

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 4, 2021

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 Representative Brennan, Senator Daughtry, 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 (126<sup>th</sup> 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 black ink, appearing to read "W. Brennan", written over a white background.

Dr. William J. Brennan  
President

# Maine Maritime Academy

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

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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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 2019 cohorts. This data is presented in the table in Appendix A.
- January 2021 – six year graduation data for the cohort available for the first year.

## 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. Six year graduation rates are available for the first time in the fall of 2020. These six year graduation rates are based on the definitions required by [The National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#).

40% of the incoming class in the fall of 2020 met the definition of first-generation college student. This is just one percentage point lower than the cohort in the fall of 2019.

78% of the Fall 2019 cohort of first-generation college students persisted to the second year at MMA, an 8 % increase over the previous year. 62% of the Fall 2018 cohort persisted to a third year. The Fall 2018 has had higher rates of attrition for this population than all other years and we continue to analyze data to determine what caused the outlier patterns in this class. 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. Of the cohort which entered MMA in fall of 2014, 75.7% of the first time freshmen graduated within six years. Within that class, the First Gen (State of Maine) 6 Year GR Rate for FTF is 75.7%, the First Gen (State of Maine) 6 Year GR Rate for Transfers is 57.9%, and the First Gen (State of Maine) 6 Year GR Rate TOTAL (FTF and Transfers) is 61.3%.

\*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. While these visits to high schools and in-person college fairs are on hold due to the pandemic, Admissions staff and guidance counselors have arranged for virtual visits for students to meet with Admissions staff.

MMA's campus visit program provides families with more opportunities and dates to visit campus than had occurred in the past. 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. These tours have continued on a limited basis during the fall of 2020.

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. 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 visited campus through these programs. This program is on hold until it is safe for such programs to resume.

In cooperation with Maine's U.S. congressional representatives, MMA coordinates and hosts two Service Academy nights each year. This program continues to attract first-generation students who are exploring military service options to fund higher education. This event was held virtually in the fall of 2020.

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 different from typical universities, 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. This is due to the nature of their field experiences right after their first year on campus. 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 offered virtually in the summer of 2020. We did not have as many parent participants as usual and are not able to determine what influenced their lack of participation. We plan to resume in person orientations when it is safe to do so; however, we will also offer virtual programming for those unable to visit in person.

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. As we think of transitioning back to an on-campus program, we will continue to offer virtual/remote Orientation programs for students and parents, which will again provide access to more families, including those with limited ability to miss work or pay for travel for orientation.

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 (RPT) 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. While we could not offer the team-building experience to the independent students this fall due to COVID restrictions, we were able to restructure the RPT experience into smaller groups and thus all were able to participate.

### *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. In the fall of 2020, we were unable to bring speakers to campus for large events due to COVID-19 restrictions but plan to resume these programs when it is safe to do so.

### *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. Many of these services were offered remotely in the fall of 2020.

### *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*

While the Academy is in the process of developing a new Strategic Enrollment Management plan to guide enrollment and retention efforts for the future, this process was put on hold due to the pressing needs of developing plans to address the pandemic. Planning will resume in January of 2021.

## **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 are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on college-planning, especially as the number of completed FAFSA forms has decreased significantly this year, at least among the national cohort, and thus are planning additional outreach activities to connect with prospective 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 Collected

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	
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>First Generation</b>														
<b>TOTAL</b>	2014	106	89	84.0%	88	83.0%	77	72.6%	47	44.3%	65	61.3%	65	61.3%
	2015	115	102	88.7%	96	83.5%	83	72.2%	53	46.1%	66	57.4%	0	-
	2016	136	109	80.1%	103	75.7%	94	69.1%	68	50.0%	0	-	0	-
	2017	131	107	81.7%	93	71.0%	89	67.9%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2018	100	70	70.0%	61	61.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	119	93	78.1%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	102	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>First Generation</b>														
<b>First-time, full-time</b>	2014	87	70	80.5%	70	80.5%	63	72.4%	39	44.8%	53	75.7%	53	75.7%
	2015	89	79	88.8%	74	83.1%	69	77.5%	45	50.6%	57	64.0%	0	-
	2016	111	86	77.5%	84	75.7%	80	72.1%	55	49.5%	0	-	0	-
	2017	115	92	80.0%	77	67.0%	76	66.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2018	91	65	71.4%	56	61.5%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	102	80	78.4%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	87	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>First Generation</b>														
<b>First-time, part-time</b>	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	-	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%	11	57.9%
	2015	26	23	88.5%	22	84.6%	14	53.8%	7	26.9%	9	34.6%	0	-
	2016	25	23	92.0%	19	76.0%	14	56.0%	13	52.0%	0	-	0	-
	2017	16	15	93.8%	16	100.0%	13	81.3%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2018	8	5	62.5%	5	100.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	17	13	76.5%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	15	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 is

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

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