

Office of Higher Education

At a Glance

JANE A. CIARLEGLIO, Executive Director

Established - by CGS Sec. 10a-1d

Central office - 61 Woodland Street, Hartford, 06105-2326

Number of full-time employees - 31

2014-15 Recurring Operating Expenses - \$46.2 million

Organizational structure - Office of the Executive Director;

Division of Academic Affairs; Division of Programs and Student Services; Division of Finance and Administration

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Mission

The Office of Higher Education seeks to advance the promise of postsecondary education for all Connecticut citizens, and to advocate on behalf of students, taxpayers, and the postsecondary schools and colleges under its purview. The Office carries out its mission by assuring that students have access to postsecondary institutions which meet the highest standards of academic quality, by administering the state's student financial aid resources, by serving as an information and consumer protection resource, and by fostering interaction and collaboration among postsecondary institutions and other entities.

Statutory Responsibility

The Office of Higher Education is charged by statute to uphold state standards of academic quality, to operate the award of state college aid funds, and to administer a variety of programs including the Alternate Route to Certification.

To maintain standards of quality, the Office licenses and accredits independent colleges and universities, licenses in-state programs offered by out-of-state institutions, and regulates the operations of Connecticut's postsecondary career schools which include occupational schools, hospital-based schools, and barber and hairdressing schools.

As of July 2015, among degree-granting private institutions, 19 non-profit, three for-profit and 13 from outside the state were approved by the agency to operate in Connecticut. Among non-degree schools, 56 occupational schools, 6 hospital-based schools, and 31 hairdresser and barber schools were approved to operate.

The agency's other major statutory responsibility is to administer state student financial aid funds which are disbursed through the Governor's Scholarship Program. Other state programs managed by the agency include the Alternate Route to Certification and the Minority Advancement Program. In addition, the agency oversees the Higher Education State Matching Grant Fund, the Endowed Chair Investment Fund, and the reporting requirements for the Connecticut Higher Education Trust Advisory Committee.

Federal responsibilities include serving as the State Approval Agency for programs enrolling veterans, and as the state's lead agency for AmeriCorps, the national service program. The Office also administers the higher education portion of the federal Improving Teacher Quality Grant Program, and the John R. Justice Grant Program; and serves as a clearinghouse for student complaints as mandated by federal regulations.

Public Service

Building a highly-educated workforce to meet Connecticut's economic and societal needs serves as the framework for the Office of Higher Education's public service activities. To prepare talented adults to become teachers, the Office conducted its summer and weekend Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) programs.

The summer 2014 program prepared 36 adults for teacher certification in English, mathematics, life and physical sciences, and world languages (Chinese, French, Italian, Latin and Spanish). Fifty-three percent of the graduates hold master's and/or Ph.D. credentials, and 11 percent are from minority groups.

ARC's 2014-15 weekend program prepared another 35 individuals to teach mathematics, music, life and physical sciences, and world languages (French, Italian and Spanish). Twenty-nine percent have advanced degrees, and another 29 percent are from minority groups.

Overall, 83 percent of the graduates of both ARC sessions are prepared to teach in shortage areas. ARC is Connecticut's sixth largest teacher preparation program, and is the state's greatest producer of teachers in grades 5-12 math, science and world languages. Approximately 34 percent of ARC graduates work in urban districts. Since 2006, at least 52 ARC graduates have received prestigious honors, including the national Presidential Excellence in Teaching for Mathematics and Science, Connecticut Teacher of the Year, and District or School Teacher of the Year. Many graduates also serve in public school administrative capacities.

For in-service teachers, the Office of Higher Education awarded \$504,936 in federal Teacher Quality Partnership Grants to four teacher professional development projects in mathematics, science and social studies. The projects – conducted by Central Connecticut State University, Quinnipiac University, the University of Hartford and the University of Connecticut - will serve 123 teachers of nearly 4,000 students across 16 districts. The projects were selected from 13 applications following a competitive review process. Operated by partnerships of colleges and school districts, the projects aim to strengthen teacher content knowledge and instructional skills. This year, priority was placed on proposals which address the Common Core State Standards and the state's new social studies frameworks.

The agency's Education & Employment Information Center (EEIC) counseled thousands of persons seeking training and new careers, and participated in college and career fairs across the state. In addition, the EEIC fields the majority of inquiries received by the Alternate Route to

Certification, and student complaints involving independent colleges and postsecondary career schools.

