

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 15, 2022

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
c/o Hillary Risler, Esq.
Office of Policy and Legal Analysis
13 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

The Maine Community College System is providing this letter in accordance with 20-A MRSA §10013. This law requires the Maine Community College System (MCCS), University of Maine System (UMS), and Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) to provide the following information about first-generation college students by January 15th of each year:

- A. Data regarding enrollment of first-generation college students and educational outcomes, including graduation rates for first-generation college students compared with other college students; and
- B. A summary of strategies used, and activities undertaken to increase enrollment and graduation rates of first-generation college students and any available data indicating the effect of those strategies and activities; and
- C. Plans for or recommendations regarding new strategies or actions designed to increase enrollment and graduation rates of first-generation college students.

To meet the requirements of the legislation, MCCS worked with the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy to coordinate data collection and reporting to promote a common framework for determining enrollment and educational outcomes of first-generation college students. Additionally, the three institutions agreed that for the purpose of this report, we would define a first-generation student as one with neither parent having completed a college degree. Each institution determined the level of college completion appropriate to its mission.

For MCCS, a student is first-generation if neither parent has earned an associate degree. For UMS and MMA, a student is first-generation if neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree. For consistency, we are also providing data on MCCS students with neither parent having earned a bachelor's degree.

The three institutions agreed that questions on applications for admission related to parents' highest level of education should provide students the opportunity to be specific about the degree completed by each parent. Since previously this information had not been consistently requested

or collected by MCCS, our colleges revised their applications for new students entering in the fall of 2014.

Enrollment by first-generation college status

Community colleges serve more first-generation students than any other sector of U.S. higher education. According to a 2018 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly half of all first-generation college students attend a community college.¹

Although approximately one-third of students entering two- and four-year colleges in the United States each year are first-generation (as defined by parental attainment of a bachelor's degree), that figure is nearly twice as high at Maine's community colleges where 58% of entering students (1,717) meet this definition of first generation.

The percentage of entering MCCS students who are first-generation has declined in the years since we began tracking this data in Fall 2014. The following table provides an overview of Systemwide data from Fall 2016 to Fall 2021. This decline is consistent with national data. As the percent of Americans with a college degree increases, the share of children who are first-generation college continues to shrink. Nevertheless, MCCS continues to serve a significantly higher percentage of first-generation students than the national average.

MCCS Entering Students	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
Neither parent has an associate degree	47%	47%	46%	46%	44%	42%
Neither parent has a bachelor's degree	66%	65%	65%	64%	62%	58%

Student outcomes

This report details three-year outcomes (150% time to completion) for first-generation college students who entered a Maine community college in the fall semester, 2015 – 2018. The data captures graduation, transfer, and still-enrolled rates using methods consistent with National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting.

Beginning with the Spring 2020 semester, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our students' ability to persist and complete their education, especially those who are low-income, many of whom are first generation. That reality is reflected in the three-year outcomes for first-generation students who entered MCCS in the fall of 2017 or 2018.

The data for the two most recent cohorts (Fall 2017 and Fall 2018) show a slight decline in the overall success rate compared with the two most recent pre-COVID cohorts (Fall 2015 and Fall 2016).

Nevertheless, our colleges remain focused on the student success initiatives outlined in this report and on the impact they have had, and will continue to have, on first- generation and other groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, *Stats in Brief, First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcome*, February 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018421.pdf>.

Three-year outcomes of entering degree-seeking students (Fall Cohorts 2015 – 2018)

Fall 2015 Cohort

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First-generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	24%	28%	24%	28%
Still Enrolled	11%	11%	11%	11%
Transferred	15%	19%	15%	21%
Not Attending	50%	42%	49%	40%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Fall 2016 Cohort

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First-generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	26%	28%	27%	27%
Still Enrolled	11%	12%	11%	12%
Transferred	15%	20%	16%	20%
Not Attending	49%	41%	47%	40%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Fall 2017 Cohort

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First- generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first- generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	23%	28%	25%	27%
Still Enrolled	10%	10%	10%	9%
Transferred	15%	20%	16%	22%
Not Attending	52%	42%	49%	42%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding

Fall 2018 Cohort

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First- generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first- generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	25%	30%	27%	31%
Still Enrolled	9%	9%	9%	10%
Transferred	14%	18%	15%	18%
Not Attending	51%	42%	49%	41%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

The data, disaggregated by first-generation status at each of the community colleges, are included in Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix to this report.

