

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 14, 2014

The Honorable Rebecca Millett, Chair
The Honorable W. Bruce MacDonald, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
126th Maine Legislature
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Senator Millett and Representative MacDonald:

Maine Maritime Academy is providing the attached report on first generation college students' retention and graduation rates and programming in response to Public Law Chapter 166 (126th Maine Legislature), "An Act Regarding Enrollment and Graduation Rates of First-Generation Higher Education Students."

To meet the requirements of the legislation, representatives of Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) have been working with colleagues from the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Maine Community College System (MCCS) to coordinate data collection and standardize reporting across all the Maine campuses. The group worked first to define "first generation," and this definition is included in the attached report. Next, the group developed a standardized process for data collection and template for data submission. While MMA has been collecting this data as part of a MELMAC Education Foundation grant reporting process, the other colleges have not, and the MMA data was collected utilizing a broader definition of first generation than the final one adopted by the working group. Thus, the working group decided to utilize a standardized procedure of data collection during the admission process for the first year class enrolling in fall of 2014.

As noted above, the data collected previously at MMA regarding first-generation students utilized a definition of first-generation as proscribed by the MELMAC Education Foundation which specified use of the Federal TRIO Program's definition of a first generation student as a student with at least one custodial parent who did not attain a baccalaureate degree. Thus, a student who has two custodial parents, one of whom does have a baccalaureate degree, would have been defined as first-generation in our previous data collection. Therefore, while some data

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is provided, the report attached focuses more on programming efforts and the process of collecting consistent data for the fall of 2014.

MMA has also been working with UMS, MCCA and the Maine Department of Education on a five-year statewide education and workforce development plan, as mandated by the Joint Select Committee on Maine's Workforce and Economic Future. Many of the goals and strategies in this plan will target first generation college students as well as high school students who might not have considered college attendance. Other initiatives and on-going programs to support first generation college students are described in the report.

Maine Maritime Academy is proud of its high retention and graduation rates for all students and especially first generation college students. Nevertheless, we continue to strive to improve these retention rates as we are well aware of the critical and far-reaching impacts a college degree can provide to a first-generation student and his or her family, siblings and future generations.

Sincerely,

Dr. William J. Brennan
President

Maine Maritime Academy

Report on Status of First-Generation Students in response to Public Law Chapter 166 (126th Maine Legislature)

Public Law Chapter 166 requires Maine Maritime Academy (hereafter referred to as MMA) and the other public higher education institutions in Maine to provide the following information about first-generation college students by January 15th of each year:

1. Data regarding enrollment of first-generation college students and educational outcomes, including graduation rates for first-generation students compared to other students;
2. 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
3. Plans for or recommendations for new strategies or actions designed to increase enrollment and graduation rates of first-generation college students.

Actions taken

July 2013- November 2013- representatives from MMA joined with representatives from the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Maine Community College System (MCCS) to review the legislation and reporting requirements and establish guidelines for consistent collection and reporting of enrollment and outcomes data on first-generation college students. Key decision points: a standardized definition of first-generation college student and clarification that graduation rates are calculated at the 150% standard, which in the case of MMA means graduation within six years (12 semesters) of enrollment.

November 2013 – application materials reviewed to confirm collection of demographic data regarding first generation status of applicants and matriculated students. NOTE: such data is self-reported and presumes applicants have accurate knowledge of their parents' educational achievements. A snapshot of how this data is collected in the on-line application is included in Appendix B.

Definition

After extensive discussion with the working group and the MMA leadership team, the following definition of first generation college student was developed and will be used for data collection for this report for future:

First generation college student is defined as (1) A student neither of whose natural or adoptive parents received a baccalaureate degree; (2) A student who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one parent and whose supporting parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree; or (3) An individual who, prior to the age of 18, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or an adoptive parent.

Data collection

Maine Maritime Academy has collected self-reported data regarding first-generation status of enrolled students since the fall of 2008. However, this data was collected based on a broader definition of first generation student than the one described above that will be used for this report in future years.

The five year average (Fall of 2008-Fall of 2012) of percentage of students who had a custodial parent who did not attain a baccalaureate degree* was **53%** of the overall first-time, full-time baccalaureate student population.

The six year graduation rate of first generation students averaged **65.2 %** over the last five cohorts as compared to the overall six year graduation rate of 65.6% for the same period.

Beginning with the class entering MMA in the fall of 2014, data will be collected to prepare this report annually using the data forms in Appendix A. These forms were developed with the working group to provide consistent and comparable data. Therefore, while enrollment percentages will be available to include in the report beginning in January 2015, six year graduation rates will not be available until January of 2021.

*Using previous definition of first generation student as one who has a custodial parent(s) who did not attain a baccalaureate degree

Strategies

Due to the high percentage of first generation college students at MMA, a variety of programs targeted at prospective and first year students benefit this subset of the overall population. However, future activities will be designed specifically for first generation students and will be outlined in the next section.

