
May 2024

Examining Trends of Higher Education in Ohio Institutions

Alex Giordano

Case Western Reserve University, adg97@case.edu

Noam Greenberg

Case Western Reserve University, ntg13@case.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.case.edu/joe>

Recommended Citation

Giordano, Alex and Greenberg, Noam (2024) "Examining Trends of Higher Education in Ohio Institutions," *Case Western Reserve University Journal Of Economics*: Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28953/APPL00011120.1000>

Available at: <https://commons.case.edu/joe/vol2/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Weatherhead School of Management at Scholarly Commons @ Case Western Reserve University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Case Western Reserve University Journal Of Economics by an authorized editor of Scholarly Commons @ Case Western Reserve University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@case.edu.

Examining Trends of Higher Education in Ohio Institutions

By: Alex Giordano & Noam Greenberg

Different types of post-secondary education institutions offer unique job opportunities and attract different demographics, depending on the nature of the institution. Research into post-secondary education in Ohio, including two-year and four-year degrees, is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides data-driven insights into the effectiveness, outcomes, and challenges of different higher education pathways, empowering policymakers, educators, students, and families to make informed decisions about educational investments and career choices. Moreover, research can uncover disparities in access to higher education opportunities based on factors such as income, race, and gender. Research also helps evaluate the relevance and value of educational programs. Studies into higher education in Ohio help to assess the alignment between educational offerings and workforce needs, thereby informing curriculum development and training initiatives to better prepare students for employment opportunities.

Higher education in Ohio is essential for driving economic prosperity, promoting social mobility, and fostering innovation. As industries evolve and new technologies emerge, the demand for skilled workers continues to grow, highlighting the importance of aligning educational programs with workforce needs. However, disparities in access and outcomes persist, highlighting the need for research and policy interventions to address equity issues and enhance educational opportunities for all Ohioans.

To research this topic, examining enrollment is key to understanding the evolution of higher education in Ohio. It's also crucial to consider economic shocks like the 2008 recession and the COVID-19 pandemic when examining how the economy impacts education. According to a report by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, as cited by Conley and Massa (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with a significant decrease in higher education enrollment: from Fall 2019 to Fall 2021, enrollment fell 6.6% nationally. Similarly, during the 2008 recession, university enrollment fell, but 2-year colleges saw enrollment increase by 33% ("Postsecondary Enrollment..." 2018). Many people believe that a degree from a 4-year university is simply "not worth it". Rising tuition costs, coupled with concerns about the actual return on investment, have made families more cautious about sending their children to college after high school.

The visualizations below are based on data dating back to 2005 and look at Ohio universities rather than countrywide enrollment. For the most accurate determination, we chose Ohio's largest universities and community colleges and analyzed their enrollment trends, graphing them over time. We also observed the percent change in enrollment over time, allowing for a comparison between universities and community colleges. All data was collected from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Figure 1. (left) Enrollment at Ohio universities; **Figure 2.** (right) Enrollment at Ohio community colleges

