

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 5, 2017

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
128th Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

In accordance with Public Law 2013, Chapter 166 (126th Maine Legislature), “An Act Regarding Enrollment and Graduation Rates of First Generation Higher Education Students,” the University of Maine System is providing this letter and the attached summary in response to this legislation. As you know, this law requires the University of Maine System (UMS), Maine Community College System (MCCS) and Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) to provide the following information about first generation students by January 15th of each year:

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

In order to meet the requirements of the legislation in a consistent way, the University of Maine System worked with the Maine Community College System and Maine Maritime to coordinate data collection and reporting in order to ensure that our reporting of enrollment and outcomes are presented in a similar form and format across all campuses.

Collectively, we agreed that our definition, for the purpose of this report, would be that for a student to be a first-generation student, neither parent would have *completed* a college degree. Each institution determined what level of degree was most appropriate to its mission; in the case of the UMS, a first-generation college student is a student neither of whose parents has earned a bachelor's degree.

For 2016, we are providing statistics for students who entered one of our institutions in Fall 2016 divided by campus and first-time or transfer status, and additionally are providing data for the entire cohort as well as those who are attending full time (Table 1). We are also providing corresponding information for the students who entered in Fall 2015 and Fall 2014 (Tables 2 and 3). Our percent of first generation students has remained fairly consistent over the past three reporting cycles:

	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
Neither parent has a bachelor's degree (all students):	43.7%	42.9%	44.4%
Neither parent has a bachelor's degree (full time students):	42.2%	41.6%	42.0%

Educational outcomes, including graduation rates for first-generation students compared with the entire population, will be provided at the 150% time to completion (6 years), consistent with NCES IPEDS reporting. The first cohort for which we would provide this additional information would be the 2014 cohort (reporting in 2020).

Attached you will find a summary of the kinds of initiatives in place on our campuses related to recruiting and retaining first-generation students.

If you should have any questions or concerns related to the attached report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

James H. Page
Chancellor

University of Maine System

Response to Public Law 2013, Chapter 166, 126th Maine Legislature “An Act Regarding Enrollment and Graduation Rates of First-Generation Higher Education Students”

January 15, 2017

Overview of the Legislation and Data Collection

Public law Chapter 166 requires the University of Maine System (UMS), Maine Community College System (MCCS) and Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) to provide the following information about first-generation college students by January 15th of each year:

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

In order to meet the requirements of the legislation in a consistent way, between July and November of 2013, the University of Maine System worked with the Maine Community College System and Maine Maritime to coordinate data collection and reporting in order to ensure that our reporting of enrollment and outcomes are presented in a similar manner and format across all campuses.

Collectively, we agreed that our definition, for the purpose of this report, would be that for a student to be a first-generation student, neither parent would have *completed* a college degree. Each institution determined what level of degree was most appropriate to its mission; in the case of the UMS, a first-generation college student is a student *neither of whose parents has earned a bachelor's degree*. Further, we will report on both first time and transfer degree seeking students, beginning with the Fall 2014 cohort. Finally, when reporting graduation, we will report graduation up to the 150% standard (up to six years). The first cohort for which we would provide this additional information would be the 2014 cohort (reporting in 2020).

We also worked together to determine how best to collect information related to first-generation status going forward and agreed that the admissions applications were the appropriate venue for this. Our admissions applications were revised to incorporate questions that are more specific about the degree level completed by each parent but these changes did not go into effect until February 2014, for the class entering Fall 2014.