Marketing and Recruitment

The Admissions staff at MMA aggressively target Maine high school students to educate them about the opportunities offered at MMA. One strategy is high school visits – including visits in fall of 2013 to 115 of the 143 public high schools in Maine. This strategy brings MMA to the high school, rather than relying on students and their parents to travel to our campus in Castine. This helps to “level the playing field” for first generation students, whose parents may not have the resources or the knowledge to do college tours.

-Discovery Voyage program : Discovery Voyage helps to stimulate students' educational and career aspirations. The highly interactive program challenges students to apply what they are learning in a choice of educational activities. Geared toward math and science the program offers students a tour of college class and laboratories, a view of campus life and a meal in the college dining facility. Students participate in activities in the departments of engineering, International Business, Marine Transportation and Marine Sciences. All of this is offered at no cost to the student or the school that brings the students. Additionally, a transportation subsidy is possible for schools whose students would not otherwise be able to participate. In addition to bringing students in high school math and science classes to campus, the Discovery Voyage program also attracts middle school students, Junior ROTC Units, Sea Cadets and other special interest groups such as the Acadia Institute of Oceanography. While not targeted specifically at first generation students, by bringing entire classes and groups to campus and eliminating obstacles such as travel and costs, high school students without parents with college degrees have equal opportunities to experience the program as their peers with college-educated parents.

Financial Literacy program

MMA partnered with a local bank, Camden National, and the Finance Authority of Maine to pilot a financial literacy program for first year and senior students this year. The first year student program was a required lecture for all first year students and was particularly valuable for first generation college students. The program focused on three topics: credit card debt, the value of a degree and how student loans have a high rate of return in terms of increased earning potential, and the cost of repaying student loan debt if a student fails to complete their degree. The program was well-received by students, and we plan to continue the program each fall. The program for senior students will focus on transitional financial issues such as paying for housing, loan repayment, and a renewed focus on the dangers of credit card debt.

Orientation programs

The orientation programs at MMA are designed to introduce students to MMA and help their parents make the transition from parents of high school students to their new role as a parent of a college student. As the MMA experience is so unique, the programs are designed to give all participants the necessary knowledge to be successful. No assumptions are made that the student already has expectations or advice from parents who attended college.

A key element of the program is a workshop on financial aid and registrar services, as these are often services that are difficult for first generation students to negotiate without the guidance of parents. Orientation leaders, assigned to each small group of new students, encourage questions and share key strategies for learning the way around campus and administrative processes. Academic support sessions also emphasize the differences between structured high school instruction and the expectations of college professors.

The parent program is designed to help parents transition from the role of primary decision-maker and caregiver to a coaching role as their student progresses towards independence. As such, the orientation program is designed to give parents and guardians the tools they need to advise and help their students

learn how to problem-solve, resolve issues, and make informed choices. For parents who are not college graduates, these programs are particularly informative.

Transition Series

MMA hosts a fall lecture series, titled the Transition Series, with topics and speakers targeting their message to new students, especially those who do not have parents who attended college. These lectures are timed to coincide with key decision points for students in terms of behaviors and choices.

Topics for fall of 2013 included:

Andy Stoll

After college Andy Stoll set off on a 4-year, 40-country solo trip around-the-world. Andy went in search of experiences far off-the-beaten path to get a better understanding of how the world works. He handed out micro-loans in China; played a 19th Century British soldier in a Bollywood movie; worked in a dress factory in Bangkok for 60 cents an hour; lived in a mud hut village in Zambia and climbed Mt Kilimanjaro with 10 Tanzanian street kids. Andy's message to students is clear: the distance between who you are and who you want to become, is closer than you think.

Ross Szabo

Ross is an award winning speaker, writer, trainer and Peace Corps Volunteer. Since 2002, he has spoken to more than 1 million students about the importance of mental health and provided a positive example to empower them to seek help. He is the co-author of Behind Happy Faces: Taking Charge of Your Mental Health and a blogger for The Huffington Post.

Jake Byczkowski - ***Solo Cup Culture: Minimizing the Risks of an Alcohol-Soaked Campus Climate***

M. Dickson

Dickson is a stand-up comedian turned author. Her memoir "Dear Dad, It's Over " details M's revelations in the wake of her parents' divorce and puts a unique spin on the perspective of growing up as a custody kid.

C.L. Lindsay ***Computing & The Law***

C.L. is a nationally recognized expert and leader in the field of student rights and academic freedom. He also literally wrote the book on legal problems at colleges: The College Student's Guide to the Law.

Future Plans and Recommendations

Enrollment Management Committee

MMA has an Enrollment Management Committee composed of representatives from across the campus and is charged with continuous improvement of recruiting and retention initiatives. The agenda for the January 2014 meeting of the Committee is focused on first generation students and what new initiatives can be explored to target this population.

Statewide plan

MMA partnered with MCCS, UMS, and the Maine DOE to develop a five-year statewide education and workforce development and plan, as requested by the Joint Select Committee on Maine's Workforce and Economic Future. While not explicitly mentioned as a population, first generation students will be targeted for both college recruitment and retention as a result of the strategies in the plan. For example, some of the objectives and measures in the plan include:

Goal 1, Objective 3

Measure 1 ■

- **YEAR 1.** Continue to introduce Maine K-12 students to MMA through Discovery Voyage programs and high school visits.
- **YEAR 2.** Develop proposals to provide a week-long Discovery Voyage or STEM summer camp program for Maine high school students to encourage post-secondary aspirations in STEM fields among high school students.

