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The Cleveland-Akron-Elyria Region Doing Well: More Persons Attending College and Getting Degrees, 2000 to 2007

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**More Persons Attending College and Getting Degrees, 2000 to 2007
The Cleveland-Akron-Elyria Region Doing Well**

by

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Discussions of economic development and job availability in northeast Ohio often lament the unavailability of a qualified workforce in some sectors. Workforce training and attracting more educated population to the region are cited as important, even critical, objectives for the region. While a more detailed study of the regions' workforce by The Center for Community Solutions is nearing completion, the release of new data by the Census Bureau provides some enlightening observations about college enrollments and educational attainment in the region.

Based on an analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey (ACS) released September 24, 2008, we find that despite losses in population, the eight-county Cleveland-Akron-Elyria Combined Statistical Area (CAE CSA)¹ has increased in the number of persons pursuing a college education and in attaining graduate or professional degrees.

An estimated 193,500 persons in the CAE CSA were enrolled in college or graduate school in 2007, an increase of almost 35,000, or 22 percent, since the 2000 Census. This estimated increase in college pursuit surpasses Ohio's and the nation's percentage increases (20% and 19%, respectively). These increases are consistent with increases in the number of college-age population. The poor job situation in the region may also play a role, at least for older persons returning to school, since people often turn to college to improve their employability when jobs are scarce. In 2006, almost 18,000 students in the county — 13 percent of all students — indicated that were unable to find work, significantly higher than the 8 percent of students in Ohio, where unemployment is not quite as severe.²

From 2000 to 2007, the number of persons age 25 and older in the region with an Associate's degree (only) increased by an estimated more than 29,000 — from 110,000 to 139,000, which was a 27 percent increase. Those with a Bachelor's degree increased by 24,000 (8%), and persons with a graduate or professional degree increased by a remarkable 35,000 or 21 percent.

¹ The CAE CSA includes Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage, and Summit counties.

² The observation concerning job availability and college enrollment is based on an analysis, by The Center for Community Solutions, of Cuyahoga County's workforce using the 2006 ACS and has yet to be released. The report is expected to be posted on the Community Solutions web site in the next few weeks and a summary will be published in Community Solutions' journal, *Planning & Action*. See Salling, Mark, et. al., "New Study Shows County's Workforce Characteristics," *Planning & Action*, Nov/Dec 2008, Vol. 61, No. 5, forthcoming.

Overall, the region saw an increase in percent with a Bachelor's degree or more from 23.5 percent to 26.6 percent in the period.

Clearly, the region has a significant share of the most educated workforce – larger than any other CSA in the state. One in four persons in the state age 25 and older and those with an Associate degree lived in the CAE CSA in 2007. However, almost 28 percent of the state's population with a Bachelor's degree, and 30 percent with graduate or professional degree, lived in the region. The Columbus-Marion-Chillicothe CSA and Cincinnati-Middletown-Wilmington CSA included 20 percent and 21 percent, respectively, of the state's graduate or professional degree-holders.

Cuyahoga County

With an increase in the number persons in the primary college-attending ages, Cuyahoga County also saw increases in the number of persons enrolled in college — by an estimated 9,300 persons — between 2000 and 2007. Many achieved a two-year degree; there were an estimated almost 12,000 more persons with an Associate's degree (only) since 2000, which was an increase of 24 percent. Another 12,000 persons with a graduate or professional degree were added since 2000 — an increase of almost 14 percent. The percent with a Bachelor's degree or more education increased from approximately 25 percent to approximately 28 percent.

Thus, with the county increasing in college attainment it is apparent that the loss of population that the county has been experiencing includes a greater share of those with less education than with more education moving away. The increased numbers of college-educated population likely results from both more persons in the region finishing their degrees and persons with degrees moving to the county.³ Also, those with less than a bachelor's degree that have been moving out of Cuyahoga County are likely moving out of the region rather than to other counties in the region, since we see increases rather than decreases in college educated population in the region.⁴

Cleveland

There are greater limits to being able to report on changes in college enrollment and educational attainment in the city of Cleveland due to the relatively small sample size of the ACS for the city. However, we can report that, despite large losses of population since 2000 (an estimated 40,000), the estimated enrollment in college or graduate school remained relatively the same for 2007 as in 2000 — approximately 22,000.