For 2016, we are providing statistics for students who entered one of our institutions in Fall 2016 divided by campus and first-time or transfer status, and additionally are providing data for the entire cohort as well as those who are attending full time (Table 1). We are also providing corresponding information for the students who entered in Fall 2015 and Fall 2014 (Table 2 and 3). Our percent of first generation students has remained fairly consistent over the past three reporting cycles:

	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
Neither parent has a bachelor’s degree (all students):	43.7%	42.9%	44.4%
Neither parent has a bachelor’s degree (full time students):	42.2%	41.6%	42.0%

A Brief Summary of Strategies Used and Activities Undertaken to Recruit, Retain and Graduate First-Generation College Students

First-Generation students are present at all universities within the University of Maine System, representing approximately 44% of the entire entering class (42% of those attending full time) in Fall 2016. While these students come from all demographic groups, research indicates that they are more likely to be from low income families, and may be female, older and with dependent children. Typically, they are academically less well prepared, lack essential learning skills, have lower aspirations for success and often perceive a lack of support from their family, friends or “significant others.” When considering attending college, they can find the application process overwhelming and many times view a bachelor’s degree as too ambitious a goal. Once they do enroll, they tend to achieve lower first semester GPAs, are more likely to drop or stop out, are more likely to commute, attend part-time and work full-time, have difficulty integrating into the academic culture and have lower self esteem.¹ Clearly, developing and implementing a range of support services for these students both as they apply for college and ultimately attend is extremely important in enhancing their opportunities for success. The Universities of the University of Maine System have chosen to approach how to best identify and serve these students in a variety of ways.

¹ <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/portals/0/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/documents/first-gen.pdf>

Overarching Programs and Services which Benefit All Students

Because each institution within the University of Maine System has a relatively large percentage of first-generation students, many programs and services that are provided for all students also assist this sub-category of students. It is important to remember that in addition to the wide range of services and supports available on each campus, additional supports and services which complement and supplement what occurs on campus are available at the University College centers of the University of Maine System (e.g., Rockland, Ellsworth, Rumford, Bath/Brunswick, Saco, etc.) – this gives expanded access to potential and current students and their families to these important supports.

Marketing and Recruitment – Admissions staff at UMS universities work extensively with every high school in Maine to ensure that students know about the programs and services they offer. Through publications, social media and on line literature, through visits to the high schools, attendance at college fairs, presentations at workshops and at guidance events, campus visits by high schools (and a growing number of middle schools), and through open houses, discovery days and other special on-campus events, students interested in college learn about our universities. Several universities offer special summer programs for incoming students that enable them to address academic deficiencies or get a head start on their college career. UMFK and UMM both offer summer bridge programs which work with any at-risk student prior to their first semester of enrollment in addressing needs within developmental course work and skills essential to college success. UM reaches out to students who were in care (foster students, wards of the state and emancipated minors) to support them in the transition to college. USM, UMM and UMA are all working with Jobs for Maine’s Graduates (JMG) in providing further supports for the students JMG serves (many of whom are first-generation) who are attending one of these institutions, and JMG also has college and career specialists embedded on these campuses to provide further support for these students. UMM is working with Family Futures Downeast, a grant funded two-generation program dedicated to first-generation adult learners and their young children (this has been recognized by the White House as one of ten Rural IMPACT centers nationwide).

All of our campuses participate in the Aspirations program, Early Study programs (including Bridge programs) and Dual/Concurrent Enrollment programs which encourage high school students to enroll in college level coursework and get a head start on their higher education aspirations. Faculty, student success staff and others are very involved in the delivery of these

programs and are developing a number of support initiatives for students enrolled in these programs. As an example, UMA implemented an awards ceremony for its Bridge Program students which recognized the success of the students at an on campus event.

In addition, our admissions staff, transfer affairs staff, University College outreach staff and others work with organizations such as Maine Adult Education in general and the College Transitions program specifically, New Ventures Maine (formerly known as Women, Work and Community), the Next Step Maine Employers' Initiative, various veterans' organizations, other employer-based organizations and other community organizations to reach out to adult students who may be interested in either attending college for the first time or returning to college after a long absence. Better addressing the needs of this population and helping them return to college is a fundamental component of our 2013 report and recommendations, "*Adult Baccalaureate Completion Distance Education Report*" which is currently being implemented at all of our campuses.

Recognizing that many new students and most specifically first-generation students are often unfamiliar with deadlines for admissions, financial aid and course registration, all campuses have preferred but also rolling deadlines for admission and provide support throughout the cycle for students who may apply late. Several campuses have late start "mini-sessions" that can enable late applicants to initiate coursework in a timely way.

