

News Release

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Board of Governors for Higher Education
Department of Higher Education
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College Degrees Rising but Lag in Critical Fields

HARTFORD, Jan. 22 — A new report by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education shows a steady production of college graduates in the state but not enough to alleviate shortages in critical fields.

The report on degrees awarded in the 2001-02 academic year shows that 30,498 students received awards from the state's 46 colleges, up 2.7 from the previous year but just three percent higher than a decade ago.

Further, the annual tally shows a significant drop-off in the share of degrees awarded by public colleges over the past 10 years. This past spring, their share stood at 48 percent compared to 54 percent in 1992. The reverse is happening at the independent colleges whose degree share stands at 52 percent, up 5.5 percentage points from 1992. This outcome is particularly at odds with more recent trends in which public enrollments are growing faster than student counts in the independent sector.

Other notable findings include the first dip in degrees to minority students in 10 years but an increase in awards to students majoring in the physical sciences, computer science and allied health fields. In nursing, the number of students receiving degrees is up eight percent but still below projected labor needs. In teaching, only 18 percent of the total awarded was in the nine shortage fields identified by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

In releasing the report at today's meeting of the Statewide Tuition Policy Review Committee, Higher Education Commissioner Valerie Lewis stated the figures "show progress but not as fast as we'd like in critical industry clusters such as nursing, biology and engineering. We're equally concerned about the reasons for the slower degree production at our public colleges. It could well be a question of affordability since students at these colleges tend to be more prices-sensitive and may be taking longer to graduate to cope with rising tuitions. This issue merits a closer look by this committee."

The Tuition Policy Review Committee has been looking at college costs since September and is slated to issue recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly this spring.

Across the system, nearly half of all student earned bachelor's degrees (49%), followed by those with master's (28%) and associate's (15%). The top five most popular fields continue to be business, education, health professions, social sciences, and liberal arts and sciences. Copies of the Department's report, "*2001-02 Degrees Conferred by Connecticut Institutions of Higher Education*," are available at www.ctdhe.org or by calling 860/947-1848.
