

Enrollment Slows Nationally

Submitted by Ann McClure on Tue, 02/05/2013 - 7:16pm

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Wednesday, February 6, 2013

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It had been predicted for years and now it looks like it is finally coming to pass. No, not the Mayan calendar apocalypse. After years of steep increases, higher education enrollments are slowing, almost across the board. In its “Projections of Education Statistics to 2021” report, the Department of Education predicts that overall higher education enrollment will rise only about 15 percent from 2010 to 2021, after witnessing a 46 percent increase from 1996 to 2010. The last couple of years seem to mark the crest of the wave as enrollments have fallen in every sector but four-year private non-profit schools, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Community colleges are taking the biggest hit in many states, with a decline of around 3 percent nationally. Some states and regions were impacted to a greater degree than others. While Florida saw a drop of about 1 percent overall in two-year school enrollment, individual institutions recorded a larger decline. Enrollment at Daytona State College fell 8 percent, for example, while Tallahassee Community College slipped 6 percent, and Lake-Sumter State College reported a 4 percent drop. Similarly, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) reported an overall 2.7 percent decline in community college enrollment. Individually, the Houston Community College System had a 7 percent decline, while the Austin Community College District declined by 4.5 percent. Why enrollment is dropping is a question with multiple answers. Historically, a recovering economy and improving job picture means students are more interested in employment than education.

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