



**SENATE RESOLUTION #2951**

**TITLE:** ASUW Acknowledgement of Enrollment Cliff and Decline

**DATE INTRODUCED:** 02/27/2024

**AUTHOR:** Senator Schliebe

**SPONSORS:** Senator Gomelsky, Senator Grimm, Senator Hennigar, Senator Keasling, Senator Grimm, Senator Saint, Director of Community and Governmental Affairs Bouma, Director of Student Organizations and Outreach Murphy

1. WHEREAS, the purpose of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming
2. (ASUW) is to serve our fellow students in the best manner possible; and,
3. WHEREAS, college enrollment nationally has been declining due to cultural perceptions
4. of higher education, decrease in birth rates, COVID-19, tuition inflation, student
5. migration trends, and the looming enrollment cliff; and,
6. WHEREAS, as seen in addendum A the University of Wyoming has seen a decrease of
7. fall total enrollment numbers from a peak of 13,929 students in the fall of 2012 to 10,913
8. students in the fall of 2023; and,
9. WHEREAS, as seen in addendum B the enrollment cliff, which is the “decline in college
10. enrollment numbers in the United States” due to the decline in birthrates since the
11. 2008 Great Recession, needs to be accounted for and proactively addressed; and,
12. WHEREAS, there is predicted to be a decline in 18-year-olds, thus reducing the
13. enrollment pool of students; and,
14. WHEREAS, as seen in addendum B it is predicted that enrollment numbers in the
15. Western states may decrease a further 2.5-7.5%, as opposed to nearly 15% in more
16. Eastern states due to the Enrollment Cliff and national trends; and,
17. WHEREAS, this is a national issue and a regional issue; and,
18. WHEREAS, the first step to addressing an issue is acknowledgment; and,
19. WHEREAS, a decrease in college enrollment may lower the relative quantity and/or
20. quality of participation in student organizations, campus activities, and campus
21. interactions; and,
22. WHEREAS, acknowledging the problem and working to reduce the impact of the
23. enrollment cliff is vital to reduce the harm created towards campus entities; and,

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24. WHEREAS, there is a multitude of student organizations with varying levels of  
25. interactions with the University administration; and,  
26. WHEREAS, organizations with lower levels of interaction with University  
27. administration may be unaware of potential difficulties facing the University; and,  
28. WHEREAS, ASUW has a responsibility to inform and mitigate potential risks posing the  
29. University; and,  
30. WHEREAS, ASUW has an obligation to assist students and student organizations in the  
31. best manner possible through accurate representation.  
32. THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Associated Students of the University of  
33. Wyoming is committed to a sustained effort to bring awareness to and address the  
34. decline in enrollment to the decline in enrollment; and,  
35. THEREFORE, be it further resolved that the Associated Students of the University of  
36. Wyoming encourage organizations to reach out to either Student Orgs Office and/or  
37. ASUW to find ways to increase retention, recruitment, and marketing  
38. efforts to lessen the impact of the enrollment cliff.

Referred to: HOPE and AD&P

Date of Passage: March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Signed: 

(ASUW Chairperson)

“Being enacted on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, I do hereby sign my name hereto

and approve this Senate action.”

  
ASUW President

### Addendum A

#### Total Enrollment Numbers at the University of Wyoming<sup>1</sup>

*The statistics cited in the resolution are cited from the following sources. More information about the enrollment cliff is available via the following links.*

Year	UW Total Fall Enrollment	UW Total Spring Enrollment
2023	10,913	10,463
2020	11,829	11,545
2018	12,450	12,138
2016	12,607	13,098
2014	13,638	13,444
2012	13,922	13,751
2010	13,476	13,459
2008	13,106	13,065
2006	13,203	12,725
2004	13,162	12,825

The chart above displays the enrollment numbers since 2004. The University of Wyoming provides statistics on enrollment since 1997, the graph above uses 2-year increments to display trends, rather than annual numbers. Fall and Spring numbers are shown to emphasize retention numbers between semesters. As seen above there has been a decrease in enrollment since 2012.