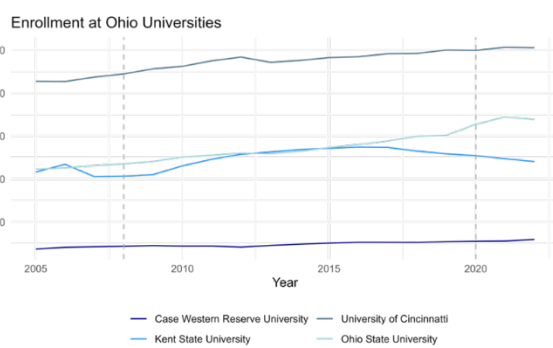


Fig. 1

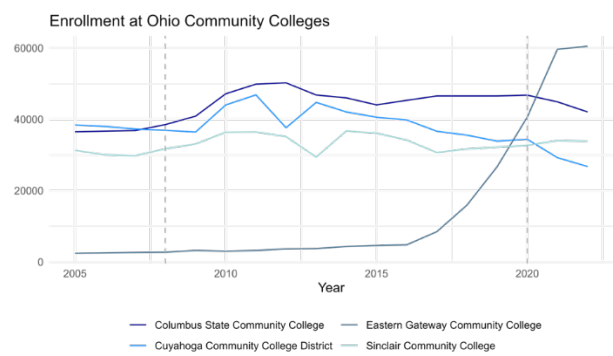


Fig. 2

The university enrollment graph above (Figure 1) shows consistent growth over time, with the four selected universities growing at similar rates from the mid-2000s to the 2020s. The community college enrollment graph (Figure 2) above shows less consistent growth, with most institutions remaining at or below 2005 levels through to the 2020s.

Figure 3. Percent change in enrollment at Ohio universities and community colleges

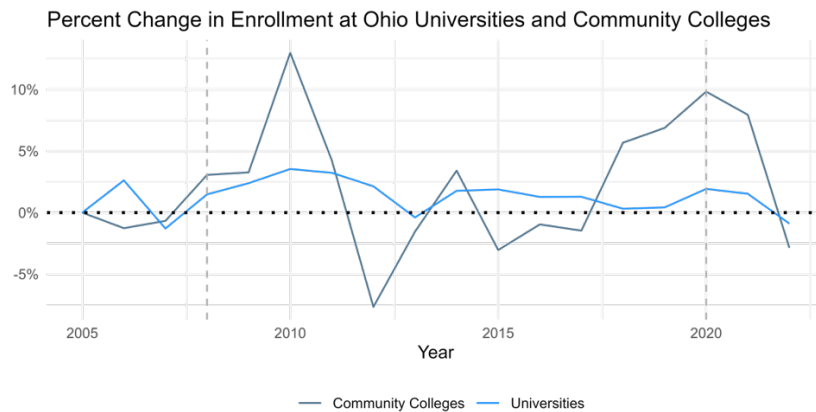


Fig. 3 Source IPEDS
Dashed lines represent 2008 recession and COVID-19 pandemic

Looking at Figure 3, university enrollment shows a relatively steady and consistent growth pattern, contrasting with the more erratic fluctuations seen in community college enrollment. This may be because community college enrollment numbers are more vulnerable to external economic conditions, as community colleges tend to attract students who are more sensitive to economic fluctuations, job market trends, and changes in government funding or financial aid policies. Additionally, the volatility in community college enrollment may be attributed to the fact that bachelor's degree programs require a greater time commitment. This may indicate a higher level of commitment from prospective college students to attend an institution with longer degree programs.

In conclusion, the steady growth of university enrollment in Ohio over the last two decades contrasts with the more erratic fluctuations seen in community college enrollment. This disparity is most pronounced when examining the percent change graph, where the highs and lows for community colleges appear much more irregular. One possible explanation for this difference is the relative affordability of community colleges compared to universities, making them more sensitive to economic conditions. Additionally, the volatility in community college enrollment may be attributed to the fact that bachelor's degree programs require a greater time commitment, suggesting that prospective students are more committed to attending institutions offering longer degree programs.

References:

1. Bill Conley, Robert Massa. "The Great Interruption." Inside Higher Ed | Higher Education News, Events and Jobs, www.insidehighered.com/admissions/views/2022/02/28/enrollment-changes-colleges-are-feeling-are-much-more-covid-19. Accessed 22 Apr. 2024.
2. "Postsecondary Enrollment Before, During and After the Great Recession." Census.gov. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/postsecondary.html>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2024.
3. U.S. Department of Education, "Total 12-month unduplicated headcount 2005-2022" IPEDS, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/cds.aspx>. Accessed 22 Apr. 2024. Wall, H.J. (2009, October). The "Man-Cession" of 2008-2009: It's Big, but It's Not Great, St. Louis Fed, <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/regional-economist/october-2009/the-mancession-of-20082009-its-big-but-its-not-great>