Targeted strategies

MCCS has placed a strategic focus on student success measures designed to support first-generation students and others who traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education and who often face significant challenges in accessing postsecondary education, succeeding academically once they enroll, and completing a degree. These strategies include:

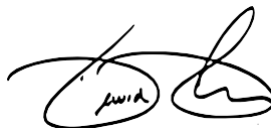
- **EMBARK** (formerly Early College for ME) through the high school-to-college transition. The program works with Maine students who may need additional support as they transition from high school to college and connects them to the career, academic, and financial resources they need for success in and beyond community college. Advisors travel to high schools to meet individually with students and create personal relationships that students rely on during the transition to college. The program's outcomes indicate that the early advising and guidance have a lasting impact, as Embark students who enroll in community college are more likely to return for their second year and graduate on time.
- **TRIO Student Support Services Programs** at each of our colleges. These programs are designed specifically to serve low-income, first-generation college students and offer comprehensive, individual support through academic planning, tutoring, financial aid assistance, financial literacy, and guidance in course selection and registration.
- **On-campus employment opportunities** that allow students to build their work schedule around their classes and provide them with a stronger sense of community and a stronger support network.
- **Intensive college readiness experiences** offered at no cost in the summer before student enrolls in a program of study.
- **Guided Pathways** streamline a student's journey by providing structured choice, revamped support, and clear learning outcomes to help students achieve their goals. At the heart of Guided Pathways is a recognition that the current self-service model of community colleges leads many students to unintended dead ends or unforeseen detours in the form of excess or out-of-sequence credit. The four pillars of Guided Pathways are: clarify the path (creating clear pathways to employment and further education); enter the path (help students choose); stay on the path (support students to stay on their path); and ensure learning (follow through and ensure results).

The MCCS launched this effort through our work on Math Pathways. Math Pathways took a very systemic approach to improving student success and completion rates in math, which is often a critical barrier to success for students. In Math Pathways students enroll in a gateway, college level math course that is relevant to their program of study, rather than the heretofore traditional gateway college algebra course— a course that is now viewed as inappropriate for non-STEM students. The need for remediation has been also reduced and often eliminated using multiple measures to determine student readiness for college level math, rather than using one, high stakes placement test, and using co-requisite remediation in which students who need additional support receive it in real time through linked mandatory tutoring. In the time since math pathways was first launched, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of students successfully completing a 100-level math course and an equally dramatic decrease in remediation.

In addition, MCCS has expanded the number of college navigators, or advisors, at all seven colleges, to help ensure that students—especially those with little experience of college – have the academic and personal supports they need to persist and complete a college degree.

Finally, we remain committed to making sure our colleges are as affordable as possible. Maine’s community colleges continue to offer the lowest tuition and fees in New England.

I would be glad to meet with you at any time to address questions or concerns the Committee may have regarding our students who are the first in their family to attend college.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Daigler', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Daigler, MCCS

President

cc: Pender Makin, Commissioner, Department of Education
Joseph Marro, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor

² <https://completecollege.org/strategy/math-pathways/>

³ <https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/accelerated-pathways-student-success-mathematics.pdf>

Maine Community College System

The source for data in the tables is the MCCS Data Mart. Only first-time and transfer-in students with reported parental education levels are included. Data are self-reported by applicants on the application for admission.

TABLE 1: Fall 2021 Entering Degree-Seeking Students First-Generation Students by College

College	Entering Students #	Neither parent has a(n):			
		Associate Degree		Bachelor's Degree	
		#	%	#	%
CMCC	731	329	45%	456	62%
EMCC	467	194	42%	269	58%
KVCC	326	152	47%	213	65%
NMCC	167	71	43%	106	63%
SMCC	1,085	405	37%	562	52%
WCCC	94	43	46%	63	67%
YCCC	72	35	49%	48	67%
MCCS Total	2,942	1,229	42%	1,717	58%

Only first-time and transfer-in students with reported parental education levels are included in the table above. Fall 2021 total entering students: 3,754.

