

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the  
**LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY**  
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library  
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from electronic originals  
(may include minor formatting differences from printed original)



**Date:** March 1, 2021

**Source of Report:** 20-A: Education, Part 5: Post-Secondary Education, Chapter 428, §12545

**Topic:** Job Creation Through Educational Opportunity Program Report

### **Context**

This report is submitted in accordance with 20-A §12545 Report. The statute requires the Department of Education to file a report related to the Maine Education Opportunity Tax Credit and states that “By March 1, 2021, the department shall report findings and recommendations regarding the program to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over taxation matters.” The report is based upon submissions made by Maine accredited colleges or universities that award associate or baccalaureate degrees.

### **20-A: Education, Part 5: Post-Secondary Education, Chapter 428, §12545**

#### **Job Creation Through Educational Opportunity Program Report**

“By February 1, 2021, each accredited Maine community college, college and university, as defined in section 12541, subsection 1, shall report to the department on efforts to promote the program and to train admissions and financial aid staff about the program. By March 1, 2021, the department shall report findings and recommendations regarding the program to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over taxation matters. By March 1, 2021, the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of Revenue Services, Office of Tax Policy shall report on implementation of the educational opportunity tax credit, including statistics on credits claimed, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over taxation matters. The Office of Tax Policy, in conjunction with the State Economist and the Department of Labor, shall include in its report an analysis of the costs of the credits claimed and the impact of the program on the State's labor force. After receipt and review of the information required under this section, the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs or the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over taxation matters may report out to the Legislature a bill regarding the program.” [PL 2015, c. 328, §1 (AMD).]

*In preparation for this report, the Office of Higher Education and Educator Support Services, sent a letter to officials at each of the postsecondary institutions required to submit a report to the Department of Education. The information within the report is based upon the self-reporting of those participating institutions.*

### **Applicable Post-Secondary Institutions**

As noted in the statute, institutions of higher education that fell under this reporting requirement include public institutions under the auspices of the Maine Community College System, University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy as well as most private higher education institutions in the state that offer associate or baccalaureate degrees. It does not include, for example, Northeastern University's Roux Institute which only offers graduate education. Further reference is made to 20-A, §12541 which provides the following definitions:

1. Accredited Maine community college, college or university. "Accredited Maine community college, college or university" means an institution that is accredited by a regional accrediting association or by one of the specialized accrediting agencies recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and is:
  - A. Any campus of the Maine Community College System;
  - B. Any campus of the University of Maine System;
  - C. The Maine Maritime Academy;
  - D. Any educational institution that is located in this State and has authorization to confer an associate degree or a bachelor's degree, in accordance with sections 10704 and 10704-A;
  - E. Any educational institution that is located in this State and is exempted from chapter 409 under section 10708, subsections 1 and 2; and
  - F. Any educational institution that is located in this State and is operating under a certificate of temporary approval from the state board under section 10703, to the extent that a student is ultimately able either to obtain an associate or a bachelor's degree at that institution or to transfer to and obtain a degree from an institution described in paragraphs A to E.

Twenty-seven post-secondary institutions with Maine-based operations in the state were identified and were sent a letter on January 6, 2021 reminding them of the requirements of this statute related to the Maine Education Opportunity Tax Credit. A follow-up communication was made to those who had not submitted on February 1, 2021. **Table 1** lists each institution and indicates whether they submitted reports used in this document as well as any notes if applicable.

**Table 1. Institutions of Higher Education**

INSTITUTION	SUBMISSION	NOTES
Bates College	Yes	
Beal University	Yes	
Bowdoin College	Yes	
Central Maine Community College	Yes	As part of the Maine Community College System submission
Colby College	Yes	
College of the Atlantic	Yes	
Eastern Maine Community College	Yes	As part of the Maine Community College System submission
Husson University	Yes	
Kennebec Valley Community College	Yes	As part of the Maine Community College System submission
The Landing School	No	Received a reply to reminder of report but no submission
Maine College of Art	Yes	
Maine College of Health Professionals	Yes	
Maine Maritime Academy	Yes	
Northern Maine Community College	Yes	As part of the Maine Community College System submission
Purdue University Global	No	Received a reply to reminder of report but no submission
St Joseph's College	Yes	
Thomas College	Yes	
Unity College	Yes	
University of Maine	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission
University of Maine at Augusta	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission

University of Maine at Farmington	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission
University of Maine at Fort Kent	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission
University of Maine at Machias	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission
University of Maine at Presque Isle	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission
University of New England	Yes	
University of Southern Maine	Yes	As part of the University of Maine System submission
Washington County Community College	Yes	As part of the Maine Community College System submission
York County Community College	Yes	As part of the Maine Community College System submission

There are two main considerations the statute calls for within the reporting requirement for postsecondary institutions: 1). Promotion of the Maine Education Opportunity Tax Credit (EOTC) and 2). Training of admission and financial aid staff. All institutions responded with varying degrees of details, that they promoted the program to students and trained their staff. The statute does not prescribe any specific reporting requirements for the Department except for findings based upon the institution reporting and any recommendations related to the program.

