

# Worcester State, QCC & MWCC begin to reverse enrollment declines

[By Isabel Tehan](#)

After years of declines, enrollment picked up significantly in the fall semester for Worcester State University and both Central Massachusetts community colleges, part of a statewide trend where public college enrollment is rising, largely thanks to community colleges.

Worcester State saw the highest percentage increase of any non-community college in the state, at 6.2% in the fall semester, according to preliminary data released by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education on Tuesday.

The preliminary report did not provide exact enrollment figures for the institutions, only percentage increases.

The WSU increase comes after enrollment hit a 10-year low in fiscal 2023, where the public university had 4,418 in full-time equivalent enrollment, according to DHE data released in October.

For the fall semester, Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner had an increased enrollment of 12.4%, according to the

Tuesday data. This came after MWCC hit a 10-year full-time equivalent enrollment low of 1,751 in fiscal 2023.

Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester had enrollment increased by 6.5% in the fall semester. QCC, too, hit a 10-year low of full-time equivalent enrollment of 3,794 in fiscal 2023.

The other two Central Massachusetts state universities saw their enrollment drop further in the fall semester. Fitchburg State University had enrollment drop 1% in the fall, after the university in fiscal 2023 was at a 10-year low of 4,883.

Framingham State University had enrollment decrease 5.2% in the fall semester, after being a 10-year low of 3,621 in fiscal 2023.

Throughout Massachusetts, enrollment at public colleges and universities ticked up in the fall 2023 semester. Statewide, this is the first uptick in enrollment in almost a decade of declining undergraduate participation at state colleges, according to the DHE report.

“Expanding access to higher education is critical for connecting students with the skills that are in demand by employers today and setting them on a path toward success in their future careers. We are particularly excited to see a boost in enrollment at our 15 incredible community colleges following the launch of MassReconnect. We’re grateful for the partnership of the Legislature and our colleges and universities to expand these

opportunities for our students,” Gov. Maura Healey said in a press release accompanying the report.

The enrollment growth comes largely from community college enrollment, which was up 8%, more than 5,000 students, for the fall semester compared to 2022 figures. There are nearly 153,000 students enrolled at public colleges across the state.

Overall enrollment figures increased 3% over the same period, including the community college figure. Undergraduate enrollment at non-community colleges was down 192 students, the smallest decline in over five years, according to the DOHE report.

At the four University of Massachusetts campuses offering undergraduate degrees, enrollment decreased by 1%, or 538 students.

All figures in the report are preliminary data, which will not be finalized until 2024.