

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY

January 12, 2018

The Honorable Brian Langley, Senate Chair
The Honorable Victoria Kornfield, House Chair
Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
c/o Legislative Information
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

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."

Representatives of Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) worked 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. Beginning in the fall of 2014, a standardized procedure of data collection during the admission process was implemented for the first-year class.

First-generation students compose a large cohort within the MMA student body as the Academy has long had a history of serving this population. Our mission and career-focused education are very appealing to students who will be the first in their family to consider higher education, and our admissions staff specifically targets this population as we understand the significant impact college attainment can have on Maine families. My colleagues and I take great pride in our high retention and graduation rates for all students, and have worked hard to make sure our first-generation cohort can be successful at the Academy. It is my pleasure to provide annual updates on our successful strategies to recruit and retain first-generation college students. I would be pleased to address any questions or suggestions you have upon reviewing this report.

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 are self-reported and presume applicants have accurate knowledge of their parents’ educational achievements.
- Fall 2014 – demographic data collected on parental education achievement for the incoming first-year class. These data are available in the table in Appendix A.
- Spring 2014 through Fall 2017 – programmatic initiatives to aid in retention of all students continued and expanded.

- Summer/Fall 2015 – MMA transitions to SLATE Admissions software and the Common App which includes data collection regarding first-generation status. A sample of the data captured through the Common App regarding parental education levels is included in Appendix B.
- Fall 2015-present – demographic data collected on parental education achievement for the incoming first-year class and included in the table in Appendix A.
- Fall 2015-present – data collected regarding retention of first-generation students in the Fall 2014 and Fall 2015 cohort. This data is presented in the table in Appendix A.

Definition

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, as the data collected was based on a broader definition* of first-generation student than the one described above and that will be used for this report in future years, it cannot be compared to the data from other Maine institutions.

Beginning with the class entering MMA in the fall of 2014, data were collected to prepare this report using the data forms in Appendix B and presented in the format displayed in Appendix A. Therefore, while enrollment percentages were available to include in the report beginning in January 2015, six year graduation rates will not be available until January of 2021.

44.6% of the incoming class in the fall of 2017 met the definition of first-generation college student.

80% of the Fall 2016 cohort of first-generation college students persisted to the second year at MMA. Transfer students persisted at a higher rate than first-time students - 92%. 83.5 % of the Fall 2015 cohort persisted to a third year. Our longitudinal data on persistence shows that attrition typically happens between first and second year; if a student, whether first-generation or not, persists to the second year, they tend to persist to graduation.

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

Current Strategies

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 our staff employs is personal visits to the majority of public high schools in Maine. MMA Admissions also participated in New England regional college fairs to which high schools bused interested students. These strategies bring MMA to the high school students, rather than requiring students to travel to our campus in Castine. This helps first-generation students, whose parents may not have the resources or the knowledge to plan travel for college tours.

Beginning in the summer of 2017, MMA restructured the campus visit program to better accommodate families and work schedules with more opportunities and dates to visit. The visit begins with an overview of the institution, a campus tour, as well as opportunities to attend classes or stay overnight with a student host. In particular, the overview session benefits first generation students and families who may not know what relevant questions to ask on a campus tour.

The MMA Discovery Voyage college aspirations program also 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 an overview of the Academy and its programs, a tour of college classes 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 ocean studies. All of this is offered at no cost to the student or the sending school. Additionally, a transportation subsidy is possible for schools whose students would not otherwise be able to participate. Besides bringing high school math and science students to campus, the Discovery Voyage program attracts middle school students, Junior ROTC Units, Sea Cadets and other special interest groups such as the Susan Curtis Foundation and Acadia Institute of Oceanography. While not targeted specifically at first-generation students, this program assists students without college-educated parents by bringing entire classes and groups to campus and eliminating obstacles such as travel and costs. Over 1000 Maine students each year visit campus through these programs.

In cooperation with Maine's U.S. congressional representatives, MMA coordinates and hosts two Service Academy nights each year. We anticipate this program will continue to attract first-generation students who are exploring military service options to fund higher education.

MMA began recruiting through the Common Application in fall of 2015, which streamlines the application process. For first-generation students navigating the application process without the guidance of parents, participation in the Common Application may make the process less cumbersome, as students can apply to multiple schools by completing one application.

MMA Prep

In 2013, the Academy began a partnership program with the Maine Community College System to offer students who did not meet MMA admission requirements to take specific coursework at a MCCS institution. If the student is successful and meets GPA and credit requirements in the year at the community college; s/he is guaranteed admission to MMA for the following fall. At present, we do not have data on the percentage of first-generation students in the MMA prep cohort but we will begin to collect this data for future reports.

Orientation Programs

Orientation programs at MMA are designed to introduce all new students to the very unique nature of our curriculum. While cognizant of the high percentage of first-generation students, we designed Orientation to help all students understand their obligations and responsibilities as well as the resources available to them. We have extensive orientation and training for all of our students as our institution, curriculum and requirements are so unique – thus a parent’s educational background is not much of an advantage.

In addition, the Academy is focused on interacting with the student and interacts less with the student’s parents than our peers at more traditional colleges. Thus, the advantages provided elsewhere to students with overly-engaged parental advocates (sometimes referred to as helicopter parents) are not a factor for MMA students. Finally, because we traditionally have served so many first-generation college students, we do not assume that any of our students have the advantages provided by a parent with a college degree.

The Orientation program was moved to mid-summer this past year (2016) from the previous August schedule. This has allowed more time for students and families to absorb and process information and prepare for arrival in the fall. One unintended consequence was that families of some new students failed to attend the program as their student failed to notify them of the family program. Previously, most families would come as they were dropping off their student to college for the first-time. We have changed our communication strategy to include a mailing targeted at parents for the upcoming summer.

