

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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COLLEGE RETENTION PROGRAM

**REPORT TO THE
128th LEGISLATURE**

MISSION STATEMENT

To identify students who face barriers to education, and to guide each one on to a successful path toward continued education, a meaningful career, and productive adulthood.



VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to be a champion for all Maine students who face barriers to education. We understand Maine's future will be a reflection of what we commit and contribute to our youth.



2016-2017

91 Programs
serving more
than 6,500
students



Lewiston Regional Technical Center (3 programs)
Lewiston MS

Windham HS & MELMAC
Bonny Eagle HS
Gorham HS
* Deering HS (2 programs), Portland HS (2 programs), LearningWorks YBA Portland & USM
* Memorial MS, Mahoney MS, So. Portland HS (2 programs), & Southern Maine Community College
* Thornton Academy
* Biddeford HS
* Sanford HS & Sanford Jr. HS
* Noble High School

**Middle School
High School
College Success
Statewide Partnerships**

- Brewer Community School
- China Middle School
- Durham Community School
- Freeport Middle School
- Lewiston Middle School
- Mahoney Middle School
- Memorial Middle School
- Mt. View Middle School
- Rose Gaffney Elementary School
- Sanford Middle School
- Vassalboro Community School
- Warsaw Middle School
- Waterville Jr. High School
- Wisasset Middle/High School
- Belfast Area High School
- Biddeford High School
- Bonny Eagle High School
- Brewer High School
- Brewer High School MELMAC
- Calais Area High School
- Caribou High School
- Carrabec High School
- Cony High School
- Deering High School
- Deering High School Pathways
- Dexter Regional High School
- Erskine Academy
- Fort Kent Community High Sch.
- Foxcroft Academy
- Freeport High School
- Gardiner Area High School
- Gorham High School
- Greenville Consolidated School
- Hall-Dale High School
- Hodgdon High School
- Houlton High School
- Jonesport-Beals High School
- Lawrence High School
- Lewiston Regional Tech. Ctr. (3)
- Lisbon High School
- Machias Memorial High School
- Madison Area Memorial HS
- Maine Central Institute (MCI)
- Messalonskee High School (2)
- Monmouth Academy
- Morse High School
- Mt. Ararat High School
- Mt. Blue High School
- Mt. View High School
- Narragagus High School
- Noble High School
- Nokomis Regional High School
- Northern Penobscot Tech.
- Oak Hill High School
- Oceanside High School - East
- Old Town High School
- Penquis Valley High School
- Portland High School
- Portland High School Pathways
- Richmond High School
- Sanford High School
- Shead High School
- Skowhegan Area High School
- South Portland High School (2)
- Spruce Mountain High School
- Thornton Academy
- Washington Academy
- Waterville Sr. High School (2)
- Windham High School
- Windham High School MELMAC
- Winslow High School
- Winslow High School MELMAC
- Woodland Jr./Sr. High School
- Kennebec Valley Community College
- Southern Maine Comm. College
- Thomas College (2)
- University of Maine at Augusta
- University of Maine at Machias
- University of Southern Maine
- Washington County Community College
- JMG Opportunity Broker (Cumberland & York Counties)
- Learn, Earn, & Achieve Potential (LEAP) Coordinator
- LearningWorks YBA Portland
- OP for Foster Care Youth
- Somerset Cty. Career Prep Coordinator

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND SIXTEEN

S.P. 84 - L.D. 215

An Act To Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §6902-A is enacted to read:

§6902-A. Postsecondary services

The corporation shall provide services, in accordance with this section and for the purpose of significantly increasing the percentage of eligible students who obtain a postsecondary degree, to postsecondary institutions in the State to assist students in completing a postsecondary course of study.

1. "Eligible student" defined. As used in this section, "eligible student" means a student who:

- A. Has previously been enrolled in a high school program administered by the corporation;
- B. Has been in or currently is in foster care; or
- C. Has earned a high school equivalency diploma through an alternative program within the previous 5 years.

2. Student services. The corporation shall:

- A. Provide academic and social mentoring and counseling to eligible students, including monitoring of academic performance and connection to campus life;
- B. Assist each eligible student in developing an individualized academic plan for completing a course of study and consider each eligible student's individual academic needs and provide connections to sources of academic support, if necessary;
- C. Develop a system of peer mentoring between eligible students and other college students and between eligible students and college graduates; and

D. Provide eligible students with financial guidance relating to postsecondary expenses, including assisting eligible students in obtaining all available sources of financial aid.

Sec. 2. Report. Jobs for Maine's Graduates shall determine methods for implementing the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 6902-A and report its findings to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by December 31, 2016. The committee may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 127th Legislature.

Working Title:
**BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A
BRIDGING AND RETENTION PROGRAM IN MAINE**

Prepared for Jobs for Maine's Graduates

January 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today more than ever, economic security comes from having a post-secondary credential. Yet earning one isn't easy, especially for the growing number of students balancing education with work and family. Across the country, scores of bridge and retention programs are trying to help those students navigate the long journey to a college degree. Based on their experiences, this report recommends a comprehensive program that ensures students' academic success through intensive support that follows them seamlessly from high school to college graduation. Key recommendations are as follows:

COMPREHENSIVE: Help students overcome whatever obstacles stand between them and a college degree, whether it's a placement test, confusing paperwork, or a broken car

ACADEMIC SUCCESS: Ensure that students are academically prepared for college and successful once they enroll

- Use ACCUPLACER early in high school to identify academic weaknesses
- Provide tutoring and other tools to address those weaknesses
- Use summers to make academic gains and immerse students in programming
- Closely advise college students; offer tutoring and other academic supports as needed

COLLEGE CULTURE: Ensure that high school students see college as a realistic and desirable goal; ensure that college students find social success within the college community

- Foster a college-going culture among staff members
- Make earning a post-secondary credential a goal for all program participants; communicate that goal early and often to students and their families
- Begin college counseling as soon as high school students enter the program
- Require all students to develop a post-high-school plan that includes a post-secondary credential
- Foster “college knowledge”
- Give students on-campus experiences
- Ensure social success in college by creating a sense of community within the program

INTENSIVE SUPPORT: Practice intrusive advising throughout the program to ensure that students persevere through college graduation

- Assist with college applications using Naviance
- Tackle summer melt with help from a text messaging program
- Require all college students to develop a map to graduation that includes a course sequence leading to completion as quickly as possible
- Offer comprehensive incentives that reward students for sustained effort, program participation, and milestones
- Encourage full-time college students to take 15 credits
- Help students with budgeting and financial literacy
- Provide access to emergency funds

SEAMLESS: Provide students with continuous support from high school through college, building on accomplishments and trust as students work toward their educational goals

INTRODUCTION

Decades ago, graduating from high school was usually enough for economic security. In the 1960s, young adults with a high school education typically earned about 80% as much as their college-educated peers (Pew 2014). Today, they earn just 62%. They are also about three and a half times more likely to become unemployed. According to the Pew Research Center, “the disparity in economic outcomes between college graduates and those with a high school diploma or less formal schooling has never been greater in the modern era.”

In response to this change, more people are attempting college than ever before. Most of today's college students aren't recent high school graduates living in the residence halls of a four-year institution. Nearly 90% live off-campus, mostly with parents and relatives (Bishaw 2013). Over 70% work while taking classes and 20% work full-time (Davis 2012).

Sadly, many of today's non-traditional students have difficulty navigating the academic, social, and economic challenges of earning a post-secondary degree. Even those who begin college full-time face unfavorable odds: only three in five will graduate from public four-year institutions within six years; only one in five will graduate from public two-year institutions within three years (NCES 2015).

There is a large body of academic research on what influences a student's decision to enroll in college and remain there through graduation (Watson 2015). Most researchers model college success (i.e., earning a college degree) as the culmination of academic success, social success, and a supportive environment.

“Academic success” refers to a student's mastery of college-level academic material. “Social success” refers to the formation of positive social relationships within the college community. “Environment” includes everything from finances and family expectations, to transportation and child care, to institutional obstacles such as changing class schedules that impede a student's ability to have a job.

Drawing on this research, educators and policymakers across the nation are designing programs to meet the changing needs of today's college students. “Bridge” programs seek to close the gap between the knowledge and skills students gain in high school and those needed to succeed in college. “Retention” programs help students remain in college until they earn a degree.

This report summarizes a nationwide review of bridge and retention programs undertaken for Jobs for Maine's Graduates. Through web research and phone interviews, the author reviewed over fifty initiatives and surveyed academic literature in the field. That work revealed three common elements across the best programs: they foster academic success, create a college culture, and provide intensive support. This report describes those elements and the many different ways programs are approaching them. It also offers recommendations for building an effective bridge and retention program in Maine.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Academic knowledge is the basic ingredient of a college degree. Preparing students to succeed in a college classroom must begin long before they step onto campus. It starts with identifying areas of academic weakness during high school (or earlier) and addressing those weaknesses through academic instruction that exceeds what students are currently receiving, often through tutoring and summer instruction. Once in college, students benefit from additional academic supports and incentives to maintain academic momentum through graduation.

The initial academic goal of most bridge programs is for high school students to score well enough on standardized tests to enroll in the college of their choice and to immediately begin taking college-level courses there. That means passing placement exams and avoiding the discouragement, delay, and expense of remedial courses. In Fall 2014, fully 46% of Maine high school graduates who enrolled in community college required at least one remedial course (MCCS 2014).

High School Preparation

Diagnostic tests can identify students' academic weaknesses early in order to address them before they enter college. At San Diego Early/Middle College (SDEMC) high school, students take ACCUPLACER, a widely used college placement test, to assess their skills in reading, writing, and math. If their results show weak areas, they are assigned MyFoundationsLab modules. MyFoundationsLab is a real-time diagnostic and training tool that provides personalized instruction in math, reading, and writing.

The Maine Community College System allows high school students in its Early College for ME program to take the ACCUPLACER as juniors. Students who score low are directed to PLATO Courseware, an online tutoring program whose curriculum aligns with the Common Core standards. Several Maine high schools also use PLATO (e.g., Kennebunk High School, Gorham High School, Skowhegan Area High School) both as a tool for students to strengthen areas of academic weakness and to make up courses or portions of courses they failed.

Some bridge programs use tutors to help students improve their academic performance. Upward Bound, a federally-funded program run by colleges and universities, works with students' high schools to provide tutoring if they are struggling in a class. For instance, staff members of the University of Maine's Upward Bound Math Science (UBMS) program offer tutoring during their twice monthly meetings with students. If a student needs additional help, UBMS staff works with someone at the student's school to find an appropriate tutor. UBMS pays for up to three hours of tutoring per week.

College Possible and College Advising Corps place special emphasis on standardized test preparation in their high school programs. Both organizations place recent college graduates in under-resourced high schools to assist with college preparation. For juniors, instruction includes essay writing and ACT/SAT preparation. An evaluation of College Possible participants in one state showed that students' average ACT test score increased 22% while participating in the

program (ICF 2010).

Recommendation: *Strengthen high school preparation*

Have students take the ACCUPLACER test by their junior year of high school. If their results show areas of weakness, work with their school to provide tutoring. Direct students to online tutoring programs, if necessary. Have seniors retake ACCUPLACER early in the year to assess their progress and continue addressing academic weaknesses.

Summers

Many programs use summers to immerse students in programming and make academic gains. SDEMC holds four-week summer enrichment programs for its high school students. Rising tenth graders focus on reading and writing proficiency. Rising eleventh graders focus on college preparation. Students also use MyFoundations Lab during the summer to address any areas of academic weakness.

Intensive summer programming is a longstanding component of Upward Bound (UB). Each year, thousands of UB students across the country spend five to six weeks living on a college campus, receiving intensive instruction in academics, career exploration, and college planning. At the University of Maine Farmington, UB students take classes in science, math, English, and a foreign language. In Orono, the program includes a research component where students get hands-on research experiences with graduate students and faculty members.

Many programs focus on preparing students for college placements exams during the summer between high school and college. LifeLink, a program of Good Shepherd Services in New York, holds a six-week summer program for recent high school graduates entering its college support program. Historically, nearly all LifeLink students had to take at least one remedial course when beginning college. To address that, LifeLink's summer program focuses heavily on preparing students to pass placement tests for the City University of New York. Students receive special instruction and work packets tailored to the questions most often asked on the tests. LifeLink staff report that their summer program is a critical time for students to develop a sense of identity within the program and build relationships with their peers (Thompson 2015). Since the program takes place before students begin regular classes, it establishes staff members and their fellow participants as their primary community within the new college environment.

MySuccess, a program for Portland Public School graduates entering Southern Maine Community College, gives students three weeks of intensive instruction in the summer prior to their first semester. The program aims to reduce the need for remedial courses and increase college preparation. SMCC reported that MySuccess participants placed into higher English and math courses than similar students who did not participate in the program (SMCC 2015).

An evaluation of eight similarly intensive, academic summer bridge programs in Texas showed the programs improved students' performance during the year following the programs but there were no significant changes after two years (Barnett et al. 2012). This suggests that academic supports must be sustained.

Recommendation: *Utilize summers*

Offer summer tutoring, either in person or online, to all rising high school seniors in need of academic support, and to younger students who are interested. For recent high school graduates, offer a summer intensive program at the college they plan to attend. Focus on ACCUPLACER preparation while building relationships between students and staff members and developing a sense of community among participants. Consider offering stipends for summer programming to attract students who need to earn money during that time.

College Academic Supports

Nearly all colleges and universities offer tutoring and other supports to students who seek them out. Retention programs go further by ensuring students use those resources early and often. Most programs either provide tutoring directly or connect students with preexisting services on campus. LifeLink students are expected to attend guided study session at least five hours per week and to work with tutors as needed. LifeLink staff members check in with students weekly to see how their classes are going and to identify challenges early. Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) at City University of New York (CUNY) also offer tutoring, although it is only required for students who are struggling academically.

Academic supports are only effective if students receive them within time to recover their grades. Unfortunately, some students may not tell their advisors about problems until it's too late. To address that, some institutions are using technology to notify advisers that a student may be struggling. In 2010, Paul Smith's College implemented a Starfish Early Alert system to combine information from various campus sources and identify at-risk students. Drawing on historical data, the system identifies patterns that a student may be struggling, for instance, a transfer student experiencing a sharp drop in grades or attendance. The system automatically notifies the student's advisor that intervention is required. The results have been promising. Within two years, the percentage of students receiving "F" grades fell almost in half, retention rates rose, and early indicators showed an increased in the two-year graduation rate (Taylor and McAleese 2012).

Student privacy protections make it difficult for non-institutional programs to create early-alert systems like the above. Some non-institutional organizations have arrangements with their institutional partners that allow them to access students' records and look for similar warning signs. Some staff members have been certified as adjunct staff members (e.g., LifeLink), while others have adopted memorandums of understanding, or gained access to student records with a signed student waiver (CYC 2013). Campus leaders can help ease communication with college faculty and staff by publicizing the program and asking college employees for their support.

Recommendation: *Strengthen college academic supports*

Practice intrusive advising by checking in weekly with students and referring them to tutoring at the first sign of trouble. If possible, enter into an arrangement with the college so program staff can see student records and discuss students' progress with college faculty and staff. Provide office space for students to study together and enlist older participants or alumni to organize study sessions and to tutor if appropriate. Hire more experienced tutors as necessary.

COLLEGE CULTURE

High school students who see college as worthwhile are more likely to attend than those who do not. College students who feel at home on a college campus are more likely to graduate. Therefore, nearly all bridge and retention programs strive to build a “college culture” that encourages students to persevere in their quest for a college degree. Building that culture starts in middle and high school as students begin to see college as a realistic and desirable goal. It's strengthened by bringing students onto a college campus and empowering them with “college knowledge.” Once enrolled, it means helping students find social success within the college community so they begin to identify themselves as college students and strive to retain that status.

College Culture Among Staff

The first step to creating a strong college culture is ensuring that all program staff members believe students can and should pursue some form of post-secondary instruction. The director of one program explained, “We used to describe ourselves as a GED program, but now it is college readiness. This has changed our culture” (CYC 2013).

At North Queens Community High School, a College Going Culture Committee began building their school's culture by encouraging staff to talk with students about college on a regular basis and by hanging college posters in common areas. They planned “t-shirt days” when staff members were invited to wear shirts from their alma maters.

LifeLink staff members report the importance of spending time with their counterparts at the high schools from which they recruit. “Without buy-in from school-based staff, recruiting is very difficult” (JFF 2012). Bronx LifeLink has hosted high school staff members on campus for several days to help them gain a better understanding of the program.

Recommendation: *Foster a college culture among staff*

Make earning a post-secondary credential the ultimate goal for all program participants and ensure that all staff members support that vision. Give each college staff member responsibility for the high schools in their region. Have that person meet with their counterparts at each high school on a regular basis, perhaps quarterly, and develop a shared approach to college counseling.

Start Early, Include Families, Create Cohorts

College aspirations form as early as middle school and academic preparation starts long before high school seniors fill out applications. Therefore, the most comprehensive bridge and retention programs start working with students as early as possible and create a supportive network of people who will encourage their college aspirations throughout their academic career.

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) has a detailed curriculum for students beginning in seventh grade (NACAC 2015). The sessions for seventh and

eighth graders encourage students to think about their career interests and to understand the level of post-secondary education needed for most professions. NACAC also recommends explaining the real-life impact of earnings differentials. Early high school sessions encourage students to think more deeply about their long-term goals and to see themselves as college-bound. Students study the full array of colleges available to them and learn how high school course selection will impact their choices. Later high school sessions focus on college affordability, standardized testing, college applications, and financial aid.

At NQCHS, prospective eighth graders and their families are told that all North Queens students are expected to apply to college and have a plan for after high school (JFF 2013). Upon entering, students fill out a graduation plan that maps out everything they will need to do to complete high school and achieve their post-high-school plan. These activities set the stage for a high school experience in which all students share a common goal and support each other in achieving it.

The University of Maryland Baltimore County consciously involves parents in its Meyerhoff Scholars program, a scholarship program for minority students interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Meyerhoff staff encourage parents to actively support their child's involvement in the program and the Meyerhoff Parents Association reaches out to new families and hosts student events.

LifeLink invites alumni to visit their former high schools to talk about the program and serve as real-life examples of college success (Thompson 2015). Near-peer role models help high school students see college as a realistic and desirable goal. The LifeLink representatives talk about the financial benefits of college, the availability of aid, college options, program benefits, college preparation, and the application process.

Some groups have experimented with low-cost ways to trigger college aspirations, including mail and telementoring campaigns targeted at high-potential, low-income high school students (Expanding College Opportunities, Amherst College). These efforts have produced modest positive results. However, they generally have less impact than programs that offer students one-on-one support (Avery 2014).

Recommendation: *Spread college culture to students, families, and cohorts*

When high school students first enroll in the program, explain to them and their families that earning a post-secondary credential is the ultimate goal for all participants. Have high school staff incorporate college into both formal programming and informal conversations with students. Have college staff meet with high school participants at least once per semester through the first half of junior year and then quarterly. Use NACAC curriculum to guide their visits, customizing it as necessary over time. Have alumni talk with students at their former high schools. Have college staff attend family events at their regional high schools to tell students' families how the program can continue supporting them in college.

College Pathway Mapping

Pathway mapping is a powerful tool for showing students the value of, and need for, a post-secondary credential. At North Queens, students work from a College/Careers Planning Tool that requires them to identify their career interests, research the post-secondary training necessary for those careers, identify people who will support their goals, and begin developing a plan for how they will pay for college. They begin working with this tool early in high school and return to it regularly in meetings with their advisor. They update and modify the plan, check off completed tasks, and look ahead to next steps.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, a unique partnership between the public school district, a community college, and the state university system provides students with pathway guidance every summer from ninth grade through college graduation. Students who enter the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) program as high school freshmen understand they are embarking on a long journey to a worthwhile goal. The program begins with rising tenth graders learning about the value of college and necessary preparation. As rising juniors they spend ten days on a community college campus experiencing that environment and meeting staff. The summer after high school they hone practical college success skills and learn about career options. Later they receive assistance transitioning into the state university system. During the summer before finally graduating, they mentor younger students and work on job placement.

Recommendation: *Map a path to college*

Require all students to identify their career interests, learn about the training necessary for those professions, and develop a plan for attaining a post-secondary credential. Begin drafting the plan early in high school and return to it regularly. Update and modify the plan as necessary, check off completed tasks, and look ahead to next steps.

“College Knowledge”

Building a college culture starts with aspirations, but it extends to practical knowledge about how college works and what it's like to study on a college campus. Some high school programs incorporate elements of college courses to ease students' transition to a new style of instruction that requires more individual responsibility. San Diego Early College High School gives students a college readiness grade beginning in ninth grade. In addition to academic skills, the grade reflects a student's maturity, leadership skills, behavior, and discipline in meeting deadlines, all important factors in college success. North Queens introduces students to terms such as “syllabus” as freshmen in its Gateway course, which introduces new students to the school's college-going culture.

LifeLink introduces college elements in its summer bridge program. The program is guided by a syllabus, instructors hold office hours, students make presentations, and some readings are from scholarly journals.

Many colleges and universities offer “college knowledge” courses for entering students aimed at bridging the gap between high school and college. Bowdoin College requires all students to

enroll in a first-year seminar focused on writing, research skills, and critical thinking. The seminars are small, about fifteen people, providing lots of contact with the instructor. Bates College offers similar first-year seminars, although they are not required. Bates also has a small Science Fellows program for first-year students from underrepresented groups or under-resourced high schools, and first-generation college students. The program helps to develop their quantitative and research skills while they take introductory science courses. Thomas College's EDGE program offers a free one-week class for students in the summer prior to their first semester. The class focuses on college skills and personal growth.

Recommendation: Foster “college knowledge”

Give students a college readiness grade as early as possible. Incorporate elements of college courses into classes for high school seniors and the summer intensive. Have instructors use a syllabus, hold office hours, etc. Teach a college-readiness class to all program participants during their first year of college that includes time management, study skills, self-advocacy, financial literacy, etc.

On-Campus Experiences

Bringing high school students onto a college campus can be a powerful tool for helping them envision themselves as college students. Nearly all bridge programs offer students an on-campus experience. Some early-college programs, including several in Maine, allow high school students to take classes on campus. Upward Bound goes furthest by providing students a chance to live in college residence halls and attend classes in college classrooms every summer. Many programs offer free college visits for juniors and seniors (ACES, Quest Bridge, College Possible, Upward Bound, Boothbay Region High School). During LifeLink's summer program, staff lead tours of the community college students will soon attend, showing them various offices and resources available on campus.

Recommendation: Bring students to campus

Ensure that every high school student in the program steps onto a college campus at least once per year and take high school students on tours of prospective colleges. Provide a dormitory experience during the summer intensive and give students a guided tour of the college they'll be attending. Introduce them to helpful individuals on campus: librarians, financial aid officers, tutors, etc.

Social Success in College

Once students are on a college campus, “college culture” expands beyond aspirations to finding social success within the college environment. Many colleges are experimenting with “learning communities” – groups of first-year students who take two or more classes together, sometimes with the same instructors and/or support staff. The goal is to help students make strong social connections in the critical first semester of college.

Incoming students at California State University, Fullerton can apply to one of six learning communities organized by theme (business, environmental, education, etc). Together with other

members of their learning community, students take University Studies 100 and an introductory course in their field of interest. Shared schedules and class assignments are meant to encourage social connections and study groups. An evaluation of CSU Fullerton's program showed it had a positive, sustained effect on student retention and GPA, especially for underrepresented minority students (Moon et al. 2013).

Programs like LifeLink, which can't influence the college scheduling process directly to form learning communities, can create social connections through programming and services. Program offices can provide a literal "home" for students, especially those who commute. LifeLink's offices have comfortable spaces for studying and socializing with coffee stations and computers. Study sessions and social events help to strengthen connections between students. LifeLink staff encourage students to participate in planning group outings and events.

The Posse Foundation offers perhaps the most comprehensive approach to ensuring social success in college. It helps academically gifted students from underrepresented populations access elite colleges and universities, where many of them will be minorities within the student body. Through a competitive recruitment process, the group forms 10-12 member "posses" of high school seniors from urban areas nationwide and connects them to four-year, full-tuition scholarships at one of its partner colleges (including Colby College, which partners with Posse Houston). During their senior year of high school, the Posse meets weekly for team-building and pre-college training on topics including cross-cultural communication. Once in college, the Posse meets weekly with an on-campus advisor and individuals meet bi-weekly. The Posse forms a supportive social network for students as they navigate college.

Recommendation: *Ensure social success in college*

Create a welcoming, comfortable space for students within the program's offices that encourages them to spend time there. If possible, teach a for-credit class just for program participants (on college readiness, financial literacy, etc). Foster a sense of community through social events such as pizza parties, pumpkin carving, and group outings. Allow students to choose and plan those events. Ensure that college staff are familiar with student clubs and activities, and can suggest groups that might align with each student's interests.

