

Office of Higher Education

At A Glance

KEITH M. NORTON, *Acting Executive Director*

Established - 2011

Statutory authority – Conn. Gen. Statutes Section 10a-1d

Central Office – 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, 06103-1841

Number of full-time employees - 20

2017-18 Recurring Operating Expenses - \$37.1 million

Organizational structure — Division of Academic Affairs; Division of Programs and Student Services; Division of Finance and Administration

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 programs, by serving as an information and a 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 administer college financial aid, and to operate 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 2018, among degree-granting private institutions, 18 non-profit, three for-profit and eight from outside the state were approved by the agency to operate in Connecticut. Among non-degree schools, 58 occupational schools, four hospital-based schools, and 38 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 Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. Other state

programs managed by the agency include the Alternate Route to Certification and the Minority Advancement Program.

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 John R. Justice Grant Program; and serves as a clearinghouse for student complaints as stipulated in 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 Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program.

ARC's 2017-18 program prepared 107 adults for teacher certification in business education, English, family consumer science, mathematics, music, sciences, technical education and world languages (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Italian). Fifty-eight percent of the graduates hold master's and/or Ph.D. credentials, and 31 percent are from minority groups.

Overall, 57 percent of the ARC graduates are prepared to teach in shortage areas. ARC is Connecticut's number one producer of STEM teachers and the number one producer of language teachers. Approximately 40 percent of ARC graduates work in high-needs districts. Since 2006, at least 54 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 as public school principals and administrators.

An extension of the agency's public service role is carried out by the Connecticut Commission on Community Service (CCCS) which is administered by the Office of Higher Education. The CCCS was created by the National and Community Service Trust Act as amended in 1993. The CCCS is a governor-appointed board and the state partner of the federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Connecticut Commission on Community Service administers AmeriCorps service programs in the state and promotes citizenship and service throughout the state.

Last year more than 1,800 Americans of all ages and backgrounds met local needs, strengthened communities, and expanded economic opportunity through national service in Connecticut. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) invested more than \$10.3 million to support cost-effective community solutions, working hand in hand with local partners to empower citizens to solve problems. Through this unique public-private partnership, national service in Connecticut has generated more than \$6.2 million in outside resources from businesses, foundations, public agencies, and other sources. This local support strengthened community impact and increased the return on taxpayer dollars. With federal funds, the Commission awards AmeriCorps funding to nonprofit agencies responding to local needs. In

exchange for a year of service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$6,095 that can be used to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans. Since 1994, more than 14,000 Connecticut residents have served approximately 20 million hours and earned education awards totaling more than \$48.4 million. There are currently seven (7) Connecticut institutions of higher education that match the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award thus providing a minimum of one \$1,000 match, scholarship or benefit to at least one AmeriCorps alumnus each year.

This year, AmeriCorps provided more than 700 individuals with opportunities to serve at community-based organizations such as Health360 (Waterbury), FoodCorps Connecticut, Governors Prevention Partnership (Hartford), the New England Science and Sailing Foundation (Stonington), JumpStart for Children-Connecticut and Teach for America-Connecticut. AmeriCorps members tutored and mentored children, supported urban farming and nutrition education, provided health services, restored the environment, increased economic opportunity, and recruited and managed volunteers.

On Tuesday, April 3, 35 elected officials representing more than 3,500,000 Connecticut residents, participated in National Service Recognition Day. Mayors or first selectmen in Ansonia, Berlin, Branford, Bridgeport, Danbury, East Hartford, East Haven, East Lyme, Essex, Fairfield, Hamden, Hartford, Killingly, Manchester, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, New London, North Haven, Norwalk, Norwich, Plymouth, Prospect, Southington, Stamford, Thomaston, Torrington, Vernon, Wallingford, Waterbury, Westport, Wethersfield, and Wolcott held special events and issued town proclamations to salute volunteers.

The Office of Higher Education has completed its four year grant cycle of the Minority Advancement Program (MAP). The purpose of MAP is twofold: 1) to increase the retention and graduation rates of pre-college students and 2) to provide a bridge of academic, social and financial support services to first time, full-time freshman that help them successfully navigate the college experience and graduate on time. MAP provided 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).

Over the grant cycle, the five ConnCAP programs enrolled a total of 1,125 students from grades 8 to 12. There were 377 seniors that graduated and 365 (98%) of them went onto college the fall semester after graduation. Among the eight ConnCAS programs, there were 1,380 students enrolled over the four year grant cycle. Over two-thirds of enrolled students either remained in college or graduated. There were 116 ConnCAS students that successfully completed college and graduated.

