



Office of Higher Education
Budget Presentation
Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee
Thursday, March 4, 2021 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

The Office of Higher Education is divided into three programmatic divisions – Academic Affairs, Finance and Human Resources and Programs and Student Services. The OHE staff position count is 27 with 24 positions filled and 3 refill positions currently under OPM review.

Division of Academic Affairs

The Division of Academic Affairs consists of three units. The first unit deals with the regulatory oversight of independent institutions of higher education and their related programs within the state. In addition, this unit serves as the state portal entity for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). This function allows us to approve state institutions to be members of SARA. Finally, this unit also has regulatory oversight of out-of-state institutions that are not members of SARA and wish to teach Connecticut students. The second unit, authorizes private postsecondary occupational schools and their related programs to operate within the state. It also manages the Student Protection Account, which provides refunds for students who are unable to complete an approved course or unit of instruction at a school because of insolvency or cessation of operation of the school and did not receive a refund from the school. Finally, the third unit, serves as the Connecticut State Approving Agency (SAA) for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Under Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations, the SAA approves institutions and programs so eligible veterans and veteran dependents can use his/her GI Bill educational benefits at that school.

OHE published an almanac that details a list of all of the approved institutions of higher education and private postsecondary occupational schools, along with their related academic programs. The almanac can be found here:

<https://www.ctohe.org/News/pdfs/2020/2020Almanac.pdf>

Licensure, Accreditation, SARA, Out-of-State:

Connecticut has 24 approved independent institutions total and 17 public institutions. Thirty one of our institutions participate in State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). We have 20 out of state institutions that are approved to offer online instruction to Connecticut students.

With regards to licensing and accrediting academic programs. P.A. 19-26, allows certain non-profit, private institutions of higher education to be exempt from the OHE program approval process. Among the exempt institutions, there were 65 programs approved without undergoing the approval process. Among the 65 programs, 6 were a certificate program, 3 was an associate degree program, 21 were bachelor's degree programs, 11 graduate certificates, and 24 were master's degree programs.

For the non-exempt institutions, which are still required to go through the OHE's program approval process, 15 programs (3 Master's Degrees, 1 MD, and 11 Graduate Certificate programs) were licensed and 1 program (Bachelor's degree) was accredited. In addition, the Office approved the licensure of 2 programs at out of state institutions licensed to operate in Connecticut.

The proposals for new academic programs spanned a variety of fields, including nursing, data science, STEM and e-sports and gaming. At the institutional level, OHE reviewed and licensed 1 institution and re-accredited another institution.

Private Occupational School Authorization:

Currently there are 98 approved postsecondary private occupational schools in Connecticut. During the 2019-20 fiscal year, the Office of Higher Education approved four new occupational schools, re-approved 20 existing schools, investigated 5 formal complaints, and worked with ten schools that closed in compliance with state statutes. There were no changes to our hospital-based schools for FY20.

Carrying out its oversight of hairdresser and barber schools, the agency approved five new schools, and re-approved 10 existing schools, investigated four formal complaints and closed three schools in compliance with state statutes.

OHE worked with schools to organize CareerConn2020, an event that seeks to raise awareness about careers through occupational school education, such as hairdresser, HVAC, plumbing or electrician. The event had over 1,000 people registered including high school students. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was postponed. The event will be held virtually on Wednesday, March 31, 2021.

Connecticut State Approving Agency

As the Connecticut State Approving Agency (SAA) for veterans' education benefits, the Office of Higher Education processed 126 initial, revised and updated approval actions for institutions and training facilities eligible to enroll veterans; conducted one inspection visit, one technical assistance visits, and 12 compliance survey visits to schools, colleges and training facilities; and provided information to active duty service members and veterans regarding their educational benefits at 13 outreach activities. Staff approved 1,935 programs and disapproved 391 programs for degree- and non-degree-granting institutions and training organizations at

approved facilities; and participated in the 2020 virtual Veterans Stand Down and virtual National Association of State Approving Agencies Mid-Winter Training and Business Meeting.

The CT Office of Higher Education also helped to bring together members from the CT police Academy, CT Department of Veterans Affairs, CT Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, CT Army National Guard and the U.S. Marine Corps Military Police Training Program, to create a path for Veterans and Active Duty Personnel with Military Police experience, to access employment as Police Officers in Connecticut. To accomplish this, Ms. Karen Boisvert and Ms. Patrice Palombo, CT Police Academy, met with the training facilitators of the Army National Guard and the U.S. Marine Corps to compare the curriculums of each program. The goal was to identify areas in which the training materials overlapped between the military side and the civilian side of each program. In doing so, this team found up to 400 clock hours of CT Police Academy training that could potentially be waived for qualified applicants for each program.