INTENSIVE SUPPORT

Nearly all successful bridge and retention programs offer one-on-one support that exceeds what students normally receive. Some do it with mentors from the local community (Make It Happen!), college-graduate volunteers (College Possible, College Advising Corp), older students and alumni (LifeLink), and staff with caseloads (LifeLink, ASAP). Contact ranges from once-a-semester meetings with advisors to weekly goal setting and daily check-ins. This intensive support is often the cornerstone of the program; it connects students to all other aspects of the program and provides the personal support needed to keep them motivated and on-track.

Case management is common among large-scale programs. Every student is assigned to a staff advisor who serves as their gateway to the program's incentives and services throughout their time with the program. ASAP is perhaps the most successful example of this approach. A program implemented at six CUNY community colleges, ASAP offers intense advising, tutoring, and career counseling to low-income students who agree to attend school full-time, take remedial classes early, and graduate within three years. According to one report, "The close relationship between ASAP advisors and their students is the heart and soul of ASAP" (CUNY 2015). An evaluation of the program showed that in their first year, students met with their advisor 38 times on average, met with career and employment counselors 9 times, and attended 24 tutoring sessions (Scrivener et al. 2015). When combined with other supports, these interactions nearly doubled the three-year graduation rate of ASAP participants compared to non-participants, by far the largest documented increase for programs of this nature.

College Applications

Nearly all bridge programs provide application assistance for both college and financial aid. Some also help with scholarship searches. Make It Happen! uses volunteer coaches to provide one-on-one college application assistance to high school students in Portland, Maine (Portland ConnectED 2013). Coaches are professionals from within the local community, high school and college employees, and some high-achieving students. College Possible and College Advisory Corps also use volunteers to provide one-on-one application assistance.

The Maine Community College System has a staff member at six of its seven campuses assigned to work with high school students in that region. That individual advises high school juniors and seniors through the process of applying to the community college and securing financial aid.

Several Maine high schools use online tools to help students stay on track through the college application process. For example, George Stevens Academy and Boothbay Region High School (as well as College Possible) use Naviance to help students explore careers and college options and then guide them through the application process. When loaded with historical data, Naviance can show students which colleges accepted past students from their high school with similar grades and test scores. Once they have chosen which colleges to apply to, Naviance creates checklists and notifies them of due dates. Both students and their advisers can track completed tasks and deadlines. College counselors from both Maine schools speak very highly of it (Clark 2015 and Garfield 2015). Boothbay credits Naviance with helping to dramatically increase the

college-enrollment rate of its seniors from less than 50 percent to over 80 percent in just two years (Clark 2015). College Possible and Collegiate Directions, two non-profit bridging programs, also use Naviance.

Recommendation: *Assist with college applications*

Ensure that every student receives comprehensive, one-on-one assistance with college applications and financial aid, and submits at least one college application. Allow college and high school staff to determine how best to provide assistance at each school by either leveraging existing resources or by using volunteers, near-peer mentors, or program staff. Write a plan for each school so that all staff members, students, and families know how the program will provide application assistance. Use Naviance to streamline the counseling and application process.

Summer Melt

Being accepted by a college is an important milestone for students but it's not the end of their journey. Before they start classes, they must undertake numerous tasks such as sending immunization records, completing housing applications, paying bills, and registering for classes. The more tasks, the more chance of a student not showing up to class. Surprisingly, 10-40% of high school graduates who are accepted into college don't show up in September (Castleman, Page, and Snowdon 2013). The estimate varies widely based on the student and type of institution; students from lower-income families entering two-year institutions are the most likely to succumb to "summer melt." Bridge programs can address this phenomenon by helping students through the registration and enrollment process.

In its *Summer Melt Handbook*, the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University proposes a range of strategies, from \$2 per student digital campaigns to \$200 per student outreach by high school counselors, colleges, and local organizations (Ibid). CEPR reports fall-enrollment increases of around 5 percentage points across five pilot programs that tested a variety of approaches. Staff members who undertook outreach spent on average 2-3 hours per student over the course of the summer.

BridgIt is one company that offers a text-message service to keep students on track between high school graduation and college enrollment. Students begin before they leave high school by answering questions about their college plans. From their responses, BridgIt generates a customized list of tasks for their selected college or university. BridgIt texts students throughout the summer as deadlines approach, offers links to relevant websites, and can even connect students with counselors upon request. The Maine College Access Network (MaineCAN) partnered with GEAR UP Maine to pilot a summer text-messaging campaign at two Maine high schools in 2015 and is considering expanding the program (MaineCAN 2015).

North Queens Community High School hired two college-age alumni to contact recent graduates via phone, email, and Facebook and help them navigate the college enrollment process and their first semester on campus. While the funding for that program is no longer available, the school was pleased with the results and still tries to maintain contact with as many recent graduates as possible through informal methods (Collins 2015).

LifeLink guides its students over common summer-melt hurdles during its six-week summer program. Staff members help students with course selection, on-line registration, and campus orientation.

Recommendation: *Tackle summer melt*

Maintain close contact with students during the summer after high school graduation to ensure they follow through with their post-secondary plans. Use a text-message program like BridgIt augmented by counseling from program staff members and/or near-peer mentors.

Graduation Pathway Mapping

Once students enter college, they face a vast array of courses and degree programs, each with different requirements and schedules. The choices can be confusing and some students end up taking unnecessary courses that eat up precious time and resources. In college, pathway mapping takes on a very pragmatic flavor, intensely focused on helping students choose courses wisely, avoid taking unnecessary credits, and graduate on time. Research shows that getting students into a degree program early increases their chances of graduating (CCA 2011).

In 2008, Arizona State University (ASU) launched “eAdvisor,” a computerized advising tool that provides four-year course sequences and milestones for every degree program, and shows students whether they are on track to graduate. ASU credits eAdvisor with dramatically increasing its retention and graduation rates, especially for low-income students. From 2006 to 2009, the four-year graduation rate for students from families with incomes under \$50,000 rose from 26% to 41% (UIA n.d.).

Some colleges, such as Illinois Valley Community College, are mapping course sequences for each degree program and encouraging students to see those recommendations as their default unless they have a compelling reason to deviate from them. The Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology, which offers vocational and technical training, have achieved an average completion rate of 80% by entering students into programs with clear schedules and time lines, rather than individual courses (THEC 2015). For instance, the class to become a dental assistant meets Monday through Friday 8am to 2:30pm for twelve months.

Recommendation: *Map a path to college graduation*

Encourage students to select a degree program early, preferably in high school. Use each college's graduation requirements to map course sequences leading to completion as quickly as possible. Have students map multiple semesters in advance to avoid scheduling problems. Advise undecided students to take general education classes and others that are most likely to fulfill graduation requirements.

Incentives

Nearly all bridge and retention programs offer financial incentives to help defray the cost of applying for and enrolling in college, to motivate students, and to assist in recruiting. In addition to traditional incentives like scholarships and fee waivers, some programs offer cash incentives

and in-kind rewards.

Few programs offer cash rewards to elementary and high school students. There is a common concern that doing so will replace intrinsic motivation (i.e., love of learning) with extrinsic motivation (i.e., love of money). One exception is the University of Maine's Upward Bound Math Science program, which provides a \$25-per-quarter stipend to students who maintain at least a "B" average for at least three quarters.

There is an informative body of academic literature on the impact of financial incentives. *The Power and Pitfalls of Education Incentives* concludes that incentives can have a positive impact on school-aged children if well designed (Allan and Fryer 2011). For instance, programs that reward inputs, such as attending class and completing homework assignments, have proved to be more effective than those that reward outputs, such as good grades and high test scores.

At the college level, many financial aid programs and scholarships base eligibility on GPA. However, many bridge and retention programs do not. They encourage students to remain in school regardless of their grades and to use tutors as needed. Many bridge and retention programs offer more pragmatic financial incentives. For example, ASAP offers free transit passes and vouchers for books. It also covers any gap between financial aid and the full cost of tuition and fees for any student who qualifies for need-based aid.

LifeLink distributes financial incentives frequently and in small amounts to reward students' ongoing effort. Bronx LifeLink gives students \$40 per week for participating in study sessions for five hours per week (Thompson 2015). LifeLink also rewards students with eBooks, transit passes, movie tickets, parties, and outings (Cotton 2015). Students receive certificates for small milestones such as completing the summer program and passing portions of the CUNY placement exam. Furthermore, LifeLink participants only receive their final stipend of the semester when they have registered for classes for the next semester.

Recommendation: Offer incentives

Celebrate each high school student's first college application submission with a financial incentive. Once in college, develop a comprehensive incentive program that rewards students for sustained effort (such as attending study sessions and tutoring), program participation (meeting with their advisor, high school visits, mentoring), and milestones (completing the summer intensive, finishing their first semester). Incentives may include cash stipends, book vouchers, gift cards, computers, and movie tickets. Ensure that one incentive at the end of each semester is dependent on students registering for the following semester. Provide employment opportunities for program participants to be tutors, program ambassadors, and summer-melt or college application advisors.

Full-Time Enrollment

Complete College America (CCA) makes a strong case for encouraging students to take 15 credits per semester in order to graduate on time (CCA 2011). Taking 12 credits, just one less course, increases the time to graduate by 25%; that's one semester for a two-year degree and one

year for a four-year degree. That delay is costly for students, institutions, and taxpayers. CCA notes the disincentive created by Federal Pell grants and many state programs, including the State of Maine Grant, which consider 12 credits per semester to be full-time. That means some students can exhaust their available financial aid by taking 12 credits and face out-of-pocket costs to take 15 credits.

Several institutions are experimenting with programs to ensure that taking 15 credits costs no more than 12. The University of Hawai'i System (UHS) charges a flat tuition rate for full-time students who take at least 12 credits, so taking an additional class to reach 15 credits is free (UH 2015). UHS markets that “free” class heavily in its “15 to Finish” campaign. The campaign publicizes the benefits of taking 15 credits per semester, including lower costs, increased likelihood of graduating on time, and better grades. From 2011 to 2014, the percentage of newly enrolled UHS students taking 15 credits rose from 36.5% to 55.5% and the four-year graduation rate rose from 19% to 25% (Gill 2014).

The University of New Mexico experimented with a program offering \$1,000 scholarships to low-income students who completed 15 credits per semester and maintained a GPA of 2.0 or higher. An evaluation showed it increased credits earned and increased the graduation rate by 5.1 percentage points after 4.5 years (Binder, Krause, Miller, and Cerna 2015). Several Texas universities have experimented with similar incentives, including offering \$2,000 in loan forgiveness for each semester students completed 15 credits (Keller and Johnson 2013). The results of those experiments are not yet available. ASAP only requires students to take at least 12 credits. However, it ensures there is no additional cost to taking 15 credits by covering all expenses over students' financial aid award.

Recommendation: *Encourage full-time enrollment*

Set students' expectations early that 15 credits is the optimal course load. Have all pathway mapping and advising tools reflect that expectation and commit to paying any out-of-pocket expenses students face by increasing their course load from 12 to 15 credits. Reward students for each semester they complete 15 credits.

Financial Emergencies

Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, a prominent college-access researcher, has written, “If I was going to do one thing to improve college success for low-income students and their families, it would be a well-implemented, properly-staffed emergency aid program” (Herk 2012). Many retention programs offer such aid to their participants. A national survey of emergency-fund administrators by the University of Wisconsin's HOPE Lab found \$500 to be the most common limit per request and \$1500 to be the most common lifetime limit for each student (Dachelet and Goldrick-Rab 2015). One recommendation from the survey was to make sure staff and students are aware of other potential sources of aid such as food stamps and subsidized housing.

Aid Like A Paycheck, an MDRC program piloted in California, seeks to help students manage their money wisely, reduce their work hours, and avoid the need for emergency funds by distributing financial aid like a bi-weekly paycheck, rather than as a lump sum. When calculating

a student's cost of attendance, FAFSA includes tuition and fees, room and board, books, transportation, child care, and more. Tuition and fees are paid to the college and any remaining funds are usually distributed to students in one or two lump sums. Money sometimes runs out at the end of the semester, leaving students short on funds, vulnerable to a financial emergency, and needing to work extra hours. By awarding aid every other week, Aid Like A Paycheck seeks to help students with financial management and create the sense that going to college is a job with financial benefits.

One organization focuses its support entirely on legal and financial advising, including helping students acquire public benefits. Single Stop has sites on 21 community college campuses in seven states. Rather than helping students with academics as students deal with personal problems, they do the reverse. They offer help accessing benefits like food stamps and Medicaid, financial and legal counseling, and tax preparation. Notably, Single Stop will help find funds for both students and their families, to help stabilize students' homes so they can focus on their studies.

University of Oklahoma and UNC Chapel Hill have reportedly experimented with forgiving the unpaid debt and loans of at-risk students who improve their academic performance (Keller and Johnson 2013). However, no public evaluations of those programs could be found.

Recommendation: *Help students manage and avoid financial emergencies*

Create an emergency scholarship program for college students and ensure that college staff know about local aid groups that can help students with housing, child care, medical, and other basic needs. Help students with budgeting and financial literacy, either through a college-readiness course or personal advising.

CONCLUSION

As more students seek to access higher education, bridge and retention programs across the nation are testing ways to help them reach their goals. The previous sections describe a vast array of strategies to address the equally vast number of hurdles to earning a college degree. Those hurdles aren't just grades and exams. They may be a work schedule, family responsibilities, confusing paperwork, or a broken car. Each one is a test of resolve for students on the edge of college attendance. An effective bridge and retention program must help students overcome all of them.

In addition to being comprehensive, an effective bridge and retention program must be seamless. Multiple programs with multiple applications or enrollment processes only create more hurdles for students, and more opportunities for them to decide college is just too much work. An effective program must stand by students throughout their academic career, providing exactly what they need, when they need it. Ninth graders learn how college fits into their life goals; twelfth grades get help with college applications; college students get employment and leadership opportunities.

Students must see staff members as trustworthy, knowledgeable individuals who will help them face any challenge. High school staff guide them toward high school graduation while fostering connections with the college staff who will support them the rest of the way. Students begin using the college supports right away because they are trusted extensions of their high school experience.

Finally, effective programs address the social and emotional aspects of college success in addition to the academic and financial challenges. They help students build supportive cohorts with shared goals; students encourage each other through the academic and personal challenges along the long journey to a college degree.

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Appendix I: SUMMARY OF MAINE PROGRAMS

There are bridge and retention programs in Maine that model some aspect of nearly every national program described in this report. Some provide in-depth, comprehensive services to a small number of students. Others provide more limited services to larger numbers of students. The following section provides a sampling of these programs.

Programs for High School Students

Nearly all Maine high schools have a college counselor, although the amount of time they can spend with each student varies greatly based on the number of students in their caseload and the other responsibilities they have within the school. Boothbay Region High School (BRHS) has a uniquely comprehensive college counseling program. Troubled by the low percentage of its graduates continuing onto post-secondary education, BRHS's guidance department purchased Naviance and hired a dedicated College Access Counselor to help students through the college process. They now take students on college visits, including an annual trip to Boston, and advocate for them in the financial aid process. In two years, the college enrollment rate for seniors rose from less than 50% to over 80% (Clark 2015).

At some high schools, such as the Maine School of Science and Mathematics and Chevrus High School, college advising is a required course for juniors and seniors. Topics include college essay writing, college selection, and the application process. These courses are in addition to one-on-one meetings with college counselors.

Make It Happen! in Portland pairs English Language Learners in grades 8-12 with coaches and mentors to help with college readiness. Students meet with their coaches individually for one to two hours per week and have access to additional support at an after-school academic center. Students receive personalized assistance in the college application and selection process.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a 7-year, \$20 million initiative funded by the federal government and administered by the University of Maine Farmington and Syntiro. Its first year of funding was 2014 so the program is still in its early stages. Its goal is to help economically disadvantaged students earn college degrees by increasing their academic preparation and their knowledge of college opportunities. GEAR UP Maine will serve 7-12 graders in 63 Maine high schools through partnerships with multiple state agencies, nonprofits, and educational institutions.

The Maine Community College System (MCCS) offers several early-college programs. Early College for ME, described earlier, is a system-wide initiative that has enrolled about 2,500 students since 2003. It offers assistance with applications to Maine community colleges. In addition, MCCS offers qualified Maine high school students the opportunity to take courses at little or no cost. York County Community College's Future for ME program offers high school juniors the opportunity to begin training for a certificate in precision machining technology before graduating high school.

The University of Maine System has multiple early-college and dual-credit programs at its seven campuses. The system-wide Aspirations program allows qualified Maine high school juniors and seniors to take up to six credits tuition-free per semester, either online or on a college campus. In the 2014-2015, about 4,000 high school students participated in that program (Gallagher 2015).

The federal government funds a suite of programs to help low-income and first-generation students access college. Collectively called “TRIO,” since there were originally three programs in the 1960s, these programs include Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, and Student Support Services. The following TRIO statistics are from the 2014-2015 yearbook (MEOA 2015).

In 2014-2015, more than 500 Maine high school students participated in Upward Bound or Upward Bound Math Science programs at five locations: University of Maine, University of Southern Maine, University of Maine Farmington, University of Maine Presque Isle, and Bowdoin College.

Maine has two Educational Talent Search programs run by the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Together they serves about 1,600 students in grades 6-12. The program helps students from low-income families develop academic and career goals, gain financial literacy, and prepare for college.

The Maine College Access Network (MaineCAN) is a partnership of non-profits, government agencies, educational institutions, and funders. MaineCAN's primary initiative is Aspire Higher Maine, which encourages high schools to create a college-going culture through College Application Month (November), the FAFSA completion deadline (May 1), and Decision Day Celebrations. There are currently about 27 Maine high schools participating.

Programs for College Students

Nearly all Maine community colleges and universities offer tutoring, counseling, and other supports to students who request them. Furthermore, most receive federal TRIO funding for Student Support Services (SSS) for low-income students. Those services includes tutoring, advising, and remedial instruction. In 2014-15, there were 11 SSS programs in Maine serving over 2,000 students at CMCC, KVCC, NMCC, WCCC, YCCC, UM, UMA, UMF, UMFK, UMPI, and USM.

Most institutions host an orientation for first-year students that gives them an opportunity to meet their classmates before beginning classes. All entering students at Colby and Bowdoin colleges go on a 3-4 day outdoor orientation trip that includes hiking, boating, or other nature-based activities with a small group of new classmates. Bates College offers similar trips, although participation is not mandatory. Colby College has a very comprehensive program for first-generation college students that includes help with transportation to campus, advising and peer mentoring. Those supports are available throughout students' time at Colby.

Programs for Adult Students

The Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) is a TRIO program administered by the University of Maine that serves adults who want to attain a college degree. MEOC advisers offer career and college counseling, skills assessment, and application assistance. In 2014, the program served over 2,200 clients statewide, over 600 of whom enrolled in college (MEOC 2015).

Maine College Transitions (MCT) is a statewide support program that helps non-traditional students transition from the adult education system into a college or university. MCT includes academic preparation, ACCUPLACER testing, career counseling, and assistance with college and financial aid applications.

Community-Based Programs

Androscoggin College for ME is a partnership of employers and educators in Androscoggin County that seeks to increase the percentage of residents with a college degree. The group works to foster a college-going culture throughout the county, serves as an information hub for scholarships and other college opportunities, and encourages local businesses to offer training to their employees.

Appendix II: EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Exemplary Bridge Program – LifeLink

Good Shepherd Services (GSS) is a community-based organization that offers services ranging from youth development to family counseling and housing assistance in New York City. GSS's LifeLink helps high school students graduating from other GSS programs to attend college. The program has three phases: recruitment and preparation, summer bridging, and college supports.

LifeLink has centers in the Bronx and Brooklyn, each of which recruits students from GSS programs within its borough. Staff members visit those programs on a regular basis to talk about the value of college and the resources available through LifeLink. Alumni sometimes return to their former high schools with staff members. Theory Thompson, Director of Bronx LifeLink, says these near-peer role models are very important for high school students to see.

Students considering LifeLink meet with staff individually and take diagnostic tests. If they decide to enroll, they must sign a contract with their LifeLink counselor. Students agree to attend weekly meetings, participate in program events, and use tutors as needed. Counselors agree to support students through academic and personal issues, to help them plan a pathway to college graduation, and to hold them accountable to that plan. Once students sign the contract, staff members assist them with college and financial aid applications.

In the summer following high school graduation, LifeLink hosts a six-week bridge program focused primarily on the CUNY placement exam. In the past, nearly all LifeLink students had to take at least one remedial course when beginning college, usually math. In 2012, 84% of participants placed out of at least one remedial classes after the summer instruction.

The summer bridge program is also a critical time for students to form relationships with staff members and each other. There are team building activities and even an overnight retreat for Bronx participants. Students form a supportive cohort with a shared college culture; they will encourage each other through the academic and personal challenges that lie ahead. LifeLink also uses the summer program to foster “college knowledge.” Courses are guided by a syllabus, instructors hold office hours, students make presentations, and some readings are from scholarly journals. Staff members lead campus tours to show students the various offices and resources available to them.

Once classes start, LifeLink's academic and social supports kick in. At the beginning of each semester, students meet with their advisor to review their academic plan and discuss goals for the upcoming term. Students then meet with their advisers at least weekly and attend study and tutoring sessions as needed. LifeLink centers become a literal home for students, all of whom commute. Both locations have inviting spaces with computers, couches, and kitchen facilities. These spaces create important opportunities for students and staff members to support each other both formally and informally.

Throughout LifeLink's three phases, students receive financial incentives frequently. The timing and amount of the incentives varies between the two centers but both offer about \$1,000 per

years. Bronx LifeLink gives students \$40 per week for participating in study sessions for five hours per week. Brooklyn LifeLink found that giving eBooks upon completing the summer program is a strong incentive for its students. Both centers also give students transit passes, movie tickets, parties, and outings. LifeLink participants only receive their final stipend of the semester when they have registered for classes for the next semester. There are additional earning opportunities through internships and mentorships. Students receive certificates for small milestones such as completing the summer program and passing the placement exam.

Student accountability is a hallmark of LifeLink's program. It begins with students making the decision to sign the contract. The regular financial incentives and advisor meetings are then opportunities for students to see the natural consequences of their actions. For instance, students who waste time or watch videos aren't admonished, but if they don't demonstrate progress at their weekly meeting then they don't get a stipend. Students are encouraged to plan activities for holidays and special events, to organize study groups, and to take responsibility for keeping the centers clean.

Exemplary Retention Program – ASAP

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) is perhaps the most effective retention program whose results have been confirmed by rigorous evaluation. Launched in 2007 by City University of New York (CUNY), ASAP uses academic supports and financial incentives to encourage low-income students to graduate from community college within three years. Its comprehensive approach has yielded unprecedented results. In a random assignment study, 40% of ASAP participants obtained a degree in three years compared with 22% of the control group (Scrivener et al. 2015).

There are three research-based principles behind ASAP's success: academic momentum, integration and belonging, and timely and relevant support services. To maintain “academic momentum,” ASAP students are required to take at least 12 credits per semester and to enroll in remedial courses continuously until passing them. All high school graduates who test into two remedial courses in the spring are required to take at least one during the summer. Students needing one remedial course are encouraged, but not required, to do the same.

ASAP schedules students' courses in morning, afternoon, and even weekend blocks to help them balance college with work and family responsibilities. Students map out course sequences with their advisor and are encouraged to enter into a degree program as soon as possible. ASAP also encourages students to take winter- and summer-session courses and covers those costs.

To achieve “integration and belonging,” ASAP creates learning communities in which students take multiple courses, scheduled in blocks, with the same group of students. ASAP students also take a college success seminar (non-credit) in their first year.

Lastly, ASAP offers “timely and relevant support services” delivered to students by a dedicated advisor who supports them from acceptance into the program through graduation. There is optional tutoring for all students and required tutoring for struggling students, and career counseling.

ASAP backs all of these services with generous financial incentives including tuition waivers for all expenses not covered by students' financial aid, free remedial courses, textbook vouchers, and monthly unlimited transit passes. According to one participant, "ASAP has helped me be more focused in school. I don't worry about paying for classes or books, or about how I'm getting to school every day."

Appendix III: TECH TOOLS TO AID BRIDGING AND RETENTION

This report mentions several organizations that are successfully using technology to enhance bridging and retention. The following list summarizes the various tools they employ. It is not an exhaustive list of the many companies and products available in this field, nor does it include institutional software such as Arizona State University's eAdvisor.

ACCUPLACER

ACCUPLACER is a widely used college placement test that assesses students' reading, writing, math, and computer skills. The test is adaptive, meaning it gets easier or harder at students progress in order to accurately determine their skill level. ACCUPLACER is a test of the College Board, which also administers the SAT, PSAT, and AP exams. All Maine community colleges and all public universities except the University of Maine in Orono use ACCUPLACER.

