



Maine Community College System

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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**To: Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs;
Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**
From: David Daigler, President, Maine Community College System
Re: Statement on Biennial Budget proposal for Fiscal Years 2024-2025 (LD 258), A-135 through A-138 and Language QQQ
Date: February 13, 2023

Thank you for taking the time to allow me to present the Maine Community College System portion of the Biennial Budget on behalf of the Trustees of the Maine Community College System.

Maine's seven community colleges have long been the most direct, affordable, and effective investment for meaningfully advancing Maine's economy. Our fall enrollment was 16,791 students, including the 5,574 who took advantage of the state's Free College Scholarship, and we serve more than 25,000 individuals through degree and certificate programs, customized short-term workforce training and credit and non-credit offerings. We educate Maine people from all walks to life to provide them the skills and knowledge to excel in their chosen industry and create a fulfilling, stable and rewarding life for themselves and their families. The state's partnership and financial support allows us to educate tomorrow's workforce in critical, innovative, and high-demand fields that sustain and strengthen the fabric of our entire society.

In late August, we presented our budget request to the Administration. At the same time, we provided the Administration with preliminary data on our Free Community College initiative. At the time of our request, classes were just beginning, and students were still enrolling. Since that time, we are pleased to see that the Free College initiative has fulfilled the goals set out by the Governor and the Legislature. The goal was to reach out to and lift up those students most impacted by the pandemic. We have done that—and our enrollment is up 12%. The program attracted 749 students who, despite graduating from high school in 2020 and 2021, hadn't enrolled in college right after graduating, but were choosing to go to college now. Our Free College students are also bucking a nationwide trend of young rural men shunning higher education. MCCS, like all higher education, traditionally skews about 60 percent female and 40 percent male, but the Free College students are 50/50. In addition, 77% of the Free College students enrolled in our career and occupational programs, up from about 70% enrolled in those programs pre-pandemic. The other great news is that 1,220 have enrolled in our transfer track programs of General/Liberal Studies. With our continued close collaboration with the University

of Maine System and other Maine colleges, these students are positioned to seamlessly transfer their MCCS credits to a four-year college to finish their degree at a greatly reduced cost.

We requested a 4.5% increase in our baseline budget for both FY24 and FY25 and are very grateful that this request was in the Governor's proposed budget. As you know, most of our baseline budget goes to personnel and associated costs that increase each year. Our colleges and their employees are not immune to inflationary pressures. We need to compensate our faculty and staff competitively if we are to recruit and retain the people engaged in this work. Like all Maine families and businesses we also have rising energy, food and other costs. A 4.5% increase in our base budget will help us manage these costs.

We had also asked Governor Mills for an additional \$5 million to support student success. You will note that the budget before you includes the 4.5% increase and additional funds to continue the free college initiative to include the classes of 2024 and 2025, but does not include funds to bolster our student success and support initiatives.

We fully understand and appreciate why the Governor did not include the student success and support funds in her biennial budget proposal. It is her obligation to present a balanced budget based on the information available at the time. However, we believe that additional appropriations are crucial so that our colleges can meet the increased emotional, academic, and financial needs of our students. We respectfully ask that, as the picture of the state budget becomes clearer and as you receive more revenue forecast data, you consider funding this request. Our students are not "traditional" in the sense that they are mostly coming direct from high school with a clear path to college. Students at Maine's community colleges tend to be older, first-generation college students, with fewer financial resources: The average age of degree-seeking students is 25 years old, 70 percent of them get some form of grant aid, and more than 60 percent of them are first-generation college students.

They work, they care for kids, they worry about their aging parents, and paying for housing, child care, transportation and rising food costs. They are overwhelmed and facing financial, and emotional hurdles. Adding school on top of everything else seems very daunting. We are doing what we can to support our students. However, our staff, like many across Maine, are struggling with the same pressures. As stated earlier, an increase to our base budget will allow us to support our faculty, staff and adjunct faculty but these same staff tell us they need more resources to best serve our students.

We would be remiss if we did not mention a few other initiatives in the biennial budget that have our strong support. The Governor proposed an increase to the Maine State Grant for 2024-2025 from \$2,500-\$3,000 (A-299). This will have a great impact on our students, but also for Maine students attending other institutions of higher education. We also stand here today in strong support of the budget allocations for the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime

Academy. Maine students should have strong public options to pursue higher education in state—and our national reputation depends on vibrant and cutting-edge research, education, and training.

Also, our students rely heavily on the state's support for childcare, SNAP, HOPE and other assistance programs. Although we operate food pantries, clothing pantries and have some limited childcare, we can't support all our student needs. We need the state to partner with us and to support these crucial programs.

You may notice that I use the word partner a lot. We are the state's workforce development partner. Whether through our two-year associate degree programs, one-year certificate programs, advanced certificates, early college or our short-term training programs, we partner across the state. We could not do what we do without your help, without Maine's employers' support, without private support.