Goal 2, Objective 1

Measure 1 ■

- **Year 1.** Continue to maintain the 64% six-year graduation rate and 82% persistence rate from first year to second year.
- **Year 2.** Continue to maintain graduation and persistence rates at present levels while analyzing data on various demographic groups within the overall six-year cohort.

Measure 3 ■ Partnership—UMS, MMA, Lead: MCCS

- **YEAR 1.** By June 2014, host a one-day institute with experts from all three public higher education institutions in Maine to identify best practices in achieving high persistence and graduation rates.

Goal 2, Objective 2

Improve transfer opportunities within and among Maine's public higher education institutions.

Maine Maritime Academy strategic plan

MMA's Board of Trustees is currently developing a new strategic plan. One of the key components of this plan is to ensure that the programs and services currently offered by Maine Maritime Academy are more broadly known within the state. An indirect impact of this branding strategy will be to ensure that high school students in Maine, regardless of their parents' educational background, will be informed of the opportunities available to them at MMA.

MELMAC Grant - 5/50 Project

MMA received a grant from the MELMAC Education Foundation to fund an identification and early intervention strategy for at-risk, first-year undergraduate students at MMA, titled the 5/50 Project. The two-year initiative will leverage already high, campus-wide interest in student retention and our ongoing efforts aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates. At MMA, the students with the greatest attrition risk are on “academic probation,” as defined by poor academic performance. Their six-year graduation rates, which average 34.8%, are about half those of their entering cohorts. The low rates stand in stark contrast to those of virtually every other demographic (e.g. Pell recipients, first generation, ethnic minority, students with learning disabilities) at MMA.

In a typical incoming class cohort, MMA will place roughly 60 students on academic probation during at least one semester of their enrollment. As with retention generally, attrition of students on academic probation mostly occurs in the first year of college. While we have not yet have information regarding how many students on academic probation are first-generation college students, one might assume that this sub-group is proportionately included in the probationary group at approximately the same percentage as in the overall college population. Providing early intervention for *probationary students* at MMA makes sense. Identifying and intervening with at-risk students before they are on probation seems essential to preventing attrition. Moreover, currently interventions for at-risk students begin only *after* they are no longer in good academic standing and thus have a greater challenge in bringing their grades up to academic progression standards.

The goal for the 5/50 Project is to increase MMA’s overall graduation rate by five percentage points, to about 70%, by increasing the graduation rate of students on academic probation by 15 percentage points, to about 50%. Strategies to attain this goal include:

- Improving the Performance Fostering and Decision (PFD) program. Each student on probation is assigned a PFD advisor who meets weekly with him/her to review goals, develop strategies for success, and track progress. Training for PFDs includes utilizing materials from the Gardner Institute for the First Year Experience.
- Incorporate strategies developed through analysis of data gathered through administration of the College Student Inventory (CSI) instrument to all first-year students, including comparison of probationary student data with risk factors identified through administration of the CSI. Highly correlated risk factors will be highlighted to identify new students with the highest risk for probation and intervention strategies will be implemented. These strategies will be developed using the Noel Levitz retention materials associated with the CSI and First Year Experience materials.

B. Snapshot of web application page collecting parental educational levels

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Maine Maritime Academy's application page. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://sisportal.mma.edu/app/layouts/FormServices/parent/location.html?application=UndergraduateApplication>. The page header includes the Maine Maritime Academy logo and the text "A Maritime College of Engineering, Management, Science, and Transportation". Below the header, there is a navigation menu with options like "Review the Admissions Process" and "Current Date : 8/5/2013".

The main content area is titled "APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS" and contains the following text:

Complete each tab of the application. *This form is best viewed in Internet Explorer.*

Fields in yellow and red [-- * or or --] are required for application. You may partially fill out the form and save for later by clicking the [Save Application](#) button below.

Note that the word **Incomplete** appears directly below each tab that requires more information filled in.

Below the instructions, there are two buttons: "Save Application for Later Completion" and "Retrieve Previously-Saved Application". A warning box states: "Application is incomplete, you must complete all tabs before it can be submitted. Please save your application often, as sometimes browsers can be unpredictable."

The page features a tabbed interface with the following tabs and their completion status:

Tab	Status
Enrollment	COMPLETED
Personal	COMPLETED
Residence	COMPLETED
Academic	COMPLETED
Family	INCOMPLETE
Accomplishments	INCOMPLETE
Discipline	INCOMPLETE
Submit	

The "Family" tab is currently selected, showing the "V. Family Information" section. This section is divided into two columns: "Father" and "Mother". Each column contains the following fields:

- Prefix :
- First Name : *
- Middle Name :
- Last Name : *
- Suffix :
- Address Line 1 :
- Address Line 2 :
- Address Line 3 :
- City :
- State :
- Zip Code :
- Country :
- Phone Number :
- Phone Type :
- Occupation :

The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the system tray with a 99% battery level and the date/time: 2:10 PM, 8/5/2013.