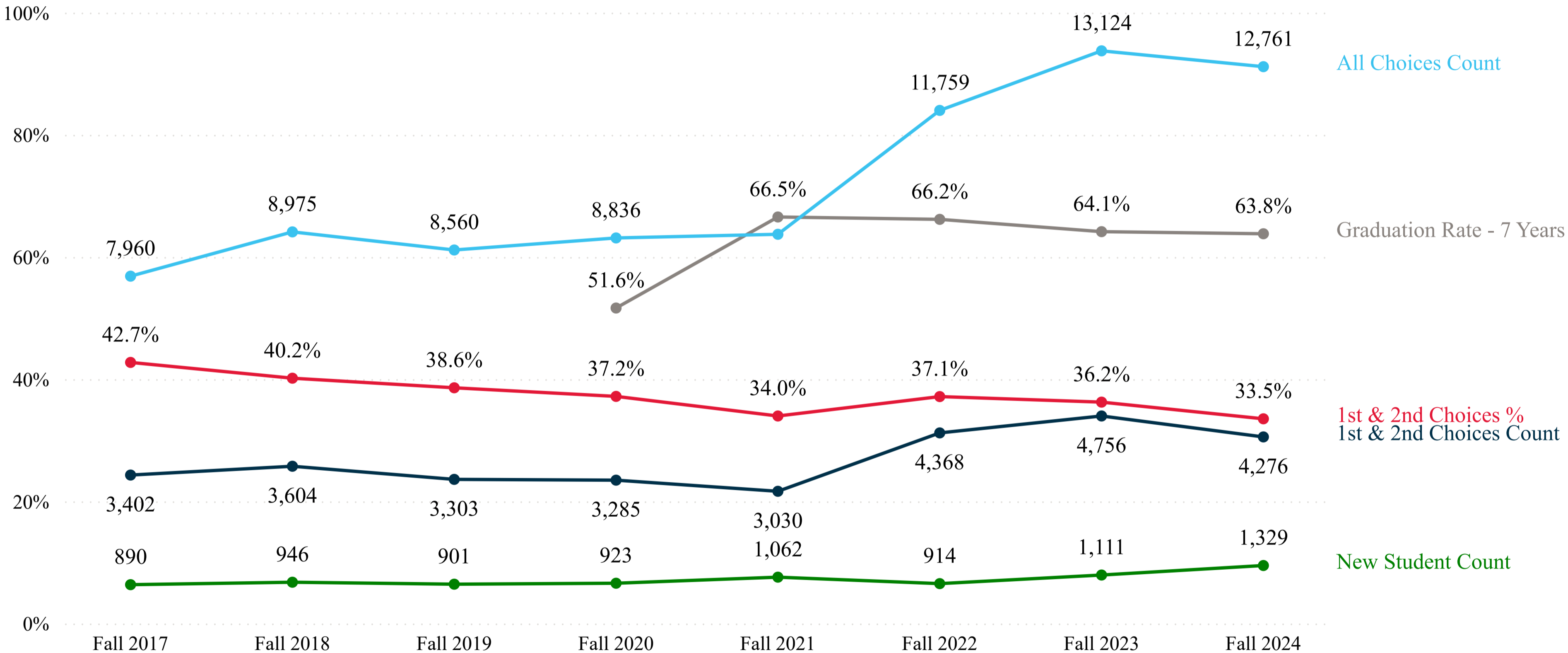
All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