### Addendum B

#### Research Behind Enrollment Cliff

*The statistics cited in the resolution are cited from the following sources. More information about the enrollment cliff is available via the following links.*

#### Statistica

“The ‘enrollment cliff’, a phenomenon referring to a decline in college enrollment numbers in the United States, has generally been attributed to a drop in fertility during the Great Recession. Between 2008 and 2011, the birth rate in United States fell abruptly, and despite an economic recovery facilitated within the next decade, the birth rate did not bounce back. As a result, the college-age population has been in decline, with the total number of enrollment for the fall term in the United States falling from 19.9 million in 2017 to 18.2 million in 2022. Within

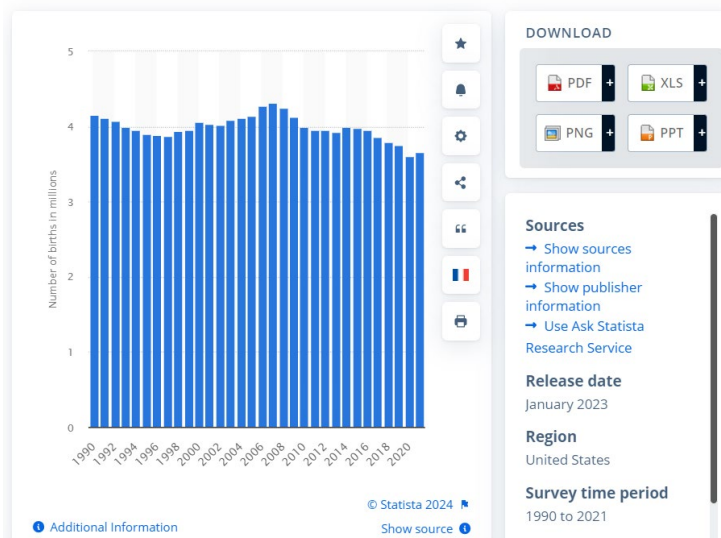
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<sup>1</sup> Office of Institutional Analysis. *Enrollment Summaries*. University of Wyoming.  
<https://www.uwyo.edu/oia/student-data/enrollment-summaries.html>

this time period, the sector with the highest enrollment numbers in the U.S. was public 4-year colleges, which had 7.8 million students enrolled in the fall term in 2017. Demonstrating the tip of the enrollment cliff, this number fell to 7.6 million by 2022. Along with this decline in enrollment, the number of potential high school students wishing to attend college may have been further impacted by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, in which the switch to online learning was estimated to lead to an additional 1.1 million high-school dropouts in the United States<sup>2</sup>.”

### Number of births in the United States from 1990 to 2021

(in millions)



The graph above shows the declining birthrate within the United States from 1990 to 2021, with a gradual decline since 2007, arguably caused by the 2008 economic recession. Birthrates have been on a steady decline starting in 2008<sup>3</sup>.

### College and University Professional Association for Human Resources<sup>4</sup>

“U.S. Birthrate Drops 4th Year in a Row, Possibly Echoing the Great Recession”

“U.S. Births Fell to a 32-Year Low in 2018; CDC Says Birthrate Is in Record Slump”

<sup>2</sup> Korhonen, Veera. (2023). *The Enrollment Cliff in the United States – Statistics & Facts*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/10608/the-enrollment-cliff-in-the-united-states/#topicOverview>

<sup>3</sup> Korhonen, Veera. (2023). *Birth rate in the United States from 1990 to 2021*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/195943/birth-rate-in-the-united-states-since-1990/>

