

Office of Higher Education

JANE A. CIARLEGLIO, Executive Director

Established by - CGS Sec. 10a-1d

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

Number of full-time employees - 27

2013-14 Recurring operating expenses - \$47.4 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 private occupational schools, hospital-based schools, and barber and hairdressing schools.

As of July 2014, 20 non-profit and three for-profit independent institutions of higher learning, 57 private occupational schools, 7 hospital-based schools, and 13 out-of-state schools were approved by the agency to offer postsecondary programs in the state.

The agency's other major statutory responsibility is to administer state student financial aid funds which are disbursed through the new Governor's Scholarship Program. Other programs managed by the agency include the Alternate Route to Certification, the Minority Advancement Program, and the BW-Germany Exchange. 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 2013 program prepared 31 adults for certification in English, mathematics, life and physical sciences, and world languages. Seventy-one percent of the ARC graduates hold masters and/or Ph.D. credentials, and 19 percent represent minority groups.

ARC's 2013-14 weekend program prepared another 78 individuals to teach English, family and consumer sciences, mathematics, music, life and physical sciences, technology education, and world languages (Chinese, French, Italian, Latin, Spanish). Fifty-five percent of these graduates have advanced degrees.

Overall, 63 percent of the graduates of both ARC sessions are prepared to teach in shortage areas. ARC is Connecticut's fifth largest teacher preparation program, and is the state's greatest producer of teachers in grades 5-12 math, science, and world languages. Approximately 41 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 various K-12 administrative capacities.

For in-service teachers, the Office of Higher Education awarded \$612,767 in federal Teacher Quality Partnership Grants to four teacher professional development projects in mathematics and science. The projects – conducted by Albertus Magnus College, Eastern Connecticut State University's Institute for Sustainable Studies, Quinnipiac University, and the University of Hartford working with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc., - will serve 165 teachers of 26,927 students across 27 districts. The projects were selected from nine 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 specific content areas in mathematics and science.

The agency's Education & Employment Information Center (EEIC) counseled more than 3,000 persons seeking training and new careers via its toll-free hotline (800/842-0229) and website, and by participating 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 - an agency responsibility as directed by federal regulations.

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 of Higher Education.

The Commission provides intensive community service opportunities to meet education, environmental, health, and other pressing community challenges. The Commission sponsors AmeriCorps, the national service initiative, by awarding federal AmeriCorps dollars to nonprofit agencies to respond to local needs. In exchange for service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$5,645 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 16 million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than \$36.1 million.

This year, AmeriCorps provided more than 910 individuals the opportunity to serve at community-based organizations such as the Regional Youth/Adult Social Action Partnership (Bridgeport), the Knox, Inc. (Hartford), the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut (New Haven), FoodCorps (New London), 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 April, 20 Connecticut Mayors participated in the Corporation for National and Community Service's Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service. Mayors across the state held special events and issued town proclamations to salute more than 3,700 volunteers.

Also in April, nearly 200 gathered to honor Connecticut college students and staff for their community service work at the Commission's annual Higher Education Community Service Awards ceremony held at Central Connecticut State University. This year, Connecticut colleges submitted 103 nominations for the three award categories of Individual Student, Student Group and Special Award for projects led by faculty and staff. Six 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 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 readiness for college as well as 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 2013-14, 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, 54 Connecticut students attended universities in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, while 53 German students came to Connecticut for study. In addition, 22 Connecticut students attended summer language institutes in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Connecticut's partner-state, bringing the total number of students served to 76.

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 Connecticut students, while the German students concentrate on English (Literature and American Studies),

economics/business administration and engineering. Eleven Connecticut engineering students (20% more than last year) who are enrolled in the UCONN Eurotech Program performed six-month internships at German companies such as Mercedes (Stuttgart), Bosch (Stuttgart), Fraunhofer Institute (Stuttgart), MTU Aerospace (Munich) and at the research laboratories of the Universities of Freiburg and Heidelberg.

Improvements/Achievements FY 2013-2014

During the year, the Office of Higher Education focused on implementing the new Governor's Scholarship Program, and a streamlined process for approving academic programs proposed by Connecticut independent colleges and universities.

The Governor's Scholarship Program replaces the former the Capitol Scholarship Program, Connecticut Independent College Students Grant Program and the Connecticut Aid to Public College Students Program, all of which had been in place for more than 30 years. The implementation of the new program was a significant undertaking, involving the creation of a new processing data-base, allocation formulas, student and institutional communication materials, and agency and institutional staff training.