MyFoundationsLab

MyFoundationsLab is a real-time diagnostic and training tool that provides personalized instruction in math, reading, writing, and other subjects. It offers an ACCUPLACER version that assesses students' results on that test and designs a personalized tutoring curriculum to improve areas of weakness.

PLATO

PLATO Courseware is a online tutoring program whose curriculum aligns with the Common Core standards. MCCS directs students to PLATO. Several Maine high schools also use PLATO, both as a tool for students to strengthen areas of academic weakness and to make up courses or portions of courses they failed.

Naviance

Naviance is a dynamic online software platform that helps students explore careers, prepare for standardized tests, and navigate the college selection process. Once students have chosen which colleges to apply to, Naviance creates checklists and notifies them of due dates. Several Maine high schools use Naviance, as does Collegiate Directions, Inc., a non-profit in Maryland that supports student from tenth grade through college graduation.

BridgIt and SignalVine

BridgIt and SignalVine are text-message programs to keep students on track between high school graduation and college enrollment. They notify students throughout the summer as deadlines approach for tasks such as sending immunization records and registering for classes. They offer links to relevant websites and options for students to request personal assistance from counselors. MaineCAN and GEAR UP used SignalVine for a pilot text messaging campaign in the summer of 2015 with recent graduates from York and Upper Kennebec high schools (MaineCAN 2015).

Starfish Early Alert

Starfish Early Alert is part of the Starfish Enterprise Success Platform, a suite of advising tools that help colleges track student progress and advise students more effectively. The system uses historical data to predict when students may be at-risk and notify their advisors to intervene.

Appendix IV: PROGRAMS REFERENCED

High school

Boothbay Region High School
Chevrus High School
College Advising Corps
College Possible
Educational Talent Search (TRIO)
Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)
George Stevens Academy
Maine College Access Network (Aspire Higher Maine)
Maine Community College System (Early College for ME)
Maine School of Science and Mathematics
National Association for College Admission Counseling
North Queens Community High School
Portland Public School System (Make It Happen!)
San Diego Early/Middle College
Quest Bridge
University of Maine System (Aspirations)
Upward Bound (TRIO)
Upward Bound Math Science (TRIO)
York County Community College (Future for ME)

College and university

Aid Like A Paycheck
Arizona State University
Bates College
Bowdoin College
California State University, Fullerton
City University of New York (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs)
Colby College
Illinois Valley Community College
Paul Smith's College
Single Stop
Student Support Services (TRIO)
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology
Thomas College (EDGE)
University of Hawaii System
University of Maryland Baltimore County (Meyerhoff Scholars)
University of New Mexico
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
University of Oklahoma
University of Texas System

Cross-over (high school and college)

Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success

Brooklyn LifeLink (Good Shepherd Services)

Bronx LifeLink (Good Shepherd Services)

Collegiate Directions, Inc.

The Posse Foundation

Southern Maine Community College (MySuccess)

Adult education

Androscoggin College for ME

Maine College Transitions

Maine Educational Opportunity Center (TRIO)

Appendix IV: SUGGESTED READING

High school preparation for college success

Importance of High School Conditions for College Access

Leticia Oseguera (2013)

Pathways to Postsecondary Success, UC/ACCORD

Building a college culture, high school pathway mapping

Building a Successful Postsecondary Preparatory Program at a Back on Track School: A Jobs for the Future Case Study

Sam Seidel for Jobs for the Future (2013)

Financial incentives for high school students

The Power and Pitfalls of Education Incentives

Bradley M. Allan and Roland G. Fryer, Jr. (2011)

The Hamilton Project, The Brookings Institute

College counseling for middle and high school students

Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning for Families, Counselors and Communities

National Association for College Admission Counseling (2015)

Summer melt

SDP Summer Melt Handbook: A Guide to Investigating and Responding to Summer Melt

Benjamin Castleman, Lindsay Page, and Ashley Snowdon (2013)

Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University

Bridging example

Putting Students in the Driver's Seat: Good Shepherd Services' LifeLink Approach to Postsecondary Success

Sam Seidel for Jobs for the Future (2012)

College pathway mapping

Guided Pathways to Success: Boosting College Completion

Complete College American (2012)

Retention example

Inside Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP): A Resource Guide on Program Structure, Components, and Management

The City University of New York (2015)

Early alert system example

Beyond Retention: Supporting Student Success, Persistence and Completion Rates through a Technology-based, Campus-wide, Comprehensive Student Support Programming

Loralyn Taylor and Virginia McAleese (2012)

Paul Smith's College

Emergency funds

Investing in Student Completion: Overcoming Financial Barriers to Retention Through Small-Dollar Grants and Emergency Aid Programs

Karole Dachelet and Sara Goldrick-Rab (2015)

Wisconsin HOPE Lab, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Appendix V: EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

The following table indicates programs that are informative examples of the various practices discussed in this report. It is *not* an inventory of every service offered by each program.

	ACADEMIC SUCCESS			COLLEGE CULTURE				INTENSIVE SUPPORT						
	High School Preparation	Summer Instruction	College Supports	Building College Culture	College Pathway Mapping	"College Knowledge"	On-Campus Experiences	Social Success in College	College Application Assistance	Summer Melt	Graduation Pathway Mapping	Incentives	Full-time Incentives	Financial Emergencies
EXAMPLE PROGRAMS														
High school														
Boothbay Region High School				X			X		X					
Chevus High School									X					
College Advising Corps	X			X					X					
College Possible	X			X					X					
Educational Talent Search (TRIO)	X			X	X									
George Stevens Academy									X					
Maine College Access Network (Aspire Higher Maine)				X						X				
Maine Community College System (Early College for ME)	X		X						X					
Maine School of Science and Mathematics									X					
National Association for College Admission Counseling				X	X				X					
North Queens Community High School	X			X	X	X								
Portland Public School System (Make It Happen!)	X			X					X					
San Diego Early/Middle College	X	X		X	X	X								
University of Maine System (Aspirations)	X						X							
Upward Bound (TRIO)	X	X		X			X		X					
Upward Bound Math Science (TRIO)	X	X		X			X		X					
College and university														
Arizona State University (eAdvisor)														
Bowdoin College (First-Year Seminar)						X					X			
California State University, Fullerton (Learning Communities)							X							
City University of New York (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs)			X			X	X			X	X	X		
Colby College (First Generation to College)			X			X	X							
Illinois Valley Community College										X				
Paul Smith's College			X											
Single Stop														X
Southern Maine Community College (MySuccess)	X	X				X	X							
Student Support Services (TRIO)			X							X				
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology										X				
Thomas College (EDGE)						X								
University of Hawaii System													X	
University of New Mexico														
University of Maryland Baltimore County (Meyerhoff Scholars)				X										
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill														
University of Oklahoma														
University of Texas System														X
Cross-over (high school and college)														
Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success	X			X	X	X	X			X				
Brooklyn LifeLink (Good Shepherd Services)	X	X		X		X	X		X			X		
Bronx LifeLink (Good Shepherd Services)	X	X		X		X	X		X			X		
Collegiate Directions, Inc.														
The Posse Foundation			X	X		X	X							
Adult education														
Androscoggin College for ME				X										
Maine College Transitions	X				X				X					
Maine Educational Opportunity Center (TRIO)					X				X					

College Success and Retention Data and Literature Review

Final Draft February 25, 2016

Jobs for Maine's Graduates is working with students who face barriers to education at seven Maine college campuses to improve college success and retention. This memo provides an overview of current college persistence and graduation rate data for Maine's postsecondary institutions and among relevant demographic subgroups, with national comparisons for context. Several model programs aimed at college students similar to those JMG serves are described, along with findings from program evaluations.

College Enrollment Data Sources

The National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Set (IPEDS) is maintained by the U.S. Department of Education. Higher education institutions provide data to IPEDS annually as a condition of receiving federal funds, and the data are considered highly accurate. One key drawback is that this data set does not follow students when they transfer to a different institution. Longitudinal measures like student persistence and graduation rates are only reported for "first-time, full-time freshmen" entering student cohorts, so part-time and nontraditional students are not included. The data are disaggregated by gender and race, but most measures are not available disaggregated by socioeconomic status or academic preparation differences.

Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) have three advantages: they follow students who transfer to different higher education institutions; they include part-time and non-traditional students; and they provide disaggregated estimates for student academic achievement levels and more demographic characteristics than IPEDS. NSC data drawbacks are that only 92% of U.S. institutions opt to participate in NSC, and institution-level data are not publicly available.

College Persistence and Completion

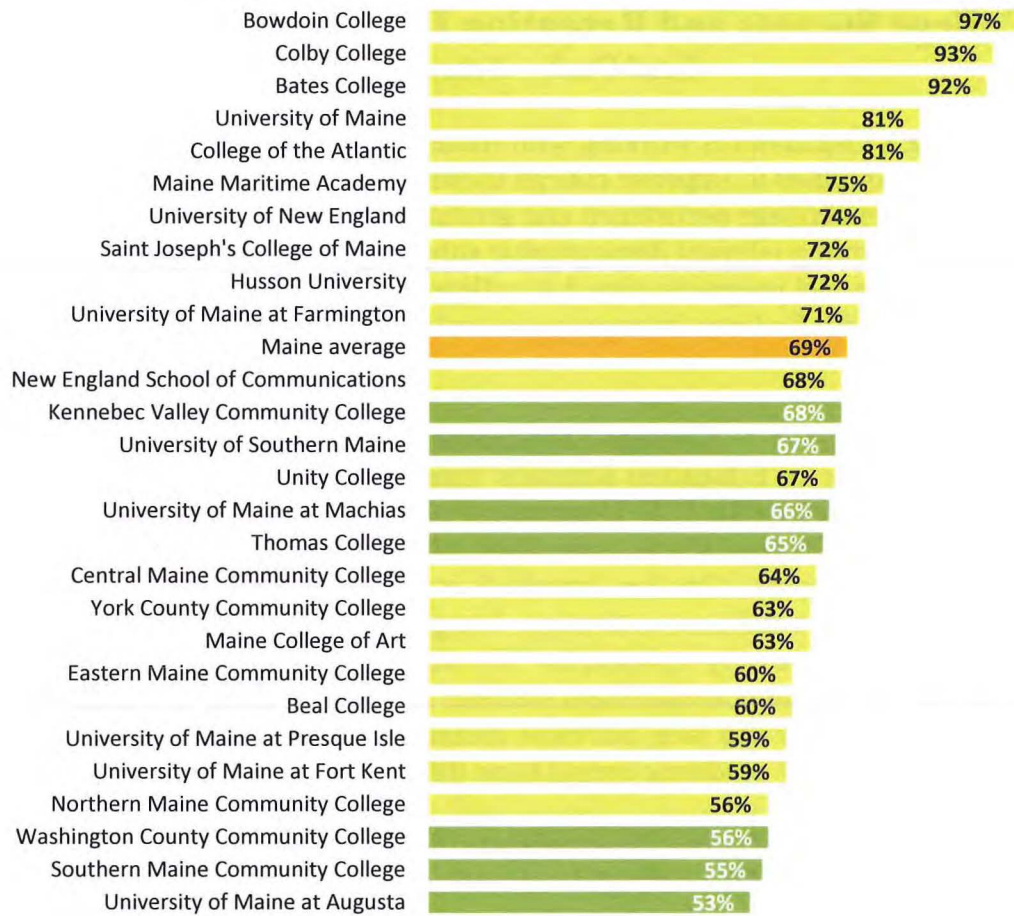
Maine Institutions

Student persistence and degree completion rates vary widely across higher education institutions. Selective private four-year colleges tend to have the highest rates and community colleges reporting among the lowest rates.

IPEDS defines persistence as "the proportion of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates who were enrolled at the institution in the fall one year after starting at the institution." As shown in Table 1, persistence at Maine institutions in 2014 ranged from 53% at University of Maine at Augusta to 97% at Bowdoin College. The Maine

average is 69% (65% at UMS campuses and 60% at MCCC campuses), and the national average is 67%.

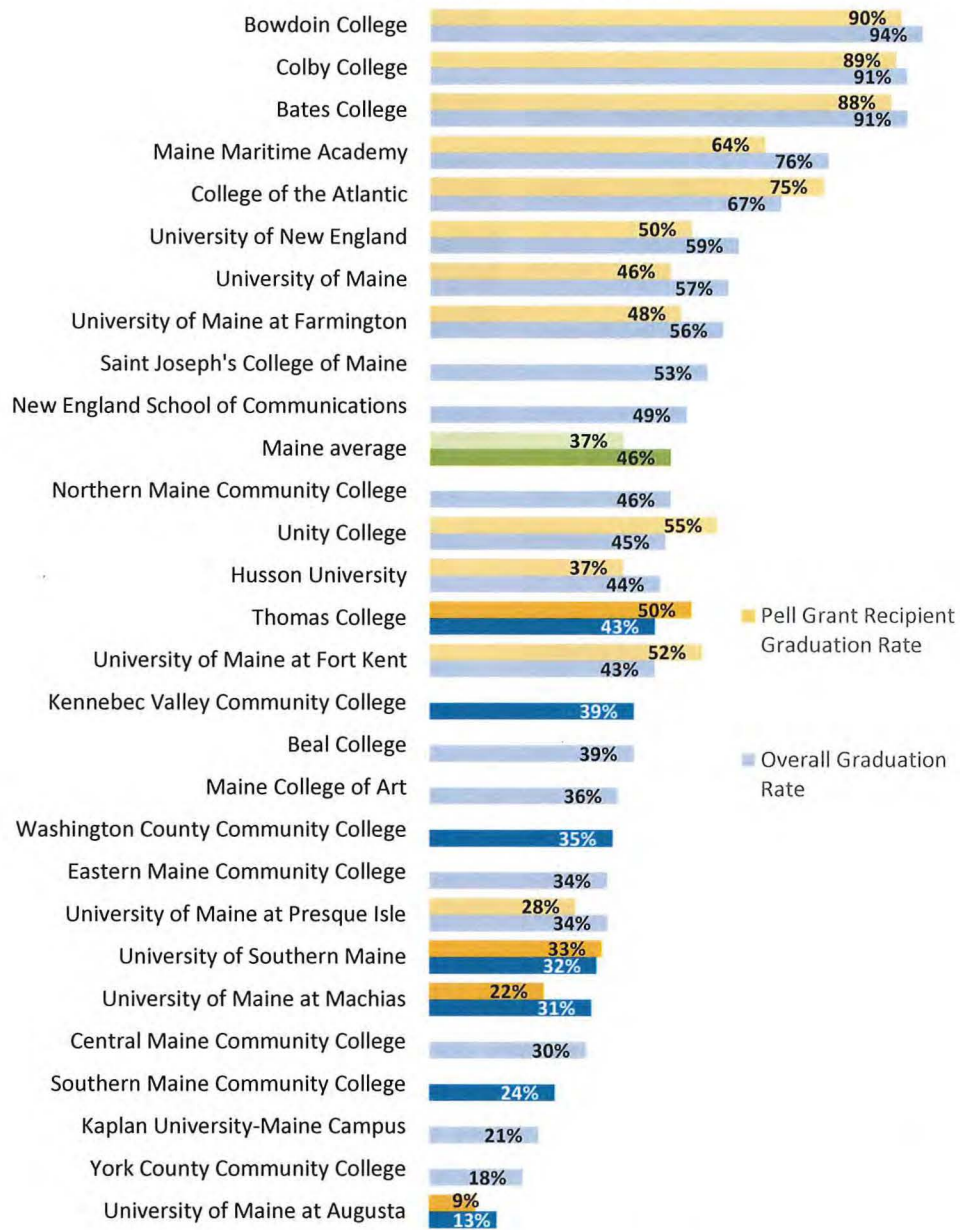
First to Second Year College Persistence Rates



Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), U.S. Department of Education.

The IPEDS college graduation rate is the proportion of first-time, full-time students completing their degree program within 150% of normal time to completion (6 years at four-year institutions and 3 years at two-year institutions). Among Maine institutions, 2014 graduation rates ranged from 13% at UMA to 94% at Bowdoin, and the only JMG campus with a graduation rate above 40% is Thomas College, with 43% of entering students graduating within six years (see Table 2). The Maine college graduation rate average is 46% (26% at community colleges, 49% at four-year public institutions, and 67% at four-year private institutions, according to Educate Maine). The national average is 44% (20% at community colleges, 58% at public four-year institutions, and 65% at private four-year institutions, as reported in *Condition of Education*).

College Graduation Rates

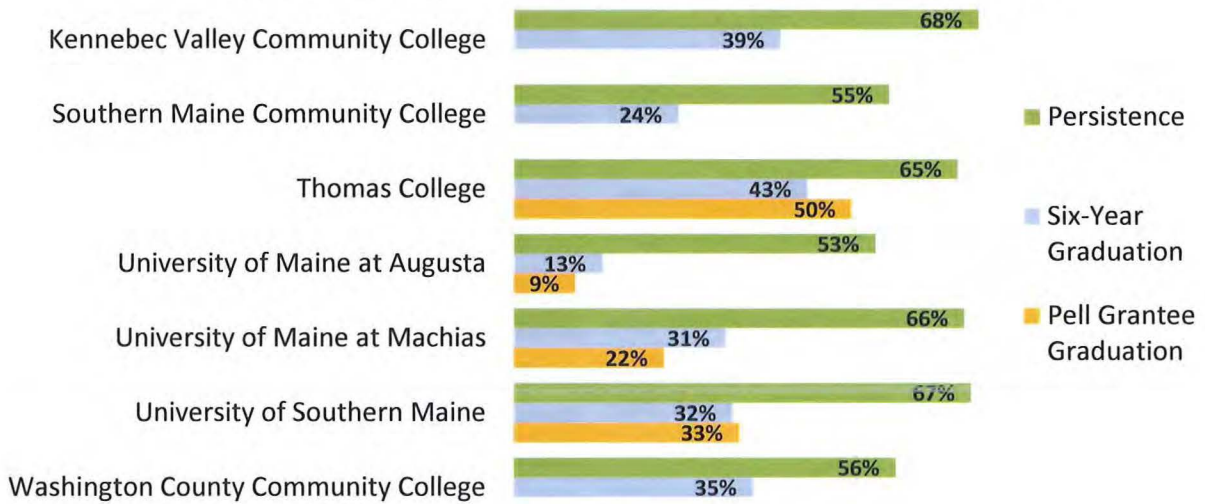


Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), U.S. Department of Education; The Education Trust. Pell Grant Recipient Cohort: 2007 entering students/2013 graduation. Overall Graduation Rate Cohorts: 2008 entering students in four-year programs and 2011 entering students in two-year programs/2014 graduation.

JMG Partner Institutions

Persistence to the second year of college ranges from 53% to 68% at JMG's student success initiative partner institutions. Graduation rates range from 13% to 43% and six-year graduation among four-year degree seeking Pell grantees ranges from 9% to 50%, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Persistence and Graduation at JMG Partner Institutions



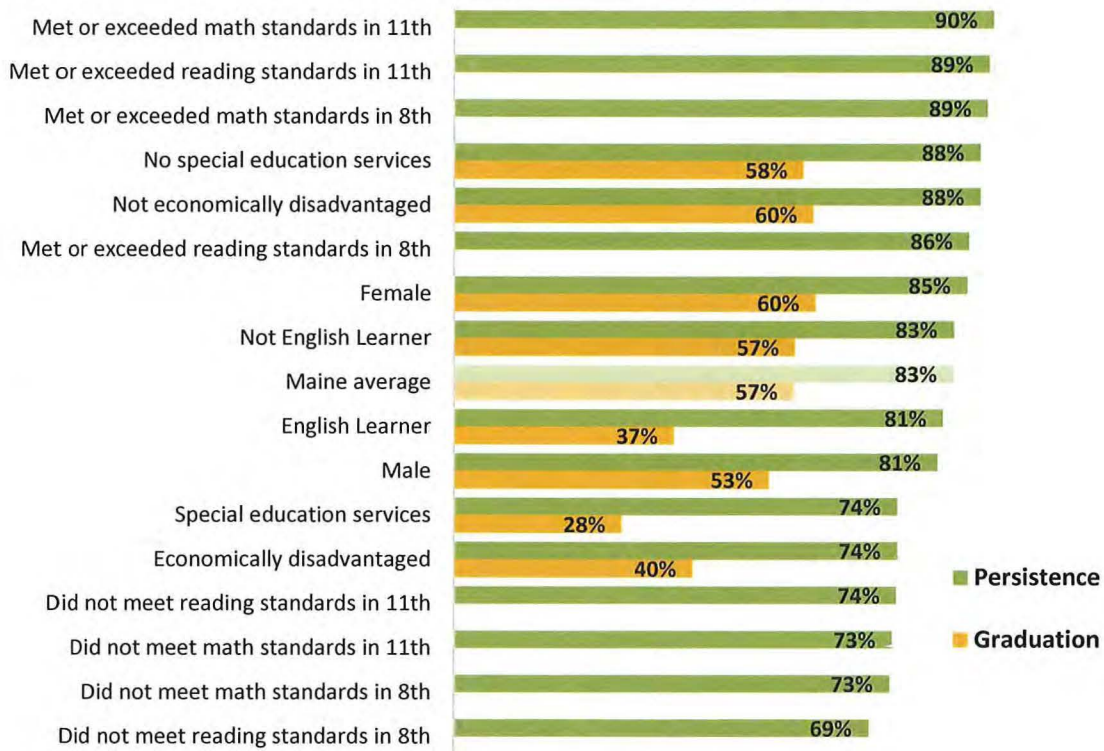
Sources: Education Trust, IPEDS

Recent Maine High School Graduates

The Mitchell Institute reports on college persistence and completion using National Student Clearinghouse data obtained by the Maine Department of Education for all Maine public high school graduates. The NSC defines *persistence* as the percentage of students who return to college at *any* institution for their second year, and *retention* as the percentage of students who return to *the same* institution for their second year. The NSC finds that persistence is about 12 percentage points higher than retention, with smaller differences among full-time students and larger differences among part-time students.

Table 4 shows persistence and completion rates among recent graduates from Maine public high schools. Persistence ranged from 69% for students who did not meet state reading standards when tested in 8th grade to 90% for students who met or exceeded math standards when tested in 11th grade. Students who received special education services and economically disadvantaged students (those eligible for free or reduced-price school meals) both had 74% persistence rates, nearly ten points below the state average of 83% (Mitchell Institute, 2015). The national average persistence rate of 60% is much lower than Maine’s 83% persistence rate (NSC Research Center).

College Persistence and Graduation Rates



Sources: Maine Department of Education; Mitchell Institute; National Student Clearinghouse Persistence for 2012 entering students; Graduation for 2008 entering students

The Mitchell Institute used NSC data to calculate college completion rates within six years after high school graduation as a proportion of students who enrolled in college within two years after graduation. Across demographic characteristics, completion rates ranged from 28% for students who received special education services to 60% for female students and those who were not economically disadvantaged (Mitchell Institute). The Maine average for completion was 57%, just above the national average of 55% (NSC Research Center).

Among all Maine high school graduates, 39% of the 2008 class earned a college degree by 2014. These outcomes varied by student characteristics:

- 34% of male and 44% of female high school graduates;
- 21% of economically disadvantaged and 44% of not economically disadvantaged graduates; and
- 10% of graduates with learning disabilities and 40% of graduates without learning disabilities earned a college degree by 2014 (Maine DOE and NSC).

Pell Grant Recipients

The federal Pell grant provides substantial grants for college (a maximum of \$4,500 to \$5,500 annually during the study years) to financial aid applicants with low family incomes. The Education Trust recently examined bachelor's degree completion among full-time, first-time freshmen enrolling in four-year colleges and universities, with IPEDS data as the source.

- **Nationally, just over one-half (51%) of students who received Pell grants completed bachelor's degrees within six years at the same institution where they started.**¹
- Non-Pell college students had a six-year completion rate of 65%, 14 points higher than the Pell students.
- The completion gap between Pell and non-Pell students at the same colleges averages only 5.7 points. The large difference in overall completion rates is explained by Pell grantees enrolling at institutions with lower completion rates than their non-Pell counterparts, and a small subset of institutions with disproportionately large completion rate gaps between Pell grantees and other students (Nichols 2015).
- The Education Trust study's data set provides Pell grantee graduation rates at Maine institutions. **Statewide, 37% of first year Pell grant recipients entering Maine four-year institutions in 2007 completed bachelor's degrees at the same institution by 2013.**
- Institutional completion rates ranged from 9% at University of Maine at Augusta to 90% at Bowdoin College, as shown in Table 2 above.
- At five Maine institutions, including Thomas College and University of Southern Maine, Pell recipients have higher than average graduation rates.