Also, the estimated percent with a Bachelor's degree or higher increased from a little more than 11 percent in 2000 to 13 percent in 2007. There was an estimated increase in both Associate's degrees and graduate or professional degrees, as well — 17 and 19 percent, respectively. On the

³ This observation is supported by an earlier analysis of migration between 1995 and 2000 (see Mark Salling and Ellen Cyran, "Where next? College grads leave the region; experienced careerists move in," *Plain Dealer*, Friday, March 17, 2006.

⁴ The increase in the number of persons enrolled in college and with college degrees does not necessarily imply a concurrent increase in incomes and economic security for this population. The 2007 ACS also shows increased rates of poverty among the college-educated population in the state and region. See Salling, Mark, "Changes in Poverty and Educational Attainment, 2000 to 2007, Poverty Rates Increasing for those with College Education, Too," September 2, 2008, at <http://www.communitysolutions.com/> or <http://nodisnet1.urban.csuohio.edu/nodis/publications.shtml>.

other hand, though the margin of error in the estimate is large enough to account for the difference, the 2007 sample shows a loss of about 2,000 persons in the city with a Bachelor's degree.

Figure 1

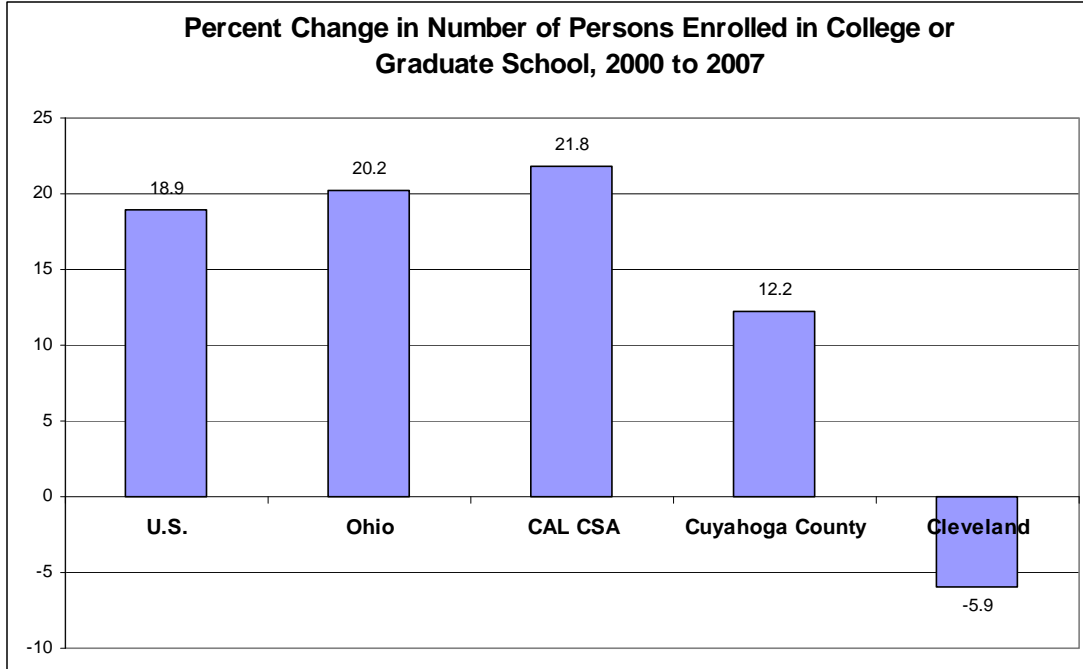


Figure 2

