*Fiscal Facts by Wisconsin Policy Forum*

**In southeastern Wisconsin, fewer education grads pose threat to teacher workforce**

Education degrees earned at colleges and universities in southeastern Wisconsin declined from 2011 to 2019, raising the question of whether there is a sufficient supply of new K-12 teachers to meet the region’s teacher workforce needs.

Bachelor’s degree completions declined sharply and master’s completions also fell. White students continue to account for the majority of education degree completions, but their share of the total has diminished over time. These are some key trends that emerge from data collected by the Higher Education Regional Alliance (HERA) and analyzed by the Wisconsin Policy Forum.

During the nine years studied, education completions dropped substantially both in number and as a share of all new degrees and certificates awarded. Education completions decreased 12.9% from 2,244 in 2011 to 1,955 in 2019. They made up 7.3% of all degrees and certificates awarded by HERA institutions in 2019, down from 8.7% in 2011.

The decreases raise concerns over whether enough potential new teachers are entering the field. According to state Department of Public Instruction data, pre-K-12 student enrollment in Wisconsin public schools is declining but at a far slower rate than degree completions. This disparity may hamper school districts seeking to meet hiring goals, especially when coupled with the retirement of many Baby Boomers within the field and the potential for heightened demand for additional staff to support students’ COVID-19 learning recovery.

In interviews, deans of education at HERA institutions attribute the declines in bachelor’s and master’s completions to several factors, including perceptions of increasing demands and pressure on education professionals; a perceived decrease in public respect for the educator profession; increasing politicization and de-professionalization of the field; ripple effects from the 2008-09 recession; and the lack of competitive pay compared to professionals with similar education levels in other fields.

Meanwhile, white students continue to earn the vast majority of education degrees in southeastern Wisconsin — 81.7% each year on average. For both education degrees and overall degrees, however, the proportion of completions by white students has shrunk over time. White students accounted for 87.8% of education completions in 2011. By 2019, that number had dropped by 11.1 percentage points to 76.6% as a result of both decreased completions by white students and increased completions across most non-white races and ethnicities. While more progress remains needed, this shift in representation is encouraging given the benefit of educators of color to all students as discussed in past Forum research.

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