

College enrollments spike statewide

Largest annual gain in 20 years

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As Connecticut collegiate enrollment hit new heights this fall, universities here can thank not just the huge classes being cranked out of high schools in the state's valleys, but also overseas recruiting among the tallest peaks in the world.

Statewide, the undergraduate population swelled 3.2 percent this fall, the largest annual gain in two decades according to the Connecticut Department of Higher Education.

The University of Bridgeport trailed only Waterbury's Post University for enrollment growth among schools offering a bachelor's degree, as the Bridgeport school added 570 students this fall, up 12 percent from a year ago.

Gibbs College in Norwalk had the steepest decline, as its private-sector owner prepares to shut down the campus in a year's time.

It marked the seventh straight year Connecticut's undergraduate population has increased. The growth has mostly been due to a "baby boomlet" that has swelled high-school ranks over the past decade. The high school population peaks this year, however, and through 2016 is expected to drop 9 percent.

That has college admissions staff attempting to broaden their reach – in the case of the University of Bridgeport, overseas. The school today has some 150 students from Nepal, perhaps the highest concentration of any school in the nation.

"We had one professor who was in Nepal who sent his son here more than 10 years ago," said University of Bridgeport President Neil Salonen. "After that his brother came and it kind of grew. They knew this would be a place where they found other Nepalese students."

The University of Bridgeport has more than 5,300 undergraduates, and Salonen said the school would probably target a student body of 6,500 students, though the unsteady student loan market could have a short-term impact on that goal.

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"Because we have put so much in place, we anticipate continuing to grow," Salonen said.

"We are trying to slow it down a little and shape it."

Housatonic Community College had the sharpest increase in enrollment among Fairfield County schools and among community colleges statewide, enrolling an additional 600 students this fall for a 14 percent

increase from a year ago. The Bridgeport school now has nearly 5,100 undergraduate students.

President Anita Gliniecki said the growth was a direct result of the opening this fall of Beacon Hall.

"We finally have the classrooms (and) labs, and so we increased the number of sections we offered because we always felt there was pent up demand we were not meeting," Gliniecki said. "People finally have space."

That space includes a room that can accommodate up to 450 people for a conference. The capacity figure will forever be burned in Gliniecki's brain – she received the occupancy certificate from the city of Bridgeport less than a day before a ballyhooed debate scheduled there between lame-duck U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays and James Himes, who won the election.

The downside of the growth spurt is that with the state projecting budget deficits, Housatonic Community College has been unable to fund its original staffing goals, Gliniecki said.



**FALL 2008 ENROLLMENT AT
 CONNECTICUT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**
Ranked by enrollment growth from 2007

INSTITUTION	LOCALE	ENROLLMENT			CHANGE
		2008	2007	2006	
Housatonic Community College	Bridgeport	5,081	4,475	4,431	13.5%
University of Bridgeport	Bridgeport	5,323	4,752	4,018	12.0%
University of <u>New Haven</u>	New Haven	5,233	4,774	4,649	9.6%
Western Connecticut State	Danbury	6,462	6,211	6,086	4.0%
UConn Stamford	Stamford	1,314	1,270	1,281	3.5%
Quinnipiac University	Hamden	7,413	7,216	7,341	2.7%
Sacred Heart University	Fairfield	5,958	5,801	5,756	2.7%
University of Connecticut Storrs	Storrs	24,273	23,692	23,557	2.5%
Fairfield University	Fairfield	5,128	5,024	5,091	2.1%
Norwalk Community College	Norwalk	6,266	6,231	6,040	0.6%
Yale University	New Haven	11,445	11,454	11,415	-0.1%
Trinity College	Hartford	2,504	2,526	2,499	-0.9%
Connecticut College	New London	1,852	1,869	1,886	-0.9%
Wesleyan University	Middletown	3,149	3,222	3,220	-2.3%
Gibbs College	Norwalk	422	919	765	-54.1%
Connecticut*		184,544	178,855	176,560	3.2%

*Totals include schools not listed