Our work is central to many of the State's most basic goals. We are supporting the healthcare workforce that cares for your families, we are training the Ed Techs our K-12 partners need so desperately. While Maine's housing stock needs renovation and expansion, we train and educate the carpenters, electricians, and plumbers. Maine is leading efforts to combat climate change. It is the students of Maine's community colleges that install and maintain the heat pumps and solar panels needed to address climate change. Northern Maine Community College has one of only two Wind Power Technology programs in New England. Families across this state are searching for quality child care, and community colleges educate the early childhood providers that deliver that quality care.

We set our graduates on a path to college or career success and we ask that you partner with us to assure we have the resources we need to continue working with Maine's businesses to rebuild a better, safer, and stronger economy.

Thank you.



Maine's comprehensive two-year college system, we offer technical, career, and transfer programs; customized training; and lifelong learning.

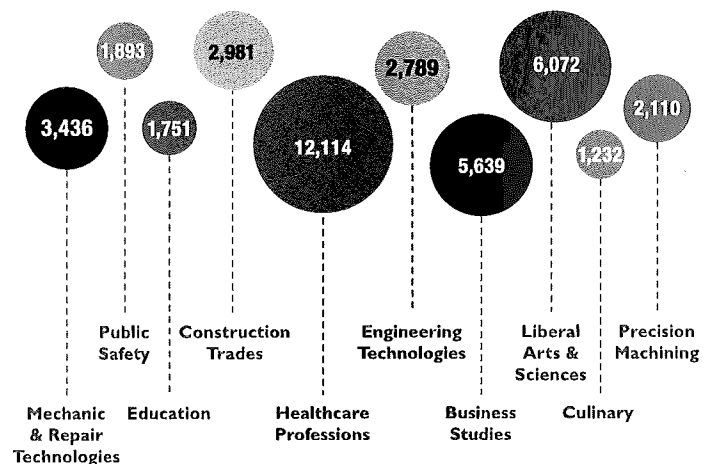
Who We Are

- We're affordable: Maine's community colleges have the lowest tuition and fees in New England, and generous scholarships and aid.
- We're vibrant: On-campus housing is available along with sports, clubs, athletic facilities, and campus events.
- We're practical: High-tech facilities mean students learn on equipment they'll use on the job. Through practicums and internships, students can get hands-on experience in their field.
- We're welcoming: Our community includes high school students in early college programs; high school graduates starting their college path; job-focused adults in workforce training; and mid-career Mainers looking to gain new skills.

Who We Serve

- 16,791 students enrolled in credit courses in fall 2022.
- 95% of incoming degree-seeking students are Maine residents.
- About 70% of degree-seeking students get some form of grant aid. For over half of all degree-seeking students, grant aid covers the full cost of tuition and fees.
- 65% of all students attend part time.
- 80% of degree-seeking students are enrolled in career and occupational programs, while others are focused on completing an affordable first two years of college and then transferring for a four-year degree.

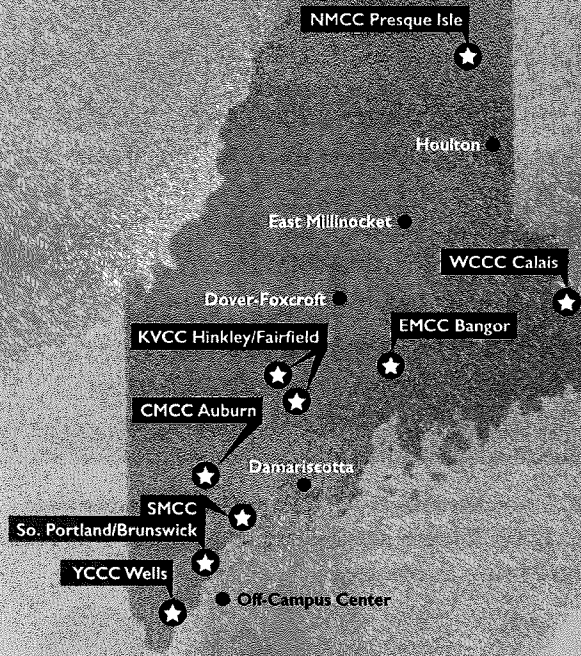
MCCS has awarded 45,195 college credentials since 2003. These skilled workers form the bedrock of the Maine economy.



Serving All Ages and Aspirations

- The average age of degree-seeking students is 25. 34 percent are adult learners age 25 or older.
- In 2021-2022, 3,594 Maine high-school students earned college credits through early college programs offered at Maine's community colleges.
- 52% of new, degree-seeking students are recent high school graduates.
- Students at Maine's community colleges can easily transfer credits for general education courses to the University of Maine System, and liberal studies students can be admitted to UMS with advanced standing. In fall 2020, 641 MCCS alumni enrolled in the UMaine System, while many other graduates continue their education at colleges across New England and the country.

Our Locations



The seven community colleges and their off-campus centers are within 25 miles of 94% of Maine's population.

Maine's community colleges offer the lowest tuition in New England

Free for many. Affordable for all.

\$96 per credit hour

The average cost for a full-time student \$3,750 a year in tuition & fees.

High school graduates from Classes of 2020-2023 qualify for a Free College Scholarship that pays 100% of tuition and mandatory fees.

Over \$54 million in grant aid is awarded each year.

In 2021-2022, the community colleges served more than 25,000 individuals — through degree programs, customized training, and credit and non-credit offerings.