Orientation – All campuses offer a range of orientation programs during the summer and at the start of each semester whose goal is to acquaint the student with the campus, with important policies and procedures, with their program and faculty and with each other. All encourage parents and significant others to join the student at the orientation and separate programming is provided to help them prepare for and support their student's entry into higher education. Many campuses offer an overnight residential orientation in addition to the more program-oriented orientation; this affords students who will be living on campus the opportunity to learn more about residence hall living, meet the other students and staff with whom they will be living, learn more about how to get help when they need it, etc. UMA is developing an online new student orientation program which will enable all students, including those at a distance, to participate in a program. The goal of any orientation is to begin that important process of helping a new student connect to and engage in campus life. In addition to orientations at the beginning of school, all campuses host many fairs during the first week where students can learn more about clubs, community organizations, athletic activities, and other extracurricular activities in which they can participate.

Programs and Services Provided During Enrollment and Beyond

Once a student is enrolled within any institution of the UMS, a range of programs, services and supports are in place for them including but not limited to:

- *Academic advising* – Academic advising helps a student successfully progress within the major of their choice, assists when the major is not the correct “fit”, works with the student when they have other factors impacting their ability to be successful (social, emotional, academic preparedness, financial) and connects the student to the appropriate resources on campus. Many campuses have structures where new and first year students are advised by both an academic advisor/student success specialist (who acts as the general resource for the students) and a faculty advisor (who advises and mentors specific to the academic program). USM has introduced a new model of engagement for all students which includes a 90-120 minute meeting for each incoming student which enables students to ask individualized questions while learning about their programs of study, resources, expectations and opportunities. All of our campuses are working with the EAB-Student Success Collaborative which provides a platform grounded in predictive analytics which will help advisors better identify, and work with, students with academic risk throughout their academic career;
- *Learning Support Services* – these programs and services help students develop the skills and resources they need to be successful in college. Services range from tutoring support in areas like mathematics, English and writing, supplemental tutoring and instruction in courses within majors, delivery of workshops in time management and other skills needed for college, access to writing centers, learning commons and math labs, to assistance from library staff. UMA is implementing several initiatives focused on online coursework and online students with the intent to facilitate early intervention, communication and improve student success including online tutoring in college composition and an online career exploration tool;
- *Counseling Services and referrals* – these services help students cope with a range of issues related to their emotional and behavioral health, lack of support from family or significant others, difficulty orienting to college, juggling multiple demands, gaining self-confidence, etc. All campuses have intervention teams or student success teams in place for students who may be dealing with multiple difficulties ranging from academics to emotional or mental health issues. UM has instituted the Black Bear Leaders program which supports upperclass student mentors to provide one-on-one or group help to first-generation students who may apply to or be referred to the program – this program focuses on engagement, socialization, leadership development, cultural exposure and academic success; UMPI is piloting a similar program;

- *Career Counseling* – Campuses provide a range of services to students including assessing interests, articulating skills, choosing a major and defining career goals. As an example, UM has a variety of online tools available to students to help students assess their skills and interests and then translate these into a major and to develop a better understanding of the various career fields, employment outlook and salaries. Career Fairs are offered at all campuses as are specialized workshops and classroom presentations, including those offered for first year seminar classes. Specialized mentor programs, such as the Health Professions Mentor Program for first year students at UM, focus on students from underserved areas of the state, many of whom may be first-generation students. UMPI will be piloting a career readiness program which includes critical skill development specific to problem solving and “badging” for the accomplishment of learning outcomes;
- *Specially designed retention and student success programs which focus extensively on first year students* – Examples include one stop student success centers which help students navigate the university, identify resources, receive advising; First Year Living/Learning communities within the residence halls which have both an academic and social goal of connecting the student; cohort based learning experiences where students take similar courses together as a group; first year experience courses which further orient students to college and provide critical knowledge and resources for success; UMA has implemented a class steward program which embeds assistants trained to identify and support struggling students within high risk classes (those with lower than average completion rates) – course completion rates within these classes have improved, and there has been a decline in F grades in these classes as well; special bridge programs for students who may be academically at risk (ex. UMFK’s Bridge to Success program, and UMM’s Bridge program); co-curricular opportunities for leadership development and connections to fellow students through student life, athletics and other student service/support offices. UM is working with UMM and UMA to transition the Foundations Program (typically a program with a high proportion of first generation students) to these campuses. UMM has a dedicated first-year advisor for Early College and Transitions students;
- *Financial Literacy* – All campuses are participating in the SALT program which is an online tool, supplemented by campus-based programming, that encourages responsible financial management, and among other resources, provides answers and advice regarding budgeting, taking out loans or, upon graduation, loan consolidation;
- *Affordability* – The University of Maine System has frozen tuition at the same level for six years and has expanded the availability of financial aid during the same time period. Major scholarship funding for adults returning to college is available and, starting in 2014, five rounds of funding have been awarded to date.