Improvements/Achievements FY 2017-2018

During the year, the Office of Higher Education continued to administer the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program, and review and approve new academic programs proposed by Connecticut independent colleges and universities.

Working with college financial aid officers, the Office of Higher Education distributed \$34.7 million to 13,590 undergraduates enrolled in Connecticut's public and private colleges and universities through the two components of the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program: 1) a need-based merit scholarship administered directly by the Office of Higher Education, 2) a need-based grant program administered by participating colleges.

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 \$37,513 for 2017 which was distributed to 64 grantees.

To strengthen diversity in the state's teacher workforce, the Office of Higher Education awarded Minority Teacher Incentive Grants to 50 minority students, and loan reimbursement stipends to 29 former grant recipients who are now teaching in Connecticut.

Apart from financial aid, the agency's other major focus centered on licensing and accrediting academic programs. P.A. 16-36, now revised to P.A. 18-33, allows certain non-profit, private institutions of higher education to be exempt from the Office of Higher Education's program approval process. Among the exempt institutions, there were 91 programs approved without undergoing the approval process. Among the 91 programs, one was an associate degree program, 32 were bachelor's degree programs, six graduate certificates, 46 were master's degree program and six were doctoral degree programs. For the non-exempt institutions, which are still required to go through the Office of Higher Education's program approval process, four programs (2 bachelor's degree and 2 master's degree programs) were licensed and four programs (3 bachelor's degree and 1 master's degree programs) were accredited.

In addition, the Office approved 11 program modifications, and the licensure of nine programs at out-of-state institutions licensed to operate in Connecticut.

The proposals for new academic programs spanned a variety of fields, including health sciences, business, cybersecurity, and social work.

At the institutional level, the Office of Higher Education reviewed and licensed three institutions and re-licensed one institution. Another eight institutions were reaccredited.

Regarding the state's postsecondary career schools, the Office of Higher Education approved five new occupational schools, re-approved 21 existing schools, investigated seven formal complaints, and worked with three schools that closed in compliance with state statutes. There was one hospital-based re-approval for FY18.

Carrying out its oversight of hairdresser and barber schools, the Office of Higher Education re-approved 20 existing schools, and closed two schools in compliance with state statutes. There were no new schools approved and no complaints investigated for hairdresser and barber schools.

As the Connecticut State Approving Agency (SAA) for veterans' education benefits, the Office of Higher Education processed 103 initial, revised and updated approval actions for institutions and training facilities eligible to enroll veterans; conducted 8 inspection visits, two technical assistance visits, and 25 compliance survey visits to schools, colleges and training facilities; and provided information to active duty service members and veterans regarding their educational benefits at outreach events. Staff approved 825 programs and disapproved 56 programs for degree- and non-degree-granting institutions and training organizations at approved facilities; and participated in the 2017 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 June 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 2017 enrollment at Connecticut colleges and universities fell 0.2 percent to 198,704 students compared to the previous fall. The decrease was due mostly to losses in part-time enrollment at the undergraduate level, and full-time and part-time enrollment at the graduate level. The numbers of part-time undergraduates declined 1.8 percent while overall graduate enrollment was down 0.8 percent.

The latest graduation statistics show that Connecticut colleges and universities awarded 47,221 degrees in 2016-17, up just 0.5 percent from the previous year and continuing a 16-year upward trend.

Just under half of all awards (49.7 percent) were bachelor's degrees, 24.1 percent were master's and 14.6 percent were associates. The largest annual increase was in bachelor's degrees with 775 more awarded in 2017. The number of master's degrees also increased, while the number of associates degrees declined. Connecticut's public colleges and universities produced 81 percent of all associate's degrees, 50 percent of all bachelor's degrees, and 30 percent of all master's degrees.

Women earned 58 percent of all degrees, remaining flat from 2016. 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 12,346 degrees and certificates were earned by individuals from minority groups in 2017, representing 26.1 percent of award recipients, up from 24.9 percent in 2016. Black students earned 8.6 percent of awards compared to 8.5 percent in 2016; Hispanic students

earned 9.9 percent of awards compared to 9.4 percent in 2016; Asian or Pacific Islander students earned 4.8 percent of awards compared to 4.6 percent in 2016; and white students earned 56.4 percent of awards compared to 58.7 percent in 2016. Award recipients whose race and ethnicity is unknown earned 8.2% of awards as compared to 7.2 percent in 2016.

The proportion of degrees earned in the sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics, health and fitness, and business outpaced growth in all other fields over the previous year. Conversely, the proportion of degrees conferred in education fell. Over the last 10 years, the largest growth in degrees conferred has been in the fields of technicians and trades, health and fitness, and criminal justice.