### **Promotion of the Maine Education Opportunity Tax Credit Program**

Institutions reported multiple strategies for promotion of the program, some passive and others that intentionally engaged with students and other stakeholders. It is worth noting that campuses reported publicizing to multiple audiences including prospective and current students, families, and alumni.

Almost every reporting institution hosts an online presence for promoting this program [see **Table 2** for a list of institution websites]. Many of the websites referenced and directed individuals to the *Live and Work in Maine* website which provides up-to-date resources as well as documentation of the changes to the program over the years. Much of this information was mirrored by institutions in print materials such as flyers, brochures, posters and letters as well as digital resources they disseminated to students and alumni through email and social media. Several of the campuses also directed individuals to the Maine Revenue Services website for the



current EOTC worksheet. Many of these websites also noted additional federal or state programs that students could take advantage of to assist in loan forgiveness and like programs. A few institutions reported that the information was available on their website but did not disclose additional ways in which they may be promoting the program to prospective, current, or former students.

**Table 2. Reporting Institutions Online Presence<sup>1</sup>**

INSTITUTION	WEBSITE
Bates College	<a href="https://www.bates.edu/financial-services/grants-scholarships-loans/maine-educational-opportunity-tax-credit/">https://www.bates.edu/financial-services/grants-scholarships-loans/maine-educational-opportunity-tax-credit/</a>
Beal University	<a href="https://beal.edu/financial-aid/">https://beal.edu/financial-aid/</a>
Bowdoin College	<a href="https://www.bowdoin.edu/student-aid/after-bowdoin/opportunity-maine.html">https://www.bowdoin.edu/student-aid/after-bowdoin/opportunity-maine.html</a>
Colby College	<a href="https://www.colby.edu/sfs/federal-student-loans/">https://www.colby.edu/sfs/federal-student-loans/</a>
College of the Atlantic	<a href="https://www.coa.edu/admissions/admitted-students/your-financial-aid/">https://www.coa.edu/admissions/admitted-students/your-financial-aid/</a>
Husson University	<a href="https://www.husson.edu/financial-aid/loans/opportunity-maine">https://www.husson.edu/financial-aid/loans/opportunity-maine</a>
Maine College of Art	<a href="https://www.meca.edu/info-for/alumni/alumni-opportunities/">https://www.meca.edu/info-for/alumni/alumni-opportunities/</a>
Maine College of Health Professionals	Refers to external websites in their communications
Maine Community College System	<a href="https://www.mccs.me.edu/admissions-tuition-aid/tuition-aid/opportunity-maine/">https://www.mccs.me.edu/admissions-tuition-aid/tuition-aid/opportunity-maine/</a>
Maine Maritime Academy	<a href="https://mainemaritime.edu/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/financial-aid/opportunity-maine/">https://mainemaritime.edu/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/financial-aid/opportunity-maine/</a>
St Joseph's College	<a href="https://www.sjcme.edu/admissions/online/financial-aid/apply/">https://www.sjcme.edu/admissions/online/financial-aid/apply/</a>
Thomas College	Refers to external websites in their communications
Unity College	<a href="https://unity.edu/distance-education/admissions-costs-aid/distance-education-financial-aid/">https://unity.edu/distance-education/admissions-costs-aid/distance-education-financial-aid/</a> <a href="https://unity.edu/hybrid-learning/tuition-costs-and-financial-aid/financial-aid/">https://unity.edu/hybrid-learning/tuition-costs-and-financial-aid/financial-aid/</a>
University of Maine System	<a href="https://www.maine.edu/students/opportunity-maine/">https://www.maine.edu/students/opportunity-maine/</a>
University of New England	<a href="https://www.une.edu/money-matters/know-your-tax-benefits-higher-education">https://www.une.edu/money-matters/know-your-tax-benefits-higher-education</a>

<sup>1</sup> The websites for the Maine Community College System and University of Maine System have been noted in place of individual campuses for brevity

Institutions reported various interactions in promoting the EOTC during a student's tenure. Most institutions reported promoting the program to prospective students and their families during the admissions and enrollment processes. About half of the institutions annually or semesterly send an email to current students with information related to the program as a reminder. As an example, the University of Southern Maine's Student Financial Services office emailed the following to all students on November 14, 2020 in support of this effort:

"The State of Maine offers an Educational Opportunity Tax Credit (EOTC) for any Maine college graduate who has borrowed loans and lives and works in Maine after graduation. The program is officially known as "Opportunity Maine". The program is now available to anyone who has received an associate's, bachelor's and/or graduate degree on or after January 1, 2008. Eligibility criteria varies based on the year of degree completion.

