



# Maine Community College System

## Strategic Plan

*July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2020*



# Contents

<b>Background</b>	1
Overview of the Maine Community College System	1
<b>Environmental Scan</b>	3
The Economic and Demographic Landscape	3
The Demands of an Evolving Workplace	4
Government Funding	5
The Student Success Agenda	6
Accountability	7
Student Success	8
Remediation and Retention	8
Student Engagement	9
Affordability	10
College and Career Ready: Meeting the Needs of Students and Employers	11
Recent High School Graduates	11
Adult Learners	12
<b>Conclusion</b>	13
<b>Goals, Objectives, and Measures</b>	14

# Background

## Overview of the Maine Community College System

Maine’s seven community colleges have their roots in the Maine Vocational Technical Institute that first enrolled students in the fall of 1946 in Augusta. Over the next five decades, the original VTI expanded to seven technical colleges, and in 2003 the institutions became comprehensive community colleges.

Today, Maine’s community colleges have a unique dual mission. As they have since their founding in 1946, they prepare students for direct employment in the Maine economy -- through trade, technical and occupational programming. They also provide affordable access to higher education, leading to transfer to four-year programs of study.

The mission of the MCCS was updated in 1999 to reflect this dual mission:

### MCCS Mission

*The basic mission of the Maine Community College System is to provide associate degree, diploma, and certificate programs directed at the educational, occupational, technical, and transfer needs of the state’s citizens and the workforce needs of the state’s employers...to create an educated, skilled, and adaptable labor force which is responsive to the changing needs of the economy of the state and to promote local, regional, and statewide economic development.*

—Title 20-A MRSA section 12703 and approved by the Board of Trustees  
June 10, 1999

The MCCS vision statement, which amplifies its mission, has been reviewed often, and commitment to it has been reaffirmed for more than a decade by Trustees, Presidents, employees, and students.

## MCCS Vision

*Maine's community colleges are dedicated to educating today's students for tomorrow's career opportunities in an environment that supports personal and professional growth, innovation, and lifelong learning. The colleges are committed to enhancing the quality of life and economic prosperity of Maine through excellence in education.*

Maine was one of the last states in the nation to offer community college education. But when the switch from a technical to a community college system came, people flocked to the institutions. Enrollment has grown nearly 80% since the system's transition to community colleges in 2003, and in the past five years has increased 11%. As of fall 2014, the colleges enrolled 18,160 students and offered nearly 300 program options along with customized training for business and industry.

Of the students enrolled:

- 59% attend part-time and many are working adults;
- The average age of degree-seeking students is 27;
- 40% of the students who entered in the fall of 2014 came directly from high school;
- 82% of full-time, degree-seeking students receive financial aid; and
- 92% of employed graduates are working in Maine.

At the heart of the MCCS mission and vision is an unwavering commitment to providing a quality education to the people of Maine so they can meet the needs of their families and the Maine economy.

Until fairly recently, the primary measure of success for public two-year colleges was to provide access to higher education, with the expectation that this would better prepare citizens for jobs and possibly further education. Now, the primary measures of institutional effectiveness include both access *and* student success. In fact, "student success"—the timely progression toward and completion of students' desired academic outcomes—has become the organizing theme for all of higher education. This theme is reflected in the MCCS mission and vision and guides our strategic plan for the next five years.

# Environmental Scan

## The Economic and Demographic Landscape

Since the beginning of this century, shifting demographics have had an impact on population composition and growth, and technology has restructured the workplace and made available a level of data for analysis unobtainable just a decade ago. The economy has gone through dramatic adjustments, most recently the 2008 financial crisis and recession. All of these realities have had a profound impact on higher education, including on our own community colleges.

Among demographic trends:

- Maine's population has the distinction of being the oldest in the nation (median age of 42.7 compared to the national median of 37.2<sup>1</sup>).
- The portion of Maine's population age 45 and older is growing, while the population age 20 and younger has declined during the past 20 years.<sup>2</sup>
- Maine is also one of the least diverse states in the country. In 2013 the state's population was 94% White compared to the national median of 63%.<sup>3</sup>
- The population of the state grew only 4% between 2000 and 2012, and since 2003 has been relatively flat at around 1.3 million people.<sup>4</sup>

These facts tell us that, barring significant in-migration, the majority of the workforce projected for 2020 is already living in Maine.

