

2020

MCCS STRATEGIC PLAN



Overview

The mission of the Maine Community College System (MCCS) is to create an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force that is responsive to the changing needs of the Maine economy. The state's seven community colleges are uniquely positioned to accomplish this work through their mix of occupational and transfer programs, statewide reach, affordable tuition, and strong partnerships with business and industry.

Since their transition from technical to community colleges, the institutions have made it possible for thousands more Maine people to access greater educational opportunity. But increased access has not meant that Maine has fully realized the potential of the community colleges to prepare and sustain a highly skilled and adaptable labor force.

Realizing that full potential will require strategic responses to statewide challenges that threaten Maine's ability to attract and retain jobs that sustain its families and communities.

- College going and completion rates lag those in the rest of New England; as a result, not enough Maine people have the skills and credentials the state's economy needs to grow and sustain good jobs at good wages;
- This challenge is compounded by the fact that the state's aging population means that its labor force is projected to continue a steady decline over the next 15 years;
- At the same time, rapid technological change will continue to transform Maine's economy and demand even higher skill levels of both incumbent and future workers;
- In short, many more Maine people must be prepared and able to attain additional training, education, and skills.

Faced with these realities, Maine's community colleges—as detailed in this new strategic plan—are focused on three fundamental priorities: access and attraction, student success, and lifelong learning.

- 1. Get them in: access and attraction**
- 2. Get them through: student success**
- 3. Keep them connected: workforce development and lifelong learning**

1 Get them in: access and attraction

As Maine's population ages, the state faces a lack of skilled workers to fuel the state's economy.

- While the number of Maine high school graduates continues to decline (down 15% in the last 10 years)¹, only 62% of Maine students enroll directly in college after graduating from high school²;
- Nearly 125,000 Mainers have earned some college credit but have not completed a certificate or degree;³ and
- Thousands of adult workers remain out of the labor force because they lack the personal qualities and technical skills to qualify for high-demand jobs.⁴

Maine's community colleges are uniquely positioned to help many more Maine people gain the skills and education they need.

- The seven colleges and their off-campus centers are within 25 miles of 92% of Maine's population;
- The colleges offer the lowest tuition and fees in New England, and half of all students receive grant aid that covers the cost of tuition and fees;
- Over 75% of the programs offered by Maine's community colleges are the only ones of their kind in the state; and
- The colleges have the capacity to be innovative and flexible in their programming, scheduling, and delivery models in order to meet the immediate and long-term needs of both students and employers.

Progress in 2019: Both the number and percent of recent public high school graduates enrolling in a Maine community college have increased as the number of public high school students statewide has declined.

	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Recent high school grads enrolled at MCCS*	2,111	2,212	2,168	2,071	2,154	2,254
Maine public high school graduates**	12,362	12,368	12,426	12,247	12,369	12,090
Percent recent high school grads enrolled at MCCS	17.1%	17.9%	17.4%	16.9%	17.4%	18.6%

¹ <https://knocking.wiche.edu/state-profiles/>

² <https://mitchellinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014MaineCollegeGoing.pdf>

³ Lumina Foundation, A Stronger Nation: <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/ME>

⁴ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/07/01/commentary-retooling-maines-displaced-workers/>