Website: <http://www.liveandworkinmaine.com/opportunity-maine/>

When filing your State of Maine tax return, complete the EOTC worksheet and submit it along with your completed tax return and supporting documentation to the Maine Revenue Service.

For more information, please visit the following:  
<https://www.maine.edu/students/opportunity-maine/>  
and/or <http://www.maine.gov/revenue/> ”

One likely time to promote the program is as students look toward graduation from their respective institution. Students at the Maine College of Arts receive details on the EOTC program in the course *Professional Studio Practices*, which is a required credit-bearing course for all seniors at the college. Multiple campuses indicated that they reinforce awareness of the program in exit counseling letters and materials. Staff at Bates College discuss the program as a part of the in-person student loan exiting counseling sessions. If a student is unable to attend a session or has borrowed through a private lender, they are mailed information as a part of their student loan exit packet to ensure they have been made aware of the benefits of the program.

Alumni relations offices and alumni programs were also mentioned by institutions as an important avenue to provide awareness and remind graduates of the benefits of the EOTC.

Multiple means of promotion were cited and included newsletters, social media, and other publications and outreach efforts with a focus on alumni. As changes have been made to the program there are nuances that graduates sometimes need to navigate to take advantage of the program. The University of Maine System not only aids individuals to encourage use of the program, but they also provide support in the submission of appeals. Finally, while certainly not exclusive to those nearing graduation, career services office staff were also noted to be involved in promoting the program as they engaged with students to assist in planning their post-academic life.

### **Training of Admissions and Financial Aid Staff**

Almost every institution suggested that they provide training related to the EOTC to admissions and financial aid staff at their respective campus. One institution candidly noted that it offered limited training related to the program and that this institution as well as others suggested they would be open to ideas on opportunities to train their staff. As was the case with information related to promotion of the program, details varied among institutions while there was minimal differentiation in training descriptions and opportunities among all reports. Most institutions employed at least one of the following efforts:

- Provide annual trainings to admissions and financial aid staff. Thomas College, for example, has a special focus on EOTC and other program trainings in December and January as the tax season approaches.
- Remind staff of program through annual communications and materials.
- Partnering at one time or another with the Finance Authority of Maine to assist in training staff on this and other programs that may be an opportunity for their students.
- One campus cited a future partnership to work with Live and Work in Maine to train their staff to promote the program to their students.

### **Additional Comments**

While most institutions did not submit additional information other than what was called for in the statute, there were a few items that seem appropriate to report. Several institutions noted the potential impact of the program and that changes over the years have been helpful in expanding opportunities for students and graduates. Maine Maritime Academy specifically cited their appreciation that the program covers “merchant mariners who make their home in Maine



but work at sea.” The Maine Community College System reported that due to the low cost of tuition and the likelihood that students would qualify for grants in place of loans, the students attending MCCS campuses “are unlikely to be meaningful beneficiaries of this Program” and that the “leading beneficiaries of this publicly subsidized tax credit are much more likely to be those students who take out higher loans to attend more expensive schools.” This of course, as MCCS discloses, does not diminish their efforts in promoting the program.

## **Recommendations**

It was generally noted that the EOTC is a positive mechanism for Maine residents who qualify for the tax credit. If the program is to continue, stakeholders, including lawmakers may consider these recommendations.

1. Continued promotion of the program to out of state students and alumni as a benefit of moving or returning to Maine permanently. Maine has the lowest degree attainment rate of all states in New England. While the EOTC tax credits may not on its own be the reason someone considers moving or staying in Maine, programs like these may provide incentives for individuals to relocate or remain in Maine with a postsecondary credential of value.
2. Examine opportunities for students who borrow less - specifically, community college students have higher participation in Pell Grant and other programs. Tuition as well as living expenses account for higher percentages of the overall household burden on these students as compared to other students.
3. Some campuses reported taking a comprehensive approach to promoting the program to students and their families. One institution noted that it shares information about the program to new students and their families during their student orientation and in their financial aid award letter but also have made a commitment to provide a continued emphasis throughout the students’ tenure with additional opportunities to expose students to the benefits of the program by their Career Services and Alumni Affairs staff. A comprehensive and multi-faceted approach should be taken by all institutions.

4. Institutions, if they do not already, should investigate a partnership with the Finance Authority of Maine, Live and Work in Maine, or another agency to assist them in conducting training on EOTC and related programs to ensure students and graduates are informed of these opportunities. These trainings should include not only admissions and financial aid staff but career services and alumni affairs staff to ensure that the message is reinforced throughout and beyond a student's time at the institution.

**Contact**

Jason C. Libby  
Postsecondary and Educator Preparation Coordinator  
[jason.libby@maine.gov](mailto:jason.libby@maine.gov)  
207-624-6846