Working with college financial aid officers, the Office of Higher Education distributed \$42.5 million to approximately 20,500 undergraduate students enrolled in Connecticut's public and private colleges and universities through the new, comprehensive 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 \$57,619 for 2013 which was distributed to 80 grantees.

To strengthen diversity in the state's teacher workforce, the Office of Higher Education awarded Minority Teacher Incentive Grants to 62 minority students, and loan reimbursement stipends to 43 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.

Apart from financial aid, the agency's other major focus centered on implementing a new, shortened process for acting upon proposals for academic programs within 45 days of receipt. The Office of Higher Education used the new process to evaluate 36 licensure and four re-licensure proposals submitted by Connecticut independent colleges, and one program licensure application from an out-of-state college.

Additionally, the agency reviewed five applications for institutional re-accreditation, and two applications for re-licensure. Thirteen graduate proposals were approved, including two doctoral programs, nine master's degree programs, and two advanced graduate certificates.

Approved applications for program accreditation totaled 45, enabling colleges to graduate students and confer degrees for the first time. Of these, 16 were certificates, four were associate's, four were bachelor's, two were graduate certificates, 18 were master's and one was at the doctoral level.

The Office also evaluated three applications for simultaneous licensure and accreditation, and 30 requests for program modifications.

The proposals for new academic programs spanned a variety of fields, generally reflecting workforce needs: 25 were in health sciences, 35 were in business, five were in engineering, 12 were in security and protective services, and 10 were in journalism/media with the remainder in the liberal arts and other subjects.

Regarding the state's private occupational schools, the Office of Higher Education approved two new schools and two new branches, re-approved 23 existing schools including two branches, approved one change of ownership, investigated three formal complaints, and worked with four schools that closed in compliance with state statute. The agency also approved the operation of seven Connecticut hospital-based occupational schools.

To carry out its new responsibility for oversight of hairdresser and barber schools, the Office held two information sessions to facilitate school compliance. Two schools and one branch were approved with nine pending approval under the new procedures.

As the Connecticut State Approving Agency (SAA) for veterans' education benefits, the Office of Higher Education processed 99 initial, revised and updated approval functions for institutions eligible to enroll veterans; conducted nine inspection and 29 compliance survey visits to schools and colleges; and provided information to active duty service members and veterans regarding their educational benefits at 58 outreach events. Staff reviewed 535 programs for degree and non-degree granting institutions at approved facilities, participated in the 2013 Veterans Stand Down and in numerous job fairs for veterans.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The Office of Higher Education provides comprehensive information on trends in post-secondary education. In November, the Office reported that fall 2013 enrollment at Connecticut colleges and universities was down for the first time in 15 consecutive years of record growth. A decrease of 897 students, or 1.4%, brought the new total to 202,095 students.

Much of the decline was due to a drop in part-time enrollment. Part-time graduate enrollment has declined each of the last four years while part-time undergraduate enrollment experienced a decline for the first time since 2008. Full-time enrollment, however, grew slightly from fall 2012, with 554 more students for a total of 128,746.

Compared to last year, undergraduate enrollment fell 0.5% (all in part-time enrollment) to 167,126. Graduate enrollment also declined 0.5% to 34,969.

The latest graduation statistics show that Connecticut colleges and universities awarded 44,029 degrees in 2012-13, up 3.6% from the previous year. This is the twelfth consecutive year of growth.

As in previous years, the number of degrees and certificates earned was closely related to enrollment gains of previous years.

Half of all awards (49.1%) were bachelor's degrees, 23.9% were master's and 15.5% were associate's. The annual largest increase was in bachelor's degrees with 701 more awarded in 2013. The number of associate's also increased, while the number of master's degrees remained flat. Connecticut's public colleges and universities produced 81% of the associate's degrees, 53% of the bachelor's degrees, and 32% of the master's degrees.

Women earned 59.1% of all degrees, slipping 0.5% from 2012. 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 9,706 degrees and certificates were earned by individuals from minority groups in 2013, representing 22.0% of awards recipients, up slightly from 21.5% in 2012. Black students earned 7.7% of awards compared to 7.9 in 2012; Hispanic students earned 8.0% of awards compared to 7.6% in 2012; Asian or Pacific Islander students earned 4.6% of awards compared to 4.5% in 2012; and White students earned 63% of awards compared to 62.7% in 2012. Award recipients whose race and ethnicity is unknown earned 9.2% of awards as compared to 9.8% in 2012.

The proportion of degrees in the field of technicians and trades outpaced growth in all other areas followed at some distance by criminal justice, and health and fitness. Conversely, the proportion of degrees conferred in business, and family/consumer sciences fell.