The Education Trust study does not include data on persistence rates, but several older studies provide estimates of Pell grant recipient college persistence.

- In a nationally-representative sample of college students followed from 2003 to 2009, 64% of degree-seeking students who received Pell grants were still enrolled or earned a degree after six years, only four points lower than the non-Pell student rate of 68% (US DOE, 2011).
- Among Pell recipient students who started college in 2002 at 35 community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream network, 77% persisted to a second year, 51% persisted or completed a degree after two years, and 33% persisted or completed after three years (JBL Associates, 2006).

Maine State Grant Recipients

The Maine State Grant Program provides need-based grants to Maine residents attending Maine postsecondary institutions. The maximum grant amount is much smaller than a Pell grant (\$1,250 to \$1,500), but until recently the eligibility cutoff was higher than Pell's, so the Maine State Grant provided smaller grants to more students. A recent Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) study using National Student Clearinghouse data found:

- **56% of college students who received a Maine State Grant between 2005 and 2010 completed a degree within six years.**
- Enrollment and financial characteristics predict college completion better than demographic characteristics. For example, the graduation rate for full-time students was 60%, compared with 47% for part-time students. 60% of students with family incomes between \$20,000 and \$29,999 completed a degree, compared with 42% of students with no family income (FAME, 2016).

¹ Figures are for graduation by 2013 among the 2007 entering student cohort.

Former Foster Care Youth

A recent study of 1,800 Maine young adults who aged out of foster care from 2003 to 2013 found that:

- 31% of the young adults enrolled in college by 2015.
- Among those who entered college, 37% attended both full-time and part-time during their college careers, 32% attended college only part-time, and 31% attended solely full-time.
- 8.4% of those who enrolled in college (and only 2.5% of all the young adults in the study) earned a college degree by May 2014. The college completion rate among students who enrolled in college and had at least six years within in the study period was 10.2%.

One study advocating to improve postsecondary education access for former foster youth concluded that, “Enrolling in postsecondary education is just the first step in the journey for foster care youth; persisting and succeeding in college is the true long-term challenge. Comprehensive student supports must include attention to year-round housing and other basic needs, financial aid, academic advising, career counseling, and adult mentors” (Casey Family Programs, 2008).

Alternative High School Credential Students

Many students who do not graduate from high school pursue alternative high school credentials in order to improve their job prospects and to gain admission into postsecondary education programs including college. In Maine, the primary alternative high school credential is now HiSET, which recently replaced the GED. Both credentials are a considered high school diploma equivalent, and have the same legal standing as a high school diploma. The state covers HiSET exam costs for Maine residents, and Maine has one of the highest rates of adults with a high school diploma or the equivalent.

While IPEDS and NSC do not report data on college enrollment, persistence, and completion among students with alternative high school credentials, the GED testing service conducted a study from 2009 to 2011, using data on a nationally-representative sample from the National Center for Education Statistics.

- **GED test-passers’ six-year certificate or degree completion rate was 34%**, compared with 51% among traditional high school graduates.
- Another 17% of GED test-passers were still enrolled in college after six years.
- Female GED test-passers were significantly more likely to complete a credential than were male students—38% compared with 28% (Guison-Dowdy, 2011).

Most adults pursuing alternative high school credentials in Maine get assistance from an adult education program. About one-third of Maine’s roughly 100 adult education sites offer the Maine College Transitions (MCT) model, which aims to provide pathways to postsecondary education concurrently with high school credential assistance. In 2012, MCT studied college enrollment among the subset of adult students who participated in their program during its first four academic years, from 2007 to 2011. Using National Student Clearinghouse data, MCT learned that:

- 51% of the students enrolled in college for at least one term by 2012.

- Only 14% of the students enrolled in college exclusively full-time. 49% enrolled only part-time, and 39% enrolled part-time for some terms and full-time for some terms.
- 50% of adult students who enrolled in college remained continuously enrolled during the study period.
- 13% of the students completed a postsecondary certificate or degree during the four-year study period (Educate Maine, 2012).

Jobs for the Future published a report on promoting postsecondary education for high school dropouts in 2011. Its authors stress the importance of supporting GED learners well before they enter college, including “early and ongoing help in applying to college, selecting an appropriate school, and accessing financial aid... Most disconnected youth have little understanding of what is involved in qualifying for college, completing applications for admission and financial aid, making a good choice of which college to attend, and acclimating themselves to the college environment.” These students are likely to face multiple barriers to college access and success, and advance planning can help address this. The study’s authors advocate that once GED students enroll in college, advising should focus primarily on academic achievement and helping students with their studies (tutoring services, forming study groups, and tracking academic progress throughout each term), but also offer strategies to assist students in balancing their studies with other obligations (Jobs for the Future, 2011).

Results from Student Success Programs

City University of New York: Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

MDRC recently conducted a random assignment experiment to evaluate CUNY’s Accelerated Study or ASAP program. ASAP targets incoming students who are required to take a remedial course, meaning they did not pass the entrance exams for entry-level community college courses. The program requires full-time enrollment and provides dedicated student advisers, priority access to required courses, and financial support for tuition, transportation, and textbooks. CUNY is now expanding ASAP to serve 25,000 students by 2019, and MDRC and CUNY are working with three Ohio community colleges to replicate the program.

The three-year study included nearly 900 students, and found that:

- **73% of ASAP students returned for the second year (third semester) of college, compared with 64% of control group students.**
- **40% of program participants earned an associate degree within three years, compared with 22% of those in the control group.** Program participants also earned more college credits and were more likely to go on to a four-year college.
- ASAP’s cost per student is \$13,270, compared with \$8,594 for tradition CUNY student services. “Because the program generated so many more graduates than the usual college services, the cost per degree was lower [\$104,825 vs. \$118,248] despite the substantial investment required to operate the program.”

OneGoal Graduation

The OneGoal program was founded in Chicago in 2003 and has since expanded to three more regions. The program is serving 6,400 students at 132 high schools in the current academic year. OneGoal is a full-time academic course in the junior and senior years of high school, aimed at helping underserved students prepare for college success. The program focused on college admissions test preparation, college admissions strategy, and building “non-cognitive” skills—resourcefulness, resilience, ambition, professionalism, and integrity. OneGoal aims to improve GPAs and test scores in part so that students can gain admission to more selective and supportive colleges. In the first year of college, OneGoal advisors provide intensive, remote coaching to reinforce the lessons learned during high school and to ensure that they take advantage of available resources and develop support networks. An independent evaluation of OneGoal found:

- The program **improved students’ college enrollment and persistence rates by 10 to 20 percentage points** over comparable peers. Students with low ACT test scores and male students gained the most from participating in OneGoal.
- “When time is set aside for developing academic behaviors, skills, and mindsets, students non-cognitive skill level increases, resulting in a statistically significant impact on life outcomes.”

Achieving the Dream

Founded by the Lumina Foundation and seven partner organizations in 2004, the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network now includes over 200 in 35 states and the District of Columbia. The network’s goal is to close achievement gaps and accelerate student success in order to help more than four million community college students have a better chance of completing a college degree. Its four overlapping strategies are evidence-based institutional change, state policy reform, generating and sharing knowledge, and engaging communities.

Eastern Maine Community College joined the Achieving the Dream Network in 2011, and is the only member institution in Maine. The initiatives EMCC is pursuing are: building a culture of evidence for systematic institutional improvement; redesigning its approach to developmental math courses; redesigning registration and advising procedures for incoming students—including establishing a Student Success Center in 2015; and revising assessment and placement practices.

Addressing Basic Needs

There is a growing movement to address low-income college students’ basic needs. Wisconsin’s HOPE Lab surveyed 4,300 students at ten community colleges in seven states, and found that nearly two in five community college students (39%) experience food insecurity, and more than one-half (52%) experience housing insecurity. A recent *Inside Higher Ed* article described several college programs, including accepting SNAP benefits (food stamps) in cafeterias, establishing food banks for students, and free breakfast programs on campus. The HOPE Lab’s report suggests that community colleges assemble lists of local organizations that offer food and housing assistance, partner with organizations to bring services to campus, establish emergency aid funds, and expand student access to case managers and social workers.

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College Retention Program Resources and Promising Practices

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A Work in Progress

JMG College Success Program

*A Comprehensive College Preparation, Bridging
and Retention Program*

An Extension of the JMG Model

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DRAFT
A Work in Progress

JMG College Success Program

A Comprehensive College Preparation, Bridging and Retention Program

An Extension of the JMG Model

The Challenge

College may not be for everyone, but for those who stop their education after high school, the path to financially stable, fulfilling careers is up-hill. Compared to college-degree holders, high school graduates face longer and more frequent unemployment, greater odds of living in poverty, lower incomes, greater reliance on social assistance, and less satisfaction with their jobs. Economists expect this situation to worsen as more and more careers require a post-secondary credential. Graduating from high school today is like pushing a boulder halfway up a hill. Unless students continue pushing to the top – to a post-secondary credential – they will always risk falling backward.

It is imperative that today’s youth understand this reality and make informed choices about the role of education in their life and career choices. However, for many youth whose career aspirations do align with a college degree, the deck remains stacked against them, and they drop-out of college before they finish, or don’t even start. There are many reasons why students don’t complete college. College is expensive, and for those unfamiliar with a campus environment, it can be a confusing and lonely place. Shifting class schedules make it difficult for students to hold down jobs and find child care. Poor high school preparation places them in remedial classes that eat up precious finances and time. Inches-thick course catalogs leave them confused and overwhelmed, sometimes choosing unnecessary courses that don't move them closer to a degree and a secure career. First-generation college students may have few role models and a lack of guidance and support as they tentatively step foot onto a college campus only to feel overwhelmed and isolated.

With so many cards stacked against them, it’s unsurprising that six years after graduating from high school, just 39% of Maine students have earned a 2- or 4-year college degree. The rest either never attempted or dropped out. For those who do start college, 1 in 5 leave after their first year, and more than 2 in 5 don’t earn a degree within six years. The problem is worse for disadvantaged students: 60% of low income college students and 90% of college students who were in foster care don’t graduate within six years.

This is the reality that students today face when they graduate high school. Jobs for Maine's Graduates is joining a handful of college success programs in Maine and around the country that are trying to reverse these trends and help students find success in college, careers, and life.

The Program

Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG) was founded in 1993 as a drop-out prevention program for high school students and has helped roughly 20,000 youth graduate high school and prepare for college and a career. In 2014 98% of JMG high school students continued in school, and 97% of JMG seniors graduated high school. Two years ago, JMG began a college success program at Thomas College to help former JMG students at Thomas stay in college and graduate with a four year degree. This year, six more campuses were added, at both 2- and 4- year public colleges in Maine.¹

To fully address college retention and completion, particularly for students with barriers to educational success, it requires more than just the implementation of a college retention program; it requires systemic changes in the way colleges deliver educational content to students and a collective mindset and culture that is fully devoted to student success, no matter what it takes. Many creative efforts are under way to address student retention and completion systemically and culturally. Working in conjunction with these efforts, the JMG College Success Program (CSP) is a comprehensive college preparation, bridging, and retention program that starts in high school and continues seamlessly through college. The overarching goals of CSP are to help students with barriers to educational success obtain a post-secondary credential and secure meaningful and financially secure careers. In partnership with Maine colleges and business community, CSP plays a critical role in students' success and can mean the difference between a student completing college or dropping out. Eligible students include those who were part of a JMG program in middle or high school, youth who are or have been in foster care, and college students who received their GED or HiSET within the last five years.

In the years leading up to college, CSP helps students prepare for and aspire to college through academic support, campus tours, application assistance, and more. Once in college, the JMG College Success Specialist provides students with a range of individualized services including academic, social, and financial support.

JMG's College Success Program has been designed based on our own extensive experiences helping students graduate both high school and college, as well as the latest research from college bridging and retention programs nationwide. Research shows that the common elements in bridging and retention programs that are successfully helping students stay in college can be placed, roughly, into three categories:

1. Academic Support; that is, helping students adequately prepare for and successfully complete college-level course work
2. College and Career Culture; that is, exposing secondary-school students to the college experience early, drawing explicit connections between careers and post-secondary education, and helping college students find social success within the college community

¹ University of Southern Maine, Southern Maine Community College, University of Maine at Augusta, Kennebec Valley Community College, University of Maine at Machias, Washington County Community College

3. Intensive Supports; that is, one-on-one, personal support (“whatever-it-takes”) to help students prepare for and complete their college degree

The JMG College Success Program has been organized first by these three categories and secondarily by which academic setting the program component occurs in (high school, summer, or college). CSP begins in high school as part of the JMG high school curriculum. Once a student accepts admission to a participating college, usually in their senior year of high school, he/she then formally chooses to commit to the next phase of the program. CSP consists of the following components.

Academic Support

In High School

In JMG high school settings, CSP is focused on ensuring that future college students place immediately into for-credit college courses and not remedial classes. JMG high school specialists do not directly teach academic subjects, so the primary roles of CSP are to assess and address academic deficiencies as early as possible.

--CSP participants take the **Accuplacer**, a common college placement test that Maine colleges use, (or another assessment tool if Accuplacer isn't available) as early as possible to identify academic deficiencies that may require a student to take remedial classes at the college level.

--JMG high school specialists also give each CSP participant a “**college-readiness**” grade which incorporate the student's level of academic preparedness as well as his/her maturity, leadership skills, behavior, and other traits that impact later success in college (see page 4 for more details).

--If results from the Accuplacer or college-readiness grade identify deficiencies that may require a student to take remedial classes in college, the student is immediately **referred to tutoring**, either online or one-on-one, and/or mentoring to resolve the deficiency.

Summer

--If additional academic support outside of the normal school year is needed to prevent academic remediation, the summer before college is utilized, either through more **referrals to summer tutoring** or through full-time academic programming held on a college campus over the course of a week or longer; that is, a “**summer intensive**”.

On Campus

On college campuses, CSP is focused on helping students pass their courses and forge adequate academic progress towards a degree. Intervening, early, before academic challenges become intractable is crucial.

--College Success Specialists use the college's “**early-warning system**” to identify academic challenges that a student may be having. This includes missed classes, incomplete assignments, or failing grades.

--Not every college has an early-warning system. In the case of no early-warning system, College Success Specialists design their own system either through personal relationships with a student's professors or by repeated check-ins with the student.

--When the early warning system flags a student for academic challenges, the specialist **refers the student to tutoring** services immediately.

--CSP students are also required to attend **bi-weekly group academic study sessions**, organized by the College Success Specialist.

College and Career Culture

In High School

High school students who are familiar with college and see the college experience as worthwhile and valuable are more likely to go to college and persist to graduation. The CSP creates a college-culture in high school through raising aspirations for students, exposing them early and often to the college-life and environment, and making explicit the connections between desirable careers and a post-secondary credential.

--Each JMG high school student shares a common **career-oriented goal: to obtain a post-secondary credential**. The paths to a credential are many and varied; 2 or 4 year colleges are not for every student. But setting an overarching goal of a post-secondary credential is critical to the success of the student and the program.

--High School Specialists work with each student to develop a **formal post-secondary plan** to achieve their career-oriented goal of a college credential. Students learn what it takes to attend and complete college, including academic requirements, financial aid considerations, and study-skills. Before they graduate, they have a tangible, well-formed plan to pay for and receive a post-secondary credential.

--High School Specialists expose students to **college instruction techniques**, including using a syllabus, corresponding by email, and learning through lecture-style lessons.

--College Success Specialists **visit JMG high school classrooms** to introduce students to the college experience and recruit them to college campuses. Every JMG high school program is visited by at least one college specialist each year. And each college specialist visits a minimum of twenty high schools in their geographic area, annually. Both high school and college specialists use customized and age-appropriate curriculum to deliver college awareness and preparation lessons to different grades of students.

--High school and college specialists coordinate to bring students onto multiple college campuses for **personalized tours**.

--A **"near-peer" mentoring** program further gives high school students the chance to interact with and learn from college students who are also in CSP (see page 16 for more details).

--College Success Specialists staff booths at local **career and college fairs**.

--The net results of classroom visits, tours, fairs, and mentoring is that the aspirations of every JMG high school student is raised, they become more comfortable and knowledgeable of the college culture, and they understand that JMG will be there to support them after high school and through college.

Summer

--During the summer before college, JMG College Success Specialists bring together CSP students to meet, socialize, and begin building the peer-relationships that will help them persist through college. Every student enrolled in college in the fall will interact with their college specialist a minimum of four times during the summer, and at least once as a **cohort of CSP students**.

On Campus

At college, CSP fosters a healthy and productive college culture by creating a cohort experience from otherwise individual experiences, binding the students together for mutual support toward a common and shared goal.

--The College Success Specialist is a visible presence at Orientation and uses the orientation to connect CSP students to each other. When the student arrives on campus, he/she receives a “backpack of school supplies” – pencils, pens, paper, binders – to help the student get organized and also realize how well-supported he/she will be in the CSP program. Accompanying the supplies is contact information for the specialist.

--The college specialist’s **office space** serves a critical function to bring students together to mutually support each other. It is designed to be an inviting place for study groups, to grab a cup of coffee, and otherwise encourage CSP students to stop by and check-in with the specialist or other students.

--The college specialist organizes **group academic study sessions** for CSP students. The specialist also brings students together socially as often as feasible for **social events** (e.g., lunches, pumpkin carving, etc.).

--Each CSS creates a **College Career Association**, essentially a college club, similar to the Career Association in the JMG high school program (see page 15 for more details). The College Career Association is student run and connects CSP students with each other, working for a common cause of college graduation and career attainment.

--When possible, the College Success Specialist **teaches a for-credit college class**. Teaching CSP students in a formal classroom setting allows the CSS to impart important knowledge to students such as financial capability and study skills that will help them succeed in college. It also helps students feel connected to their CSP peers and part of a cohort of students who are going to succeed in college, together. (Currently, two JMG specialists are adjunct instructors and one specialist is an on-line proctor.)

Intensive Support

In High School

Before CSP students enter college, one-on-one intensive support is needed for two important tasks:

helping with applications to college and ensuring that students who are accepted to college in their senior year follow through and attend college in the fall.

--Both high school and college specialists provide individual help to students with their **applications to college**, including financial aid applications and scholarship searches. Specialists are also knowledgeable about external resources for the college application process and refer students as appropriate.

Summer

--During the summer before college, an intensive effort is made to counter the “**summer melt**” problem when admitted students don’t show up to school in the fall. A minimum of four contacts are made with each student during the summer, including text messages and in-person meetings. Important milestones such as deadlines for financial aid, course registration, and immunizations are communicated to the students and support is offered.

--All college-bound JMG students are encouraged to take part in intensive summer programming during the summer before enrollment. “**Summer Intensives**” are week-long (or longer) academic and social camps held on-campus where students receive intense preparation for college. Some intensives are academic in nature, focused on ensuring that incoming students do not have to take remedial classes; others focus on skills needed to succeed in college. Most intensives count as college credit for the student.

--JMG offers its own summer intensive for select rising high school seniors. The **JMG Summer Academy** is a five-day, intensive opportunity for 20-50 rising seniors to experience college-life first-hand, earn three college credits that will transfer to whatever college they choose, and develop valuable skills to help them succeed in college (see page 17 for more details).

On Campus

Once at college, CSP students have the support of their College Success Specialist for a host of academic, social, and financial issues. Unlike many student support services, the specialist is not passive; he/she proactively reaches out to students to preempt issues that may interfere with successfully completing a degree.

--College specialists practice “**intrusive advising**” with CSP college students. Specialists meet weekly with each student in their first semester and bi-weekly for students in their second semester, in addition to frequent check-ins by email or text. The specialist is also available for any additional support needed, from academic to social to financial issues.

--College specialists work with each student to create a “**pathway**” to a **career-oriented credential**. The pathway is an individual roadmap that is both the most efficient route to degree completion and the most advantageous path to a career after graduation.

--Specialists also encourage students to **attend college full-time**, usually 15 credits per semester. Not every student can do this, but those who can are much more likely to graduate and graduate with less debt.

--CSP also includes **access to emergency funds** where students can request funds for unanticipated, emergency expenses (e.g., car repair, overdue rent) if the failure to pay those expenses will prevent the student from continuing toward his/her degree.

-- CSP is piloting a **financial incentives** component for foster care students in conjunction with the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine, as part of the Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential initiative (LEAP). Research shows that small monetary rewards can provide an important incentive for college students to spend additional time on their academic work. Rewarding inputs is more effective than outputs; that is, small payments for enrolling in classes and attending study groups and tutoring sessions are more effective than rewards for good grades. If this pilot proves successful and additional funding becomes available, CSP will add a financial incentive component where students are given small monetary rewards for achieving certain milestones.

Youth in Foster Care

A key target audience for JMG's CSP program is foster care youth.² All foster care youth in Maine are eligible for support in both JMG's high school and CSP programs. For youth in care who are not able to enroll in a traditional JMG high school program (for example, because of credit deficiency), JMG Specialists will support these students in alternative ways outside of the classroom through one-on-one coaching and mentoring so that all foster care youth will have the opportunity to become proficient in JMG's 37 career and college ready competencies. JMG Specialists are also responsible for keeping the foster care student's caseworkers and/or transition workers up-to-date on both their progress and barriers; for example, through communicating results of an Accuplacer test or college progress report, coordinating efforts to create an individualized postsecondary pathway plan, as well as providing general feedback on how the student is progressing through high school and college.

Improving college and career success for youth in care will take more than just a college success program; it will require an enhanced level of coordination and organization among all service providers that support youth in care. Recognizing this, the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative (MYTC), a public/private partnership that works to ensure educational and economic success for youth as they transition out of foster care and into adulthood, have secured additional support through the Learn and Earn Achieve Potential (LEAP) grant. Longstanding MYTC partners include the Muskie School of Public Service, JMG, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), and Goodwill Industries of Northern New England (Goodwill), and a youth-driven MYTC Advisory Board of young adults who have lived the experience. The LEAP opportunity represents a commitment from all partners to integrate efforts to best support foster care youth in their pathway from high school to college degree attainment and connections to meaningful careers. Additionally, the Muskie School of Public Service will provide professional development to JMG Specialists about the specific known learning and development needs of foster care youth. The Muskie School of Public Service will also develop and offer a summer intensive experience on a college campus specifically designed for foster care youth who are rising seniors and entering freshmen to build relationships, gain deeper learning

² According to a report conducted by the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative (MYTC) and supported by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, from January 2003 to September 2013, less than 3% of youth who had turned 18 years old while in foster care successfully earned a college degree.

skills about college/career readiness, and participate in college-like courses.

The JMG College Success Program

		Academic Support	College Culture	Intensive Supports
High School	Early Accuplacer to identify academic weaknesses	X		
	College-readiness grade	X		
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Career-oriented goal of post-secondary credential		X	
	Formal plan to obtain a post-secondary credential		X	
	Exposure to college instruction		X	
	Visits from College Success Specialists		X	
	Campus tours		X	
	Near-peer mentoring		X	
	College and career fairs		X	
	Application assistance			X
Summer	Referrals to summer tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	Summer Melt outreach			X
	Summer intensives and JMG Summer Academy	X	X	X
College	Early warning system	X		
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Group academic study sessions	X		
	Backpack of school supplies	X	X	
	Welcoming office space	X	X	
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	College Career Association		X	
	Intrusive advising			X
	Pathway to career-oriented degree			X
	Encouragement of full time enrollment			X
	Adjunct Instructor (when available)	X	X	X
	Emergency Funds			X
	Financial incentives (if funding is available)			X

Roles and Responsibilities

The objective of CSP is seamless student-centered support, from high school through college completion. Coordination and cooperation between the High School Specialist, College Success Specialist, and the partnering college is critical. However, each has distinct roles.

The JMG College Success Specialist

The JMG College Success Specialist (CSS) resides at the college, but is closely connected with the JMG high school program and future college students. The CSS is part recruiter, advisor, and coach. In addition, the CSS is a trusted partner to many of the college departments and professionals working with CSP students.

- ⇒ *Recruiting JMG high school students:* The CSS begins building relationships with future college students as early as middle school, but that relationship intensifies in high school. Through visits to high school classrooms, campus tours, and college fairs, the CSS is actively recruiting students to college. The CSS has the dual responsibilities of raising aspirations but also being honest and realistic about what it takes to get a college degree. He/she is most knowledgeable about his/her own campus, but recruits students to college, in general, emphasizing the right college for each individual, not a specific campus.
- ⇒ *Advising CSP college students:* On campus, the CSS serves as an advisor to CSP students. On some campuses, this may be a formal role; at others, it is informal. Either way, the CSS understands both the enrollment process and the course requirements of degree offerings and is able to guide students as they sign up for classes and plan their path through college, including referring students to other student services. To fulfill this role competently, the CSS actively engages with and learn from other college departments, including advising, financial aid, admissions, student support services, tutoring options, and more. Further, the CSS is familiar with other available support and retention services and refers students to other programs like TRIO when appropriate.
- ⇒ *Coaching CSP college students:* Much of the help that students need to continue through college is not academic. As a coach, the CSS guides and mentors CSP students through a variety of obstacles they may face, from roommate issues to career choices. Career counseling, in particular, is an important part of the CSS's role. This often takes place within the College Career Association setting, where the CSS serves as an advisor, and includes visits to employers and connections to internships.
- ⇒ *Partnering with the college:* It is critical that the CSS is fully assimilated and included within the college staff environment. The CSS attends all staff meetings for advisors; he/she also attends state and national events and trainings as appropriate.