Key components of the orientation program are workshops on completion of the financial aid and course registration processes, as these processes are often difficult for first-generation students to negotiate without the guidance of parents who attended college. Student orientation leaders, assigned to each small group of new students, encourage questions and share strategies for transitioning to campus and understanding administrative processes from their perspectives. 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 that of a coach as their students’ progress 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 to problem-solve, resolve conflicts, and make informed choices. For parents who are not college graduates, these programs are particularly informative. Because some first-generation students' parents or guardians do not attend orientation, we ensure that any information presented to parents is also presented to students. For the first time, in summer of 2016, we recorded the student orientation sessions and made them available online to students so they could review from home with their parents.

Both structured and open-ended bonding opportunities are provided to students beginning with the summer orientation program and continuing into the fall semester. Some of this bonding occurs via social media (see below). New students in the regiment of midshipmen are required to attend Regimental Preparatory Training prior to the start of the Academic Year. This training program helps new students transition into the regiment and build connections. Independent students (those not in regimental majors) participate in a one-day team-building experience designed to help this group bond and make connections within the class.

Social Media

New students and their families also are guided through the transition to MMA via social media and the MMA app. Our Parent Association hosts a widely utilized Facebook page for parents where new parents ask the experts (experienced parents) many questions. Administrators monitor the page and provide information where needed. Our admissions staff invite newly admitted students to join a closed Facebook group for their class where student leaders and administrators respond to a plethora of questions. This helps students in the entering class to make connections and form a group identity prior to the start of orientation. Our Admissions Social Media Coordinator works with the campus and communication department to maintain a social media dashboard to help prospective students, including first-generation and non-traditional students, learn more about the MMA experience.

Transition Series

MMA hosts a fall Transition Lecture Series for new students, with topics and speakers focused on helping students make the transition to college from high school. These lectures are timed to coincide with key decision points for students in terms of behaviors and choices.

Topics in fall of 2017 included:

Transitioning Into College Life - motivational speaker Ed Gerety
Sex Signals – interactive training for Title IX compliance and addressing gender stereotypes
Drug and Alcohol Awareness
Diversity – Get Out of Your Bubble
Computing & the Law
Financial Literacy

Academic Support Services

Academic Support Services offered at MMA include a Writing Center, a Navigation Lab, a Math/Physics Lab, specific course tutoring sessions and individualized peer tutoring in addition to support services

provided to students with documented disabilities. These support services are offered to all students and are included in the cost of tuition.

Early Alerts and Student Athlete Support

The Academic and Student Affairs divisions collaborate to initiate interventions when an “early alert” is received by either division, indicating that a student is not performing as expected. These interventions may be planned via one-on-one communications between faculty and staff or formal mid-term grade reports, or in the Academy’s weekly meeting of key parties involved in student support and behavioral intervention. In addition, a part-time staff member in Athletics is tasked with monitoring student-athlete performance and working with coaches and students to provide necessary interventions in response to alerts.

In addition, the Athletics department offers a specific website for first generation students interested in playing collegiate sports at: <http://www.marinersports.org/information/recruiting/101/firstgen>.

The Athletics department also requires first year student athletes to participate in an on-going transitions program titled InCommand designed to enhance student success and develop leadership. Information on this program is available here:
http://marinersports.org/information/InCommand_Leadership/FirstYearProgramming.

Veterans Center

Many of our students who have served in the Armed Forces are first-generation college students. The Academy opened a new Veterans Center which serves as a lounge, gathering place and resource room for veterans. A student organization also provides activities to assist veterans with transitioning to college and dealing with unique challenges this population may face.

Strategic Enrollment Plan

The Enrollment Management division of the Academy submitted a Strategic Enrollment Plan to the President in spring of 2016. This plan includes not only recruitment strategies but also retention strategies. While not specifically targeted at first-generation students, many of the retention strategies indirectly benefit first-generation students by reducing perceived or real barriers to completion.

Future Strategies

MMA plans to continue development and enhancement of all the strategies listed above. However, assessment of these strategies and data analysis on outcomes of first generation students in comparison to the overall cohort is necessary to determine what strategies are most successful and where gaps continue to occur.

Summary

Maine Maritime Academy remains committed to improving persistence and graduation rates for all students, including our high proportion of first-generation students. Given our high percentage of first-generation students, we are acutely aware of the unique attrition risk factors for this population and

have designed programs and services to level the playing field for these students. We continue to tailor programs and services to assist our students who do not have the benefits of college-educated parents to guide them through the challenges of college admission and matriculation.

Appendix – Data Collection Form

| Cohort | Class Entering | Total Number of Students Entering # | | | | | | | Graduation Rates | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--|-------------|--------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| | | | To 2nd Year | | To 3rd Year | | To 4th Year | | Within 4 Years | | Within 5 Years | | Within 6 Years | |
| | | | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| First Generation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 2014 | 106 | 89 | 84.0% | 88 | 83.0% | 77 | 72.6% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2015 | 115 | 102 | 88.7% | 96 | 83.5% | 0 | | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2016 | 136 | 109 | 80.1% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2017 | 134 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2018 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| First Generation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-time, full-time | 2014 | 87 | 70 | 80.5% | 70 | 80.5% | 63 | 72.4% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2015 | 89 | 79 | 88.8% | 74 | 83.1% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2016 | 111 | 86 | 77.5% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2017 | 122 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2018 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| First Generation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First-time, part-time | 2014 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2015 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2016 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2017 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2018 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| First Generation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transfer | 2014 | 19 | 19 | 100.0% | 18 | 94.7% | 14 | 73.7% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2015 | 26 | 23 | 88.5% | 22 | 84.6% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2016 | 25 | 23 | 92.0% | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2017 | 12 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| | 2018 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |