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Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education takes lead to align programs with workforce needs, joins growing number of proactive public university systems in U.S.
Higher education increasingly vital to both state and its residents says Georgetown University study

(Harrisburg, PA, January 21, 2016) – Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education has taken a lead role in meeting the Commonwealth's growing demand for a more-educated workforce, increasing the number of bachelor's degrees its universities are awarding while aligning its academic programming with the specific needs of employers.

The 14 State System universities have increased the number of degrees they have awarded by 10 percent over the last five years, according to a new study released today by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center). The increase comes at a time when the demand for college graduates in the workforce also is increasing.

Already, more than one-third (1.94 million) of Pennsylvania's 5.58 million workers have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to research conducted by the Georgetown Center and included in a new study titled *Degrees of Value: College Majors and the Pennsylvania State System's Contribution to the Workforce*.

The Georgetown Center analyzed the contributions of the State System universities to higher education in Pennsylvania.

Among the study's findings is that business is now the most popular field of study across the System, accounting for 16 percent of graduates receiving a bachelor's degree. The study also found that while they prepare fewer new teachers than they have in the past, the State System universities still award 41 percent of all of the education degrees earned in the state each year. Meanwhile, the number of bachelor's degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and health-related fields awarded by the 14 universities has increased by 37 percent since 2009, representing the System's fastest growing area of study.

The Georgetown Center report will become part of the State System's "Program Alignment Toolkit," a set of resources designed to help the universities better connect with the state's economy.

“In response to the ever-changing economic environment and the State System’s strategic plan, we have renewed our emphasis on aligning our programs with workforce and personal growth needs of students,” said State System Chancellor Frank T. Brogan. “The Board of Governors and the System universities are examining ways to supplement and complement the existing work that is going on in our 14 universities to prepare our students for a lifetime of productive employment.”

The report also examines the popularity of degrees and earnings of all college graduates in the state. The most popular State System majors, including STEM, health, business, education, humanities and liberal arts and social sciences, correspond to the fields with the most college-educated workers in the state.

While college-educated workers in any field tend to earn more than those with only a high school education, the college majors that lead to the highest earnings are in STEM, health and business. For example, a major in architecture and engineering, the highest-paying area of STEM, led to average earnings of \$82,500 in Pennsylvania.

“As the share of Pennsylvania’s college-degree holders in the workforce and population continues to grow, state policy-makers need data on regional economic needs to better target investments in postsecondary education and workforce development,” said Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center and the report’s lead author. “A key piece to unlocking that data is better-designed information systems. We commend the State System leadership for embracing transparency to make information about economic outcomes available to aid in that process and also help guide decision-making for prospective students and their families.”

Other key findings from the report include:

- State System institutions cost less than other higher education options in Pennsylvania where students can earn a bachelor’s degree. On average, residents receiving grants or scholarships pay about \$4,000 less annually to attend State System universities than other public institutions.
- The State System also serves a greater share of Pell Grant recipients (32%) than other public universities in Pennsylvania (28%) and private non-profit institutions (24%).
- The State System tied with private non-profit institutions for the highest share of bachelor’s degrees awarded to women (59%).
- Public universities now award more bachelor’s degrees than private colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. This is a significant trend in a state that has long been dominated by private higher education institutions.
- Almost three-quarters of the Pennsylvania workforce with a bachelor’s degree or higher live in the state’s southeast or southwest regions, generally in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas.

“The Georgetown Center report provides strategic context for the new role of higher education in Pennsylvania and reconfirms the incredible value the 14 State System universities bring to the Commonwealth’s economy,” said State System Executive Vice Chancellor Peter H. Garland. “This report will help our universities better align their academic offerings to the workforce needs of both their regional and the statewide economies.”

The Georgetown Center’s States Initiative helps states use data more effectively to inform policy and planning, and support decision-making about education and careers. More information

about the initiative, including individual pages for all 50 states with related research, can be found on the Georgetown Center's website at cew.georgetown.edu/states-initiative. For the full report, *Degrees of Value: College Majors and the Pennsylvania State System's Contribution to the Workforce*, visit cew.georgetown.edu/pennmajors.

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education is the largest provider of higher education in the Commonwealth, with about 107,000 degree-seeking students and thousands more who are enrolled in certificate and other career-development programs. Collectively, the 14 universities that comprise the State System offer more than 2,300 degree and certificate programs in more than 530 academic areas. Nearly 520,000 State System university alumni live in Pennsylvania.

The State System universities are Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania. The universities also operate branch campuses in Oil City (Clarion), Freeport and Punxsutawney (IUP), and Clearfield (Lock Haven), and offer classes and programs at several regional centers, including the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg and in Center City in Philadelphia.

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