These are just some of the many services and supports in place for students as they progress toward their higher education goal. Hundreds of organizations, activities, events, workshops and many additional opportunities for connections to faculty, staff and students on each campus create a rich menu for every student, and most especially for first-generation students who many times need the help of the larger university community to ultimately be successful.

Grant Programs which serve First-Generation Students

In addition to our current population which has significant numbers of first-generation students, six of seven universities of the University of Maine System have federally funded TRIO programs which serve, as a part of their mission, first-generation college students. The primary purpose of TRIO programs is to prepare underserved populations for entry into, persistence within and completion of postsecondary education. These programs offer a range of supports and services designed to address the needs of these students and to help increase their chance for academic success.

The range of TRIO programs is geared toward smooth transitions along the path toward higher education:

- Educational Talent Search (ETS): serves students between the ages of 11 and 27 who have completed at least five years of elementary education – UM and UMPI have this program;
- Upward Bound (UB): serves students between the ages of 13 and 19 who have completed 8th grade and are planning to go to college – UMF, UMPI and USM have these programs (USM also has an Upward Bound program specific to Bonney Eagle, Massabesic and Sacopee Valley high schools);
- Upward Bound Math/Science (UB-Math/Science): serves the same population as Upward Bound but have an interest in and aptitude for careers in math and science – UM has this program;
- Student Support Services (SSS): serves students who are enrolled/accepted into a sponsoring postsecondary institution and have an established need for academic assistance – UM, UMA, UMF, UMFK, UMPI and USM have this program; and
- Educational Opportunity Center (EOC): serves ages 19 and above who have expressed an interest in pursuing postsecondary options and require project services – UM has this program.

Although all TRIO programs serve first generation students, not every student who participates in EOC, ETS or UB attends a UMS campus. However, all UMS institutions that have a Student Support Service (SSS) grant are serving a wide range of first-generation students as a part of the

grant (at least two-thirds tend to be low income and first-generation). The goal of SSS programs is to help students become successful by providing additional supports that supplement services already available on the campus, and by working closely with students to assist them as they progress through their college career. Some examples of initiatives and results are as follows:

- UM's SSS has served over 400 students, approximately 75% of whom are from first generation backgrounds. The program provides supplementary services to existing University services in the areas of academic advising and coaching, financial aid advising, financial literacy skills building, academic skills building, peer mentoring, one-on-one tutoring, peer mentoring, personal counseling, and workshops focusing on social and personal skills, resume development and preparation for graduate school.
- UMA's SSS serves 360 students, 95% of whom are first-generation. Students are provided with a wide range of support and service including the provision of professional and peer mentoring and tutoring, supplemental tutoring, tuition waivers for the COL 100 (Introduction to the College Experience) course, workshops on financial literacy and financial aid, extended summer programs to address deficiencies within writing and mathematics and close monitoring of progress by professional staff. 87% of the students are in good academic standing.
- UMF's SSS Program (Johnson Scholars) helps first generation participants access the range of services they will need to be successful and to orient them to the culture of the academy. The program uses the Appreciative Advising model to provide the following services to 180 eligible students: professional and peer mentoring, professional tutoring, weekly skills-building workshops, financial literacy, merit scholarships, leadership opportunities, and travel to regional and cultural events. Central to the program is collaboration among Johnson Scholars advisors and UMF faculty to support students' academic growth and social well-being.
- UMFK's SSS serves 160 students. Well over 90% of the students are in good academic standing and 90% of the students participating in the program in 2015-2016 persisted fall 2015 to fall 2016. Students are provided with numerous supports designed to aid in their success; supports include intrusive advising and coaching, basic skills developmental classes, professional and peer tutoring, supplemental instruction and writing assistance, personal and career counseling, workshops in time management, study skills, and financial literacy, and other supports responsive to identified needs. There is some limited grant aid available to Pell-eligible students.
- UMPI's SSS serves 180 students (approximately one-third are first generation). Students are provided with academic, career, personal and financial counseling as well as tutoring.