In 2014, the Maine Economic Growth Council and Maine Development Foundation produced its 20th annual *Measures of Growth* report, defining benchmarks for achieving specific economic progress by 2020. Several measures reflect the toll taken by the 2008 financial crisis and the concerted effort still required if the goals are to be met.

- Maine's per capita personal income grew slightly in 2012 to \$40,087, yet is still the lowest in New England. Since 2009 Maine has ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the nation in this measure.
- State Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined between 2007 and 2012 and grew only 0.5% between 2011 and 2012, lagging higher average growth in New England and in the US.

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<sup>1</sup> Associated Press. "US Census finds Maine the oldest state." Bangor Daily News. (May 26, 2011). Found at: <http://bangordailynews.com/2011/05/26/news/state/us-census-finds-maine-the-oldest-state/>.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Colgan. 2014 Maine Economic Forecast. University of Southern Maine: Muskie School of Public Service. Found at: [http://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/muskie/Turning\\_the\\_Corner\\_Charles\\_Colgan\\_01\\_07\\_2014.pdf](http://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/muskie/Turning_the_Corner_Charles_Colgan_01_07_2014.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau. Quick Facts for Maine. Found at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/23000.html>.

<sup>4</sup> New England Board of Higher Education analysis of US Census Bureau data. Trends & Indicators: Demography. Found at: [http://www.nebhe.org/wp-content/uploads/Fig\\_DEM01\\_2013.png](http://www.nebhe.org/wp-content/uploads/Fig_DEM01_2013.png).

- The State’s workforce must grow to 771,000 by 2020 to match the Council’s employment benchmark, yet the State’s current workforce of 709,000 is projected to lose 20,000 workers by 2020.<sup>5</sup>

In 2012, unemployment rates in Maine by level of educational attainment for those age 25 and older demonstrated the value of education in a difficult economy: those with a bachelor’s degree or higher fared best at 2.6%; those with some college or an associate degree experienced a 6% rate; those with a high school diploma, a 9.7% rate. Those with less than a high school diploma fared worst: 12.7%.<sup>6</sup>

Maine has lost ground in its efforts to raise its rate of higher educational attainment in citizens 25 and over. Between 2011 and 2012, Maine’s rate actually decreased slightly from 37.3% to 37.0%, while the New England average grew from 44.1% to 44.6%. The US average grew from 36.3% to 37.1%.

Two equally troubling facts: Maine’s poverty rate increased from 13.3% to 13.9% between 2011 and 2012, and its level of food insecurity grew to 14.9% in 2012, exceeding both New England (13%) and the US (14.7%).<sup>7</sup> In response to this difficult situation, some US colleges—including Southern Maine Community College—have started on-campus food pantries for students in need.

In summary, Maine is facing a workforce that is decreasing in size, is aging, and is not gaining ground in educational attainment. This is in direct contradiction to the trends in workforce demands for 2020.

## **The Demands of an Evolving Workplace**

The speed and complexity of workplace change have been discussed for at least 30 years and have taken on an increased sense of urgency. Changes in technology have driven new industries and transformed traditional ones. Labor market demands have also continued to evolve, valuing greater efficiency and productivity, demanding new and higher-level occupational skill sets, and sometimes requiring the relocation of jobs to take advantage of lower-cost labor or specialized skills.

A 2013 Georgetown University forecast indicates there will be 55 million job openings in the US, 24 million resulting from new jobs created and 31 million from retirements. In Maine, job

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<sup>5</sup> Maine Development Foundation for the Maine Economic Growth Council. “Measures of Growth in Focus; 2014.” (March 2014). Found at: [http://mdf.org/megc\\_mogreport.php](http://mdf.org/megc_mogreport.php).

