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December 22, 2020

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 Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

The Maine Community College System is providing this letter in accordance with 20-A MRSA §10013. This law requires the Maine Community College System (MCCS), University of Maine System (UMS), and Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) to provide the following information about first-generation college students by January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year:

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

To meet the requirements of the legislation, MCCS worked with the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy to coordinate data collection and reporting in order to promote a common framework for determining enrollment and educational outcomes of first-generation college students. Additionally, the three institutions agreed that for the purpose of this report, we would define a first-generation student as one with neither parent having completed a college degree. Each institution determined the level of college completion appropriate to its mission. For MCCS, a student is first-generation if neither parent has earned an associate degree. For UMS and MMA, a student is first-generation if neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree. For consistency, we are also providing data on MCCS students with neither parent having earned a bachelor's degree.

The three institutions agreed that questions on applications for admission related to parents' highest level of education should provide students the opportunity to be specific about the degree completed by each parent. Since previously this information had not been consistently requested

or collected by MCCS, our colleges revised their applications for new students entering in the fall of 2014.

**Enrollment by first-generation college status**

Community colleges serve more first-generation students than any other sector of U.S. higher education. According to a 2018 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly half of all first-generation college students attend a community college.<sup>1</sup>

Although approximately one-third of students entering two- and four-year colleges in the United States each year are first-generation (as defined by parental attainment of a bachelor’s degree), that figure is nearly twice as high at Maine’s community colleges where 62% of entering students (2,103) meet this definition of first generation.

The percentage of entering MCCS students who are first-generation has declined in the years since we began tracking this data in fall 2014. The following table provides an overview of Systemwide data from fall 2014 to fall 2020. This decline is consistent with national data. As the percent of Americans with a college degree increases, the share of children who are first-generation college continues to shrink. Nevertheless, MCCS continues to serve a significantly higher percentage of first-generation students than the national average.

<b>MCCS Entering Students</b>	<b>Fall 2014</b>	<b>Fall 2015</b>	<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Fall 2017</b>	<b>Fall 2018</b>	<b>Fall 2019</b>	<b>Fall 2020</b>
Neither parent has an associate degree	49%	51%	47%	47%	46%	46%	44%
Neither parent has a bachelor’s degree	67%	68%	66%	65%	65%	64%	62%

**Student outcomes**

This report details three-year outcomes (150% time to completion) for first-generation college students who entered a Maine community college in the fall semester, 2014 through 2017. The data capture graduation, transfer, and still-enrolled rates using methods consistent with National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting.

Beginning with the Spring 2020 semester, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our students’ ability to persist and complete their education, especially those who are low-income, many of whom are first generation. That reality is reflected in the three-year outcomes for first-generation students who entered MCCS in the fall of 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, *Stats in Brief, First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor Outcome*, February 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018421.pdf>.

The fall 2020 data for that group show a reverse of the progress that was reported last year for those entering in fall 2016.

Nevertheless, our colleges remain focused on the student success initiatives outlined in this report and on the impact they have had, and will continue to have, on first-generation and other groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education.

[See data on next page]

### Three-year outcomes of fall 2014 entering degree-seeking students

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First-generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	24%	26%	24%	25%
Still Enrolled	12%	11%	12%	11%
Transferred	16%	21%	16%	23%
Not Attending	48%	42%	47%	41%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

### Three-year outcomes of fall 2015 entering degree-seeking students

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First-generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	24%	28%	24%	28%
Still Enrolled	11%	11%	11%	11%
Transferred	15%	19%	15%	21%
Not Attending	50%	42%	49%	40%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

### Three-year outcomes of fall 2016 entering degree-seeking students

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First-generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	26%	28%	27%	27%
Still Enrolled	11%	12%	11%	12%
Transferred	15%	20%	16%	20%
Not Attending	49%	41%	47%	40%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

### Three-year outcomes of fall 2017 entering degree-seeking students

Status	Associate		Bachelor's	
	First-generation Neither parent has associate degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has associate degree	First-generation Neither parent has Bachelor's degree	Not first-generation One or both parents has Bachelor's degree
Graduated	23%	28%	25%	27%
Still Enrolled	10%	10%	10%	9%
Transferred	15%	20%	16%	22%
Not Attending	52%	42%	49%	42%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

The data, disaggregated by first-generation status at each of the community colleges, are included in Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix to this report.