Lassonde

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

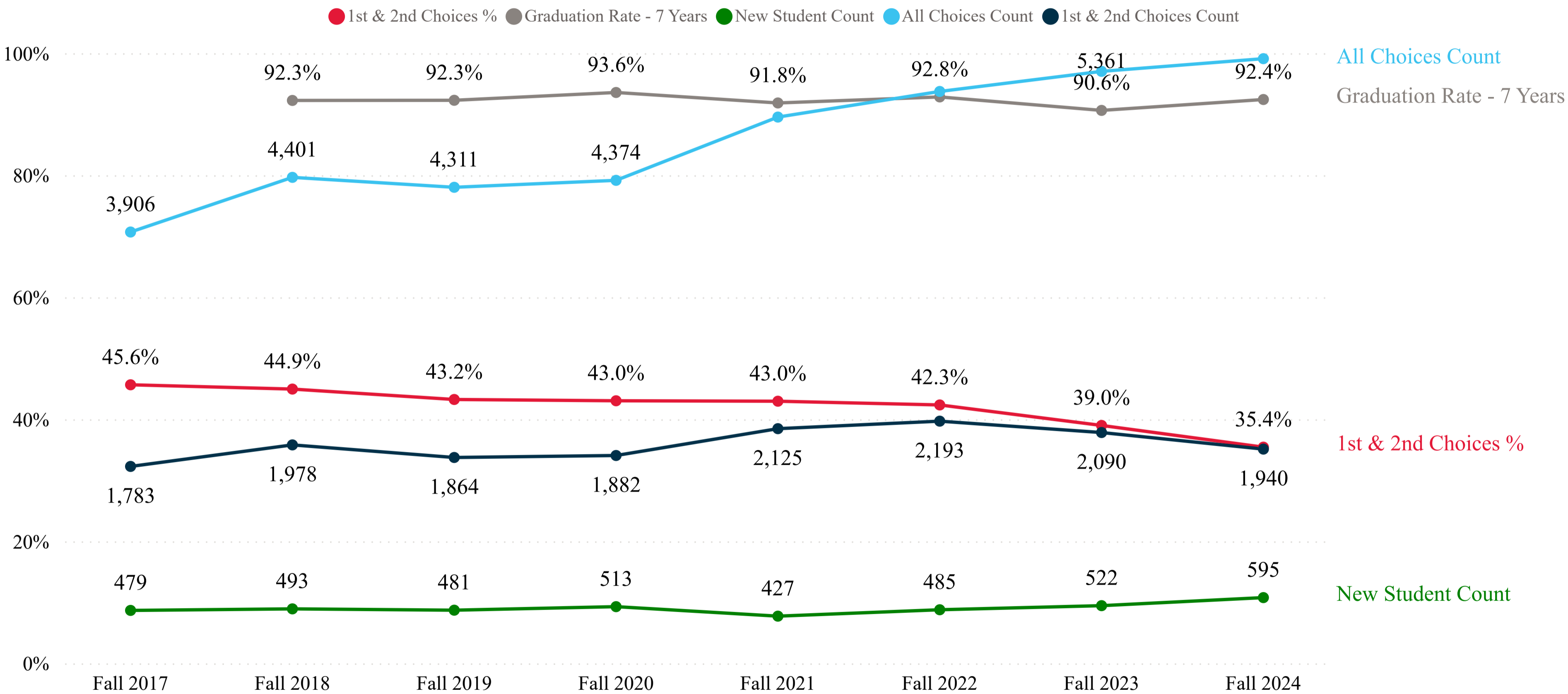
Schulich

All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

Schulich



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Faculty

Domestic/International

EntryType

Science

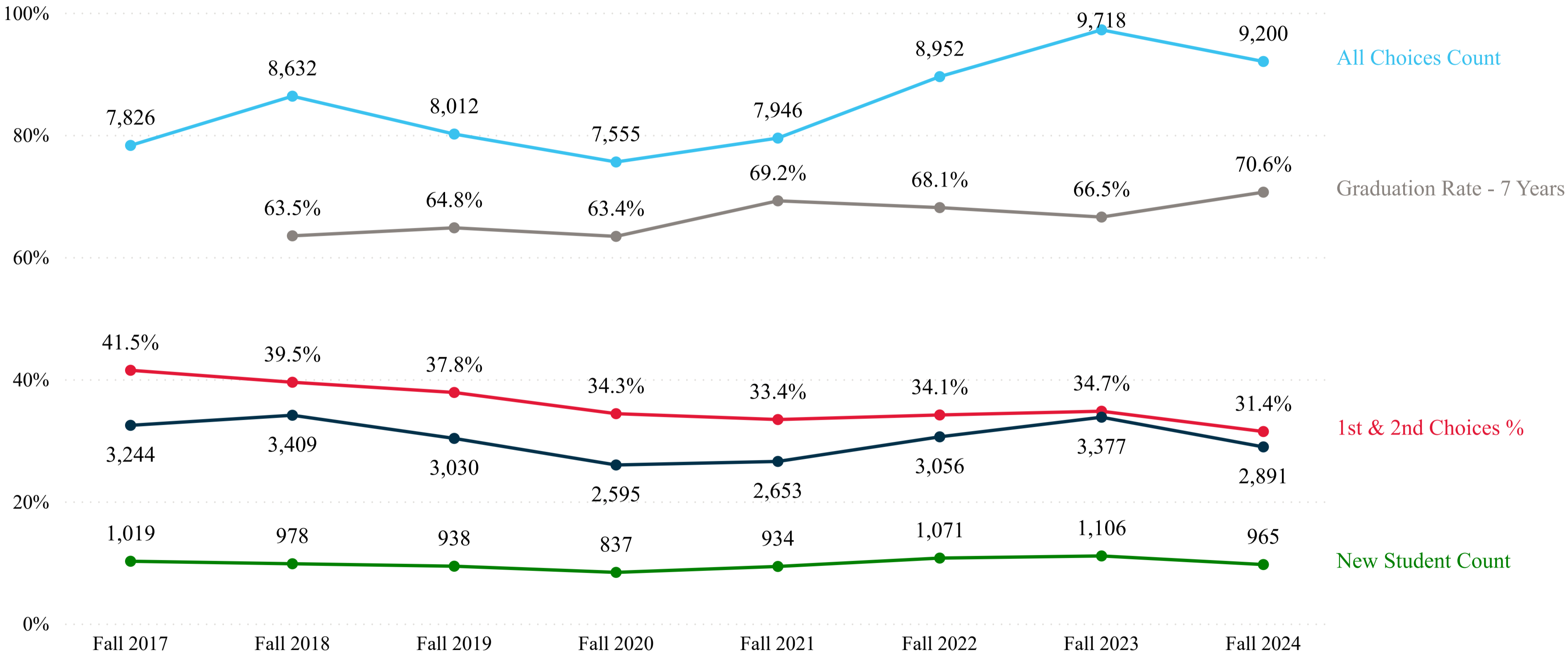
All

All

Application, Enrolment, and Graduation Trends

Science

● 1st & 2nd Choices % ● Graduation Rate - 7 Years ● New Student Count ● All Choices Count ● 1st & 2nd Choices Count



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NOTE: Graduation rate data is based on % of students who graduate from any York program within 7 years of enrolling, counting graduations up to October 2024.

Full Time Staff Headcount

Staff headcount over time is available online through the Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (OIPA) Quick Facts portal: <https://www.yorku.ca/oipa/quick-facts/>

The portal can be searched by employee group, Division, and Faculty.