<sup>6</sup> Center for Workforce Research and Information. “Demographics of Employment and Unemployment in Maine.” Maine Department of Labor. Found at: <http://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/cps.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Maine Development Foundation for the Maine Economic Growth Council. “Measures of Growth in Focus; 2014.” (March 2014). Found at: [http://mdf.org/megc\\_mogreport.php](http://mdf.org/megc_mogreport.php).

growth between 2010 and 2020 is expected to grow 10%, to 713,670 jobs.<sup>8</sup> The projected decline in Maine’s workforce to 690,000 by 2020 raises significant public policy issues for the State.

In the 2020 economy, the distribution of jobs—both in the nation and in Maine—is heavily weighted toward attainment of post-secondary credentials. Nationally, 65% of jobs are expected to require some level of post-secondary education; 33% will require some college, an associate degree, or a post-secondary certificate.

In Maine, 66% of jobs will require post-secondary education; 36% will require some college, an associate degree, or a post-secondary certificate. And most of the job growth will occur in fields demanding both higher levels of education and a command of technology, such as health care, STEM (science/technology/engineering/math), and managerial/professional office.<sup>9</sup> These projections offer both predictions of positive potential for Maine and a sobering picture of the consequences of the current lack of progress in post-secondary credential attainment, with its resulting skills gap.

In December 2012, the Maine Legislature appointed a Joint Select Committee on Maine’s Workforce and Economic Future to examine workforce training and the skills gap in the State. Inadequate alignment of worker skills to available jobs can keep willing citizens from obtaining better jobs and inhibit employers from growing their businesses in Maine. Part of the Committee’s work resulted in the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan by Maine’s public education leaders. This plan addresses the training and education needs of the State’s workforce, July 1, 2014-June 30, 2019.<sup>10</sup> Plan activities will be accomplished within anticipated State funding and represent only one step toward filling the gap in workforce preparation for 2020.

## Government Funding

Maine is not unique in experiencing a set-back from the 2008 financial crisis and recession. Though pressure on Maine’s fiscal health existed earlier, a new emphasis on fiscal sustainability—the ability of state government to meet program commitments into the future—took hold here as in many other states. The interconnection among federal, state, and local budgets has grown, as have the challenges of the cost of health care, its related impact on

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<sup>8</sup> Carnevale, Anthony P.; Smith, Nicole; Strohl, Jeff. “Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020.” Center of Workforce Education, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University. (June 2013.) Found at: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/report/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020>.

<sup>9</sup> Carnevale, et al., <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/tl10zkxt0puz45hu21g6>.

<sup>10</sup> Maine Education Coordinating Committee. Statewide Education and Workforce Development Strategic Plan. Maine Community College System. (January 2014).

the growing complexity and cost of entitlement programs, and the general dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of tax systems.<sup>11</sup>

Maine State budgets have been strained recently, especially during the past five fiscal years, causing shifts in funding due to revenue shortfalls and changing political priorities. From 2002 to 2014, MCCS experienced a 79% increase in fall student enrollment. For the corresponding fiscal years, State appropriations increased just 35%, representing a 25% decline in State appropriations per student. Enrollment growth has meant increased tuition revenue; however, this revenue has been offset by the costs of serving many more students and continued increases in the costs of health insurance, employer contributions for employee retirement, and energy costs.

Increases in tuition revenue fall short of addressing years of underfunding and needed investment for the future. As a result, the colleges have been severely limited in their ability to expand and upgrade facilities, equipment, and programs. This has made it difficult for them to keep pace with rapid technological change within both the classroom and the workplace.

Founded in 2009, The Foundation for Maine's Community Colleges is dedicated to ensuring that the State's seven community colleges have the resources to provide a high quality and affordable college education for Maine people. To date, the Foundation has raised nearly \$28 million, which has enhanced access to education and economic opportunity for Maine people and provided Maine employers with a highly trained and skilled workforce. As the colleges enter their second decade as comprehensive community colleges, the Foundation is focused on securing support for Student Success Initiatives, equipment, and facilities as identified by the Maine Community College System. Even with increased private support, covering the cost of providing relevant, competitive, and affordable education to Maine people will continue to be a challenge.