## Targeted strategies

MCCS has placed a strategic focus on student success measures designed to support first-generation students and others who traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education and who often face significant challenges in accessing postsecondary education, succeeding academically once they enroll, and completing a degree. These strategies include:

- **EMBARC** (formerly Early College for ME) is our high-school-to-college transition program for high school students who are unsure about what comes next and unfamiliar with the college application and financial aid process. Through partnerships with 80 high schools across the state, the program provides college advising and supports to students beginning in their junior year of high school and continuing through their second year of community college. Since 2003, students enrolled in the program have been more likely to both return for their second year and graduate on time than typical community college students.
- **TRIO Student Support Services Programs** at each of our colleges. These programs are designed specifically to serve low-income, first-generation college students and offer comprehensive, individual support through academic planning, tutoring, financial aid assistance, financial literacy, and guidance in course selection and registration.
- **On-campus employment opportunities** that allow students to build their work schedule around their classes and provide them with a stronger sense of community and a stronger support network.
- **Intensive college readiness experiences** offered at no cost in the summer before students enroll in a program of study.
- **Mandatory orientation and college-readiness courses.**
- **New math pathways** that align the math curriculum with the programs of study and career plans of each student. Research clearly indicates that failing to complete a college-level math class in the first year of college significantly increases the risk that a student will not complete their course of study.<sup>2</sup> As the Lumina Foundation notes, this is particularly true for the 59 percent of public two-year college students who enroll in noncredit developmental mathematics courses—many of whom are first-generation and low-income students.<sup>3</sup> The work our colleges have done over the past several years to align the math curriculum with students' programs of study offers an impressive example of how effective evidence-based practices can be in improving student outcomes. With the introduction of math pathways, the percentage of MCCS students who complete a college math course by the end of their first year has risen from 39% for the fall cohort of 2014 to 47% for the cohort entering in 2019.

At SMCC, the first college to fully implement math pathways, the results are even more striking, rising from 34% for the fall 2014 cohort to 53% for the 2019 fall cohort. We fully expect to see this

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<sup>2</sup> <https://completecollege.org/strategy/math-pathways/>

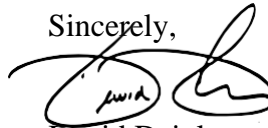
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/accelerated-pathways-student-success-mathematics.pdf>

progress reflected in higher completion rates and outcomes for the first-generation students who first enrolled at our colleges in the fall of 2019.

In addition, MCCS has expanded the number of college navigators, or advisors, at all seven colleges, to help ensure that students—especially those with little experience of college— have the academic and personal supports they need to persist and complete a college degree.

Finally, we remain committed to making sure our colleges are as affordable as possible. Maine’s community colleges continue to offer the lowest tuition and fees in New England.

I would be glad to meet with you at any time to address questions or concerns the Committee may have regarding our students who are the first in their family to attend college.

Sincerely,  
  
David Daigler

President

cc: Pender Makin, Commissioner, Department of Education  
Joseph Marro, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor

## Maine Community College System

The source for data in the tables is the MCCS Data Mart. Only first-time and transfer-in students with reported parental education levels are included. Data are self-reported by applicants on the application for admission.

**TABLE 1: Fall 2020 Entering Degree-Seeking Students by College and by Number and Percentage of First-Generation Students**

College	Entering Students #	Neither parent has a(n):			
		Associate		Bachelor's	
		#	%	#	%
CMCC	767	358	47%	486	63%
EMCC	425	161	38%	247	58%
KVCC	523	257	49%	373	71%
NMCC	166	83	50%	116	70%
SMCC	1,208	485	40%	682	56%
WCCC	97	58	60%	74	76%
YCCC	202	87	43%	125	62%
<b>MCCS</b>	<b>3,388</b>	<b>1,489</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>2,103</b>	<b>62%</b>

Only first-time and transfer-in students with reported parental education levels are included in the table above.  
Fall 2020 total entering students: 3,919.

