

Hamilton County Students Go To College In Record Numbers

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More Hamilton County students are entering college after graduation than ever before, Supt. Jim Scales said at a press conference on Wednesday afternoon.

According to data from the National Student Clearinghouse, which tracks student enrollment into colleges and universities around the country, 175 more students from Hamilton County public schools enrolled in college in 2006 than in 2005. This represents a 13% increase, with the number rising from 1,324 to 1,499, he said.

Hamilton County Schools' graduates enrolled in colleges in 28 different states and the District of Columbia last year spanning the country from New York to Washington, Minnesota to Florida. Graduates in the last three years enrolled in nine of the top 20 colleges and universities as listed by U.S. News and World Report College Rankings, including schools such as Cornell, Rice, Emory, Brown and Vanderbilt Universities, it was stated.

"We are making great strides in helping our students prepare to enter college and more and more of them are taking advantage of the education we afford them in Hamilton County," Dr. Scales said.

"We're on a roll and we plan to keep it going. Not only are more students graduating, more are going on to college, which will give them even more choices in life."

Increasing the number of students who enroll and succeed in college is one of the eight core goals of Dr. Scales' Strategic Plan 2011.

He said, "The increase in enrolling freshman is a great indicator that the district is on its way to achieving that objective."

Dr. Scales said since 2001, Hamilton County Schools has partnered with the Public Education Foundation in a comprehensive high school reform effort. That reform effort raised standards for high school graduation, but also set out to graduate more students and increase the number of graduates enrolling in college, he said.

HCDE and PEF have conducted this analysis of National Student Clearinghouse data to measure progress on that goal.

All of those goals have been met," said Sheila Young, associate superintendent for secondary education.

"Some people feared that when we implemented the single path diploma, more students would fall behind and drop out of school. Instead, our schools and our students have risen to the challenge. We have increased the number of students receiving diplomas from 1936 to 2148 since last year, yet we have maintained a rate of 70% of those graduates going on to college – in spite of the larger pool. This is good news all around."

Officials said the high school reform initiative, Schools for a New Society, placed college access coordinators in 12 of the district's high schools. These counselors, funded by several partners including the College Access Center, Lumina Foundation and PEF, help students navigate the often murky waters of college planning and financial aide. The College Access Center has provided training and helped schools find qualified individuals to serve as coordinators.

"We are working to give our students the support they need so they can see the big picture," Dr. Scales said.

"Studies show that a college graduate will earn more than \$1 million more in his/her lifetime than a high school graduate. We are working to help our students see that the decision they make today will impact their lives forever."