## **The Student Success Agenda**

Changing demographics and the demands of an evolving workplace and economy have increased dramatically the need for a more educated workforce, both in Maine and across the country. For more than a decade, the focus has been on increasing access to higher education by opening the doors to higher education to enable more Maine people to get the skills and knowledge they need to build a solid career and a stronger economy. The success of this effort can be seen in the growth of Maine's community colleges since they transitioned from technical colleges. Today, 8,000 more students are enrolled each year in the MCCS than was true in 2003.

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<sup>11</sup> Ward, Robert B.; Dadayan, Lucy. "State and Local Finance: Increasing Focus on Fiscal Sustainability." The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. (June 2009.) Found at: [http://www.rockinst.org/in\\_print/wardr/2009-05-Publius-fiscal\\_sustainability.aspx](http://www.rockinst.org/in_print/wardr/2009-05-Publius-fiscal_sustainability.aspx).



However, that growth has been achieved on an extremely limited budget that has not allowed the colleges to put in place many of the supports necessary to help more students persist in their studies, complete a degree, and reach their educational goals. As our institutions enter their second decade as community colleges, it has become imperative that the focus shift more intently to accountability and student success.

Maine is far from alone in this important work. Significant attention is now being paid nationwide to persistence and graduation rates. As demand increases for more individuals with a college credential, so, too, does the call for greater accountability and clearer measures to track student and institutional progress. Increased accountability measures will need to take into account student confidentiality protections and the ability to access the related data bases.

### **Accountability**

In 2006, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education created by Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, issued its report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Course for US Higher Education*,<sup>12</sup> aimed squarely at the need for fundamental reform in higher education. The report declared that higher education must become more efficient and productive, become more accountable to its constituents, provide more useful information to its consumers, and manage itself using better data.

By 2009, in response to growing concerns about student outcomes, the American Association of Community Colleges chose to respond to the call for better results through voluntary measures, joining in the creation of the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA).

At the same time, other initiatives began to focus on pieces of the accountability agenda and push for progress. Perhaps the initiative with the most far-reaching impact and greatest controversy was the White House's introduction in early 2013 of the online College Scorecard<sup>13</sup> which sought to provide better consumer data by enabling students and their parents to compare colleges on a number of factors: cost, financial aid, debt levels, and outcomes, such as graduation, transfer, and employment rates.

This was followed quickly by the proposed federal Student Right to Know Before You Go Act, which would require accredited higher education institutions to provide more specific longitudinal and segmented data on student progress and outcomes, including employment and earnings. At the same time, a long discussion began on requiring both public and private colleges to provide evidence that students could achieve "gainful employment" in career certificate programs, measured by ratios of earnings to debt.

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<sup>12</sup> US Department of Education Secretary's Commission of the Future of Higher Education. "A Test of Leadership: Charting the Course for US Higher Education." (September 2006).

<sup>13</sup> The White House. College Scorecard. Found at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/higher-education/college-score-card>.

These steps to improve accountability benefit consumers, but the cost of compliance further challenges community college budgets. Maine’s community colleges have made an investment in upgrading their student information systems in recent years, and MCCS is implementing the reporting capability necessary to support student success initiatives system-wide. Efforts are also underway to more efficiently and consistently measure student outcomes, including completions, employment, and earnings at the system level.

As with any fundamental change in a system as complex as higher education, questions remain about where these efforts will lead and what will be required to implement them. Regardless, MCCS sees a commitment to accountability for student success as a way to improve its contribution to the State’s people and economy.

### **Student Success**

With additional emphasis on student success, community colleges have begun to examine every aspect of their academic programs and operations to identify and remove any institutional barriers to student achievement. This has meant defining appropriate measures of success, collecting more comprehensive data, and testing and refining new strategies aimed at improving student outcomes. A renewed emphasis on student success may also require refocusing—and adding to—current faculty, staff, and funding.

