

New programs respond to workforce needs in health, STEM fields

Bernie Patterson, For USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin

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The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has long been committed to being more knowledgeable of and responsive to meeting the needs of our region and state.

The UW System, too, is responding to workforce needs of Wisconsin. Twenty additional degree programs across the System in 2016 align with state and national trends and demand for jobs. They include programs in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), health care and entrepreneurship fields.

Several are at UW-Stevens Point. A new data analytics major was launched thanks to a \$4 million gift from Sentry Insurance to endow two faculty members. Big data drives decisions from sports to retail, health care to insurance, and data analytics is a fast-growing, well-paying career field.

In the health care field, The UW Board of Regents approved health and wellness management and athletic training master's programs at UW-Stevens Point.

Last week, UW-Stevens Point and Mid-State Technical College signed an agreement that will increase the number of registered nurses in central Wisconsin. This is a great collaboration between institutions that's good for our students and the community. Students can begin classes at any of Mid-State's three locations or UW-Stevens Point. Sixteen pre-nursing students from UW-Stevens Point can move directly into Mid-State's nursing program each year, rather than apply to a waitlist, which typically takes two years. They can complete an associate degree in nursing at Mid-state to become registered nurses, then complete their bachelor of science in nursing more quickly by returning to UW-Stevens Point.

Nearly 1,600 students are pursuing health careers at UW-Stevens Point. Enrollments are growing in several existing health fields. They include audiology, which is a high-demand career; speech language pathology, clinical lab sciences, pre-physical therapy, nutritional sciences, health care administration, and health information management and technology.

Where is job growth projected? Nationally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects significant growth for positions in the STEM and health care industries from 2014-2024. Careers that require bachelor's degrees or higher with growth of 26 to 35 percent include audiologist, biomedical engineer, operations research analyst, nurse practitioner, personal financial adviser, physical therapist and physician assistant.



In the state, the top 25 growth occupations listed by Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development includes operations research analyst, computer systems analyst, financial adviser, web developer, biochemist and biophysicist, market research analyst, software developer, nurse practitioner and actuary.

UW-Stevens Point confers more degrees in STEM and health science fields than any other UW outside the research-focused institutions of Madison and Milwaukee.

We also began a new dual-degree program for physics and engineering with UW-Milwaukee. Students will earn a bachelor's degree in physics from UW-Stevens Point and a bachelor's in engineering from UW-Milwaukee in five years – three years here and two years at UW-Milwaukee. The engineer with a solid background in physics and the liberal arts has a broader, more adaptable skill set for a fast-changing industry.

We initiated a chemical engineering program a year ago, with the addition of one course to the Paper Science and Engineering curriculum – and no additional faculty. Also added recently are programs in Sustainable Food Systems and an Ed.D. in Educational Sustainability to meet growing needs locally and nationally.

Regardless of the program, our graduates are informed, engaged citizens who contribute to society and the economy. We are committed to equipping them with critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills to succeed in an ever-changing global economy.

At UW-Stevens Point, we continue to live our strategic plan, A Partnership for Thriving Communities, every day. With the UW System, we will continue to build strong connections with communities and businesses as part of our longstanding commitment to strengthen Wisconsin's economy, develop tomorrow's workforce and keep college affordable for students and families.

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<http://www.stevenspointjournal.com/story/life/2017/03/24/chancellor-programs-respond-workforce-needs/99518654/>