The JMG High School Specialist (HSS)

While the role of the High School Specialist is well-defined in the JMG high school program, there are additional responsibilities within the College Success Program to ensure that the HSS works closely with the CSS to prepare high school students for college.

- ⇒ *Identifying CSP students:* CSP is not for every JMG student. It requires a strong commitment from the student and a willingness to engage the College Success Specialist in their success. Because the HSS knows the JMG students well, he/she provides guidance to the CSS on which students are well-equipped to succeed in the program.
- ⇒ *Integrating classroom visits and campus tours:* The HSS coordinates classroom visits from the college specialist and personal tours on area college campuses. This requires more than just setting aside time during class. For students to fully absorb this exposure to the college-life, the HSS integrates both visits and tours into a broader curriculum on college preparation and experience.
- ⇒ *Building a college and career culture:* The HSS highlights the connection between careers and post-secondary credentials and builds a college-going culture through both formal instruction and informal discussions with students, culminating with support filling out college applications.

Partnering College

The ability of CSP to effectively support participating students in graduating college hinges on the relationship with our partner colleges. Strong partnerships with college leadership as well as campus staff in financial aid, advising, student support, and admissions departments are critical.

- ⇒ *Providing office space:* The partnering college agrees to provide office space to the CSS. Office space plays an important role in the College Success Program, and space that is centrally located and large enough to host study groups is crucial.
- ⇒ *Providing Student Data:* The partnering college also agrees to give access to the CSS to student-level data identical to what college advisors have access to.

Roles and Responsibilities

		High School Specialist	College Transition Specialist	Partnering College
High School	Early Accuplacer to identify academic weaknesses	X		
	College-readiness grade	X		
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Career-oriented goal of post-secondary credential	X		
	Formal plan to obtain a post-secondary credential	X		
	Exposure to college instruction	X		
	Visits from College Success Specialists	X	X	
	Campus tours	X	X	X
	Near-peer mentoring		X	
	College and career fairs	X	X	
	Application assistance	X	X	

		High School Specialist	College Transition Specialist	Partnering College
Summer	Referrals to summer tutoring (if needed)	X	X	
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	Summer Melt outreach	X	X	
	Summer intensives and JMG Summer Academy		X	
College	Early warning system		X	X
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)		X	
	Group academic study sessions		X	
	Backpack of school supplies		X	
	Welcoming office space		X	X
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	College Career Association		X	X
	Intrusive advising		X	
	Pathway to career-oriented degree		X	X
	Encouragement of full time enrollment		X	
	Adjunct Instructor (when available)		X	X
	Emergency Funds		X	
	Financial incentives (if funding is available)		X	

Student Selection and Commitment

The College Success Program begins in high school, and imparts a broad base of college awareness and skills to all JMG high school students. In college, CSP activities become more intense, and participation in CSP is more formal. In short, every JMG high school student experiences CSP; in college, CSP requires a membership. Resource constraints require a targeted and selective process that identifies college students who both need support and are motivated to leverage that support into success. CSP is not for college students who are well supported elsewhere, nor is the program a miracle-worker. CSP college students must have a high level of personal accountability and be willing to commit to the program.

Once a student accepts admission to a CSP participating college, usually in their senior year of high school, he/she is eligible to commit to the next phase of CSP – the college phase. This is done through a student commitment form. This relatively early start to the next phase of CSP (as opposed to starting the next phase once on campus) allows for excitement and anticipation as well as more comprehensive preparation.

Identification and eligibility: While most CSP members will come from JMG high school programs, not all will. The following types of college students are eligible to join CSP.

- ⇒ JMG high school students: Any college student who was part of a JMG middle or secondary school program is eligible to join CSP. (JMG high school students were previously identified with at least four barriers to success. The most common barriers include low socio-economic

background, struggling with family or social issues, high absenteeism due to disinterest in school and/or underperforming academically.)

- ⇒ Foster-care children: Any college student who is or was part of the foster care system is eligible to join CSP, regardless of whether they had JMG in middle or high school.
- ⇒ GED or HiSET recipients, within five years: Any college student who received an adult high school diploma through GED or HiSET within the last five years and is re-engaging with their education by entering college is eligible to join CSP.

Student commitment:

For a CSP student, college success is ultimately dependent on their own motivation and willingness to engage with college life, including participation in the College Success Program. As such, student commitment is critical. The student commitment form formalizes the relationship between the student and the college specialist and clearly sets out the responsibilities of both student and specialist. The commitment form helps the student understand what CSP can offer, as well as what is required of the student. The commitment form is also an important part of student selection. For students who are not willing to commit to the hard work and personal accountability that college requires, CSP is not for them.

The commitment form requires of the student:

- Regular meetings with the College Success Specialist
- Academic progress reports to the specialist that detail challenges and milestones in a timely manner through a standardized on-line template
- Participation in bi-weekly group study sessions
- Attendance at tutoring sessions or other academic support as needed
- Participation in the College Career Association
- Participation in CSP social events
- Commitment to attending college full-time (15 credits) if possible

The commitment form requires of the College Success Specialist:

- Availability for regular and frequent check-ins with the student, in person and by phone or text
- Support for the student on a range of academic and social issues, as needed and on-demand
- Connections and referrals for the student to other campus support resources, as needed
- Fostering of academic and intellectual skills needed for graduation and career goals
- Access to emergency funds

Timeline of Support and Student Load

CSP is designed to give progressively more intense levels of supports to students as they progress through high school until they complete their first year of college. Then, starting in the second year of college, support tapers off as they work to complete their degree.

In the early years of high school, CSP has a lighter touch, raising awareness and aspirations and educating students on how to prepare academically and socially for college. The program ramps up in

11th and 12th grades as high school specialists focus on college preparation and career exploration. Students are also beginning to form relationships with College Success Specialists as they visit colleges, host specialists at their school, and begin utilizing application support services. Research shows that most students who drop out do so after their first year; therefore the most intense level of support is given during the crucial first year of college, when students are required to meet weekly or bi-weekly with their college specialists. Once a student finishes the first year, the expectation is that he/she will need somewhat less intensive supports in the second year; meetings with the specialist are reduced to monthly. In the third year and beyond, students are members of the CSP primarily through the College Career Association, although they still meet with specialists each semester and have access to specialists for counseling and support as-needed.

“Intrusive Advising” Guidelines

JMG College Success Specialists are not passive advisors. They proactively engage CSP students to support them across a range of challenges. This can be difficult; some students will not respond to offers of support. The student commitment form helps as a defacto contract to ensure students are checking in regularly. In addition to in-person meetings, the CSS regularly sends emails and texts to students. These communications are a way to impart information and content to the student, including school deadlines, available services, budgeting tips, etc. The specific student contact targets for advising are as follows:

- College Success Specialists have in-person “sit-down” meetings weekly with each first-year student in their first semester (15+ times per semester), in addition to weekly interactions by text, email, phone calls, etc.
- College Success Specialists have in-person “sit-down” meetings bi-weekly with first-year students in their second semester (7 times per semester), in addition to weekly interactions by text, email, phone calls, etc.
- College Success Specialists have in-person “sit-down” meetings monthly with second-year students (4+ times per semester), in addition to weekly interactions through texts, emails, phone calls, meetings, etc.
- For students beyond their second year, college specialists interact primarily through the Career Association, but sit down with students at least once per semester, and continue regular contact through texts, emails, phone calls, etc.

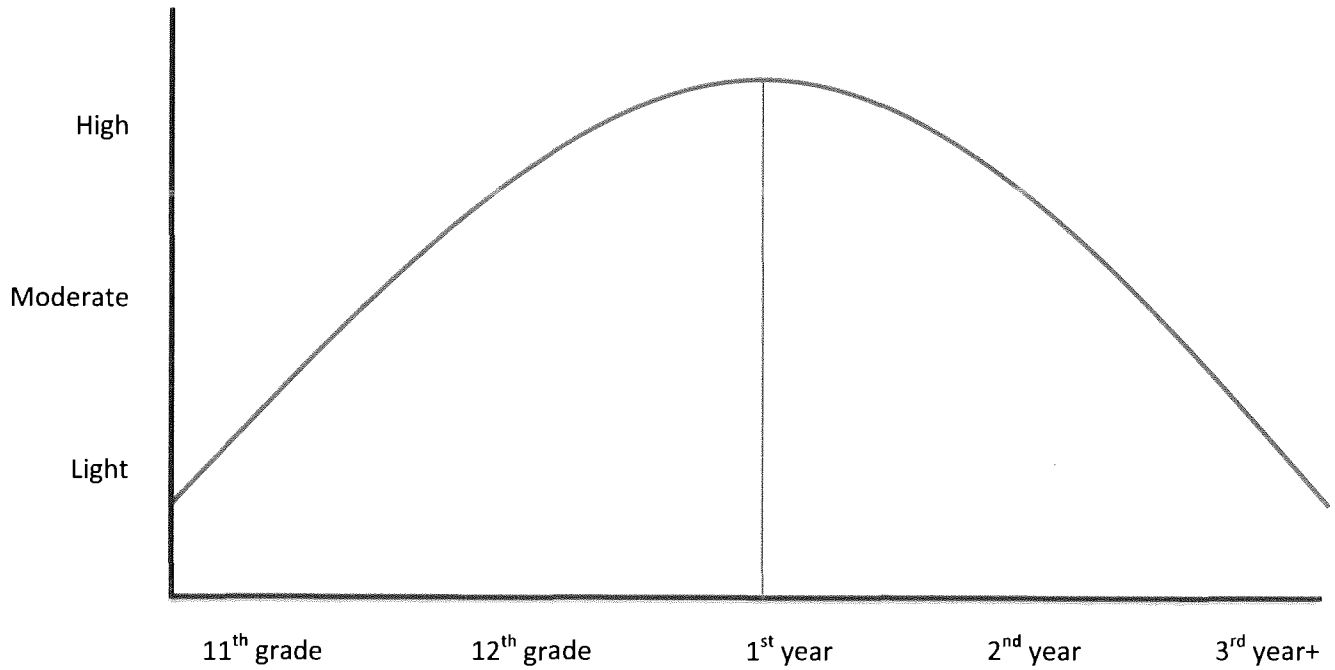
Student Load

Each campus differs in the number of eligible students and their students’ needs. However, a model program will enroll roughly 30-50 first-year students each year. As time goes on, this is a large number of students for one specialist to support, but the progressively decreasing level of support after the first year makes it possible.³ The expectation is that students beyond their second year need support on-demand, and that they participate in CSP primarily through the Career Association. Upper year students who are able will also play an important role in building a JMG cohort and helping less experienced students through near-peer mentoring. The target active student load for a College Success Specialist (i.e., the number students who are engaging on a weekly or monthly basis) is 60-100 students. Similar to

³ Other similar bridging programs range from 60-150 students per specialist, and, while not an exact comparison, the American School Counselor Association recommends counselors have a caseload of no more than 250 students.

the JMG high school program, specialists also follow students for one year after college graduation. Specialists record information on the graduate’s employment or further education situation and also offer advice on a student’s career search.

Level of student support over time



	Before 11th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	1st Year Students 1st semester	1st Year Students 2nd semester	2nd Year Students	3rd Year Students through graduation	12 Months, Post Graduation
Level of Support	<i>Light</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate to Intensive</i>	<i>Intensive</i>	<i>Intensive</i>	<i>Moderate to Intensive</i>	<i>Light to Moderate</i>	<i>Light</i>
In-person interactions with CSS	<i>Site visit / Tour</i>	<i>Site visit / Tour</i>	<i>Site Visit / Tour, Application assistance</i>	<i>Weekly "sit-down" Check-ins</i>	<i>Bi-weekly "sit-down" check-ins</i>	<i>Monthly "sit-down" check-ins</i>	<i>Semester "sit-down" check-in, Career Association</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Other contacts with CSS			<i>Summer melt check-ins</i>	<i>Weekly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Weekly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Weekly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Monthly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Periodic check-ins and follow-up</i>

College Career Association

The College Career Association is a student-led organization that helps CSP students prepare for careers after graduation. It is a critical component of the CSP and a primary way that the program imparts the career skills needed to find, land, and keep well-paying jobs. It is fully integrated into the program and works in tandem with other retention supports offered by the College Success Specialist. Each student enrolled in CSP is automatically a member of the College Career Association. Student leaders have completed at least three semesters of college.

In their third year of college, students generally transition to the Career Association as their primary means of interacting with CSP and their College Success Specialist. This is an important milestone. While barriers to degree completion will certainly still arise, the transition to the Career Association signifies that the student is changing the type of support they require, from retention services to career services; that is, from a focus on college completion to college success.

Each campus Career Association will be different, but the mission is the same: for all members to develop the competencies and skills necessary to graduate and be employed in a position with career advancement opportunities. Career Association activities are designed to develop, practice, and refine the skills necessary for personal, academic, and career success. The specific goals of the College Career Association are similar to those of the JMG high school Career Association:

1. Leadership Development
2. Career Development
3. Social Awareness
4. Civic Awareness
5. Community Service

Employer involvement is paramount and includes: guest speakers at Career Association meetings; tours of employer workplaces; possible paid internships; and mentorship of CSP students as they search and apply for jobs. Through Career Association activities, members interface with multiple employers to explore careers and better understand employability skills needed to land and keep a job after graduation.

The Career Association also plays an important role in building a cohort experience for CSP students from otherwise individual experiences. Building a cohort in a college setting can be difficult because, unlike the JMG high school program, the College Success Specialist generally does not have JMG students together in a classroom. The Career Association helps bring CSP students together for a common cause, and provide a means for students to mutually support each other.

The College Success Specialist serves as the Career Association advisor and is held accountable for implementing the Career Association and using it effectively to reach its goals. Each Association has a slate of student officers including president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Near-peer mentoring program

As part of the Career Association, a near-peer mentoring program is established linking experienced CSP college students with JMG high school and first-year CSP students. The primary goal of the near-peer (or cross-age peer) mentoring program is developmental in nature; that is, to help less-experienced students understand and prepare for college by building a relationship with someone near their age they can relate to as both a peer and role-model (i.e., someone who is succeeding in college). Both mentor and mentee benefit. Through the relationship with a near-peer, the mentee develops a much deeper and more personal understanding of what college is like and what is needed for success. The mentor, too, develops a set of important leadership, organizational, communication, and relationship skills that employers desire and are “resume-ready.”

Key CSP Components, more detail

College Visits and Tours

During high school, campus tours and visits from a college specialist play a critical role in raising aspirations and building confidence and college awareness for students. The more interaction a student has with a college before they enroll, the better prepared he/she is once enrolled as a college student. College visits and tours are integrated within the JMG high school curriculum. Specific goals are:

- Every JMG high school student will have personal contact with at least one College Success Specialist before he or she graduates, through an in-class visit or campus tour, and will be introduced to the college specialists at all colleges he/she applies to.
- Every JMG high school program will have at least one classroom visit from a College Success Specialist and tour at least one college campus, annually.
- Every College Success Specialist will visit at least 20 high schools in their local area annually (10 per semester), and host at least six campus tours annually.

Summer Melt

“Summer melt” is the phenomenon where a student accepts admission at a college but doesn’t attend in the fall. Some studies have estimated summer melt to be as high as 10-40% of enrolled students, with lower income and first generation college students showing the highest prevalence of summer melt. CSP counters summer melt through frequent interactions with and offers of support for the incoming college student during the summer before college.

- Upon acceptance to college, the College Success Specialist personally reaches out to each JMG student who has been accepted into their college to introduce him/herself and begin a working relationship.
- Each JMG college-bound graduate provides contact information and summer plans to both his/her High School Specialists and College Success Specialists.
- The College Success Specialist provides the incoming college student with the specific benchmarks and deadlines of the college the student will be attending, including:
 - o deadline for completing financial aid paperwork
 - o deadline for paying tuition and other fees
 - o dates of placement exams
 - o class enrollment dates

- Using this schedule as a guide, the CSS reaches out to the student at key dates to ensure that the student has the support he/she needs to meet the deadline and stay on-track for fall matriculation.
- The specialist interacts with an incoming college student a minimum of four times during the summer, by phone or text or social media, and at least once in-person on-campus before fall classes start.

Sample Summer Melt Interactions Schedule

Month	April	May	June	July	August
Milestone	Acceptance into college	Benchmarks for summer	Deadline for ...	Deadline for ...	Open class enrollment
Interaction	Phone call and letter	Phone call and email	Text, in person meeting if needed	Text, in person meeting if needed	On-campus meeting

JMG Summer Academy

The JMG Summer Academy is a five-day intensive program for 20-50 rising seniors to experience college-life first-hand, earn three college credits that will transfer to whatever school they choose, and develop valuable skills needed for college success. During the one-week intensive, held at Thomas College, students remain on campus and reside in a dormitory with supervision from JMG staff. The students attend six hours of class each day and attend workshops and cohort-building activities during the evening. Structured study time and tutoring is scheduled as well.

The Summer Academy is likely the first taste of college-life and independence for JMG students. It's also a chance to meet and connect with the JMG College Success Specialists who will be supporting them in the future, as well as bond with other college-bound JMG students.

Students take either Introduction to Computer Applications, a three credit course offered by Thomas College faculty that is approved by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and transfers as general elective credit to most colleges or a remedial math course, which is intended to help students pass the Accuplacer test and avoid having to take a remedial math course.

Students are nominated by their high school specialists and a selection committee accepts 20-50 students, depending on available funding. Eligible students come from all over the state. To be eligible, students must be in a JMG program; be high school juniors in good standing; aspire to obtain a two or four year college degree; and be the first in their family to attend college. In addition, accepted students will show a solid academic ability and the maturity needed to succeed in college.

Emergency Funds

Emergency funds are an essential part of CSP. For some students, the lack of a few hundred dollars can mean the end of their college enrollment. The emergency funds component of CSP allows students who would otherwise be unable to continue their education to receive funds for emergency purposes. For

the emergency funds to be effective, the guidelines of the program must be clearly communicated to students and specialists. Strong stewardship of the process and funds are imperative. General guidelines are as follows:

- Each CSP student is made aware of the program when they sign the student commitment form, including eligibility and criteria for receiving emergency funds.
- Before any emergency funds are dispersed, the College Success Specialist ensures that financial aid and other financial support services have been exhausted. The specialist is also knowledgeable of other non-college social assistance resources, such as food-stamps and Medicaid, and refers students to these programs if appropriate.
- To be eligible for emergency funds, a CSP student must be actively enrolled in a participating college and be making satisfactory progress toward a degree. It is up to the specialist to define what satisfactory progress means, accounting for the student’s personal situation. In addition, he/she must have signed a student commitment form and agree to financial counseling or other support if appropriate.
- “Emergency” is defined as an expense that is unforeseen, unexpected, one-time, and passes the “but for” test; that is, “but for” these emergency funds, the student would not be able to remain in school.
- There is a \$500 limit on single requests and a \$1500 limit on lifetime requests, unless extenuating circumstances apply.
- A student first applies for emergency funds to his/her College Success Specialist. If the criteria are met, the specialist applies on behalf of the student to the JMG CEO or designee who approves or denies the request based on eligibility and available funds.
- Once the process is initiated, the decision and disbursement of money is within three days.
- Emergency funds are paid only to third-parties (e.g., landlords, medical institutions, etc.) and written records are required (e.g., a bill or statement).

Emergency Funds FAQ

Who’s eligible?	CSP students who are actively enrolled in college, are making satisfactory academic progress, and have a signed student commitment form
What types of expenses are eligible?	“Emergency” expenses that are unforeseen, unexpected, one-time, and would prevent a student from continuing in college
How much money are emergency funds?	\$500 request limit; \$1500 lifetime limit
How long does the process take?	3 days or less
Do emergency funds include cash?	No, emergency funds are paid directly to a third party

Performance Measures and Goals

Data collection, analysis, and reporting are essential to evaluating and continually improving the College Success Program. Broadly speaking, there are two distinct categories of goals that need to be measured: student contacts and student outcomes. Student contacts goals can be thought of as “inputs” to success and include benchmark data and guidelines on the frequency and type of interactions between the

College Success Specialist and students. Student outcome goals are goals for college retention and graduation and measure the ultimate success of the program.

Student contact data and goals

College Success Specialists interact numerous times with their CSP college students over a school year. For each interaction, they record the method of interaction and topic discussed and report aggregated results at the end of each semester. This information is used to evaluate and improve the program and align specialists’ training with the support that students are asking for.

Semester Student Contact Goals

	1st Year Students, 1st semester	1st Year Students, 2nd semester	2nd Year Students	3rd Year Students and beyond
“Sit-down” Meetings per Semester	15	8	4	1
Other Contacts per Semester (e.g., texts)	15	15	15	4
Career Association Participation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

During these interactions, specialists coach and evaluate each student at least once per semester on each of eight competency areas listed below, depending on the need of the student. The CSS tracks and records the method and content of each interaction.

Competencies for coaching and recording student-contacts

1. Career development, including career goals and academic program alignment
2. Job attainment, including resume and interview skills
3. Job Survival, including appropriate appearance and communications skills
4. Basic skills / Remediation, including remedial help with writing, reading, and math
5. Academic support, including help with college-level coursework, study skills, and tutoring resources
6. College Environment, including support for social issues, college rules and procedures, and housing
7. Financial capability, including general financial education and help with financial aid
8. Personal skills, including help with setting life goals, decision-making, personal accountability, and life skills

Methods of student contacts to record:

1. In-person
2. Phone
3. Text
4. Email
5. Social Media
6. Other

Student success data and goals (DRAFT – WORK IN PROGRESS)

The vision and aspirational goal of CSP is that every student in the program will graduate with a post-

secondary credential and find gainful employment in a meaningful career. In the short-term, CSP will be successful if it meaningfully improves the number of students with barriers who stay in school and graduate with a post-secondary credential, career-ready. Two factors affect the design of specific CSP goals. First, because CSP is a bridging program that begins preparing students for college success while still in high school, it will take a few years to see the full results of the program. This necessitates a phased in approach for outcome goals, oriented toward 1st-year retention in the early years of the program and toward both retention and graduation in the later years. Second, the wide variation in success rates across college campuses necessitates the need for campus-specific graduation goals.

- ⇒ Broadly-speaking, in the first phase of the program (years 1 – 3), CSP aims to increase the 1st to 2nd year retention and persistence rates for CSP students to the average of all students in their respective colleges. Because CSP students are by nature students with barriers, this translates to roughly a 10-30% improvement.
- ⇒ Starting in year 4, when most CSP college students will have experienced the bridging component through their JMG high school class, the goal for 1st-2nd year persistence rates for CSP students is 80% across all campuses.
- ⇒ The goal for graduation is to double the percent of CSP students who graduate within 150% of normal time (6 years for 4 year degrees; 3 years for 2 year degrees) by year 6 of the program.
- ⇒ In addition, although colleges don't generally track retention rates after the 2nd year, the goal of CSP is to retain 90% of students each year after the second year, until graduation.
- ⇒ Youth in foster care: A recent study (Appendix B) found that 10.2% of college students who were or had been in foster care graduated college within six years. Working in collaboration with the Maine Youth Transition Network and the recently started LEAP initiative, the CSP goal for youth in care is to double this rate to 20%

1st-2nd Year Persistence Rate Goals

	2014 Retention Rate (all students)	Year 4 Goal
USM	67%	80%
SMCC	55%	80%
UMA	53%	80%
KVCC	68%	80%
Thomas	65%	80%
WCCC	56%	80%
UMM	66%	80%

Graduation Rate within 150% of Normal Time Goals

	2014 6 Year Graduation Rate (all students)	Year 6 Goal
USM	32%	64%
SMCC	24%	48%
UMA	13%	26%
KVCC	39%	78%
Thomas	43%	86%
WCCC	35%	70%
UMM	31%	62%

Outcomes, defined

Retained: A student continues enrollment at the same college from one semester to the next.

Persisted: A student continues enrollment at any college from one semester to the next (including student who transferred to a different college campus from the one they started).

Graduated: A student graduates from college with a post-secondary credential.

Withdrawn: A student withdraws from college, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

The first three categories, retained, persisted, and graduated, are positive outcomes for the student. CSP reports the percentage of each measure on a yearly basis, for all CSP students and separately for first-year students.