The mechanics of this program requires the candidate to complete the comparative training assessment form which is reviewed by the CT Post Council for approval. They will determine how many hours will be waived as a result of the candidate's MP experience. The waiver does not impact their ability to become sponsored by a CT Police Department.

Division of Finance and Human Resources

Finance and Human Resources Division manages the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship, John J. Justice, and the Minority Teacher Incentive Programs and provides administrative, computer technology, and financial direction to the agency. This division is also responsible for grant administration (GEER UP, GEAR funding, and OER) and data collection and evaluation. Funding allocations are attached to this document.

The State as a whole is working on an overall IT strategy to streamline business applications, including OHE's system for managing the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. The goal being to provide OHE with more robust security features and functionality.

As mentioned earlier, OHE is a smaller agency with approximately 30 employees who primarily support regulatory oversight of post-secondary education and scholarship administration. Unlike other agencies, OHE has minimal risk for service continuity, given that only two of its employees are retirement-eligible in the upcoming years.

Like other agencies in the State, OHE has limited flexibility in managing its employees. Policies and statutes keep the agency from independently managing employees (e.g., offering promotions), which ultimately decreases employee retention. Allowing agencies to independently manage their employees will increase retention – not only at OHE, but throughout other State agencies.

Programs and Student Services

The Division has three large programs within its portfolio – the Alternate Route to Certification (ARC), the Minority Advancement Program (MAP) and the National Service initiative (AmeriCorps). The ARC program is a condensed training program created to prepare candidates for the classroom over the course of nine months. Enrolled students complete a rigorous, intensive series of classes that include Core sessions and Methods classes. Two types of classes provide both general and specific learning opportunities that are vital to become an educator - with the general classes taught in a large group Core presentations and content specific principles covered in smaller Methods classes. Students must also complete an 8-week (40 day) practicum in a Connecticut Public School as part of the program. The 2020-2021 academic year enrolled 102 students with a graduation date for June 2021. Certifications are offered in Business, English, Family & Consumer Sciences, Math, Sciences, Technology, World Languages. Durational Shortage Area Permits (DSAPs) are utilized for ARC students to have a full-time position opportunities in the classroom (as a long term substitute in the subject area of certification) while also meeting the program and state requirements for certification. To help with the current teacher shortage in CT, ARC is offering current students a \$500 tuition reimbursement incentive to secure a DSAP position while meeting program requirements by graduation.

The Minority Advancement Program (MAP) provides 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. In FY20, MAP continued its initiative - Promoting Academically Successful Students (PASS) to address those students of color who are placed on academic probation and need additional support to redress their academic standing. For the 2019-2020 academic year, 76% of PASS student participants increased their GPAs from the previous semester. Students have developed sustainable college acumen skills to remain on track to graduation and be removed from academic probation in the next academic year.

An extension of the agency's public service role is carried out by the Connecticut Commission on Community Service (Serve Connecticut) which is administered by the agency staff. The Commission is a governor-appointed entity that encourages engagement in service and volunteer efforts, and provides oversight to Connecticut's AmeriCorps state programming. With federal funds, the Commission sponsors AmeriCorps, by awarding nonprofit agencies to respond to local needs. In exchange for a service year, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$6,345 that can be used to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans.

Last year more than 1,100 Americans of all ages and backgrounds united to meet local needs, strengthen communities, and expand opportunity through national service in Connecticut. AmeriCorps invested more than \$8.2 million in federal funding to support cost-effective

community solutions, working hand in hand with local partners to empower individuals to help communities tackle their toughest challenges. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are preparing today's students for tomorrow's jobs, helping communities and families impacted by COVID-19, reducing crime, reviving cities, fighting the opioid epidemic, and helping seniors live independently. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers served at more than 300 locations across Connecticut, including schools, food banks, homeless shelters, health clinics, youth centers, and other nonprofit organizations. Through a unique public-private partnership, AmeriCorps and its partners generated more than \$4.8 million in local resources from businesses, foundations, and other sources in Connecticut in the last year. For a state investment of \$245,000, the National Service initiative yields \$13.1M to the state; an ROI of \$53.5 to every state dollar of investment. Since 1994, more than 16,000 Connecticut residents have served more than 22million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than \$56.1 million.