A major portion of the agency's public service role is carried out by the Connecticut Commission on Community Service which is administered by the Office. The Commission promotes engagement in service and volunteer efforts, and oversees Connecticut's AmeriCorps state programming. In exchange for a service year, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$5,730 that can be used to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans. Since 1994, more than 12,000 Connecticut residents have served more than 17 million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than \$38.9 million.

This year, AmeriCorps in Connecticut provided more than 750 individuals the opportunity to serve at community-based organizations such as the Regional Youth/Adult Social Action Partnership (Bridgeport), Knox, Inc. (Hartford), the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut (New Haven), FoodCorps (New London), the New England Science and Sailing Foundation (Stonington), Northwestern Connecticut AHEC (Waterbury) and Teach for America-Connecticut. AmeriCorps members tutored and mentored children, supported veterans and military families, provided health services, restored the environment, responded to disasters, increased economic opportunity, and recruited and managed volunteers.

In September, Connecticut celebrated the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps with a simultaneous national swearing-in of new AmeriCorps members. More than 300 Connecticut AmeriCorps members were sworn into a year of service at the State Capitol.

In April, Connecticut Mayors participated in the Corporation for National and Community Service's Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service. Mayors or first selectmen from across the state held special events and issued town proclamations to salute volunteers.

Also in April, the Commission honored Connecticut college students, faculty and staff for their community service at the Commission's annual Higher Education Community Service Awards ceremony held at the State Capitol. Award recipients were selected based on their ability to design projects which distinctly serve a community, incorporate originality and unique approaches, substantially raise student participation, and address community problems.

The Connecticut Commission on Community Service hosted a 2 1/2-day regional training event in Hartford in May. As the largest region in the country, the Atlantic Cluster is home to 693 AmeriCorps projects, 237 Senior Corps projects, 63 Social Innovation Fund projects and 8 Volunteer Generation Fund projects. With more than 300 participants, the conference addressed results-driven service, data sharing and federal regulatory compliance.

The Office of Higher Education continued to operate the Minority Advancement Program (MAP), which gives middle and high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds the skills, knowledge and academic support they need to succeed in college. MAP provides funds, on a competitive review basis, to Connecticut colleges and universities to support activities that strengthen student college readiness, retention and graduation. MAP consists of two grant programs: the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program (ConnCAP) and the Connecticut College Access and Success Program (ConnCAS). For 2014-15, the five programs funded by ConnCAP provided 551 middle and high school students with counseling and college preparation activities. Seven colleges received ConnCAS funds to help 337 students succeed in their studies.

As part of the Office of Higher Education's BW-Germany Exchange, 44 Connecticut students attended universities in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, while 53 German students came to Connecticut for study. In addition, 21 Connecticut students attended summer language institutes in Baden-Wuerttemberg, bringing the total number of students served to 65.

The BW-Germany Exchange serves students from Connecticut's public and independent colleges and universities. The University of Connecticut and Yale University are the most active participants.

Engineering and German remain the most popular majors of the Exchange's Connecticut students, while the German students concentrate on English (literature and American studies), engineering, and economics/business administration. Thirteen Connecticut engineering students (10 percent more than last year) who are enrolled in the UCONN Eurotech Program performed six-month internships at German companies such as Mercedes and at Fraunhofer Research Institutes.

Improvements/Achievements FY 2014-2015

During the year, the Office of Higher Education continued to administer the Governor's Scholarship Program, and its process for approving new academic programs proposed by Connecticut independent colleges and universities.

This was the first year of operation of the Academic Incentive Award component of the Governor's Scholarship Program. This particular award is designed to foster student success and completion. It provides additional funds to students who have received a Governor's Scholarship need-based grant, and who have completed a minimum of 30 credits and ended the year with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better. Overall, 697 students received \$751,600 in Academic Incentive Awards.

Working with college financial aid officers, the Office of Higher Education distributed \$41.0 million to approximately 20,000 undergraduate students enrolled in Connecticut's public and private colleges and universities through all three components of the Governor's Scholarship Program. The funds are awarded based on both financial need and academic merit.

In addition, the agency administered a variety of other aid programs designed to encourage students to prepare for specific careers. The federal John R. Justice Grant Program is a loan reimbursement program for public defenders and prosecutors who commit to working in their current jobs for at least three years. Connecticut received \$32,319 for 2014 which was distributed to 77 grantees.

To strengthen diversity in the state's teacher workforce, the Office of Higher Education awarded Minority Teacher Incentive Grants to 72 minority students, and loan reimbursement stipends to 41 former grant recipients who are now teaching in Connecticut. The Office awarded similar grants from private funds to minority students selected as Weisman Scholars who are preparing to teach math and science in particular. Three Weisman Scholars received loan reimbursement stipends. The Office also implemented the new English Language Learner Educator Incentive Program to encourage more students to become bilingual education teachers.

