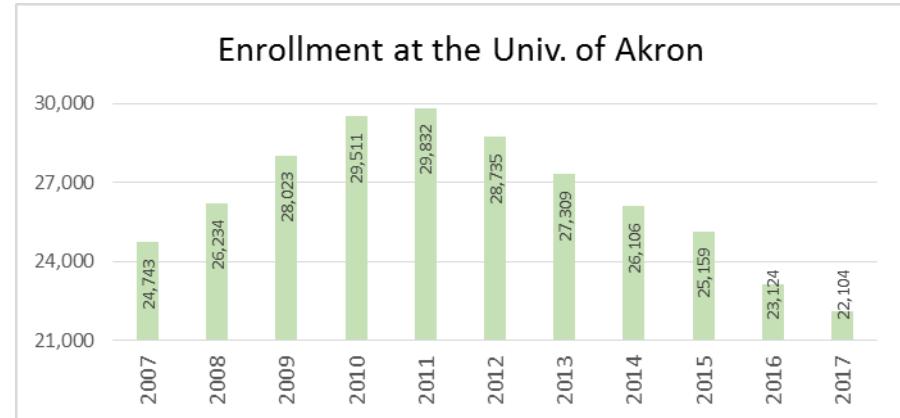
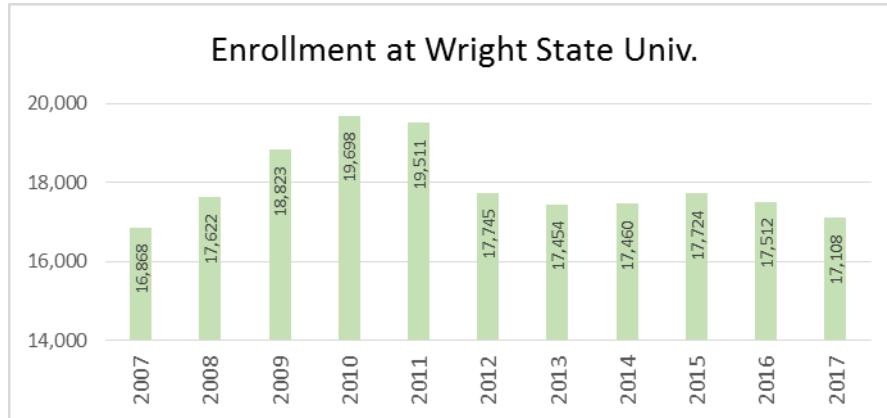
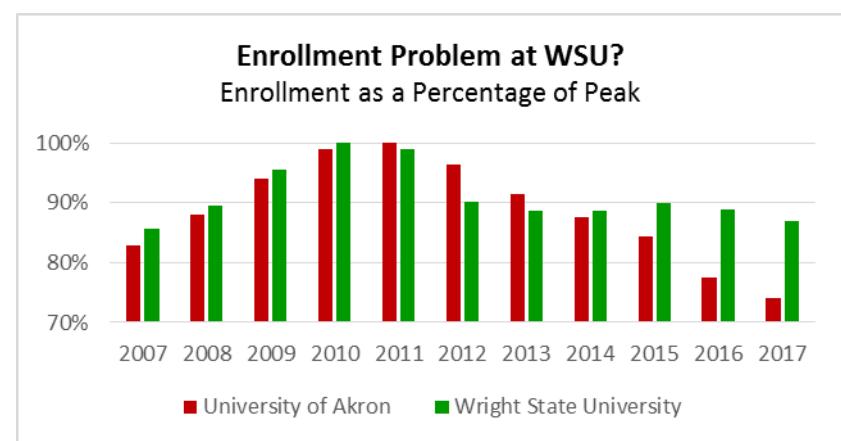


We are told that there is an enrollment problem at Wright State University. Let's see if that holds up to scrutiny.



The three years that are outliers in the WSU Enrollment Chart shown above left—2009, 2010, and 2011—have swollen enrollments due to the Great Recession, Ohio's choice to focus federal rescue dollars on supporting the retraining of laid-off workers, and the advent of semesters in fall 2012. Otherwise, enrollments at WSU have been remarkably stable. To see a genuine enrollment problem, consider the Akron Enrollment Chart shown above right. (The two charts are scaled in the same way: from 70% of the peak enrollment, rounded up to the nearest thousand, up to the peak.) The comparison is perhaps best seen when one combines the two charts into one, shown to the right. By any reasonable standard, WSU has no enrollment crisis (but Akron does).

Given that our university has reported negative cash flows and declines in reserves since 2013, it should, again, be clear that enrollment declines were not a cause of that deficit spending. Nor will more “flexibility”—the gutting of our contract and workload agreement—enable the administration to resolve the real issues with our budget. Arguably, such “flexibility” will simply do the opposite—allow the administration to continue to ignore some of the real causes.



Since this data was collected, Wright State has had some steeper enrollment declines, and the administration and Board have pointed to media coverage of our contract impasse as the main cause. But that argument conveniently ignores several facts. First, most of the negative press that the university has received over the last five years has been related to dubious decisions made by the administration and Board. Second, some of the loss of international students--in particular, Saudi students--has been predictable. Instead of focusing on further savings that might be squeezed out of faculty compensation and benefits and out of the budgets of academic units, the administration and Board could have been focusing more productively and rationally on increasing enrollment--and engaging faculty in that process, rather than antagonizing faculty. Lastly, instead of actual increases in enrollment, the administration and Board have touted bogus statistics. For instance, if the basketball team's earning a position in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament generated \$25 million in free and meaningful media attention to the university, why has that attention not resulted in enrollment increases, rather than a further erosion of enrollment numbers?