Watching the economy for enrollment trends

Enrollment trends at community colleges can typically be predicted based on how the economy is doing.

The demographic shifts and enrollment trends at community colleges have a lot to do with the economy. Enrollment data in the early part of the 21st century indicated an average of 2.2 percent increase per year, especially from 2000 to 2006. During the recent recession, community colleges saw a large spike, averaging a 5.6 percent increase, which lead to a peak enrollment in fall 2010. This is partially a result of unemployed workers turning to college to obtain new skills or retraining. In addition, a jump in high school graduates during the same time contributed to the growth at community colleges. Enrollment started to level off in fall 2011, as the economy strengthened; enrollment continues to decrease by 3.5 percent each year. Click here to read the completion report.

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Source: “Community College Completion: Progress Toward Goal of 50% Increase,” American Association of Community Colleges, April 2015.