Although more than half the undergraduates in the nation are enrolled in community colleges, the three-year graduation rate is only 19.5%. In Maine, that figure is 21.8%.<sup>14</sup> When persistence, transfer, and graduation are factored in, the MCCS student success rate increases to 55% for full- and part-time matriculated students. The 2015-2020 Strategic Plan seeks to increase that rate to 65% for the entering fall 2019 cohort of matriculated students and includes objectives and measures designed to make that goal a reality.

Several higher education issues that are central to student success and to the Strategic Plan are detailed in the sections that follow.

### **Remediation and Retention**

No discussion of student success can overlook the impact of remediation on retention and completion. Community colleges—in Maine as well as nationally—are the gateway to higher education for many students. They actively recruit students from all walks of life and all stages in their higher education journey: high school students exploring career or transfer options, adults seeking career advancement, workers in transition, and returning veterans. This has led to high rates of entering students who require some form of remedial coursework before they are prepared for college-level work. Within the MCCS in fall 2014, nearly 50% of all first-time,

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<sup>14</sup> MCCS - National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 2014 - Table 326.20

degree-seeking MCCS students and 46% of those coming directly from a Maine high school enrolled in one or more remedial courses.

National data shows that, of the 52% of students who enter a two-year college and enroll in remediation, only 22% complete remedial and associated college-level courses within two years, and only 9.5% graduate within three years.<sup>15</sup> And the students who require remediation but do not enroll in recommended courses are even less likely to persist and experience academic success. MCCS experience reflects national experience.

Accelerating remediation can improve retention by reducing the opportunities for students to exit.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, providing additional academic and personal supports can help students achieve completion.<sup>17</sup>

To that end, the MCCS is exploring steps to address academic preparation and long-term student success by introducing an intensive college readiness experience at no cost to students and before they matriculate in a degree program. Early results from EMCC's college-readiness pilot show that of the 48 students who attended the summer 2014 academy, 96% completed the program, 92% have moved from remedial to college-level English, and 85% improved their math placement scores. A major challenge will be identifying ongoing funding to bring to scale any successful pilots.

## Student Engagement

Research shows that the more engaged community college students are—in learning, in their college communities, and with faculty—the more likely they are to persist, achieve academically, and complete a degree.<sup>18</sup>

Nationally, the reduction in state funding and growth in enrollment in recent years have increased the reliance on part-time, or adjunct, faculty, who teach 58% of community college courses and 53% of community college students.<sup>19</sup> Adjunct faculty play a substantial role in students' education, yet this role may not require extensive knowledge of college requirements and resources or the expectation of providing support to students beyond course content.

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<sup>15</sup> Complete College America. "The Game Changers: Co-requisite Remediation." Found at: <http://completecollege.org/the-game-changers/#clickBoxTan>.

<sup>16</sup> Community College Research Center. Designing Meaningful Developmental Reform. "What We Know About Accelerated Developmental Education." (March 2014). Found at: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/accelerated-developmental-education.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Karp, Melinda Mechur. "Toward a New Understanding of Non-Academic Student Support: Four Mechanisms Encouraging Positive Student Outcomes in the Community College." Working Paper No. 28. Community College Research Center. (February 2011). Found at: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/non-academic-student-support-mechanisms.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Center for Community College Engagement. "Why focus on student engagement?" Found at: [http://www.ccsse.org/center/about\\_cccse/focus.cfm](http://www.ccsse.org/center/about_cccse/focus.cfm).

<sup>19</sup> Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014). "Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus," a special report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Program in Higher Education Leadership. Found at: [http://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF\\_Special\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF_Special_Report.pdf)

Many adjuncts teach developmental courses or “gateway” courses—those foundational, remedial, or college-level required courses that are highly correlated with student success. Students in these courses are often the most academically vulnerable in terms of achievement and retention. While more advanced students are likely to approach the faculty within their program of study for advice in their areas of expertise, newer students may have a connection only to adjunct faculty for guidance on what college services might help them.

Other factors that have an impact on student engagement include family obligations, work commitments, long commutes, and financial concerns.

- 26% of MCCS students spend more than 30 hours a week caring for dependents,
- 31% have children living with them,
- 31% work more than 30 hours per week in addition to attending classes,
- 29% spend more than 5 hours per week commuting to class, and
- 82% of full-time, degree-seeking students receive some form of financial assistance.