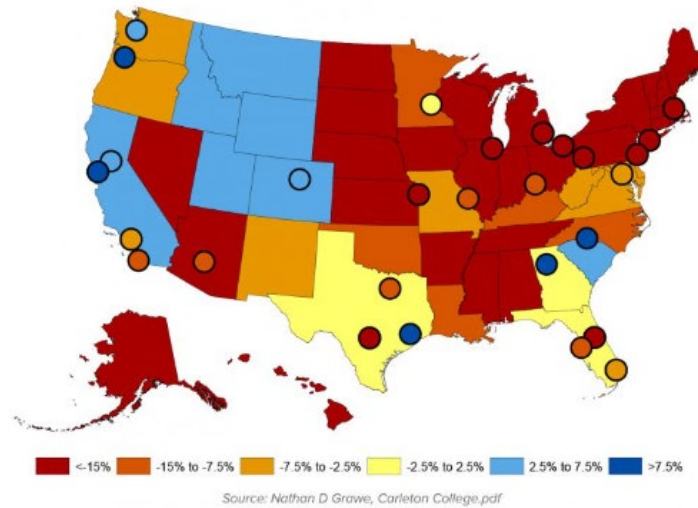
<sup>4</sup> Kline, Missy. (2019). *The Looming Higher Ed Enrollment Cliff*. College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. <https://www.cupahr.org/issue/feature/higher-ed-enrollment-cliff/>

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“The U.S. Birthrate Is Still Falling”

“College Students Predicted to Fall by More Than 15 Percent After the Year 2025”

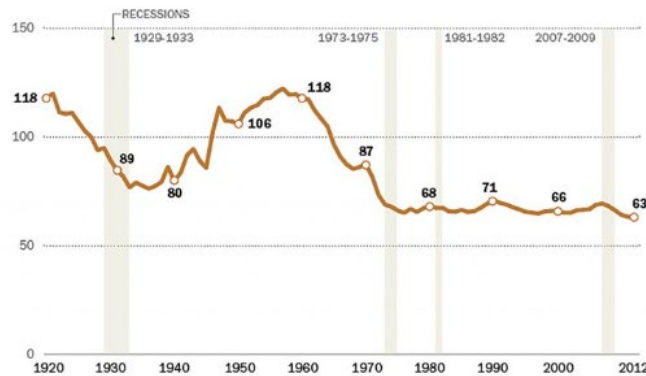
Forecasted growth and decline in college-going students, 2012-2029



The figure above displays forecasted growth and decline in college-going students from 2012-2029. While Eastern and Mid-West states are expected to experience a 15% decline, Western University’s enrollment is expected to experience a drop of 2.5%-7.5%.

Fertility Often Rises and Falls with Economic Cycles

Annual number of births per 1,000 women of childbearing age



Note: 2012 data are preliminary.

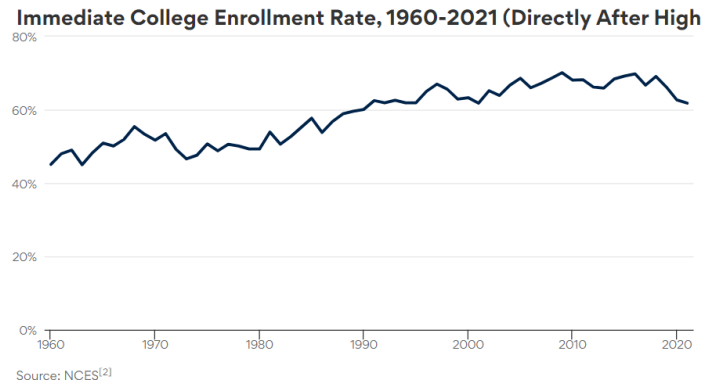
Sources: Statistics calculated using data obtained from U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Health Statistics and Heuser, Robert L. *Fertility tables for birth cohorts by color*. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. DHEW Publication No. (HRA)76-1152

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The figure above displays the historic trend of birth rates during economic crises.

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## Best Colleges<sup>5</sup>



The graph above shows immediate college enrollment rate trends, emphasizing the decrease in immediate enrollment rates since mid-2000's.

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<sup>5</sup> Welding, Lyss. (2024). *College Enrollment Statistics in the U.S.* BestColleges.  
<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/college-enrollment-statistics/>