Apart from financial aid, the agency's other major focus centered on licensing and accrediting academic programs within a 45 day period. This year, the agency evaluated 30 proposals for program licensure submitted by Connecticut private colleges, and nine applications for program relicensure from colleges located outside of the state.

Additionally, the agency reviewed two applications for in-state institutional re-accreditation, and four applications for re-licensure of out-of-state institutions. Twelve graduate proposals were approved of which 11 were at the master's level and one an advanced graduate certificate.

Approved applications for program accreditation totaled 46, enabling colleges to graduate students and confer degrees for the first time. Among these, four were at the associate's level, 18 were at the bachelor's level, eight were graduate certificates, 11 were at the master's level, and three were at the doctoral level.

The Office also evaluated 33 requests for modification to programs that are already approved.

The proposals for new academic programs spanned a variety of fields, generally reflecting workforce needs: 23 were in health sciences, 21 were in business, four were in engineering, nine were in security and protective services, and seven were in journalism/media with the remainder in the liberal arts and other subjects.

Regarding the state's postsecondary career schools, the Office of Higher Education approved one new occupational school and four new branches, re-approved 20 existing schools, investigated 12 formal complaints, and worked with four schools that closed in compliance with state statute. The agency also re-approved the operation of five Connecticut hospital-based schools, facilitated one hospital-based school closure, and approved 34 hairdresser and barber schools.

As the Connecticut State Approving Agency (SAA) for veterans' education benefits, the Office of Higher Education processed 80 initial, revised and updated approval functions for institutions eligible to enroll veterans; conducted nine inspection and 30 compliance survey visits to schools and colleges; and provided information to active duty service members and veterans regarding their educational benefits at 62 outreach events. Staff reviewed 434 programs for degree- and non-degree-granting institutions at approved facilities, participated in the 2014 Veterans Stand Down, Heroes4Hire Career Fair and numerous job fairs for veterans.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Office of Higher Education provides information on trends in postsecondary education, and in April published a comprehensive report covering enrollment, admissions, graduation rates, tuition and fees, endowments, state funding, instructional expenses, faculty and staffing, and student financial aid.

Earlier in the year, the Office reported that fall 2014 enrollment at Connecticut colleges and universities stabilized after the first down year following 15 consecutive years of record growth. An increase of 1,050 students, or 0.5 percent, brought the new total to 203,145 students.

Much of the increase was due to growth in full-time enrollment. Full-time undergraduate enrollment has grown each of the last two years while part-time graduate enrollment experienced an increase for the first time since 2009. Overall part-time enrollment, however, has declined each of the last two years.

Compared to last year, undergraduate enrollment was flat while graduate enrollment climbed 3.7 percent to 36,251.

The latest graduation statistics show that Connecticut colleges and universities awarded 44,592 degrees in 2013-14, up 1.3 percent from the previous year. This is the thirteenth consecutive year of growth.

As in previous years, the number of degrees and certificates earned closely mirrors enrollments.

Half of all awards (49.2 percent) were bachelor's degrees, 23.5 percent were master's and 16.0 percent were associate's. The largest annual increase was in associates's degrees with 308 more awarded in 2014. The number of bachelor's degrees also increased, while the number of master's degrees remained flat. Connecticut's public colleges and universities produced 82 percent of all associate's degrees, 53 percent of all bachelor's degrees, and 32 percent of all master's degrees.

Women earned 58.9 percent of all degrees, dipping 0.2 percent from 2013. Women earned more degrees than men at every degree level, and slightly more than half of all the degrees earned by women were earned at public colleges.

A total of 10,399 degrees and certificates were earned by individuals from minority groups in 2014, representing 23.3 percent of awards recipients, up from 22.0 percent in 2013. Black students earned 8.1 percent of awards compared to 7.7 percent in 2013; Hispanic students earned 8.4 percent of awards compared to 8.0 percent in 2013; Asian or Pacific Islander students earned 4.7 percent of awards compared to 4.6 percent in 2013; and white students earned 63.1 percent of awards compared to 63 percent in 2013. Award recipients whose race and ethnicity is unknown earned 8.1% of awards as compared to 9.2 percent in 2013.

The proportion of degrees earned in the fields of family sciences, social work and public administration, as well as health and fitness, outpaced growth in all other areas. Conversely, the proportion of degrees conferred in education, and social sciences fell. Across a ten-year horizon, growth in degrees conferred has been the greatest in the fields of technicians and trades, health and fitness, and criminal justice.