**TABLE 2: Three-Year Outcomes of MCCS Fall 2017 Entering Degree-Seeking Students by First-Generation Status**

Status	First-generation				Not first-generation			
	Neither parent has a(n):				One (or more) parent has at least a(n):			
	Associate		Bachelor's		Associate		Bachelor's	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Graduated	436	23%	659	25%	595	28%	372	27%
Still Enrolled	179	10%	254	10%	203	10%	128	9%
Transferred	284	15%	401	16%	425	20%	308	22%
Not Attending	965	52%	1,271	49%	889	42%	583	42%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,585</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,112</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on 3,976 first-time and transfer-in students entering in fall 2017 with reported parental education levels.  
Fall 2017 total entering students: 4,486. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

**TABLE 3: Three-Year Outcomes of Fall 2017 Entering Degree-Seeking Students by First-Generation Status and College**

		First-generation				Not first-generation			
		Neither parent has a(n):				One (or more) parent has at least a(n):			
		Associate		Bachelor's		Associate		Bachelor's	
	Status	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
CMCC	Graduated	86	22%	121	24%	98	29%	63	30%
CMCC	Still Enrolled	33	9%	43	8%	26	8%	16	8%
CMCC	Transferred	63	16%	84	16%	65	19%	44	21%
CMCC	Not Attending	203	53%	266	52%	149	44%	86	41%
<b>CMCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100%</b>
EMCC	Graduated	63	21%	99	24%	98	28%	62	27%
EMCC	Still Enrolled	24	8%	36	9%	30	8%	18	8%
EMCC	Transferred	46	16%	67	16%	78	22%	57	25%
EMCC	Not Attending	161	55%	215	52%	149	42%	95	41%
<b>EMCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100%</b>
KVCC	Graduated	88	32%	133	35%	95	40%	50	38%
KVCC	Still Enrolled	28	10%	42	11%	25	10%	11	8%
KVCC	Transferred	32	12%	48	13%	38	16%	22	17%
KVCC	Not Attending	123	45%	157	41%	82	34%	48	37%
<b>KVCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100%</b>
NMCC	Graduated	34	37%	63	44%	63	46%	34	39%
NMCC	Still Enrolled	6	6%	9	6%	6	4%	3	3%
NMCC	Transferred	12	13%	15	11%	20	15%	17	20%
NMCC	Not Attending	41	44%	55	39%	47	35%	33	38%
<b>NMCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100%</b>
SMCC	Graduated	99	16%	148	18%	160	20%	111	20%
SMCC	Still Enrolled	70	11%	101	12%	98	13%	67	12%
SMCC	Transferred	104	17%	147	18%	171	22%	128	23%
SMCC	Not Attending	339	55%	443	53%	354	45%	250	45%
<b>SMCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>100%</b>
WCCC	Graduated	28	39%	46	43%	34	54%	16	57%
WCCC	Still Enrolled	4	6%	4	4%	0	0%	0	0%
WCCC	Transferred	8	11%	10	9%	7	11%	5	18%
WCCC	Not Attending	31	44%	46	43%	22	35%	7	25%
<b>WCCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>
YCCC	Graduated	38	28%	49	26%	47	24%	36	24%
YCCC	Still Enrolled	14	10%	19	10%	18	9%	13	9%
YCCC	Transferred	19	14%	30	16%	46	23%	35	24%
YCCC	Not Attending	67	49%	89	48%	86	44%	64	43%
<b>YCCC</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,585</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,112</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>100%</b>

Only first-time and transfer-in students with reported parental education levels are included in the table above. Fall 2017 total entering students: 4,486. Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup> More information on First Generation students can be found at: <https://pnpi.org/first-generation-students/#>