

# SUNY Broome enrollment bucks national trend

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At a time when community colleges nationwide are facing declining enrollment, SUNY Broome is bucking the trend.

Enrollment is up nearly 5 percent, at 7,239 students – an increase of 315 over the previous year. By comparison, according to the latest report by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, overall college enrollment is down 0.8 percent compared to a year ago, and community colleges are seeing a 2.7 percent average enrollment decline.

“We are bucking the trend in enrollment decline primarily due to our solid partnerships in the region,” said SUNY Broome President Kevin E. Drumm, “and of course our emphasis on academic quality. Our biggest partners include 20 Southern Tier high schools, Binghamton University and our College Foundation. All have helped us grow in the face of shrinking local demographics, which are negatively impacting enrollments everywhere but especially across the Northeast.”

SUNY Broome’s high quality academic programs draw students not only locally, but from around the Northeast and the world. New academic programs – including a challenging Honors Program – keep pace with both student and workforce needs, preparing graduates both for a successful transition to colleges and universities, or the pursuit of a career.

This year, the college has seen substantial increases in its Fast Forward Program at over 30% with local high schools and in its Binghamton Advantage program with Binghamton University, as well as in online education. Fully online students are up by nearly 30 percent, according to the college’s enrollment data.

Fast Forward allows students in their last two years of high school to take college-level courses while simultaneously meeting their high school graduation requirements. This year, the Fast Forward program has drawn 1,329 students, an increase in 37 percent over last year. The number of full-time Fast Forward students also has risen by nearly 33 percent.

For the first time in the College’s history, Fast Forward courses are being offered through the Oneonta school district while enrollment has risen in the Whitney Point, Susquehanna Valley, Chenango Valley and Binghamton districts, as well as Broome-Tioga BOCES and Ross Corners Christian Academy. The top five districts for Fast Forward enrollment are Binghamton, Broome-Tioga BOCES, Chenango Valley, Chenango Forks and Johnson City. Courses are also offered in the Walton, Sidney, Maine-Endwell, Harpursville, Greene, Deposit, Bainbridge-Guilford, Windsor and Union-Endicott districts, as well as Seton Catholic Central High School.

While Fast Forward offerings have largely been in the area of Liberal Arts, the college has seen tremendous growth recently in Business Information Technology and Business course offerings, particularly at Binghamton High School and Broome-Tioga BOCES, said Associate Vice President and Dean of STEM Kelli Ligeikis, the Fast Forward team leader.

“I am impressed with the interest exhibited by our local school districts to offer a more rigorous curriculum to their student bodies, in some cases growing from zero students to over 280 students enrolled in Fast Forward courses, as is the case at Binghamton High School,” she said.

Now in its fifth year, the Binghamton Advantage Program or BAP, the result of a partnership between SUNY Broome and Binghamton University, continues to draw record numbers of students. Students live on the BU campus while taking classes at SUNY Broome and participate in student life at both campuses. Once they complete their studies at SUNY Broome, they automatically transfer to BU to complete their bachelor degrees.

Enrollment in the program – which has tracks in engineering science, computer science and liberal arts – has skyrocketed. The program, which began with 40 students 3 years ago, drew 220 last year – and a record 232 students this year.

“We draw top students from our local high schools, many while they’re still in high school,” President Drumm said. “Our graduates also comprise Binghamton University’s largest transfer cohort and some move on to the Ivy League or other top universities. We have students who take courses and even complete degrees entirely online, without setting a foot on campus. If students will commit to partnering with us, they know we mean it when we tell them: You can go anywhere from here! And save a lot of tuition dollars by doing so.”

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