

The ADVOCATE

State schools see surge in applications

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STAMFORD -- Among the 200 students she assists, Stamford High School's guidance department head, Geraldine Nuzzo, said she observed a "trickle down effect" in college admissions.

"More students applied to (University of Connecticut, Storrs) and the other state schools, which made the competition more severe ... at all of the schools," she wrote in an e-mail.

Representatives of UConn, Southern Connecticut State University and Norwalk Community College cited a surge in student interest, but they framed it as part of a long-term trend in growth.

"This isn't a one-year story for UConn," said M. Dolan Evanovich, vice provost of enrollment planning, management and institutional research. "This is a 10-year story."

This year has brought a 5 percent increase in applications, he said, but applications increased by 102 percent in the 10 previous years. He credited the increase to a \$1 billion investment in UConn's physical infrastructure that began 12 years ago. Southern Connecticut State University, one of four schools in the Connecticut State University system, set its application deadline at April 1, the earliest in its history, according to spokesman Joe Musante.

"Because of the number of applications that we were receiving and the projected number of students that

would be accepted, we cut off applications a few weeks before that," he said.

Driven by student interest, the application deadline has been creeping up over the past five years, he said.

This year's freshman class was also more selective than previous ones, he said.

Norwalk Community College has seen an increase in enrollment, averaging about 3 to 5 percent, every year for the past 10 years, except 2004, according to Vanessa Morest, the dean of institutional effectiveness. She estimated that this year's increase was 10 percent to 24 percent.

"I think it has to do with economic conditions. We are definitely looking at an unusual year," she said.

The increase is spread across returning students, transfers and first-time students straight out of high school, she said.

Though about two-thirds of NCC's students have part-time status, that proportion has declined slightly over recent years. The school has seen a general trend toward students of a more traditional college age who are more likely to enroll full time, she said.

Last fall, 219 students from Stamford's Class of 2008 enrolled at NCC.

Enrollment has grown across the state. A report by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education shows a climb from 1990 to a record high in 2008.

A survey conducted by the National Association for College Admission Counseling found that nearly 60 percent of high school counselors said they saw an increase in the numbers of students planning to

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enroll in public versus private college as compared with last year. Meanwhile, 37 percent reported an increase in students planning to enroll in community college versus a four-year institution.

Nationally, the average total cost of a year at a private school averaged \$34,132 for 2008 and \$14,333 for an in-state, public, four-year school, according to a report by the College Board.

Two private colleges in the region that enroll Stamford students, Fairfield University and the University of New Haven, reported differing student interest this year.

Applications dipped slightly at Fairfield University, by less than 3 percent or 4 percent, according to Karen Pellegrino, director of undergraduate admission. The University of New Haven, meanwhile, saw a 52 percent increase this year, part of a two-year trend, according to Kevin Phillips, associate vice president of enrollment management.

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