- USM’s SSS currently serves 140 students, 57% of whom are first generation students. 92% are in good academic standing, and 89% of the students remained enrolled Fall 2015 to Fall 2016. Services provided include a Summer Bridge Program designed to help students better success in mathematics and English, working with the students to develop a College Success Plan, learn about resources, and work in collaboration with the student’s Student Success Advisor and faculty advisors. Each semester, there are TRIO learning communities/workshops focused on academic and career success. TRIO navigators are in place to help mentor TRIO students. Additional services similar to those UM offers are a part of this program.

In addition to these TRIO grants, several campuses have MELMAC Education Foundation “Support Early Success in College” grants which also are predominantly serving first-generation students through the provision of additional supports.

Plans or Recommendations Regarding Enrollment and Retention of First-Generation College Students

As you can see from the many efforts already underway at our universities, a wide range of programs, services and supports are in place for our students from the time of first inquiry to enrollment, and enhanced services and supports are put in place every year as we further refine our student success efforts. Our new approach to gathering the data related to first generation students may point to additional supports or approaches but we need to see the data and analyze it from a variety of perspectives to determine this.

From a statewide perspective, the report issued in 2015 by the legislative committee, Commission of Affordability and College Completion, served as an important underpinning to the largest issue Maine students face which is their ability to fund their college education and successfully complete it. At the current time, it is unclear what will be the next steps related to the findings and recommendations within this report but it does serve as a good starting point for determining what additional initiatives and actions might exist for further development.

Table 1: Fall 2016 Cohort

Total Cohort - Fall 2016	FULL & PART TIME			FULL TIME ONLY		
	Total Students Entering	First Generation Students Entering	% First Generation Students Entering	Total Students Entering	First Generation Students Entering	% First Generation Students Entering
	#	#	%	#	#	%
First Generation Students						
UM System - Grand Total	6,082	2,700	44.4%	5,233	2,198	42.0%
First-time	4,085	1,705	41.7%	3,867	1,561	40.4%
Transfer	1,997	995	49.8%	1,366	637	46.6%
UM - Total	2,526	731	28.9%	2,451	698	28.5%
First-time	2,114	595	28.1%	2,085	583	28.0%
Transfer	412	136	33.0%	366	115	31.4%
UMA - Total	764	502	65.7%	390	253	64.9%
First-time	298	212	71.1%	171	116	67.8%
Transfer	466	290	62.2%	219	137	62.6%
UMF - Total	521	277	53.2%	509	271	53.2%
First-time	427	240	56.2%	427	240	56.2%
Transfer	94	37	39.4%	82	31	37.8%
UMFK - Total	363	187	51.5%	254	131	51.6%
First-time	163	86	52.8%	157	83	52.9%
Transfer	200	101	50.5%	97	48	49.5%
UMM - Total	179	104	58.1%	152	90	59.2%
First-time	128	77	60.2%	117	70	59.8%
Transfer	51	27	52.9%	35	20	57.1%
UMPI - Total	255	119	46.7%	225	101	44.9%
First-time	173	80	46.2%	165	73	44.2%
Transfer	82	39	47.6%	60	28	46.7%
USM - Total	1,474	780	52.9%	1,252	654	52.2%
First-time	782	415	53.1%	745	396	53.2%
Transfer	692	365	52.7%	507	258	50.9%