Retention Rate = % Retained = # retained / total # of CSP students

Persistence Rate = % Persisted = # persisted / total # of CSP students

Student Success Rate = % Succeeded = (# persisted + # graduated) / total # of students

Looking ahead; longitudinal analysis

The final evaluation of the effectiveness of CSP will be determined by how successful CSP participants are in finding and keeping fulfilling, stable, and financially viable careers. This is a long-term research project that measures outcomes for CSP students over many years, a decade or more. While that analysis cannot be done yet, steps can be taken to allow for such an analysis in the future. Student data should be collected and saved, following all privacy and legal requirements, in a secure database that can be analyzed in conjunction with other data sources on employment and earnings in the future.



DRAFT
A Work in Progress

JMG College Success Program

*A Comprehensive College Preparation, Bridging
and Retention Program*

An Extension of the JMG Model

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DRAFT
A Work in Progress

JMG College Success Program

*A Comprehensive College Preparation, Bridging and Retention Program
An Extension of the JMG Model*

The Challenge

College may not be for everyone, but for those who stop their education after high school, the path to financially stable, fulfilling careers is up-hill. Compared to college-degree holders, high school graduates face longer and more frequent unemployment, greater odds of living in poverty, lower incomes, greater reliance on social assistance, and less satisfaction with their jobs. Economists expect this situation to worsen as more and more careers require a post-secondary credential. Graduating from high school today is like pushing a boulder halfway up a hill. Unless students continue pushing to the top – to a post-secondary credential – they will always risk falling backward.

It is imperative that today's youth understand this reality and make informed choices about the role of education in their life and career choices. However, for many youth whose career aspirations do align with a college degree, the deck remains stacked against them, and they drop-out of college before they finish, or don't even start. There are many reasons why students don't complete college. College is expensive, and for those unfamiliar with a campus environment, it can be a confusing and lonely place. Shifting class schedules make it difficult for students to hold down jobs and find child care. Poor high school preparation places them in remedial classes that eat up precious finances and time. Inches-thick course catalogs leave them confused and overwhelmed, sometimes choosing unnecessary courses that don't move them closer to a degree and a secure career. First-generation college students may have few role models and a lack of guidance and support as they tentatively step foot onto a college campus only to feel overwhelmed and isolated.

With so many cards stacked against them, it's unsurprising that six years after graduating from high school, just 39% of Maine students have earned a 2- or 4-year college degree. The rest either never attempted or dropped out. For those who do start college, 1 in 5 leave after their first year, and more than 2 in 5 don't earn a degree within six years. The problem is worse for disadvantaged students: 60% of low income college students and 90% of college students who were in foster care don't graduate within six years.

This is the reality that students today face when they graduate high school. Jobs for Maine's Graduates is joining a handful of college success programs in Maine and around the country that are trying to reverse these trends and help students find success in college, careers, and life.

The Program

Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG) was founded in 1993 as a drop-out prevention program for high school students and has helped roughly 20,000 youth graduate high school and prepare for college and a career. In 2014 98% of JMG high school students continued in school, and 97% of JMG seniors graduated high school. Two years ago, JMG began a college success program at Thomas College to help former JMG students at Thomas stay in college and graduate with a four year degree. This year, six more campuses were added, at both 2- and 4- year public colleges in Maine.¹

To fully address college retention and completion, particularly for students with barriers to educational success, it requires more than just the implementation of a college retention program; it requires systemic changes in the way colleges deliver educational content to students and a collective mindset and culture that is fully devoted to student success, no matter what it takes. Many creative efforts are under way to address student retention and completion systemically and culturally. Working in conjunction with these efforts, the JMG College Success Program (CSP) is a comprehensive college preparation, bridging, and retention program that starts in high school and continues seamlessly through college. The overarching goals of CSP are to help students with barriers to educational success obtain a post-secondary credential and secure meaningful and financially secure careers. In partnership with Maine colleges and business community, CSP plays a critical role in students' success and can mean the difference between a student completing college or dropping out. Eligible students include those who were part of a JMG program in middle or high school, youth who are or have been in foster care, and college students who received their GED or HiSET within the last five years.

In the years leading up to college, CSP helps students prepare for and aspire to college through academic support, campus tours, application assistance, and more. Once in college, the JMG College Success Specialist provides students with a range of individualized services including academic, social, and financial support.

JMG's College Success Program has been designed based on our own extensive experiences helping students graduate both high school and college, as well as the latest research from college bridging and retention programs nationwide. Research shows that the common elements in bridging and retention programs that are successfully helping students stay in college can be placed, roughly, into three categories:

1. Academic Support; that is, helping students adequately prepare for and successfully complete college-level course work
2. College and Career Culture; that is, exposing secondary-school students to the college experience early, drawing explicit connections between careers and post-secondary education, and helping college students find social success within the college community

¹ University of Southern Maine, Southern Maine Community College, University of Maine at Augusta, Kennebec Valley Community College, University of Maine at Machias, Washington County Community College

3. Intensive Supports; that is, one-on-one, personal support (“whatever-it-takes”) to help students prepare for and complete their college degree

The JMG College Success Program has been organized first by these three categories and secondarily by which academic setting the program component occurs in (high school, summer, or college). CSP begins in high school as part of the JMG high school curriculum. Once a student accepts admission to a participating college, usually in their senior year of high school, he/she then formally chooses to commit to the next phase of the program. CSP consists of the following components.

Academic Support

In High School

In JMG high school settings, CSP is focused on ensuring that future college students place immediately into for-credit college courses and not remedial classes. JMG high school specialists do not directly teach academic subjects, so the primary roles of CSP are to assess and address academic deficiencies as early as possible.

--CSP participants take the **Accuplacer**, a common college placement test that Maine colleges use, (or another assessment tool if Accuplacer isn't available) as early as possible to identify academic deficiencies that may require a student to take remedial classes at the college level.

--JMG high school specialists also give each CSP participant a “**college-readiness**” grade which incorporate the student’s level of academic preparedness as well as his/her maturity, leadership skills, behavior, and other traits that impact later success in college (see page 4 for more details).

--If results from the Accuplacer or college-readiness grade identify deficiencies that may require a student to take remedial classes in college, the student is immediately **referred to tutoring**, either online or one-on-one, and/or mentoring to resolve the deficiency.

Summer

--If additional academic support outside of the normal school year is needed to prevent academic remediation, the summer before college is utilized, either through more **referrals to summer tutoring** or through full-time academic programming held on a college campus over the course of a week or longer; that is, a “**summer intensive**”.

On Campus

On college campuses, CSP is focused on helping students pass their courses and forge adequate academic progress towards a degree. Intervening, early, before academic challenges become intractable is crucial.

--College Success Specialists use the college’s “**early-warning system**” to identify academic challenges that a student may be having. This includes missed classes, incomplete assignments, or failing grades.

--Not every college has an early-warning system. In the case of no early-warning system, College Success Specialists design their own system either through personal relationships with a student's professors or by repeated check-ins with the student.

--When the early warning system flags a student for academic challenges, the specialist **refers the student to tutoring** services immediately.

--CSP students are also required to attend **bi-weekly group academic study sessions**, organized by the College Success Specialist.

College and Career Culture

In High School

High school students who are familiar with college and see the college experience as worthwhile and valuable are more likely to go to college and persist to graduation. The CSP creates a college-culture in high school through raising aspirations for students, exposing them early and often to the college-life and environment, and making explicit the connections between desirable careers and a post-secondary credential.

--Each JMG high school student shares a common **career-oriented goal: to obtain a post-secondary credential**. The paths to a credential are many and varied; 2 or 4 year colleges are not for every student. But setting an overarching goal of a post-secondary credential is critical to the success of the student and the program.

--High School Specialists work with each student to develop a **formal post-secondary plan** to achieve their career-oriented goal of a college credential. Students learn what it takes to attend and complete college, including academic requirements, financial aid considerations, and study-skills. Before they graduate, they have a tangible, well-formed plan to pay for and receive a post-secondary credential.

--High School Specialists expose students to **college instruction techniques**, including using a syllabus, corresponding by email, and learning through lecture-style lessons.

--College Success Specialists **visit JMG high school classrooms** to introduce students to the college experience and recruit them to college campuses. Every JMG high school program is visited by at least one college specialist each year. And each college specialist visits a minimum of twenty high schools in their geographic area, annually. Both high school and college specialists use customized and age-appropriate curriculum to deliver college awareness and preparation lessons to different grades of students.

--High school and college specialists coordinate to bring students onto multiple college campuses for **personalized tours**.

--A **"near-peer" mentoring** program further gives high school students the chance to interact with and learn from college students who are also in CSP (see page 16 for more details).

--College Success Specialists staff booths at local **career and college fairs**.

--The net results of classroom visits, tours, fairs, and mentoring is that the aspirations of every JMG high school student is raised, they become more comfortable and knowledgeable of the college culture, and they understand that JMG will be there to support them after high school and through college.

Summer

--During the summer before college, JMG College Success Specialists bring together CSP students to meet, socialize, and begin building the peer-relationships that will help them persist through college. Every student enrolled in college in the fall will interact with their college specialist a minimum of four times during the summer, and at least once as a **cohort of CSP students**.

On Campus

At college, CSP fosters a healthy and productive college culture by creating a cohort experience from otherwise individual experiences, binding the students together for mutual support toward a common and shared goal.

--The College Success Specialist is a visible presence at Orientation and uses the orientation to connect CSP students to each other. When the student arrives on campus, he/she receives a “backpack of school supplies” – pencils, pens, paper, binders – to help the student get organized and also realize how well-supported he/she will be in the CSP program. Accompanying the supplies is contact information for the specialist.

--The college specialist’s **office space** serves a critical function to bring students together to mutually support each other. It is designed to be an inviting place for study groups, to grab a cup of coffee, and otherwise encourage CSP students to stop by and check-in with the specialist or other students.

--The college specialist organizes **group academic study sessions** for CSP students. The specialist also brings students together socially as often as feasible for **social events** (e.g., lunches, pumpkin carving, etc.).

--Each CSS creates a **College Career Association**, essentially a college club, similar to the Career Association in the JMG high school program (see page 15 for more details). The College Career Association is student run and connects CSP students with each other, working for a common cause of college graduation and career attainment.

--When possible, the College Success Specialist **teaches a for-credit college class**. Teaching CSP students in a formal classroom setting allows the CSS to impart important knowledge to students such as financial capability and study skills that will help them succeed in college. It also helps students feel connected to their CSP peers and part of a cohort of students who are going to succeed in college, together. (Currently, two JMG specialists are adjunct instructors and one specialist is an on-line proctor.)

Intensive Support

In High School

Before CSP students enter college, one-on-one intensive support is needed for two important tasks:

helping with applications to college and ensuring that students who are accepted to college in their senior year follow through and attend college in the fall.

--Both high school and college specialists provide individual help to students with their **applications to college**, including financial aid applications and scholarship searches. Specialists are also knowledgeable about external resources for the college application process and refer students as appropriate.

Summer

--During the summer before college, an intensive effort is made to counter the **“summer melt”** problem when admitted students don’t show up to school in the fall. A minimum of four contacts are made with each student during the summer, including text messages and in-person meetings. Important milestones such as deadlines for financial aid, course registration, and immunizations are communicated to the students and support is offered.

--All college-bound JMG students are encouraged to take part in intensive summer programming during the summer before enrollment. **“Summer Intensives”** are week-long (or longer) academic and social camps held on-campus where students receive intense preparation for college. Some intensives are academic in nature, focused on ensuring that incoming students do not have to take remedial classes; others focus on skills needed to succeed in college. Most intensives count as college credit for the student.

--JMG offers its own summer intensive for select rising high school seniors. The **JMG Summer Academy** is a five-day, intensive opportunity for 20-50 rising seniors to experience college-life first-hand, earn three college credits that will transfer to whatever college they choose, and develop valuable skills to help them succeed in college (see page 17 for more details).

On Campus

Once at college, CSP students have the support of their College Success Specialist for a host of academic, social, and financial issues. Unlike many student support services, the specialist is not passive; he/she proactively reaches out to students to preempt issues that may interfere with successfully completing a degree.

--College specialists practice **“intrusive advising”** with CSP college students. Specialists meet weekly with each student in their first semester and bi-weekly for students in their second semester, in addition to frequent check-ins by email or text. The specialist is also available for any additional support needed, from academic to social to financial issues.

--College specialists work with each student to create a **“pathway” to a career-oriented credential**. The pathway is an individual roadmap that is both the most efficient route to degree completion and the most advantageous path to a career after graduation.

--Specialists also encourage students to **attend college full-time**, usually 15 credits per semester. Not every student can do this, but those who can are much more likely to graduate and graduate with less debt.

--CSP also includes **access to emergency funds** where students can request funds for unanticipated, emergency expenses (e.g., car repair, overdue rent) if the failure to pay those expenses will prevent the student from continuing toward his/her degree.

-- CSP is piloting a **financial incentives** component for foster care students in conjunction with the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine, as part of the Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential initiative (LEAP). Research shows that small monetary rewards can provide an important incentive for college students to spend additional time on their academic work. Rewarding inputs is more effective than outputs; that is, small payments for enrolling in classes and attending study groups and tutoring sessions are more effective than rewards for good grades. If this pilot proves successful and additional funding becomes available, CSP will add a financial incentive component where students are given small monetary rewards for achieving certain milestones.

Youth in Foster Care

A key target audience for JMG's CSP program is foster care youth.² All foster care youth in Maine are eligible for support in both JMG's high school and CSP programs. For youth in care who are not able to enroll in a traditional JMG high school program (for example, because of credit deficiency), JMG Specialists will support these students in alternative ways outside of the classroom through one-on-one coaching and mentoring so that all foster care youth will have the opportunity to become proficient in JMG's 37 career and college ready competencies. JMG Specialists are also responsible for keeping the foster care student's caseworkers and/or transition workers up-to-date on both their progress and barriers; for example, through communicating results of an Accuplacer test or college progress report, coordinating efforts to create an individualized postsecondary pathway plan, as well as providing general feedback on how the student is progressing through high school and college.

Improving college and career success for youth in care will take more than just a college success program; it will require an enhanced level of coordination and organization among all service providers that support youth in care. Recognizing this, the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative (MYTC), a public/private partnership that works to ensure educational and economic success for youth as they transition out of foster care and into adulthood, have secured additional support through the Learn and Earn Achieve Potential (LEAP) grant. Longstanding MYTC partners include the Muskie School of Public Service, JMG, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), and Goodwill Industries of Northern New England (Goodwill), and a youth-driven MYTC Advisory Board of young adults who have lived the experience. The LEAP opportunity represents a commitment from all partners to integrate efforts to best support foster care youth in their pathway from high school to college degree attainment and connections to meaningful careers. Additionally, the Muskie School of Public Service will provide professional development to JMG Specialists about the specific known learning and development needs of foster care youth. The Muskie School of Public Service will also develop and offer a summer intensive experience on a college campus specifically designed for foster care youth who are rising seniors and entering freshmen to build relationships, gain deeper learning

² According to a report conducted by the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative (MYTC) and supported by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative, from January 2003 to September 2013, less than 3% of youth who had turned 18 years old while in foster care successfully earned a college degree.

skills about college/career readiness, and participate in college-like courses.

The JMG College Success Program

		Academic Support	College Culture	Intensive Supports
High School	Early Accuplacer to identify academic weaknesses	X		
	College-readiness grade	X		
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Career-oriented goal of post-secondary credential		X	
	Formal plan to obtain a post-secondary credential		X	
	Exposure to college instruction		X	
	Visits from College Success Specialists		X	
	Campus tours		X	
	Near-peer mentoring		X	
	College and career fairs		X	
	Application assistance			X
Summer	Referrals to summer tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	Summer Melt outreach			X
	Summer intensives and JMG Summer Academy	X	X	X
College	Early warning system	X		
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Group academic study sessions	X		
	Backpack of school supplies	X	X	
	Welcoming office space	X	X	
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	College Career Association		X	
	Intrusive advising			X
	Pathway to career-oriented degree			X
	Encouragement of full time enrollment			X
	Adjunct Instructor (when available)	X	X	X
	Emergency Funds			X
	Financial incentives (if funding is available)			X

Roles and Responsibilities

The objective of CSP is seamless student-centered support, from high school through college completion. Coordination and cooperation between the High School Specialist, College Success Specialist, and the partnering college is critical. However, each has distinct roles.

The JMG College Success Specialist

The JMG College Success Specialist (CSS) resides at the college, but is closely connected with the JMG high school program and future college students. The CSS is part recruiter, advisor, and coach. In addition, the CSS is a trusted partner to many of the college departments and professionals working with CSP students.

- ⇒ *Recruiting JMG high school students:* The CSS begins building relationships with future college students as early as middle school, but that relationship intensifies in high school. Through visits to high school classrooms, campus tours, and college fairs, the CSS is actively recruiting students to college. The CSS has the dual responsibilities of raising aspirations but also being honest and realistic about what it takes to get a college degree. He/she is most knowledgeable about his/her own campus, but recruits students to college, in general, emphasizing the right college for each individual, not a specific campus.
- ⇒ *Advising CSP college students:* On campus, the CSS serves as an advisor to CSP students. On some campuses, this may be a formal role; at others, it is informal. Either way, the CSS understands both the enrollment process and the course requirements of degree offerings and is able to guide students as they sign up for classes and plan their path through college, including referring students to other student services. To fulfill this role competently, the CSS actively engages with and learn from other college departments, including advising, financial aid, admissions, student support services, tutoring options, and more. Further, the CSS is familiar with other available support and retention services and refers students to other programs like TRIO when appropriate.
- ⇒ *Coaching CSP college students:* Much of the help that students need to continue through college is not academic. As a coach, the CSS guides and mentors CSP students through a variety of obstacles they may face, from roommate issues to career choices. Career counseling, in particular, is an important part of the CSS's role. This often takes place within the College Career Association setting, where the CSS serves as an advisor, and includes visits to employers and connections to internships.
- ⇒ *Partnering with the college:* It is critical that the CSS is fully assimilated and included within the college staff environment. The CSS attends all staff meetings for advisors; he/she also attends state and national events and trainings as appropriate.

The JMG High School Specialist (HSS)

While the role of the High School Specialist is well-defined in the JMG high school program, there are additional responsibilities within the College Success Program to ensure that the HSS works closely with the CSS to prepare high school students for college.

- ⇒ *Identifying CSP students:* CSP is not for every JMG student. It requires a strong commitment from the student and a willingness to engage the College Success Specialist in their success. Because the HSS knows the JMG students well, he/she provides guidance to the CSS on which students are well-equipped to succeed in the program.
- ⇒ *Integrating classroom visits and campus tours:* The HSS coordinates classroom visits from the college specialist and personal tours on area college campuses. This requires more than just setting aside time during class. For students to fully absorb this exposure to the college-life, the HSS integrates both visits and tours into a broader curriculum on college preparation and experience.
- ⇒ *Building a college and career culture:* The HSS highlights the connection between careers and post-secondary credentials and builds a college-going culture through both formal instruction and informal discussions with students, culminating with support filling out college applications.

Partnering College

The ability of CSP to effectively support participating students in graduating college hinges on the relationship with our partner colleges. Strong partnerships with college leadership as well as campus staff in financial aid, advising, student support, and admissions departments are critical.

- ⇒ *Providing office space:* The partnering college agrees to provide office space to the CSS. Office space plays an important role in the College Success Program, and space that is centrally located and large enough to host study groups is crucial.
- ⇒ *Providing Student Data:* The partnering college also agrees to give access to the CSS to student-level data identical to what college advisors have access to.

Roles and Responsibilities

		High School Specialist	College Transition Specialist	Partnering College
High School	Early Accuplacer to identify academic weaknesses	X		
	College-readiness grade	X		
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)	X		
	Career-oriented goal of post-secondary credential	X		
	Formal plan to obtain a post-secondary credential	X		
	Exposure to college instruction	X		
	Visits from College Success Specialists	X	X	
	Campus tours	X	X	X
	Near-peer mentoring		X	
	College and career fairs	X	X	
	Application assistance	X	X	

		High School Specialist	College Transition Specialist	Partnering College
Summer	Referrals to summer tutoring (if needed)	X	X	
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	Summer Melt outreach	X	X	
	Summer intensives and JMG Summer Academy		X	
College	Early warning system		X	X
	Referrals to tutoring (if needed)		X	
	Group academic study sessions		X	
	Backpack of school supplies		X	
	Welcoming office space		X	X
	Cohort building – social events		X	
	College Career Association		X	X
	Intrusive advising		X	
	Pathway to career-oriented degree		X	X
	Encouragement of full time enrollment		X	
	Adjunct Instructor (when available)		X	X
	Emergency Funds		X	
	Financial incentives (if funding is available)		X	

Student Selection and Commitment

The College Success Program begins in high school, and imparts a broad base of college awareness and skills to all JMG high school students. In college, CSP activities become more intense, and participation in CSP is more formal. In short, every JMG high school student experiences CSP; in college, CSP requires a membership. Resource constraints require a targeted and selective process that identifies college students who both need support and are motivated to leverage that support into success. CSP is not for college students who are well supported elsewhere, nor is the program a miracle-worker. CSP college students must have a high level of personal accountability and be willing to commit to the program.

Once a student accepts admission to a CSP participating college, usually in their senior year of high school, he/she is eligible to commit to the next phase of CSP – the college phase. This is done through a student commitment form. This relatively early start to the next phase of CSP (as opposed to starting the next phase once on campus) allows for excitement and anticipation as well as more comprehensive preparation.

Identification and eligibility: While most CSP members will come from JMG high school programs, not all will. The following types of college students are eligible to join CSP.

- ⇒ JMG high school students: Any college student who was part of a JMG middle or secondary school program is eligible to join CSP. (JMG high school students were previously identified with at least four barriers to success. The most common barriers include low socio-economic

background, struggling with family or social issues, high absenteeism due to disinterest in school and/or underperforming academically.)

- ⇒ Foster-care children: Any college student who is or was part of the foster care system is eligible to join CSP, regardless of whether they had JMG in middle or high school.
- ⇒ GED or HiSET recipients, within five years: Any college student who received an adult high school diploma through GED or HiSET within the last five years and is re-engaging with their education by entering college is eligible to join CSP.

Student commitment:

For a CSP student, college success is ultimately dependent on their own motivation and willingness to engage with college life, including participation in the College Success Program. As such, student commitment is critical. The student commitment form formalizes the relationship between the student and the college specialist and clearly sets out the responsibilities of both student and specialist. The commitment form helps the student understand what CSP can offer, as well as what is required of the student. The commitment form is also an important part of student selection. For students who are not willing to commit to the hard work and personal accountability that college requires, CSP is not for them.

The commitment form requires of the student:

- Regular meetings with the College Success Specialist
- Academic progress reports to the specialist that detail challenges and milestones in a timely manner through a standardized on-line template
- Participation in bi-weekly group study sessions
- Attendance at tutoring sessions or other academic support as needed
- Participation in the College Career Association
- Participation in CSP social events
- Commitment to attending college full-time (15 credits) if possible

The commitment form requires of the College Success Specialist:

- Availability for regular and frequent check-ins with the student, in person and by phone or text
- Support for the student on a range of academic and social issues, as needed and on-demand
- Connections and referrals for the student to other campus support resources, as needed
- Fostering of academic and intellectual skills needed for graduation and career goals
- Access to emergency funds

Timeline of Support and Student Load

CSP is designed to give progressively more intense levels of supports to students as they progress through high school until they complete their first year of college. Then, starting in the second year of college, support tapers off as they work to complete their degree.

In the early years of high school, CSP has a lighter touch, raising awareness and aspirations and educating students on how to prepare academically and socially for college. The program ramps up in

11th and 12th grades as high school specialists focus on college preparation and career exploration. Students are also beginning to form relationships with College Success Specialists as they visit colleges, host specialists at their school, and begin utilizing application support services. Research shows that most students who drop out do so after their first year; therefore the most intense level of support is given during the crucial first year of college, when students are required to meet weekly or bi-weekly with their college specialists. Once a student finishes the first year, the expectation is that he/she will need somewhat less intensive supports in the second year; meetings with the specialist are reduced to monthly. In the third year and beyond, students are members of the CSP primarily through the College Career Association, although they still meet with specialists each semester and have access to specialists for counseling and support as-needed.

