
Today's News

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Fate of the Castaways: Group Tallies Where 18,000 Students Displaced by Katrina Ended Up

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Two and a half months ago, they were starting the semester just a streetcar or bus ride away from one another at a half-dozen New Orleans colleges and universities. Now, the more than 18,000 students who were forced to flee the city when Hurricane Katrina struck are scattered among 1,017 colleges and universities in every state in the nation, including the District of Columbia, according to a report released on Tuesday.

The [report](#), from the National Student Clearinghouse, examines six of its member institutions that were forced to close their campuses for the semester. It confirms what local officials have suspected as they struggle to locate and reclaim students who were blown from coast to coast.

"The big news is that so many colleges opened their doors to take these students in," said Keith J. Jepsen, president of the Global Student Loan Corporation and chairman of the clearinghouse's Board of Directors. "And they weren't just enrolling a few miles away -- they found homes all over the country."

According to a table published in the report, nearly three-quarters of the displaced students ended up in 10 states, led by Louisiana and Texas, which together accounted for almost half of them. Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge accepted the most of any institution, with 3,271, or 18 percent.

More than half of the displaced students came from Tulane University, with 5,900 students, and the University of New Orleans, with 4,702.

Tracking down hurricane evacuees is a new role for the nonprofit clearinghouse, which helps verify enrollments and keep student records for 2,800 higher-education institutions that together enroll 91 percent of American college students. The organization was created in 1993 as a way to help student-loan companies verify whether students were still in college or should start repaying their loans. In recent years, member colleges have turned to it for help in locating students who either dropped out or were accepted and chose not to enroll.

No one could have imagined that it would one day be used to track down an overnight exodus of nearly 20,000 students. But that's what it did when Katrina forced the evacuations of 18,602 students from six of its member colleges in New Orleans: Delgado Community College, Dillard University, Loyola University New Orleans, Tulane University, the University of New Orleans, and Xavier University of Louisiana.

Students at larger universities, like Tulane and the University of New Orleans, come from around the country. "Many of them were probably just returning close to home for the fall semester," said Daniel R. Boehmer, president of the clearinghouse. Others responded to a flood of offers nationwide from colleges offering reduced or no tuition.

"The next big question is what happens in January," Mr. Boehmer said. "Do they come back to these institutions, stay at their new home, or wander off to a third college?" The clearinghouse will conduct a follow-up study to try to find out.

Although many of the affected colleges in New Orleans have begun enrolling students for the second semester, most can only guess at this point what their enrollments will look like in January. Colleges that have already begun laying off employees are bracing for another round of cuts if fewer students than expected return.

Top 10 States That Received Katrina-Impacted College Students

State	Number of Students*	Percent of Total
Louisiana	5,631	30.27%
Texas	2,882	15.49%
New York	907	4.88%
Georgia	895	4.81%
Illinois	864	4.64%
California	688	3.70%
Tennessee	618	3.32%
Florida	541	2.91%
Missouri	446	2.40%
Alabama	428	2.30%

* Enrollment numbers include institutions participating in National Student Clearinghouse only.

SOURCE: National Student Clearinghouse