

College Enrollment is Decreasing... Is That a Good Thing?

College enrollment is down for the fourth straight year, even though high school graduation rates are up.

For an education system that pushes every child toward college, that may be bad news. But as an [article](#) in yesterday's *Atlantic* claims, it may actually be a good thing.

For one, declining college enrollment could be a sign that there are more opportunities in the workforce:

"As the Stanford economist Caroline Hoxby and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign economist Jeffrey Brown [have famously argued](#), students were more likely to enroll and stay in college during the Great Recession; at a time when there are fewer jobs, would-be college students are more likely to invest in opportunities to develop skills and enhance their chances at getting employed. People are drawn back toward the workforce once the economy has started to recover, which is what experts suspect is happening now."

In addition, it might show that students are turning their backs on colleges that don't offer them much of a leg up on the job market:

"Only those institutions that serve the largest percentages of disadvantaged students—two-year and for-profit colleges—have seen enrollment drop; it's actually slightly increased or remained steady at four-year institutions... The Atlantic's Gillian White has [pointed out](#) that the types of institutions seeing the most significant declines in enrollment tend to offer degrees that provide only marginal

improvements in job prospects compared to high-school diplomas."

According to recent reports, on average, those with college degrees will still earn more in their lifetimes than those without. But there are some who beat this trend, namely, those who get jobs in "blue-collar fields such as manufacturing, mining, and agriculture."

Would you welcome seeing a college degree become less necessary to succeed in today's world?