“Intrusive Advising” Guidelines

JMG College Success Specialists are not passive advisors. They proactively engage CSP students to support them across a range of challenges. This can be difficult; some students will not respond to offers of support. The student commitment form helps as a defacto contract to ensure students are checking in regularly. In addition to in-person meetings, the CSS regularly sends emails and texts to students. These communications are a way to impart information and content to the student, including school deadlines, available services, budgeting tips, etc. The specific student contact targets for advising are as follows:

- College Success Specialists have in-person “sit-down” meetings weekly with each first-year student in their first semester (15+ times per semester), in addition to weekly interactions by text, email, phone calls, etc.
- College Success Specialists have in-person “sit-down” meetings bi-weekly with first-year students in their second semester (7 times per semester), in addition to weekly interactions by text, email, phone calls, etc.
- College Success Specialists have in-person “sit-down” meetings monthly with second-year students (4+ times per semester), in addition to weekly interactions through texts, emails, phone calls, meetings, etc.
- For students beyond their second year, college specialists interact primarily through the Career Association, but sit down with students at least once per semester, and continue regular contact through texts, emails, phone calls, etc.

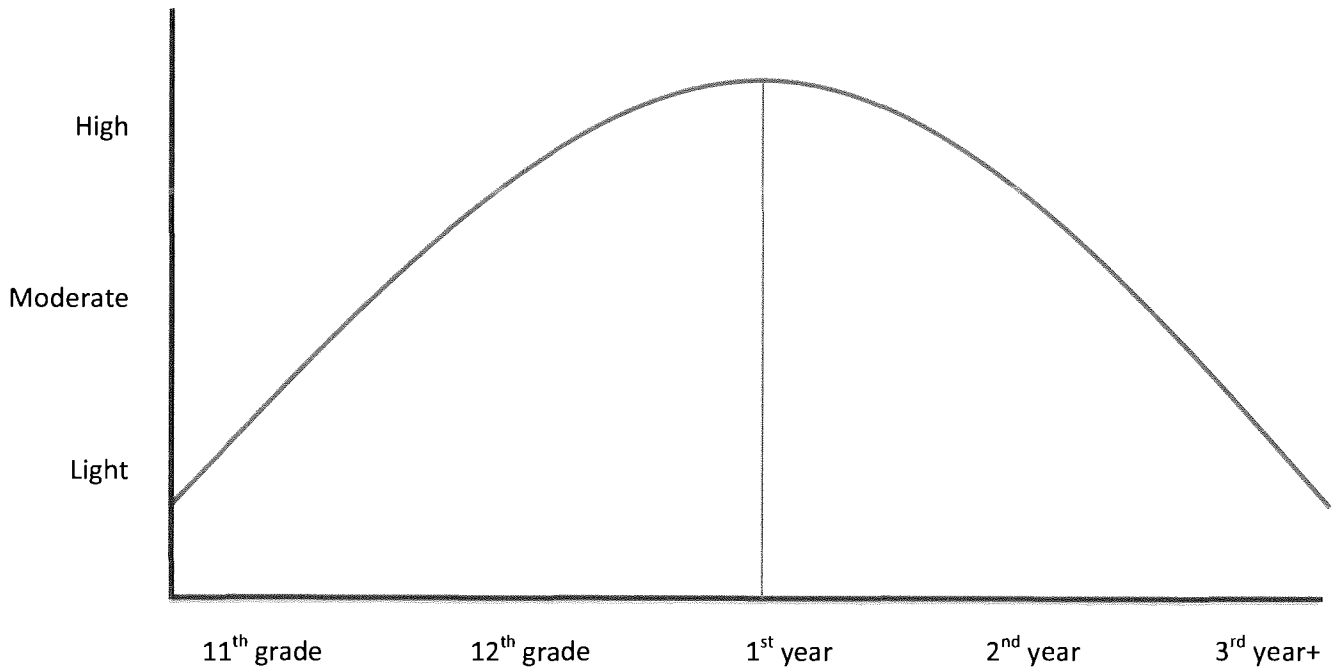
Student Load

Each campus differs in the number of eligible students and their students’ needs. However, a model program will enroll roughly 30-50 first-year students each year. As time goes on, this is a large number of students for one specialist to support, but the progressively decreasing level of support after the first year makes it possible.³ The expectation is that students beyond their second year need support on-demand, and that they participate in CSP primarily through the Career Association. Upper year students who are able will also play an important role in building a JMG cohort and helping less experienced students through near-peer mentoring. The target active student load for a College Success Specialist (i.e., the number students who are engaging on a weekly or monthly basis) is 60-100 students. Similar to

³ Other similar bridging programs range from 60-150 students per specialist, and, while not an exact comparison, the American School Counselor Association recommends counselors have a caseload of no more than 250 students.

the JMG high school program, specialists also follow students for one year after college graduation. Specialists record information on the graduate’s employment or further education situation and also offer advice on a student’s career search.

Level of student support over time



	Before 11th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	1st Year Students 1st semester	1st Year Students 2nd semester	2nd Year Students	3rd Year Students through graduation	12 Months, Post Graduation
Level of Support	<i>Light</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Moderate to Intensive</i>	<i>Intensive</i>	<i>Intensive</i>	<i>Moderate to Intensive</i>	<i>Light to Moderate</i>	<i>Light</i>
In-person interactions with CSS	<i>Site visit / Tour</i>	<i>Site visit / Tour</i>	<i>Site Visit / Tour, Application assistance</i>	<i>Weekly "sit-down" Check-ins</i>	<i>Bi-weekly "sit-down" check-ins</i>	<i>Monthly "sit-down" check-ins</i>	<i>Semester "sit-down" check-in, Career Association</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Other contacts with CSS			<i>Summer melt check-ins</i>	<i>Weekly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Weekly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Weekly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Monthly Texts, Emails</i>	<i>Periodic check-ins and follow-up</i>

College Career Association

The College Career Association is a student-led organization that helps CSP students prepare for careers after graduation. It is a critical component of the CSP and a primary way that the program imparts the career skills needed to find, land, and keep well-paying jobs. It is fully integrated into the program and works in tandem with other retention supports offered by the College Success Specialist. Each student enrolled in CSP is automatically a member of the College Career Association. Student leaders have completed at least three semesters of college.

In their third year of college, students generally transition to the Career Association as their primary means of interacting with CSP and their College Success Specialist. This is an important milestone. While barriers to degree completion will certainly still arise, the transition to the Career Association signifies that the student is changing the type of support they require, from retention services to career services; that is, from a focus on college completion to college success.

Each campus Career Association will be different, but the mission is the same: for all members to develop the competencies and skills necessary to graduate and be employed in a position with career advancement opportunities. Career Association activities are designed to develop, practice, and refine the skills necessary for personal, academic, and career success. The specific goals of the College Career Association are similar to those of the JMG high school Career Association:

1. Leadership Development
2. Career Development
3. Social Awareness
4. Civic Awareness
5. Community Service

Employer involvement is paramount and includes: guest speakers at Career Association meetings; tours of employer workplaces; possible paid internships; and mentorship of CSP students as they search and apply for jobs. Through Career Association activities, members interface with multiple employers to explore careers and better understand employability skills needed to land and keep a job after graduation.

The Career Association also plays an important role in building a cohort experience for CSP students from otherwise individual experiences. Building a cohort in a college setting can be difficult because, unlike the JMG high school program, the College Success Specialist generally does not have JMG students together in a classroom. The Career Association helps bring CSP students together for a common cause, and provide a means for students to mutually support each other.

The College Success Specialist serves as the Career Association advisor and is held accountable for implementing the Career Association and using it effectively to reach its goals. Each Association has a slate of student officers including president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Near-peer mentoring program

As part of the Career Association, a near-peer mentoring program is established linking experienced CSP college students with JMG high school and first-year CSP students. The primary goal of the near-peer (or cross-age peer) mentoring program is developmental in nature; that is, to help less-experienced students understand and prepare for college by building a relationship with someone near their age they can relate to as both a peer and role-model (i.e., someone who is succeeding in college). Both mentor and mentee benefit. Through the relationship with a near-peer, the mentee develops a much deeper and more personal understanding of what college is like and what is needed for success. The mentor, too, develops a set of important leadership, organizational, communication, and relationship skills that employers desire and are “resume-ready.”

Key CSP Components, more detail

College Visits and Tours

During high school, campus tours and visits from a college specialist play a critical role in raising aspirations and building confidence and college awareness for students. The more interaction a student has with a college before they enroll, the better prepared he/she is once enrolled as a college student. College visits and tours are integrated within the JMG high school curriculum. Specific goals are:

- Every JMG high school student will have personal contact with at least one College Success Specialist before he or she graduates, through an in-class visit or campus tour, and will be introduced to the college specialists at all colleges he/she applies to.
- Every JMG high school program will have at least one classroom visit from a College Success Specialist and tour at least one college campus, annually.
- Every College Success Specialist will visit at least 20 high schools in their local area annually (10 per semester), and host at least six campus tours annually.

Summer Melt

“Summer melt” is the phenomenon where a student accepts admission at a college but doesn’t attend in the fall. Some studies have estimated summer melt to be as high as 10-40% of enrolled students, with lower income and first generation college students showing the highest prevalence of summer melt. CSP counters summer melt through frequent interactions with and offers of support for the incoming college student during the summer before college.

- Upon acceptance to college, the College Success Specialist personally reaches out to each JMG student who has been accepted into their college to introduce him/herself and begin a working relationship.
- Each JMG college-bound graduate provides contact information and summer plans to both his/her High School Specialists and College Success Specialists.
- The College Success Specialist provides the incoming college student with the specific benchmarks and deadlines of the college the student will be attending, including:
 - deadline for completing financial aid paperwork
 - deadline for paying tuition and other fees
 - dates of placement exams
 - class enrollment dates

- Using this schedule as a guide, the CSS reaches out to the student at key dates to ensure that the student has the support he/she needs to meet the deadline and stay on-track for fall matriculation.
- The specialist interacts with an incoming college student a minimum of four times during the summer, by phone or text or social media, and at least once in-person on-campus before fall classes start.

Sample Summer Melt Interactions Schedule

Month	April	May	June	July	August
Milestone	Acceptance into college	Benchmarks for summer	Deadline for ...	Deadline for ...	Open class enrollment
Interaction	Phone call and letter	Phone call and email	Text, in person meeting if needed	Text, in person meeting if needed	On-campus meeting

JMG Summer Academy

The JMG Summer Academy is a five-day intensive program for 20-50 rising seniors to experience college-life first-hand, earn three college credits that will transfer to whatever school they choose, and develop valuable skills needed for college success. During the one-week intensive, held at Thomas College, students remain on campus and reside in a dormitory with supervision from JMG staff. The students attend six hours of class each day and attend workshops and cohort-building activities during the evening. Structured study time and tutoring is scheduled as well.

The Summer Academy is likely the first taste of college-life and independence for JMG students. It's also a chance to meet and connect with the JMG College Success Specialists who will be supporting them in the future, as well as bond with other college-bound JMG students.

Students take either Introduction to Computer Applications, a three credit course offered by Thomas College faculty that is approved by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education and transfers as general elective credit to most colleges or a remedial math course, which is intended to help students pass the Accuplacer test and avoid having to take a remedial math course.

Students are nominated by their high school specialists and a selection committee accepts 20-50 students, depending on available funding. Eligible students come from all over the state. To be eligible, students must be in a JMG program; be high school juniors in good standing; aspire to obtain a two or four year college degree; and be the first in their family to attend college. In addition, accepted students will show a solid academic ability and the maturity needed to succeed in college.

Emergency Funds

Emergency funds are an essential part of CSP. For some students, the lack of a few hundred dollars can mean the end of their college enrollment. The emergency funds component of CSP allows students who would otherwise be unable to continue their education to receive funds for emergency purposes. For

the emergency funds to be effective, the guidelines of the program must be clearly communicated to students and specialists. Strong stewardship of the process and funds are imperative. General guidelines are as follows:

- Each CSP student is made aware of the program when they sign the student commitment form, including eligibility and criteria for receiving emergency funds.
- Before any emergency funds are dispersed, the College Success Specialist ensures that financial aid and other financial support services have been exhausted. The specialist is also knowledgeable of other non-college social assistance resources, such as food-stamps and Medicaid, and refers students to these programs if appropriate.
- To be eligible for emergency funds, a CSP student must be actively enrolled in a participating college and be making satisfactory progress toward a degree. It is up to the specialist to define what satisfactory progress means, accounting for the student’s personal situation. In addition, he/she must have signed a student commitment form and agree to financial counseling or other support if appropriate.
- “Emergency” is defined as an expense that is unforeseen, unexpected, one-time, and passes the “but for” test; that is, “but for” these emergency funds, the student would not be able to remain in school.
- There is a \$500 limit on single requests and a \$1500 limit on lifetime requests, unless extenuating circumstances apply.
- A student first applies for emergency funds to his/her College Success Specialist. If the criteria are met, the specialist applies on behalf of the student to the JMG CEO or designee who approves or denies the request based on eligibility and available funds.
- Once the process is initiated, the decision and disbursement of money is within three days.
- Emergency funds are paid only to third-parties (e.g., landlords, medical institutions, etc.) and written records are required (e.g., a bill or statement).

Emergency Funds FAQ

Who’s eligible?	CSP students who are actively enrolled in college, are making satisfactory academic progress, and have a signed student commitment form
What types of expenses are eligible?	“Emergency” expenses that are unforeseen, unexpected, one-time, and would prevent a student from continuing in college
How much money are emergency funds?	\$500 request limit; \$1500 lifetime limit
How long does the process take?	3 days or less
Do emergency funds include cash?	No, emergency funds are paid directly to a third party

Performance Measures and Goals

Data collection, analysis, and reporting are essential to evaluating and continually improving the College Success Program. Broadly speaking, there are two distinct categories of goals that need to be measured: student contacts and student outcomes. Student contacts goals can be thought of as “inputs” to success and include benchmark data and guidelines on the frequency and type of interactions between the

College Success Specialist and students. Student outcome goals are goals for college retention and graduation and measure the ultimate success of the program.

Student contact data and goals

College Success Specialists interact numerous times with their CSP college students over a school year. For each interaction, they record the method of interaction and topic discussed and report aggregated results at the end of each semester. This information is used to evaluate and improve the program and align specialists’ training with the support that students are asking for.

Semester Student Contact Goals

	1st Year Students, 1st semester	1st Year Students, 2nd semester	2nd Year Students	3rd Year Students and beyond
“Sit-down” Meetings per Semester	15	8	4	1
Other Contacts per Semester (e.g., texts)	15	15	15	4
Career Association Participation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

During these interactions, specialists coach and evaluate each student at least once per semester on each of eight competency areas listed below, depending on the need of the student. The CSS tracks and records the method and content of each interaction.

Competencies for coaching and recording student-contacts

1. Career development, including career goals and academic program alignment
2. Job attainment, including resume and interview skills
3. Job Survival, including appropriate appearance and communications skills
4. Basic skills / Remediation, including remedial help with writing, reading, and math
5. Academic support, including help with college-level coursework, study skills, and tutoring resources
6. College Environment, including support for social issues, college rules and procedures, and housing
7. Financial capability, including general financial education and help with financial aid
8. Personal skills, including help with setting life goals, decision-making, personal accountability, and life skills

Methods of student contacts to record:

1. In-person
2. Phone
3. Text
4. Email
5. Social Media
6. Other

Student success data and goals (DRAFT – WORK IN PROGRESS)

The vision and aspirational goal of CSP is that every student in the program will graduate with a post-

secondary credential and find gainful employment in a meaningful career. In the short-term, CSP will be successful if it meaningfully improves the number of students with barriers who stay in school and graduate with a post-secondary credential, career-ready. Two factors affect the design of specific CSP goals. First, because CSP is a bridging program that begins preparing students for college success while still in high school, it will take a few years to see the full results of the program. This necessitates a phased in approach for outcome goals, oriented toward 1st-year retention in the early years of the program and toward both retention and graduation in the later years. Second, the wide variation in success rates across college campuses necessitates the need for campus-specific graduation goals.

- ⇒ Broadly-speaking, in the first phase of the program (years 1 – 3), CSP aims to increase the 1st to 2nd year retention and persistence rates for CSP students to the average of all students in their respective colleges. Because CSP students are by nature students with barriers, this translates to roughly a 10-30% improvement.
- ⇒ Starting in year 4, when most CSP college students will have experienced the bridging component through their JMG high school class, the goal for 1st-2nd year persistence rates for CSP students is 80% across all campuses.
- ⇒ The goal for graduation is to double the percent of CSP students who graduate within 150% of normal time (6 years for 4 year degrees; 3 years for 2 year degrees) by year 6 of the program.
- ⇒ In addition, although colleges don't generally track retention rates after the 2nd year, the goal of CSP is to retain 90% of students each year after the second year, until graduation.
- ⇒ Youth in foster care: A recent study (Appendix B) found that 10.2% of college students who were or had been in foster care graduated college within six years. Working in collaboration with the Maine Youth Transition Network and the recently started LEAP initiative, the CSP goal for youth in care is to double this rate to 20%

1st-2nd Year Persistence Rate Goals

	2014 Retention Rate (all students)	Year 4 Goal
USM	67%	80%
SMCC	55%	80%
UMA	53%	80%
KVCC	68%	80%
Thomas	65%	80%
WCCC	56%	80%
UMM	66%	80%

Graduation Rate within 150% of Normal Time Goals

	2014 6 Year Graduation Rate (all students)	Year 6 Goal
USM	32%	64%
SMCC	24%	48%
UMA	13%	26%
KVCC	39%	78%
Thomas	43%	86%
WCCC	35%	70%
UMM	31%	62%

Outcomes, defined

Retained: A student continues enrollment at the same college from one semester to the next.

Persisted: A student continues enrollment at any college from one semester to the next (including student who transferred to a different college campus from the one they started).

Graduated: A student graduates from college with a post-secondary credential.

Withdrawn: A student withdraws from college, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

The first three categories, retained, persisted, and graduated, are positive outcomes for the student. CSP reports the percentage of each measure on a yearly basis, for all CSP students and separately for first-year students.

Retention Rate = % Retained = # retained / total # of CSP students

Persistence Rate = % Persisted = # persisted / total # of CSP students

Student Success Rate = % Succeeded = (# persisted + # graduated) / total # of students

Looking ahead; longitudinal analysis

The final evaluation of the effectiveness of CSP will be determined by how successful CSP participants are in finding and keeping fulfilling, stable, and financially viable careers. This is a long-term research project that measures outcomes for CSP students over many years, a decade or more. While that analysis cannot be done yet, steps can be taken to allow for such an analysis in the future. Student data should be collected and saved, following all privacy and legal requirements, in a secure database that can be analyzed in conjunction with other data sources on employment and earnings in the future.



**JMG College Success Program
2016 Annual Report**

December 31, 2016

JMG College Success Program 2016 Annual Report



Executive Summary

In the fall of 2015, JMG ran college success programs at seven Maine colleges. Six of these programs were developed in collaboration with Maine's university and community college systems at the direction of Governor LePage and the Maine State Legislature. The seventh program, at Thomas College, was started as a pilot two years earlier and funded by private support. This report is a summary of JMG's learnings, challenges, and outcomes for the 2015-2016 academic year.

- ⇒ **During the 2015-2016 school year, JMG served 284 college students across seven college campuses.**¹ Eligible students included those who were part of a JMG program in middle or high school, youth who are or have been in foster care, and college students who received their GED or HiSET within the last five years.

- ⇒ **85% of JMG college students had a positive outcome.** Positive outcomes included staying in college or graduating. For first year students, 73% remained in school at the campus where they started; 80% are still in college, but not necessarily at the same college where they started; and four percent graduated. On six of seven campuses, JMG students as a whole had better outcomes than the campus benchmark.

- ⇒ **JMG College Success Specialists made an intensive effort to engage with students.** In total, specialists interacted with students through 1,350 sit down meetings; 5,400 emails; 1,200 texts, and 500 phone calls. The structure of the JMG program is modeled on nationwide research that identifies three common elements in effective college bridging and retention programs: academic support; college and career culture; and, intensive supports.

- ⇒ **The need for JMG's approach to college success remains acute.** Disadvantaged youth face significant barriers to college success. For youth in the Maine foster care system who enroll in college, recent research showed that just eight percent of students who started college graduated with a college degree six years later. At the seven campuses that have a JMG

¹ University of Southern Maine; University of Maine Augusta; University of Maine Machias; Southern Maine Community College; Kennebec Community College; Washington County Community College; and Thomas College

program, between just three and 35 percent of students finish their degree on-time; and, between just 13 and 43% complete their degree within six years.

- ⇒ **The most important and critical differentiator of the JMG College Success Program is its connection to our 60 high school programs.** The JMG program is fundamentally different from most college success programs in that we have JMG Specialists on both high school and college campuses and directly support more than 6,000 students in more than 80 schools across Maine, as well as participate in other complementary initiatives with foster care youth, disabled youth, and financial literacy. This organizational structure provides the opportunity for true alignment between our high school and college programs and helps us teach and reinforce college success skills well before a student steps foot on campus.

- ⇒ **Two of the most enduring challenges in our College Success Program are youth engagement and early warning of academic deficiencies.** The colleges we serve have a high percentage of commuter students, and taking courses on-line is becoming more common. This makes engagement and cohort building all the more important, but also extremely challenging. Likewise, the lack of timely early warning systems at the colleges limits our specialists' ability to proactively help students who are struggling academically.

- ⇒ **A top priority in the coming year is to enhance our ability to support students who begin at a JMG supported school but transfer elsewhere.** There are numerous logistical and financial challenges with a persistence- based approach to college success, but the reality is that many JMG students will take circuitous routes through multiple higher education institutions, and we want to support their persistence in achieving college success.

JMG College Success Program 2016 Annual Report



"College success is critical for our students, our employers, and our economy."
Craig Larrabee, CEO & President, JMG

A Brief History of the JMG College Success Program

In the fall of 2014, JMG partnered with Thomas College for our first College Success Program. Two JMG Specialists, housed on the Thomas College campus, worked with former JMG students who were attending Thomas, and supported them as they tried to earn a college degree. At the same time, a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation funded a JMG Postsecondary Navigator position to work with disconnected youth in Cumberland and York Counties to help them find their way to, or back to, college.

One year later, in the fall of 2015, Governor Paul LePage, Senate President Justin Alford, and the Maine legislature asked JMG to expand our pilot college success program to six public college campuses and provided \$250,000 to do so.² JMG matched the state funding with private philanthropic dollars from foundations who shared our vision of helping at-risk students complete a post-secondary credential.³ At the six public campuses, eligible students included those who were part of a JMG program in middle or high school, youth who are or have been in foster care, and college students who received their GED or HiSET within the last five years.

Today, JMG employs nine college specialists on seven college campuses. Working in collaboration with our middle and high school programs, the JMG College Success Program (CSP) is a comprehensive college preparation, bridging, and retention program that starts in high school and continues seamlessly through college. The overarching goals of CSP are to help students with barriers to educational success obtain a post-secondary credential and secure meaningful and financially secure careers. In partnership with Maine colleges and business community, CSP plays a critical role in students' success and can mean the difference between a student completing college or dropping out. We are planning our second annual "Summer Academy" for aspiring college students,³ and are steadily integrating a college bridging curriculum into our 80+ secondary school programs.

The results from our first year were good – roughly 85% of our students are still in college – but there is much work to do. This report provides a summary of the work completed last year with an emphasis on learnings and challenges that we are addressing going forward.