While work can distract from academic focus and affect persistence, it can also provide skills and experience valuable to students seeking employment or building a career. Studies indicate a positive impact on performance, retention, and student engagement for students who work part-time for moderate hours on their college campus.<sup>20</sup> The MCCS has made a commitment to provide additional work-study jobs for students at each college who have financial need, whether or not they qualify for Pell assistance.

### **Affordability**

Given Maine’s income levels and student demographics, it is no surprise that the majority of MCCS students need financial assistance. In 2012-2013:

- 50% of all students and 62% of first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students received Pell grants.
- 44% of all students and 52% of first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students received federal student loans.
- 88% of first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students received some form of financial aid.

This is in spite of the fact that the MCCS has resisted onerous cost increases for students by freezing tuition in seven of the last 15 years. MCCS raised tuition for both 2013-14 and 2014-15 by just \$2 per credit hour, or \$60 per year for a full-time, in-state student. MCCS tuition and fees are now the lowest in New England and equal to the national average. In an MCCS 2013 Ability to Pay Study<sup>21</sup> 66% of student respondents said that if tuition were increased by \$5 per

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<sup>20</sup> Noel-Levitz. White Paper—“Enhancing Student Success by Treating ‘Student Jobs’ as ‘Real Jobs’” (2010).

<sup>21</sup> Center for Applied Research, “Maine Community College Students’ Ability to Pay Study” (2013).

credit hour (an average of \$150 per year for a full-time student), they would likely decrease the number of credits they took; 24% said it might impact their attending college at all. This shows the narrow margin of price sensitivity for MCCS students and reinforces the effect State financial support has on college attendance and completion.

Furthermore, although many community college students qualify for Pell grants—federal aid of up to \$5,730 for the 2014-2015 academic year—a significant number do not. And many of those students are at risk of being saddled with debt and/or leaving school for financial reasons before they can complete their degree. Nationally, while 78% of high school graduates from high-income families enroll in college, only 63% of those from middle-income families and 55% from low-income families pursue higher education. Once they enroll, middle-income children are only half as likely to complete college as their wealthier peers: they have a 25% completion rate, compared to 53% for children from families in the top income fifth.<sup>22</sup>

## **College and Career Ready: Meeting the Needs of Students and Employers**

Future enrollment will depend on continuing to attract recent high school graduates and working-age adults, serving the unique needs of both populations, and making sure they have access to programs and services that enable them to achieve both academic and career success.

### **Recent High School Graduates**

Recent national data show that 27% of 2010 high school graduates enrolled in two-year colleges immediately after graduation,<sup>23</sup> while 23% of high school graduates in Maine that year enrolled in the MCCS.<sup>24</sup> Maine is now closer to the national average than in years past, likely the result of the economy, the increased visibility of these colleges as an entry point for jobs and further education, and because of the efforts MCCS has made to create pathways from high school to its colleges.

Advance placement courses and articulation agreements have long been methods for high school students to take courses that could result in college credits. For the past two decades, thousands of students have participated in MCCS high school-to-college transition programs. Currently Early College for ME serves 1,500 students each year, guiding them from junior year in high school through two years at one of Maine’s community colleges.

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<sup>22</sup> Much of this section is taken from information in the White House Task Force on Middle Class Families Staff Report: “Barriers to Higher Education” [http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/MCTF\\_staff\\_report\\_barriers\\_to\\_college\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/MCTF_staff_report_barriers_to_college_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics: Table 234. Found at: [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12\\_234.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_234.asp).

<sup>24</sup> Silvernail, David L.; Sloan, James E.; Johnson, Amy F. “College Participation Rates of Maine’s Recent High School Graduates: Examining the Claims.” Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Analysis. University of Southern Maine. (March 2013) Found at: <http://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/cepare/College%20Participation%20Rates%20for%20Maine.pdf>.