Table 2: Fall 2015 Cohort

Total Cohort - Fall 2015	FULL & PART TIME			FULL TIME ONLY		
	Total Students Entering	First Generation Students Entering	% First Generation Students Entering	Total Full-Time Students Entering	First Generation Full-Time Students Entering	% Full-Time First Generation Students Entering
	#	#	%	#	#	%
First Generation Students						
UM System - Grand Total	6,234	2,675	42.9%	5,211	2,167	41.6%
First-time	4,042	1,673	41.4%	3,771	1,515	40.2%
Transfer	2,192	1,002	45.7%	1,440	652	45.3%
UM - Total	2,502	735	29.4%	2,403	688	28.6%
First-time	2,036	570	28.0%	2,004	555	27.7%
Transfer	466	165	35.4%	399	133	33.3%
UMA - Total	989	507	51.3%	518	267	51.5%
First-time	403	216	53.6%	237	116	48.9%
Transfer	586	291	49.7%	281	151	53.7%
UMF - Total	534	257	48.1%	521	254	48.8%
First-time	448	227	50.7%	447	227	50.8%
Transfer	86	30	34.9%	74	27	36.5%
UMFK - Total	307	145	47.2%	191	93	48.7%
First-time	123	63	51.2%	120	61	50.8%
Transfer	184	82	44.6%	71	32	45.1%
UMM - Total	173	111	64.2%	150	96	64.0%
First-time	131	86	65.6%	116	77	66.4%
Transfer	42	25	59.5%	34	19	55.9%
UMPI - Total	289	137	47.4%	258	123	47.7%
First-time	195	99	50.8%	184	93	50.5%
Transfer	94	38	40.4%	74	30	40.5%
USM - Total	1,440	783	54.4%	1,170	646	55.2%
First-time	706	412	58.4%	663	386	58.2%
Transfer	734	371	50.5%	507	260	51.3%

Notes:

1. Includes full and part-time students.
2. Includes only degree-seeking students.
3. Includes first-time and transfer students.

Table 3: Fall 2014 Cohort

Total Cohort - Fall 2014	FULL & PART TIME			FULL TIME ONLY		
	Total Students Entering	First Generation Students Entering	% First Generation Students Entering	Total Full-Time Students Entering	First Generation Full-Time Students Entering	% Full-Time First Generation Students Entering
	#	#	%	#	#	%
First Generation Students						
UM System - Grand Total	6,203	2,709	43.7%	5,239	2,209	42.2%
First-time	4,067	1,699	41.8%	3,830	1,568	40.9%
Transfer	2,136	1,010	47.3%	1,409	641	45.5%
UM - Total	2,533	777	30.7%	2,452	744	30.3%
First-time	2,063	608	29.5%	2,040	598	29.3%
Transfer	470	169	36.0%	412	146	35.4%
UMA - Total	962	515	53.5%	524	292	55.7%
First-time	405	225	55.6%	260	142	54.6%
Transfer	557	290	52.1%	264	150	56.8%
UMF - Total	497	265	53.3%	484	256	52.9%
First-time	412	229	55.6%	410	227	55.4%
Transfer	85	36	42.4%	74	29	39.2%
UMFK - Total	335	159	47.5%	215	100	46.5%
First-time	136	57	41.9%	127	53	41.7%
Transfer	199	102	51.3%	88	47	53.4%
UMM - Total	165	95	57.6%	148	85	57.4%
First-time	118	74	62.7%	111	67	60.4%
Transfer	47	21	44.7%	37	18	48.6%
UMPI - Total	280	133	47.5%	239	112	46.9%
First-time	197	98	49.7%	182	88	48.4%
Transfer	83	35	42.2%	57	24	42.1%
USM - Total	1,431	765	53.5%	1,177	620	52.7%
First-time	736	408	55.4%	700	393	56.1%
Transfer	695	357	51.4%	477	227	47.6%