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Enrollment up at area private colleges

Private universities in central Ohio outperform national postsecondary trend

Sheridan Hendrix
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Central Ohio private colleges and universities largely boasted stable enrollment growth this fall, with several reporting big gains in new, first-time stu-

dent enrollment, according to institutional data. The enrollment growth fits in line with preliminary fall enrollment trends data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, which found that undergraduate enrollment grew about 2.4% across all sectors this fall.

Private, nonprofit, four-year institutions reported about a 1% enrollment increase nationally. Mounting financial difficulties, shifting population demographics and attacks on higher education have spelled disarray for many colleges and universities nationwide, particularly private institutions. Of the 46 colleges and universities that closed nationwide in 2024, about 40% were private nonprofit institutions, according to the Hechinger Report's college closure tracker.

Initial enrollment reports from central Ohio private colleges, however, mostly trended upward. Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware County reported a fourth-straight year in enrollment growth after a little dip during the COVID-19 pandemic. The liberal arts university enrolled 1,652 undergraduates this semester, up about 8% since fall 2024. It also enrolled 516 new, first-time students, up from 474

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“Release the Epstein files” was a rallying cry of Republicans. But it now threatens to fracture the party as Democrats demand that the Justice Department release its files. JIM RASSOL/PALM BEACH POST FILE

Pols dispute Epstein emails

References to Trump seen in released records

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Democrats and Republicans are disputing the significance of newly released emails from accused sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Democrats highlighted several emails that reference President Donald Trump. But the White House and Republican lawmakers deny that the messages prove any close connection between the two men. Two of the key Epstein emails say Trump “spent hours at my house” and “of course he knew about the girls.” They are part of 23,000 pages of records the House Oversight and Accountability Committee released Nov. 12 about the Epstein investigation. “Release the Epstein files” was a rallying cry of Republicans demanding more information to fight pedophilia. But it now threatens to fracture the party as Democrats demand that the Justice Department release its files. A House vote is expected the week of

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Two of the key Jeffrey Epstein emails that were released say Donald Trump “spent hours at my house” and “of course he knew about the girls.” MYRON B. PITTS/FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER FILE

Ohio proposes emergency alert for children with autism

Jessie Balmert and Victoria Moorwood
State Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK

On Nov. 20, 2024, Jonisa Cook called 911 to report that her 6-year-old son, who had autism and was nonverbal, had gone missing. Cook wanted an emergency alert sent so the community could look for her missing boy. Cook was told that the missing Joshua Al-Lateef Jr. didn't meet the criteria for an immediate alert. Instead, a community-wide notification was sent after more than five hours. Joshua's story ended in tragedy 28 hours later. The 6-year-old boy drowned in a pond at the family's West Chester apartment complex. Joshua's family wants to save other children from the same fate. To that end, the Ohio House of Representatives passed the Joshua Alert law unanimously on Nov. 12. The proposed law heads to the Ohio Senate for consideration. Also known as House Bill 359, the proposed law would require local law enforcement to notify the statewide emergency alert program immediately if a child diagnosed with autism or another developmental disability goes missing. A Change.org petition advocating for the change had 16,000 supporters. “Joshua's life was filled with love and light. And though he is no longer physically with us, I believe that his legacy can live on through this bill – through the lives it saves and the families it supports,” Cook told lawmakers during a hearing on the proposed law. Cook was in the Ohio House of Representatives' chamber as the bill passed on Nov. 12, and several lawmakers thanked her for her advocacy. Under current law, local law enforcement is generally not required to notify the statewide emergency alert program during the first 24 hours. The proposed change would speed up that process for children diagnosed with autism or other developmental disabilities. The bill is a bipartisan one, introduced by Rep. Cecil Thomas, D-Cincinnati, and Rep. Jennifer Gross, R-West Chester. The Children's Defense Fund-Ohio also supported the bill. Thomas said the change is needed

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