In addition, MCCC support for “dual enrollment” has grown in the past decade to become an accepted avenue for students to earn college credit and prepare for a successful transition to college while still in high school, often at little or no cost to them. Appropriately planned, dual enrollment allows students to reduce their college costs—both in dollars and in time-to-completion.

In fall 2014, MCCC provided 2,700 college courses—on campus, online, and at high schools or career and technical education centers—to 2,200 high school students. While there is substantial benefit to high school students taking college courses, dual enrollment also requires significant resources from the colleges and MCCC during a time of competing demands for resources.

Colleges often waive at least 50% of tuition and may waive up to 100% for those enrolled in dual enrollment courses. While there is great interest as a matter of national and state policy to ensure accountability and increase the availability of dual enrollment, further expansion is unsustainable for MCCC as currently funded. Exploring ways to address this financial strain is part of the strategic plan now being implemented by the State’s public education systems.

### **Adult Learners**

The average age of MCCC students is 27, and non-traditional students (those 25 or older) represented 40% of fall 2013 credit enrollment.

In addition, the business and industry divisions at all seven colleges—often supported by training grants from the MCCC Maine Quality Centers (MQC) program—are able to provide customized, low-cost training to adults seeking to enter the workforce and those already employed. Last year, 99 businesses and organizations took advantage of this customized training to strengthen or expand their operations, benefitting nearly 1,500 workers.

In all, during 2013-2014, 4,140 people enrolled in MCCC non-credit courses to increase their skills through training and education. For some of these individuals, the courses serve as the first step in their journey to a college degree. For others, they offer an opportunity to upgrade the skills needed to progress within the workplace. As a result, the courses offer tremendous value to both the student and his or her employer. For these and other reasons, non-credit course offerings and customized training for business and industry are, and will continue to be, an important part of the work of the MCCC.

## Conclusion

Since becoming a comprehensive community college system in 2003, MCCS has achieved an impressive level of growth with minimal additional public investment. During the same period, economic and demographic changes have had major influences on the programs and services we provide as well as the needs and expectations of students, businesses, and funders.

The System's mission is to serve the educational needs of Maine people and the workforce needs of Maine businesses by creating an educated, skilled, and adaptable labor force. This requires us to continue to be responsive to rapidly evolving educational and workforce needs. At the heart of what we do are our students: Their success is the best measure of our efforts and investments. To that end, the Maine Community College System's Board of Trustees has adopted the following goals for the next five years:

1. Achieve student success through improved persistence, transfer, graduation, and employment performance.
2. Support economic and workforce development.
3. Invest in college classroom equipment, facilities, and programs.
4. Maintain a high standard of accountability in all programs and services offered throughout the MCCS.

The next section of this plan contains the objectives and measures for each of these goals. Results will be reviewed annually. In order to be responsive to changing conditions, objectives and measures may be adjusted by the Board of Trustees as needed.

**MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**  
**Strategic Plan**  
*July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2020*  
**FY16 – FY20**

**GOAL 1 ■ ACHIEVE STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH IMPROVED PERSISTENCE, TRANSFER, GRADUATION, AND EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE.**

**Objective 1. Implement the Key Building Blocks for Student Success initiative as measured by improved student success rates (continued enrollment, transferred, graduated).**

**Measure 1**

- Measure progress annually toward achieving a system-wide three year student success rate of at least 65% for the entering fall 2019 cohort of matriculated students.

**Measure 2**

- The System will seek funding to hire thirty (30) Student Success counselors system-wide to work with at least one-third of matriculated students in FY16.

**Measure 3**

- Report on persistence rate and graduation rate of students enrolled in pilot Student Success Initiatives at three years beginning in FY16.

**Measure 4**

- The System will seek funding to increase work-study opportunities for an additional 300 students in FY16.
- The colleges will report annually on the total number of students engaged in work-study opportunities beginning FY17.

**Measure 5**

- The System will seek additional funding to support staff professional development opportunities for the colleges in order to help address Student Success in FY16. If funding is available, the System will report annually on activities beginning FY17.

**Measure 6**

- Each college will develop a plan that provides greater support for and engagement by full-time and adjunct faculty in Student Success in FY16.
- Beginning FY17, each college will report annually on activities under its plan.