TABLE 2: Three-Year Outcomes of Fall 2018 Entering Degree-Seeking Students by First-Generation Status

Status	First-generation				Not first-generation			
	Neither parent has a(n):				One (or more) parent has at least a(n):			
	Associate		Bachelor's		Associate		Bachelor's	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Graduated	448	25%	665	27%	633	30%	416	31%
Still Enrolled	163	9%	223	9%	194	9%	134	10%
Transferred	253	14%	383	15%	380	18%	250	18%
Not Attending	901	51%	1213	49%	870	42%	558	41%
Grand Total	1,765	100%	2,484	100%	2,072	100%	1,358	100%

Based on 3,842 first-time and transfer-in students entering in fall 2018 with reported parental education levels. Fall 2018 total entering students: 4,309. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

TABLE 3: 3-Year Outcomes of Fall 2018 Entering Degree-Seeking Students by First-Generation Status and College

		First-generation				Not first-generation			
		Neither parent has a(n):				One (or more) parent has at least a(n):			
		Associate		Bachelor's		Associate		Bachelor's	
College	Status	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
CMCC	Graduated	87	22%	122	23%	105	29%	70	30%
	Still Enrolled	34	9%	42	8%	30	8%	22	9%
	Transferred	50	13%	67	13%	58	16%	41	18%
	Not Attending	228	57%	293	56%	165	46%	100	43%
	Total	399	100%	524	100%	358	100%	233	100%
EMCC	Graduated	61	23%	99	26%	115	34%	77	36%
	Still Enrolled	25	10%	36	9%	30	9%	19	9%
	Transferred	38	15%	60	16%	66	20%	44	20%
	Not Attending	138	53%	190	49%	127	38%	75	35%
	Total	262	100%	385	100%	338	100%	215	100%
KVCC	Graduated	90	37%	129	37%	97	39%	58	42%
	Still Enrolled	19	8%	25	7%	11	4%	5	4%
	Transferred	30	12%	51	14%	44	18%	23	17%
	Not Attending	104	43%	147	42%	94	38%	51	37%
	Total	243	100%	352	100%	246	100%	137	100%
NMCC	Graduated	38	40%	60	42%	54	49%	32	52%
	Still Enrolled	6	6%	10	7%	9	8%	5	8%
	Transferred	6	6%	12	8%	14	13%	8	13%
	Not Attending	45	47%	62	43%	34	31%	17	27%
	Total	95	100%	144	100%	111	100%	62	100%
SMCC	Graduated	108	19%	148	19%	164	21%	124	22%
	Still Enrolled	61	11%	86	11%	94	12%	69	12%
	Transferred	96	17%	144	19%	157	20%	109	20%
	Not Attending	289	52%	390	51%	355	46%	254	46%
	Total	554	100%	768	100%	770	100%	556	100%
WCCC	Graduated	37	49%	57	53%	40	58%	20	56%
	Still Enrolled	1	1%	3	3%	3	4%	1	3%
	Transferred	6	8%	9	8%	6	9%	3	8%
	Not Attending	31	41%	39	36%	20	29%	12	33%
	Total	75	100%	108	100%	69	100%	36	100%
YCCC	Graduated	27	20%	50	25%	58	31%	35	29%
	Still Enrolled	17	12%	21	10%	17	9%	13	11%
	Transferred	27	20%	40	20%	35	19%	22	18%
	Not Attending	66	48%	92	45%	75	41%	49	41%
	Total	137	100%	203	100%	185	100%	119	100%
MCCS Total		1,765	100%	2,484	100%	2,077	100%	1,358	100%

Only first-time and transfer-in students with reported parental education levels are included in the table above.

Fall 2018 total entering students: 4,309. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

More information on First Generation students can be found at: <https://pnpi.org/first-generation-student>