Building a Skilled Workforce for Maine

- We're focused on providing short-term workforce training so you can prepare for the job you want in weeks and months – not years. We trained 5,014 people in 2021-22, and we're on track to train 24,000 Mainers through 2025 in a wide range of industries.
- Among our short-term workforce training programs: Advanced emergency medical technician, Amazon Web Services, CNC, commercial drivers license, dental assisting, CompTIA, early childhood education, electrician's technology, heat pump installer, high pressure boiler, mechanized logging operations, medical assisting, medical coding, pharmacy technician, phlebotomy, surgical technician, welding, and more.
- These programs are coordinated by the new Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce, which provides short-term workforce training through Maine's community colleges.

Offering Customized Training & Education

- The Alfond Center also offers customized training for our business partners so incumbent workers can improve their existing skills and develop new skills to keep pace with the market.
- Ongoing incumbent worker training also helps with retention and job security: 60% of incumbent worker trainees were over the age of 35, and 73% had a high school diploma, but no post-secondary degree.
- Over the years, Maine's community colleges have provided customized training to more than 30,892 people.





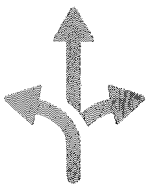
Free college is here! Starting immediately, high school graduates from the Classes of 2020-23 don't have to pay anything in tuition or mandatory fees at Maine's community colleges if they enroll full-time while pursuing an associate degree or certificate program. Students must live in Maine while enrolled and accept all federal and state grants and scholarships awarded to them. Tuition and fees average \$3,700 a year for a full-time student.

For more information go to FreeCommunityCollegeMaine.com



What is the Free College Scholarship?

The Free College Scholarship gives recent high school graduates a leg up on their next adventure as they enter the workforce in the wake of a global pandemic. High school graduates from the Classes of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 all qualify for a Free College Scholarship that pays 100% of tuition and mandatory fees at any one of our seven colleges across the state.



Who is eligible for a Free College Scholarship?

If you graduated high school (or earned the equivalent of a high school diploma, like a GED or Hi-SET) in 2020, 2021, 2022, or 2023 – you're eligible. It's that simple. There are no income or age limits. All you have to do is enroll full time in a degree or certificate program and accept any state or federal aid you qualify for. That's it – you're in!



What if I can't enroll right away. Can I enroll later?

Yes, but there's a limit. Anyone who qualifies for the scholarship must enroll no later than spring 2024. (And mark your calendar! Registration for spring 2024 classes begins in late November 2023.)



What does the Free College Scholarship cover?

This scholarship pays for up to two years of tuition and mandatory fees, after federal and state grant aid has been applied. Those students who qualify for maximum grant aid may use any additional grant funds to cover the cost of books, supplies, and other related educational expenses.



Sounds good to me! How do I sign up?

Just apply to one of Maine's seven community colleges! We'll assign you an advisor who will work with you to complete your financial aid application (aka the FAFSA), and pick out a program and classes. We can do it over the phone, on Zoom, or in person. If you are already enrolled at a community college, the scholarship is automatic – you don't need to fill out any extra paperwork!

Where can I study?



Central
Maine
Community
College
Auburn, Maine



Eastern
Maine
Community
College
Bangor, Maine



Kennebec
Valley
Community
College
Fairfield/Hinckley, Maine



Northern
Maine
Community
College
Presque Isle, Maine



Southern Maine
Community College
South Portland/
Brunswick, Maine



Washington County
Community College
Calais, Maine



York County
Community College
Wells, Maine

What can I study?



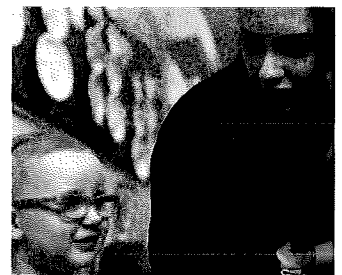
ARTS, HUMANITIES, DIGITAL MEDIA,
AND COMMUNICATION



BUSINESS AND HOSPITALITY



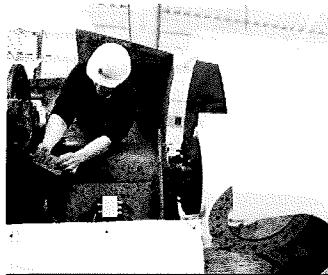
COMPUTER SCIENCE AND
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



EDUCATION, HUMAN SERVICES, AND
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES



HEALTH SCIENCES



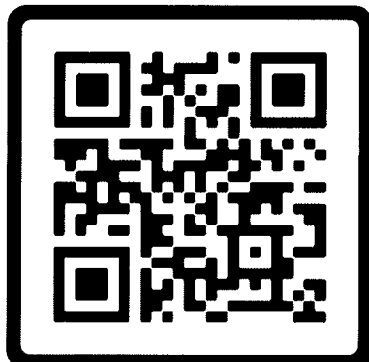
INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY
AND TRANSPORTATION



PUBLIC SAFETY



SCIENCES, ENGINEERING,
AND MATHEMATICS



For more information go to
FreeCommunityCollegeMaine.com
or scan the QR code