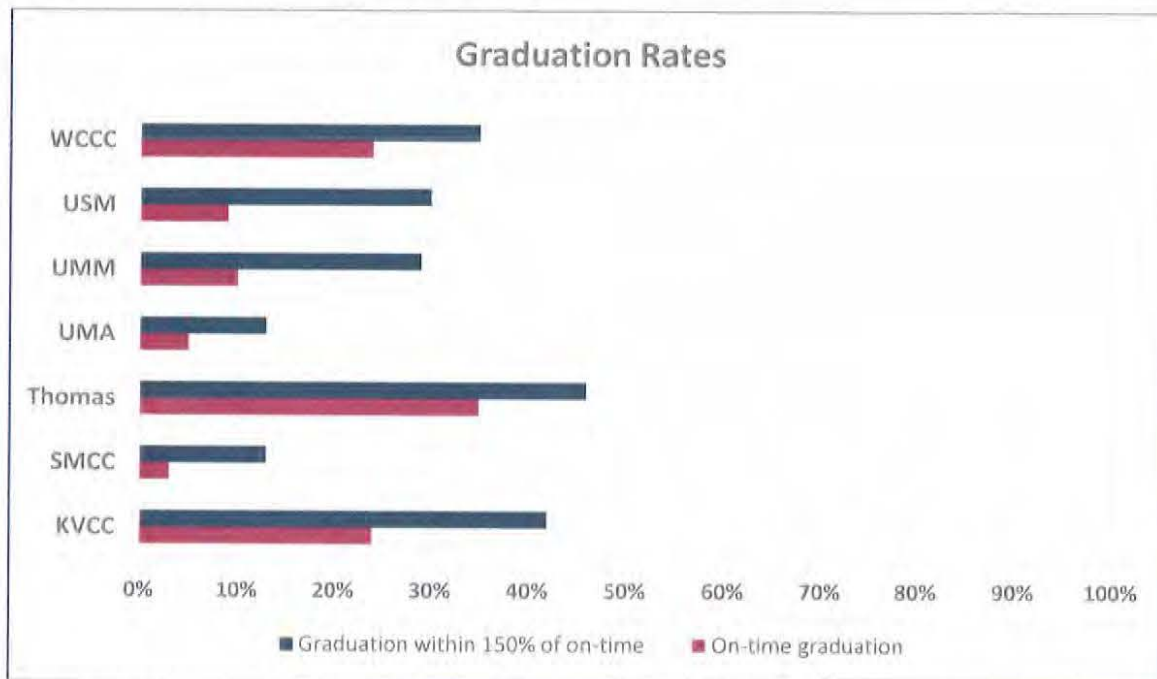
² 2016 Public Law, Chapter 466, An Act To Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions

³ John T. Gorman Foundation; Annie E. Casey Foundation; Balfour Foundation; The Boston Foundation

Momentum is building

There are many reasons why students don't complete college. College is expensive, and for those unfamiliar with a campus environment, it can be a confusing and lonely place. Shifting class schedules make it difficult for students to hold down jobs or find child care. Poor high school preparation places them in remedial classes that eat up precious finances and time. Inches-thick course catalogs leave them confused and overwhelmed, sometimes choosing unnecessary courses that don't move them closer to a degree and a secure career. First-generation college students may have few role models and a lack of guidance and support as they tentatively step foot onto a college campus only to feel overwhelmed and isolated.

No matter the reason, the reality is that many students drop-out of college before completing their degree. And for disadvantaged youth, this trend is the norm: for youth in the Maine foster care system who enroll in college, recent research showed that just eight percent who enrolled in college graduated six years later; at the seven campuses JMG has a college success program, between just three and 35% of students finish their degree on-time, and between just 13 and 43% complete their degree within six years.



Source: IPEDS

These statistics foretell a daunting future for our students in today's economy. College may not be for everyone, but for those who stop their education after high school, the path to financially stable, fulfilling careers is up-hill. Compared to college-degree holders, high school graduates are twice as likely to be unemployed, three times as likely to live in poverty, six times as likely to be on food stamps, have lower incomes and less satisfaction with their jobs.

Economists expect this situation to worsen as more and more careers require a post-secondary credential. Graduating from high school today is like pushing a boulder halfway up a hill. Unless students continue pushing to the top – to a post-secondary credential – they will always risk falling backward. *It is our responsibility as leaders and mentors to ensure that today's youth understand this reality and make informed choices about the role of education in their life and career choices.*

Despite these discouraging statistics, we are on the cusp of improving college success for at-risk youth. Nationally, and in Maine, new resources and funding are being directed to the problem of college success, particularly for first-generation students. Elected officials, philanthropic foundations, service providers, and the colleges, themselves, are coming together to collectively focus on college retention and completion. Momentum is building.

Programs like JMG's are critical in sustaining this momentum for two key reasons. First, no educational organization in Maine has the infrastructure and reach that JMG has gained. The only way to truly affect a student's success in college is to start early, well before a student sets foot on a college campus. With programs in more than 80 schools across Maine and our experience leading other complementary initiatives in financial literacy, vocational rehabilitation for high school youth, and matched savings accounts for foster care youth, JMG has a unique ability to do so. This "reach-back" is a central tenet of JMG's college success program. Second, to turn momentum into lasting system change, it will require the collective effort of many different entities, including some unlikely partners. Alone, elected officials, colleges, advocacy organizations, and philanthropic foundations will struggle to make meaningful progress. JMG is well positioned to coordinate, facilitate, and deliver services through the types of intentional connections and partnerships that will prove essential in creating system-change. Currently, we partner with more than 400 businesses, 76 schools, 30 philanthropic foundations, as well as dozens of local and statewide social service providers.

An Emerging Vision: A Continuum of Support

A vision is emerging for what our College Success Program could become. It is a vision shaped by our experience during the past two years, as well as by independent research that we commissioned on best practices nationwide. In truth, our vision has changed since we started our first college success program in 2014. We began this journey with the idea that our high school and college programs were separate and distinct programs. Today, we have categorically shifted our thinking, and now envision our college success program as a comprehensive and seamless continuum of support that engages students in high school and supports them through college completion.

This vision is, admittedly, a long-term one; it will not be realized overnight but instead through experimentation and continuous improvement. Young adults in college face a myriad of

institutional, financial, academic, and socio-emotional barriers to degree completion, with very little of the social-norms or truancy laws that help anchor kids to high school. To put it succinctly, it is harder to help youth graduate college than it is to graduate high school.

But we are learning, quickly, what the essential components of a college success program are, and how JMG can utilize its infrastructure and organizational structure to be effective. Research shows that most college success programs are based either on a high school campus or a college campus, but very few programs have a physical presence on both. From our research, we learned that the JMG program is fundamentally different from most college success programs in that we have JMG Specialists on both high school and college campuses. This unique organizational structure provides the opportunity for true alignment between our high school and college programs, and allows us to do two important things:

- “Warm hand-off”: When a youth transitions to college, the JMG High School Specialist “hands-off” the support of that student to the College Success Specialist. But this hand-off is much more than a referral; the student has already formed a relationship with the college specialist. For example, the college specialist has likely visited the student’s JMG high school class, given the student a personalized campus tour, and had a minimum of four interactions with the student during the summer before college. In this way, college retention is not starting when the student arrives on campus; it started much earlier, during high school. We are finding that this warm hand-off is especially important during the first few weeks of college, and particularly for first-generation students who have few role models to guide them.
- Curriculum alignment: One of the most trenchant challenges in higher education has been ensuring that when students get to college, their high school experience has prepared them academically and socially to succeed. Because JMG has specialists at both the high school

Case Study



In our first year at the public college campuses, we learned three important but basic things: Our college students did not understand how to use a syllabus; they did not appreciate the importance of corresponding with their professors through email; and they had not developed a plan to pay for college after their first year. These learnings were not new; for years, college students have struggled with these same issues. And yet, the problems persist. This coming year, because of our organizational structure and our close ties between our high school and college specialists, we have a unique opportunity to address these challenges through curriculum changes. We have directed our high school specialists to do three things with their seniors: use a syllabus in their lesson plans; correspond with their seniors through email; and for each senior, develop a two-year financial plan to pay for college. Of course, these curriculum changes will not guarantee college success, but they will position our students in a much stronger position when they arrive on campus.

and college levels, we have the ability to develop high school curriculum that will directly address specific challenges that our college students are facing. Our organizational structure serves as a type of continuous improvement feedback mechanism. If we find our college students are collectively struggling with an issue (for example, an inability to handle roommate problems), our college specialists can provide that feedback to our high school specialists and our high school specialists can in turn address it through curriculum changes (for example, additional lesson plans on conflict resolution). This seemingly simple alignment is a fundamental shift in how college success skills can be nurtured and developed.

The vision of the JMG College Success Program is also one of “persistence.” Persistence is different than retention: a student who is “retained” remains enrolled at the same college the student started at; a student “persists” if s/he remains enrolled in any college, even if that college is different than the one started. Many of our students will take non-traditional paths to college completion, including transferring from the college where they started. Our student-centered vision of a continuum of support means that our work with a student does not end if the student transfers to a different college. To be clear, this is an evolving principle of our program, and one that needs more thought and development. It is one thing to support a student who transfers to an institution within Maine; it is quite a different challenge to continue to support that student if s/he moves to Montana. However, we do have a good model to work from: in the JMG high school program, our specialists currently continue their relationship with a student for 12 months after they graduate high school. Translating our vision of persistence into practice is a priority for us in the coming year.

The JMG College Success Program

The hard work of operationalizing our vision of a comprehensive, seamless college success program is well underway, but not complete. Our learnings from the program to-date have improved our program design and complement our extensive experience helping students graduate high school. The structure of the JMG program is modeled on nationwide research that identifies three common elements in effective college bridging and retention programs:

1. Academic Support: helping students adequately prepare for and successfully complete college-level course work
2. College and Career Culture: exposing secondary-school students to the college experience early, drawing explicit connections between careers and post-secondary education, and helping college students find social success within the college community
3. Intensive Supports: one-on-one, personal support (“whatever-it-takes”) to help students prepare for and complete their college degree

Integrating these elements through curriculum and coaching require different approaches in a high school setting compared to on a college campus. In the years leading up to college, the program helps students prepare for and aspire to college through academic support, campus tours, application assistance, summer intensives, and more. Once in college, the JMG College Success Specialist is the anchor for our program and provides students with a range of individualized services including academic, social, and limited financial support. The College Success Specialist is a JMG employee but also a fully-integrated member of the college with office space on campus and access to students' records and information. Currently, three of our specialists teach a for-credit class, another is a proctor for on-line courses, and all are part of recruiting and admissions teams. In most cases, our specialists serve as official advisors to the student.

The most important aspect of the on-campus part of the JMG program is "intrusive advising." JMG College Success Specialists are not passive advisors; they proactively engage students in order to support them across a range of challenges. The goal for specialists is to meet weekly with each student in their first semester and bi-weekly for students in their second semester. The specialist is also available for any additional support needed, from academic to social to financial issues. The underlying principle with intrusive advising is that the more contact a student has with a trusted adult, the more likely the student is to reach out to the adult when problems arise, and the less likely a student is to fall through the cracks. To be clear, intrusive advising is a high-volume approach to student success: during this past year, JMG College Specialists supported 284 students through 1,350 sit down meetings, 5,400 emails, 1,200 texts, and 500 phone calls.

JMG Summer Academy: In partnership with Thomas College, JMG created and implemented our first JMG Summer Academy, an intense one-week academic and skill-building program for rising high school seniors on the Thomas College campus. Twenty-eight JMG high school students took part in a six-day, five-night college experience where they completed a fully accredited three-credit college course during the day and participated in college survival and cohort building programming during the evening. (The three credits were awarded by Thomas College but will transfer to any college they attend.) Early feedback is positive: all of the students who started the program graduated, and the

Case Study



"In the spring semester, one of my students was pulled over by the police for a cracked windshield and an expired inspection sticker. He didn't have the \$75 to repair the window, but without the car he would not be able to get to campus. When I told him that JMG's emergency funds program was able to pay for the window, he was so happy he cried."

Randy Inosencio,
JMG College Success Specialist, USM

satisfaction survey had stellar reviews for the program. We are planning our second Summer Academy for the summer of 2017.

Emergency Funding: One of our most surprising learnings during the past year was how little money it takes to make a critical difference in a youth’s college success. Over the last year, JMG **allocated** \$4,000 in emergency funds to JMG college students who ran into unforeseen financial situations. The individual circumstances varied, but the general picture was of a student who faced the competing demands of a small unpaid balance on a college tuition bill and an unforeseen living expense. These decisions quite literally meant staying in college without a vehicle for transportation, or fixing the car and dropping out of college. For many of the students that JMG provided emergency funding to, this funding helped keep them in college.

First Year Results⁴

During the first year of the JMG College Success Program, we served 284 students, 85% of who experienced positive outcomes (that is, they are still in school or graduated). This is shown in Table 1. For first year students, 73% remained in school at the campus where they started (they were “retained”); 80% are still in college, but not necessarily at the same college (they “persisted”); and four percent graduated. On six of seven campuses, JMG students as a whole had better outcomes than the campus benchmark.⁵ This is shown in Table 2.

Table 1

Fall 2016 Retention and Persistence

	First Year Students	All Students
Number Served	166	284
% Retained	73%	69%
% Persisted	80%	74%
% Graduated	4%	11%
% Positive Outcomes	84%	85%

⁴ First year results include all students JMG Specialists served. In this first year, JMG’s roster of students differed slightly from the rosters at the colleges because the college’s rosters included all eligible students, even those students who did not participate in the program. Going forward, rosters will be aligned and only include students who sign a student commitment form.

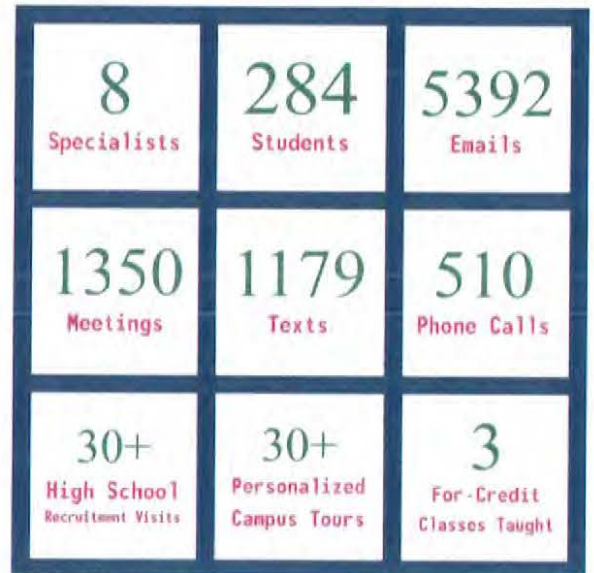
⁵ For each campus, the benchmark is 2014-15 retention for first-year first-time full-time students from the national Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This is an imperfect comparison to JMG students but the best public benchmark available.

Table 2

Fall to Fall Retention and Persistence by Campus

College	1st Yr - Retained	1st Yr - Persisted	Campus Benchmark ¹	All - Retained	All - Persisted
Washington County Community College	100%	100%	56%	94%	94%
Southern Maine Community College	84%	90%	55%	81%	85%
University of Maine at Machias	80%	85%	66%	85%	88%
Kennebec Valley Community College	81%	81%	68%	77%	81%
Thomas College	70%	74%	65%	81%	83%
University of Southern Maine	60%	75%	67%	62%	79%
University of Maine at Augusta	56%	75%	53%	74%	82%

JMG Specialists had 1,350 personal face-to-face meetings with 239 JMG college students (81%). (Our goal is to have face-to-face meetings with every one of our students, but some students were challenging to engage.) Email was a primary form of communication between specialists and students: roughly 2/3 of the personal contact between specialists and students was done through email, and all JMG students received at least one email. About half of students communicated with their specialists through phone and text. Academic support was the topic most frequently discussed with a specialist, followed by financial capability, career development, and college environment.

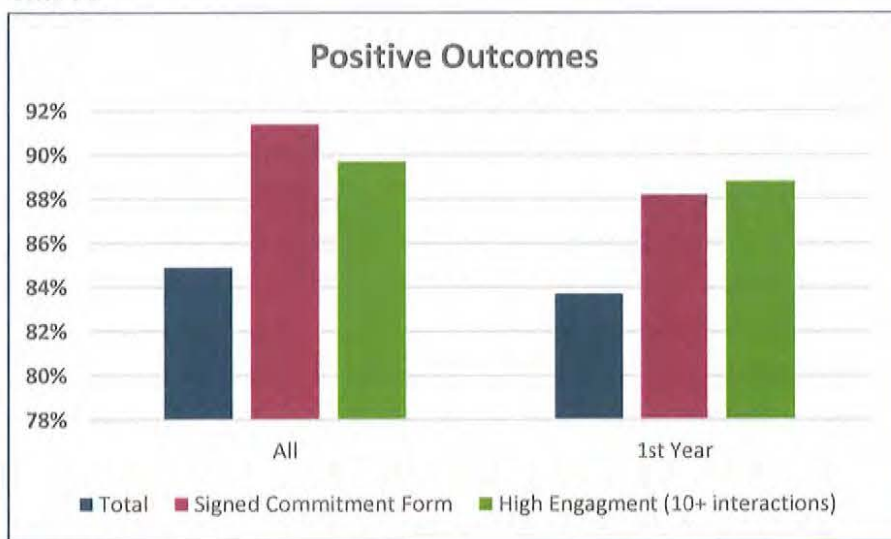


Sixty-one percent of students signed a commitment form with our specialist, including 72% of first-year students. More than 40% of our students were “highly engaged,” meaning they had 10 or more interactions with a JMG specialist. Encouragingly, students who signed a Student Commitment Form or were highly engaged had, on average, better outcomes than students who did not. Five of seven campuses had equal or higher retention rates for students with commitment forms. This is shown in Table 3 and Chart 1.

Table 3

	Total Students on Roster	Signed a Commitment Form	10+ Meetings	First Year Students on Roster	Signed a Commitment Form	10+ Meetings
KVCC	26	26.9%	26.9%	16	43.8%	37.5%
SMCC	72	75.0%	52.8%	57	75.4%	59.6%
Thomas	41	51.2%	43.9%	23	69.6%	65.2%
UMA	34	61.8%	38.2%	16	87.5%	56.3%
UMM	41	73.2%	36.6%	20	70.0%	90.0%
USM	34	67.6%	47.1%	20	80.0%	60.0%
WCCC	36	50.0%	27.8%	14	71.4%	35.7%
TOTAL	284	61%	41%	166	72%	26%

Chart 1



First Year Learnings and Challenges

There is a humility that comes with the work of college success. There are so many barriers to students’ success, and so many competing needs in young adults’ lives, that completing college can seem almost mystical, like something one has heard about happening, but not to anyone they know. While we’re immensely proud of the work that JMG staff at all levels did to develop and implement the College Success Program, and we’re particularly proud that 85% of our students

Case Study



Incentivising Youth Engagement: Through a partnership with the University of Southern Maine, we are now able to provide small financial stipends to a small group of foster-care youth. We have designed “milestones” that a student can earn money for completing. For example, a student can earn \$40 for attending a weekly two-hour study session during the fall semester.

are still in school or graduated, we recognize that we have a lot more work to do. This first cohort, in particular, has a long way to go to achieve college success and will need continued support from JMG and others in order to complete their degree and find a meaningful career. During the past year, there were three distinct challenges worth noting:

1. Youth Engagement: Because of the late timing of the state budget, we had very little time to establish a presence on the six public college campuses. This led to the unique challenge of trying to recruit and engage a cohort of students on campus who were not expecting to find JMG. There were a handful of students who never engaged with our specialists, and there were others who engaged in only a limited way. Arguably, some of these difficulties were unique to the first year of the program and will abate as we develop our “pipeline” of students from our high school programs and offer a continuum of support. Still, this challenge of engaging young adults on campus is a serious one. The colleges we serve have a high percentage of commuter students, and taking courses on-line is becoming more common. This makes engagement and cohort building all the more important, but also extremely challenging. Our specialists have noted that they have very little leverage to engage students, particularly when they are asking the student to go to tutoring or attend a study session.

2. Warm Hand-off: The warm hand-off from a high school specialist to a college specialist is one of the most important aspects of our program, and we have not executed the hand-off in as comprehensive and deeply a way as we need to. This has the potential to negatively affect both our on-campus recruitment and engagement. If students come to campus without a formal introduction to the college success specialist or, worse, unaware of the JMG program, it is challenging for the college specialist to build trust fast enough to begin providing critical first-semester support. In this first year, part of our challenge was culture – high school specialists were not fully aware of their role in the college success program and the importance of the hand-off to the college specialist. And part of our challenge was process – we were not as clear as we could have been specifying the requirements and responsibilities at each level of our organization to ensure a successful hand-off.

3. Early Warning: One of the most frustrating challenges for our specialists was the lack of real-time data on how our students are doing academically. This was a problem for our specialists who needed the information to advise our students, but it

Case Study



“I had been meeting with one of my students weekly all semester. Then I didn’t hear from him for two weeks. By the time I tracked him down, he was failing all his classes. I called an emergency “team” meeting between the student, his case worker, and me. We were able to salvage one of his classes, and withdraw from the others. He is still in school, doing much better. But an early warning system would have been so helpful!”

Kara Boone
JMG College Success Specialist, Foster Care Youth

was arguably a bigger problem for our students who often didn't know, themselves, where they stood academically in a class. Some of our specialists had students who checked in regularly and thought they were doing well academically, only to find out when the semester closed that they had failed a majority of their classes. Some of these students may have misled our specialists, but it was our experience that many of them truly didn't know their status. Regardless, without an early warning system, our specialists were forced to rely on anecdotes instead of data to support our students.

The lack of an early warning system is something that our higher education institutions are addressing, but in the meantime we are taking steps to create our own. We are currently piloting a form that our students will bring in to each of their classes to have their professors sign and then return to the JMG Specialist. The form will serve as a sort of pseudo-early warning system to give both the student and the specialist information about attendance and grades.

Going Forward

The past year has been a learning experience for the entire JMG staff. We have asked our specialists at both the college and high school levels to essentially reshape their role with youth to support them earlier, longer, and more fully, all the way through college completion. This has not been without challenges, but it has also sparked incredible creativity, collaboration, and innovation among our staff and within our programs. With the past year's challenges and successes in mind, we have identified two critical priorities for further development in our second year of our college success program.

Deeper connections with our high school program: Start earlier. This is the overarching conclusion of our work supporting youth on college campuses. The three pillars of college success – academic preparation, social maturity and resilience, and financial planning – must be nurtured and reinforced well before a youth enrolls in college. We are learning the most important elements of a comprehensive bridging curriculum: early identification and resolution of academic deficiencies; exposure to college culture and content delivery; utilization of summers for intense college preparation; warm hand-offs as students transition to college. The challenge, now, is to implement these elements as seamlessly, consistently, and as early as possible in our 80+ programs.

Persistence: Most college success programs discontinue their programming when a student transfers to a different college. And yet we know that most of the youth we serve will take circuitous routes through multiple higher education institutions. Our vision for our college success program is of a student-centered and campus-agnostic program that supports JMG students as they persist in college, even if they change schools. This is easier said than done; there are numerous logistical and financial challenges with a persistence-based approach, and we do not, today, have all the answers of how to do this effectively. Further, we recognize

there are costs to students of transferring colleges; they often lose money, time, and social networks. Our goals will always be to help students choose the right college from the start and remain there once they enroll. Still, if our students do transfer colleges, we want to support their persistence in achieving college success. Developing our persistence methodology and process is a top priority for this coming year.

Testimonials

Students

"It is so hard to get meetings with your advisors, but not with Randy, he was able to see me right away! He helped me plan for the worst and the best. He also had great connections with other staff at the university that were helpful in this long process. I feel as if other advisors or staff give you one choice or one answer but Randy gives me options and opportunities. He is supportive and helpful and if it was not for him I would be clueless about a lot of things. He is very informative, because he is constantly emailing students about important dates and such. I am lucky to have him on my side as well as the other students at the university. I think they need more staff like Randy." – USM Student

"Both Mary-Ann & Lori made a sincere effort to keep in contact with me throughout the year, to ensure everything was going smoothly, and to remind me that they were always there to help me, if need be. With their concern and support, it was reassuring to know there was always someone I could go to get an answer for a question I may have, to get some help with a school project going on, or even just to chat with someone, when I needed it most. In order to maintain good grades and combat stress during the past few semesters, it was certainly helpful to have great people, like Mary-Ann & Lori, there to back me up, with whatever college-life threw my way!" – WCCC student

"This year I felt as though I didn't have a reason to be here or didn't know what to do but they helped me gain a new goal and I'm working better as ever. Also they bring fruit snacks and lots of food, which keeps me coming back." – Thomas student

"I can never forget how they helped me get a scholarship to pay off my bill, so I could get housing. I was almost about to have no room on campus, but they helped me. Not only that, but when I need a talk they are willing to listen. They always care, support, and encourage me to be a better person and to do better in all aspects of life. They are vital people I have met in my journey in college. I thank God for them." – Thomas student

Partners Comments:

“JMG has helped TRIO Student Support Services with its mission by setting an example for community building that can only help TRIO promote persistence and graduation among its students. JMG also contributes student-centered ideas to the Student Success Division at Thomas, which helps to guide how TRIO goes about its work. JMG also helps TRIO with its mission by partnering with TRIO to bring outside resources and co-sponsoring events for students. These events help students learn the skills they will need to persist at Thomas and complete their postsecondary degree.” – Amanda Favreau, Director of TRIO Student Support Services, Thomas College

“JMG is a huge advocate for our mission! You, Matt, and JMG students are ambassadors for Thomas every day. When a student hears that we have JMG on campus they get extremely excited and want to chat with one of the specialists immediately. I think it makes students feel safe and more at home. Parents love hearing that we have a program because they feel comfortable leaving their students in the hands of a JMG Specialist and students feel more comfortable because it’s a sense of community. Moving away to college is scary for a lot of students. This program makes it a little easier for them to make the decision to call Thomas their home for the next four to six years.” – Brittany Newman, Assistant Director of Admissions, Thomas College

JMG Specialists

“The opportunity to guide college level students, both individually and within groups to take on real world challenges and assist them with the many transitions to becoming productive adults, are my most rewarding experiences. – Cory Paquette, College Success Specialist at Thomas College