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Enrollments rise at state colleges, universities

Mary Jane Smetanka, Star Tribune

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For the fifth straight year, enrollment in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) increased significantly this fall.

The system enrollment of 171,457 students set a record, increasing 3.3 percent over last fall.

System officials say enrollment is up partly because of the economy. Laid-off workers from mining, airlines and other industries have gone back to school to train for new careers. And the number of students taking online courses increased by almost 50 percent this year, with nearly 11,000 students taking more than 980 courses by computer.

Two-year schools showed the biggest enrollment increases. Head counts increased the most at Fond du Lac Community College, up 37 percent; Northwest Technical College, up 23.6 percent; Hibbing Community College, up 15 percent; and Pine Technical College, up 14.8 percent. Overall, enrollment at technical and community colleges increased 4.4 percent.

At MnSCU's seven four-year colleges, enrollment increased an average of 1.5 percent. Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall showed the biggest jump, with a 5.6 percent enrollment increase, and Winona State University had a 4 percent increase.

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