**Measure 7**

- The System will seek funding to acquire software to help monitor student progress in FY16 and report on its implementation.



**Measure 8**

- Beginning FY16, each college will report annually on progress toward reducing to 64 the number of credits required for graduation for each program of study by fall 2019. *(Programs requiring more than 64 credits by an accreditation body are exempt.)*

**Measure 9**

- Colleges conduct and report on surveys of student engagement and satisfaction with goals to meet or exceed the three-year cohort average of participating colleges for the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and to meet or exceed the national mean for two-year public colleges in the core services in the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.
  - a. In FY16 conduct the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and report the results.
  - b. In FY17 report on college activities in response to the previous year's survey results.
  - c. In FY18 conduct the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and report on the results.
  - d. In FY19 report on college activities in response to the previous year's survey results.

**Objective 2. Ensure a high level of employment or continued education of graduates.****Measure 1**

- Maintain a system-wide combined rate of at least 90% of graduates continuing their education and/or employed during the third to sixth quarter after graduation.

**Objective 3. Ensure that MCCS programs are affordable****Measure 1**

- To help inform Trustees regarding college affordability for Maine people, MCCS will conduct a review of Maine students' ability to pay every three years, with the first review due by December 31, 2016.

**Measure 2**

- Report annually on scholarships awarded and waivers granted system-wide.

**Measure 3**

- Report annually on the unduplicated number of high school students enrolled in college courses and the number of total credits attempted and earned.

## **GOAL 2 ■ SUPPORT ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.**

**Objective 1. Increase credit and non-credit headcount generated by serving business and industry.**

### **Measure 1**

- Beginning FY16, report annually on the unduplicated headcount (non-Maine Quality Centers) generated by college divisions serving business and industry. Based on FY16 and FY17 results, a performance goal will be established beginning FY18.

### **Measure 2**

- Beginning FY16, report annually on the number of individuals trained in traditional, college, and incumbent MQC projects. Based on FY16 and FY17 results, a performance goal will be established beginning FY18.

## **GOAL 3 ■ INVEST IN COLLEGE CLASSROOM EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS.**

**Objective 1. Identify infrastructure needs and report on investments to help address those needs.**

### **Measure 1**

- Beginning FY16, each college will create an annual capital plan and detailed budgets that address short- and long-term needs.

### **Measure 2**

- Beginning FY16, each college will report annually on investments made to address its capital needs listed in Schedule III of the biennial budget.

### **Measure 3**

- Beginning FY16, each college and the System will report annually on the amount of cash and equipment, including grants, obtained.

### **Measure 4**

- Campus Master Plans for each college will be reviewed during FY16.
- Plans requiring updates following the review will be revised by FY19.

**Objective 2. Invest in strategic partnerships in support of efficient operations and the System's mission.**

### **Measure 1**

- Report annually by college on active partnerships that leverage resources which lead to efficient operations and delivery of services.

## **GOAL 4 ■ MAINTAIN A HIGH STANDARD OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN ALL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OFFERED THROUGHOUT THE MCCS.**

**Objective 1.** Ensure that standards are achieved in order to address the needs of students, employers, and the state.

### **Measure 1**

- Colleges will continue to meet the requirements for accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

### **Measure 2**

- Colleges will report annually on the programs requiring specialized external accreditation to ensure that standards are maintained.

### **Measure 3**

- Colleges will conduct surveys of at least one-third of their Program Advisory Committees annually. Beginning in year four (FY19), surveys of one-half of Program Advisory Committees will be conducted annually.

### **Measure 4**

- Colleges will maintain a minimum 93% success rate of graduates taking certification and/or licensure examinations as required for employment.

### **Measure 5**

- Colleges will maintain an emergency response plan and conduct annual exercises.

### **Measure 6**

- MCCS will achieve “unqualified” annual audit reports consistent with GASB.

### **Measure 7**

- In FY16 the System will explore the feasibility of developing a system-wide data dashboard and report its findings to the Presidents’ Council.