BUFFALO, New York — The State University of New York is adding 56 degree and certificate programs from 17 campuses to a year-old online initiative as part of the university system's goal of increasing enrollment by 100,000 students.

The expansion of Open SUNY+ being announced Thursday is expected to attract 6,000 students next semester, more than triple the number that have enrolled since the program was launched with eight degree programs in January.

"The growth of Open SUNY in its inaugural year is remarkable," SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher said. "We are more confident than ever that, at full scale, Open SUNY will emerge as the world's largest online learning environment."

The new additions include for the first time certificate programs, as well as bachelor's and master's programs in fields considered to be in demand by employers, SUNY officials said.

Regardless of where they are, enrollees will be able to earn an associate degree in computer security and forensics from Broome Community College, a master's in social work from the University at Buffalo or a bachelor's degree in public affairs from Empire State College, for example.

About a third of the programs are in information technology, with business, health care, education and criminal justice comprising most of the others.

Open SUNY is the main component of the 64-campus university system's goal of increasing enrollment by roughly 20 percent over the next five years, primarily online. The system currently enrolls about 460,000 students.

Although SUNY offers 12,000 course sections online under the Open SUNY umbrella, the Open SUNY+ initiative adds the benefits of a round-the-clock help desk, tutoring, internships and additional supports available to traditional students attending brick-and-mortar classes. The university system sees in the idea a chance to tap into the millions of adults in New York state who have started but not completed college degrees.

Faculty, meanwhile, can learn how to teach online through SUNY's
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Center for Online Teaching Excellence. More than 750 of SUNY’s more than 80,000 faculty members have used the center, SUNY said.