

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 8, 2020

The Honorable Rebecca Millett, Chair
The Honorable Victoria Kornfield, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
129th Maine Legislature
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield, and members of the Joint Standing 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.

Maine Maritime Academy has traditionally served a large contingent of first-generation college students. The Academy has long had a history of serving this population as we understand the significant impact college attainment can have upon Maine families. My colleagues and I are proud of the high retention and graduation rates we maintain at the Academy, including those achieved by the first-generation cohort. This act aligns well with both our strategic plan goals and our mission to serve the state of Maine and its citizens. It is my pleasure to provide annual updates on our successful strategies to recruit and retain first-generation college students.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or suggestions you have upon reviewing this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "William J. Brennan", is written over the word "Sincerely," and extends across the line.

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 and Fall 2015 – 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 will include 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 -Fall 2018 cohorts. 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, these data were collected based on a broader definition* of first-generation student than the one described above and that is used for this report.

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. These forms were developed with the working group to provide consistent and comparable data. 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.

41% of the incoming class in the fall of 2019 met the definition of first-generation college student.

70% of the Fall 2018 cohort of first-generation college students persisted to the second year at MMA. Transfer students persisted at a slightly lower rate than first-time students which appears to be an aberration from all other years of data collection when transfer students persisted at a higher rate than the overall cohort rate. As the attrition rate for the Fall 2018 cohort was significantly higher than past years, the Retention Committee will be analyzing data to determine if new strategies can be implemented to improve retention rates for this population. 81.7% of the Fall 2017 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.

Strategies

Marketing and Recruitment

The Admissions staff at MMA aggressively target Maine high school students to educate them about the opportunities offered at MMA. MMA Admissions staff visit many high schools and also participate in New England regional college fairs to which high schools bus 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 uses the Common Application, 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.

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, which somewhat levels the playing field for first-generation college students.

In addition, the Academy staff is focused on interacting with the student and interacts less with the student's parents than do 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 is offered in May and June. This allows time for students and families to absorb and process information and prepare for arrival in the fall. 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 orientation program is designed to help parents transition from the role of primary decision-maker and caregiver to that of a coach as their student's 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, albeit in a different format. The presentations are also available online to students, and parents can access them to learn more about programs and services.

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.

First Year Experience

MMA requires first year non-regimental students to take a first year experience (FYE) seminar, with topics and speakers focused on helping students make the transition to college from high school. New regimental students enroll in a required Personal Development course which includes many of the same topics and speakers as the FYE seminar as well as specific topics required to prepare for the training cruises and other aspects of training for the unlimited Coast Guard license.

Topics in fall of 2019 included:

Ed Gerety is an author and one of the top professional youth speakers and leadership trainers in the United States. Through his personal experiences, inspirational stories, and powerful lessons, Ed teaches the life skills that are essential for our youth to develop as leaders in school and in life. These skills include respect, character, gratitude, leadership, attitude, and making a difference.

Speak About It empowers students to foster healthier relationships and build healthier communities by directly addressing issues of consent, sexual assault prevention, and bystander intervention. A performance-based program provides young people with the tools to speak openly and honestly about sex and sexuality. The powerful and thought-provoking show is composed of true stories from real students, and shares wisdom from an array of experiences and perspectives. It highlights inclusive and diverse identities and real, practical strategies for sexual assault prevention. They seek to validate students' experiences and inspire them to create change on their campuses.

Financial Literacy: Peter Bielagus

Peter leads students on a hilarious tour of the money maze. In this interactive program, Peter introduces a series of

“start now” strategies that help students manage their debt, control their spending, protect their identities and increase their credit scores, all without ever getting a credit card.

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.

New Initiatives

The Academy is currently reviewing retention and attrition data to identify defining characteristics of students most likely to be retained as well as those who do not persist. Our Enrollment Management Committee will then develop several strategies to target the groups that are least likely to persist due to academic challenges with the goal of raising and stabilizing retention rates above 80% from first to second year. First generation status is definitely a category which warrants further analysis. These strategies will be incorporated into a new Strategic Enrollment Management plan for the next five years, and we will report on the success of the strategies in future reports.

Summary

Maine Maritime Academy remains committed to improving persistence and graduation rates for all students, including our high proportion of first-generation students. We are acutely aware of the unique attrition risk factors for this population and have designed programs and services to assist 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 enrollment.

Appendices

A. 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%	47	44.3%	65	61.3%	0	-
	2015	115	102	88.7%	96	83.5%	83	72.2%	53	46.1%	0	-	0	-
	2016	136	109	80.1%	103	75.7%	94	69.1%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2017	131	107	81.7%	93	71.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2018	100	70	70.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	119	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2022	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2023	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

First Generation														
First-time, full-time	2014	87	70	80.5%	70	80.5%	63	72.4%	39	44.8%	53	75.7%	0	-
	2015	89	79	88.8%	74	83.1%	69	77.5%	45	50.6%	0	-	0	-
	2016	111	86	77.5%	84	75.7%	80	72.1%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2017	115	92	80.0%	77	67%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2018	91	65	71.4%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	102	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2022	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2023	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	1	0	0%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

	2020	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2022	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2023	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

First Generation														
Transfer	2014	19	19	100.0%	18	94.7%	14	73.7%	8	42.1%	11	57.9%	0	-
	2015	26	23	88.5%	22	84.6%	14	53.8%	7	26.9%	0	-	0	-
	2016	25	23	92.0%	19	76.0%	14	56.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2017	16	15	93.8%	16	100%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2018	8	5	62.5%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	17	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2022	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2023	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

B. Data Captured in the Application Process Regarding Parental Education Levels:

Parent 1 type:

Is parent 1 living?

Prefix

First/Given name

Middle initial

Last/Family/Surname

Former last/family/surname (if any)

Suffix

Country of birth

Preferred email

Preferred phone

Preferred phone number

Parent 1 address

Occupation (former occupation, if retired)

Employment status

Position/Title

Parent is employed by or retired from a college or university

Employer lookup

Education level

Total number of institutions attended 1

College lookup

Number of degrees your parent received from this college

Degree received

Year received

Education Level dropdown includes:

None

Some grade school
Completed grade school
Some high school
Graduated high school
Some trade school
Graduated Trade school
Some college
Graduated College
Graduate school

IF **Education Level** = Graduated college:

dropdown asks:

Degree Received:

AA/AS BA/BS MA/MS JD MD PhD etc