

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 4, 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 Representative Brennan, Senator Rafferty, 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. Since 2014, a standardized procedure of data collection during the admission process has been utilized to collect this information.

Maine Maritime Academy has traditionally served a large contingent of first-generation college students due to our unique curriculum. The Academy has a goal of serving this population as we understand the significant benefits of college attainment for 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 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, appearing to read 'William J. Brennan', is written over a blue horizontal 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 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 \(IPEDS\)](#).

44% of the incoming class in the fall of 2021 met the definition of first-generation college student. This is four percentage points higher than the cohort in the fall of 2020.

80.2% of the Fall 2020 cohort of first-generation college students persisted to the second year at MMA, a 2.1% increase over the previous year. 66.9% of the Fall 2019 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. Of the cohort which entered MMA in fall of 2015, 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 69.7%, the First Gen (State of Maine) 6 Year GR Rate for Transfers is 65.4%, and the First Gen (State of Maine) 6 Year GR Rate TOTAL (FTF and Transfers) is 68.7%.

*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 largely 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. We have been able to re-institute campus visits for prospective students under our current COVID-19 safety guidelines. In addition, while prospective families are on campus for a visit, they have an opportunity to sit down with a representative from the Financial Aid Office to ask questions or learn more about the options that might be available to them. The Financial Aid Office and members of the Admissions team have over the past few months regularly provided Admissions and Financial Aid virtual webinars for families and students in an effort to increase access for all students.

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 prior to the pandemic and we have cautiously reintroduced the program as vaccination rates and case counts allow.

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. In addition, the Academy promotes the Strategic Sealift Midshipmen Program which commissions Navy Reserve Officers following completion of a specified undergraduate course of study and earning an unlimited US Coast Guard License.

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. Maine Maritime Academy has also recently joined the Coalition for College, which is an organization whose mission is to support lower-income, under-resourced, and/or first-generation students. Membership in the Coalition for College is predicated on an institution's demonstrated proven commitment to graduating students on time, as well as increasing access, affordability and student success.

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 most 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 in 2021 was offered as a hybrid - with both on campus and virtual experiences. As with last summer, we did not have as many parent participants as usual and are not able to determine what influenced their lack of participation.

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 continue to transition back to more on-campus activities, 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 staff 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 2021, 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.

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 and Pandemic Impact

The pandemic and transition to remote learning over the past two years has had many negative impacts on our new students and prospective students. Access to guidance counselors and admissions counselors was limited and many high school students had to work independently on their college search. Math instruction was not as effective – which impacted students’ preparation for our math-intensive curriculum. Students did not meet deadlines or were late in applying, which impacted their ability to receive scholarships. Undoubtedly, first generation students were more impacted by these trends than those whose parents were more familiar with the application process. 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. The new plan will incorporate strategies based on current circumstances. Planning resumed with the hire of new Vice President for Enrollment Management in the fall 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 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%	65	61.3%
	2015	115	102	88.7%	96	83.5%	83	72.2%	53	46.1%	75	62.5%	79	68.7%
	2016	136	109	80.1%	103	75.7%	94	69.1%	68	50.0%	86	63.2%	0	-
	2017	131	107	81.7%	93	71.0%	89	67.9%	59	50.0%	0	-	0	-
	2018	100	70	70.0%	60	60.0%	56	56.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	119	93	78.1%	79	66.9%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	101	81	80.2%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	101	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%	53	75.7%
	2015	89	79	88.8%	74	83.1%	69	77.5%	45	50.6%	59	66.3%	62	69.7%
	2016	111	86	77.5%	84	75.7%	80	72.1%	55	49.5%	64	57.6%	0	-
	2017	115	92	80.0%	77	67.0%	76	66.0%	47	40.9%	0	-	0	-
	2018	83	59	71.8%	49	59.0%	48	57.8%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	101	80	79.2%	68	67.3%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	86	67	77.9%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	81	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	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%	16	61.5%	17	65.4%
	2016	25	23	92.0%	19	76.0%	14	56.0%	13	52.0%	22	88.0%	0	-
	2017	16	15	93.8%	16	100.0%	13	81.3%	12	75.0%	0	-	0	-
	2018	17	11	62.5%	11	64.7%	8	47.0%	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2019	17	13	76.5%	11	64.7%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2020	15	14	93.3%	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
	2021	20	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:Father
 Is parent 1 living?Yes
 Prefix Mr.
 First/Given name the man
 Middle initial c
 Last/Family/Surname wright
 Former last/family/surname (if any)
 Suffix
 Country of birth United States of America
 Preferred email cicket@myfairpoint.net
 Preferred phone Home
 Preferred phone number+1.207-667-1XXX
 Parent 1 address is the same as my home address
 Occupation (former occupation, if retired) College administrator/staff
 Employment status Employed
 Position/Title director
 Parent is employed by or retired from a college or university Yes
 Employer lookup Maine Maritime Academy Pleasant Street Castine, ME 04420USA2-year or community college CEEB Code: 3505
 Education level Graduated from college/university
 Total number of institutions attended 1
 College lookup University of Maine168 College Avenue Orono, ME 04469USA
 4-year college or university CEEB Code: 3916

Number of degrees your parent received from this college 1

Degree received Bachelors (BA, BS)

Year received 1980

Education Level dropdown includes:

None

Some grade school

Completed grade school

Some high school

Graduated high school

Some trade school

Grdaduated 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