

## **Spring Semester Brings Small College Enrollment Drop**

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Although overall college enrollments have been steadily rising throughout the past decade, a new report by the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ shows that this spring, enrollments decreased 2.3% compared to the spring 2012 semester. This drop was seen among all types of institutions except four-year private nonprofits, which experienced a modest 0.5% increase in enrollments.

At the same time, a previous report by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center indicated that in the fall 2012 semester, enrollment dropped by 1.8% compared to the previous year.

### **Colleges Are Not Surprised**

A January 2013 survey by Moody's Investors Service shows that many college officials were probably not surprised to see their enrollments decrease. According to The New York Times, the survey found that almost half of colleges and universities expected to see enrollment decreases among full-time students.

"The cumulative effects of years of depressed family income and net worth, as well as uncertain job prospects for many recent graduates, are combining to soften student market demand at current tuition prices," Emily Schwarz, a Moody's analyst and lead author of the report, said in a statement.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, colleges have increased their tuition in an effort to boost necessary revenue. Today, on average, tuition tends to increase approximately 8% per year, meaning the cost of earning a bachelor's degree doubles every nine years, FinAid reports.

### **The Reasons Behind Enrollment Declines**

Although many experts agree that college is still a valuable investment for students, they feel there are several possible factors behind enrollment decreases. Doug Shapiro, executive director of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, told USA Today that many colleges saw enrollment spikes in 2011 during the recession, so these small drops just mean enrollment is returning to normal. This is to be expected when an economy improves, as more individuals are heading back to the workforce rather than advancing their skills in academia.

"It's reflective of good news for the economy and labor market," Shapiro said.

At the same time, the 18-year-old population is slowly declining, Bloomberg reported last year, which could explain small enrollment decreases.

Still, Bloomberg, like many other higher education experts, largely attributed the declining number of college students to raising [tuition](#) rates, stating that "colleges may in some cases be pricing themselves out of the market."