

College Enrollments Fell This Fall

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By

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Memo to college presidents: Your admissions directors weren't making excuses when they told you they were struggling to fill their classes this fall.

Data [released by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#) on Tuesday -- in the first of what the center says will be twice-a-year snapshots of up-to-date enrollment statistics -- show that college enrollments declined by 1.8 percent in fall 2012, driven by larger drops for for-profit colleges (-7.2 percent) and community colleges (-3.1 percent). Enrollment fell by 0.6 percent at four-year public colleges and universities, and rose by half a percentage point at four-year private nonprofit colleges, as seen in the figure below.

The declines, which follow on a very small decline in fall 2011, as reported in [federal government data in recent months](#), are unsurprising, given that college enrollments typically rise and fall with the unemployment rate. So the fact that [the enrollment boom that colleges enjoyed](#) as the economy tanked in 2008 and 2009 has begun to reverse itself is in many ways to be expected.

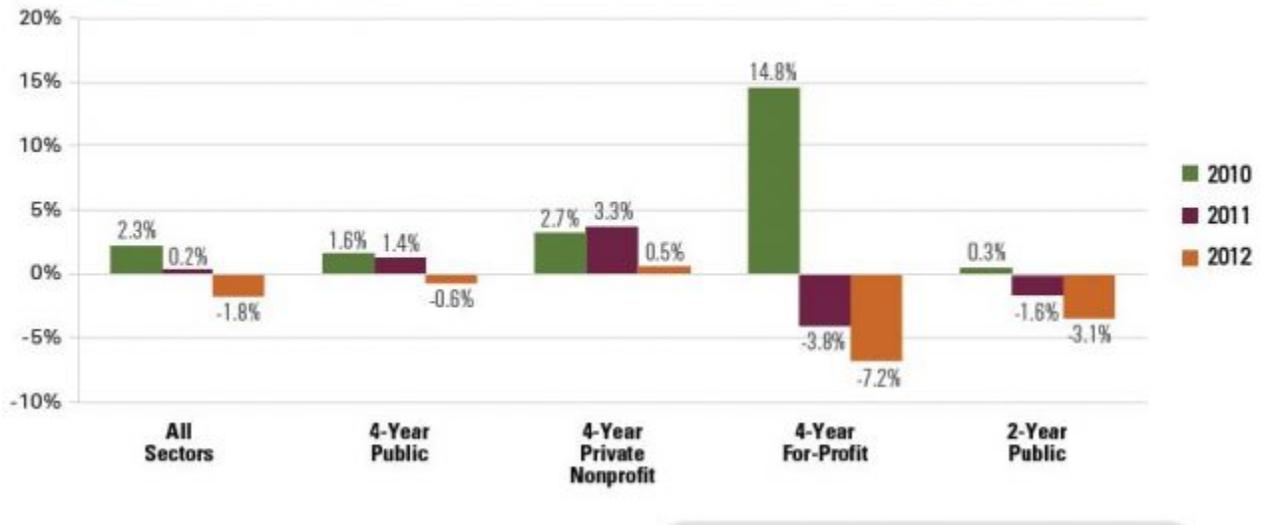
But that suggests that the philanthropic and government efforts to get significant numbers of adults to go to college (or to return there) to pursue President Obama's goal of driving up the number of Americans with a postsecondary credential may not be bearing much fruit.

And just because an enrollment dip was expected doesn't mean that it won't still cause real difficulties for the many tuition-dependent colleges and universities, especially as other sources of funds have withered.

Data from the clearinghouse show that the enrollment declines were bigger for full-time (-2.1 percent) than part-time students (-1.2 percent), for women (-2.0 percent) than for men (-1.4 percent), and for those aged 24 and older (-3.4 percent) than for traditional-aged students (-0.7 percent).

The National Student Clearinghouse collects data from institutions that represent about 94 percent of all enrollments at colleges that grant degrees and are eligible to award federal financial aid.

Figure 1: Percent Change from Previous Fall, Enrollment by Sector (Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions)



Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/12/19/fall-2012-college-enrollments-fell-18#ixzz2FVuHe02m>

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