#1 Get them in: Access and Attraction			
Goal: Increase the number of individuals served by Maine’s community colleges			
Objective		Strategies	
Increase the percent of recent Maine high school graduates who enroll in a Maine community college		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustain the statewide public awareness campaign and further develop messaging and attraction efforts targeted to recent Maine high school graduates.• Strengthen pathways and partnerships with CTE’s.• Strengthen <i>Embark: Support for the College Journey</i>.• Align secondary and post-secondary programs of study through guided pathways.• Increase strategic outreach to and recruitment of dual and concurrent students with a focus on those least likely to pursue a post-secondary credential.• Support the development of the colleges’ capacity to use SAT data and multiple measures to recruit students and place them in appropriate courses.	
Increase the number of adults served by MCCS		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support & incentivize new delivery models to meet needs of adult learners.• Support & incentivize pathways from and between non-credit to credit.• Support & incentivize badging/micro-credentialing.• Support expanded implementation and use of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).• Further develop public awareness messaging and attraction efforts targeted to adults.• Strengthen partnerships between MCCS and Adult Education, MDOL, MDOE, and employers.	
Foundational Supports			
Finance	Information Technology	Data & Institutional Research	Professional Development
Secure funding for operational costs and needed capital investments so that programs and facilities meet both existing and emerging needs of students and employers Keep MCCS affordable: - Tuition and fees remain lowest in New England - At least half of full-time MCCS students continue to receive grant aid that covers tuition/fees. Continue financial support for the strategic innovation fund.	Implement plan to further strengthen data security Implement single identity, a unique identifier for each student and employee. Create a set of Master Data Management standards that allow data to be made consistent across all colleges. Implement a technology solution for payment, enrollment, and tracking of short-term training.	Track dual and concurrent enrollment outcomes Track CTE outcomes (enrollment of CTE students; alignment of CTE program and college major; success of CTE students). Determine key characteristics of 38% of Maine high school graduates who do not currently enroll immediately in college. Assess ROI of dual and concurrent activities.	Provide professional development through systemwide convenings to support new program offerings, delivery models, and pathways from non-credit to credit offerings. Provide support for new and innovative attraction initiatives and practices.

Foundational Supports (continued) #1 Get them in: Access and Attraction			
Finance	Information Technology	Data & Institutional Research	Professional Development
	<p>Implement new enrollment management system for dual and concurrent students and their high schools, in partnership with UMS (Canusia).</p> <p>Continue to build out MCCS presence in the national Credential Registry, a repository of credentials offered by IHE's across the country.</p>		

#2 Get them through: student success

In order to address more fully the state's workforce challenges and help more Mainers attain a credential of value, efforts to increase access (to "get them in") must be supported by a sustained focus on student success ("get them through").

Our colleges' partnerships with the national Achieving the Dream network, Complete College America, the Lumina Foundation, and the Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin are supporting faculty and staff across the System in developing effective pedagogy and implementing and sharing evidence-based, student centered strategies that are designed to assist more of our students in persisting toward their educational goals.

The need for these innovations is significant:

- In fall 2014, 43% of first-time MCCC students enrolled in a remedial math course. Research tells us that these students face significant challenges. Nationwide, only a third of those who take remedial math pass, and less than 25% of remedial students at community colleges earn a certificate or degree within eight years of enrollment.⁵ Key to MCCC efforts to help more students succeed is the implementation of new math curricula and pathways that closely align with their programs of study.
- After modest gains in fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates beginning with the fall 2012 cohort and continuing through the fall 2015 cohort, the retention rate for the two most recent cohorts (fall 2017 and fall 2018) have declined several percentage points, from 76% to 73% (fall-to-spring) and from 57% to 54% (fall-to-fall). This can be partly attributed to low unemployment rates, causing more students to step away from education in favor of employment, but it is a decline that requires attention and strategies that are targeted to the specific needs of various student populations, among them adult learners, part-time students, and under-represented groups.

Progress in 2019:

- **All seven colleges have now adopted math pathways. Between fall 2014 and fall 2018, the number of first-time MCCC students enrolled in a remedial math course declined from 43% to 28%. At SMCC, which redesigned remedial math to align with students' program of study and reduced math remediation from two levels to one, students who require remediation are now far more likely to pass college-level math.**
- **The three-year success rate for MCCC students has increased steadily over the last six years, rising from 51% for the cohort that entered in fall 2010 to 55% for the cohort entering in fall 2016.**

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/10/opinion/sunday/cuny-ending-the-curse-of-remedial-math.html>

#2 Get them through: Student Success			
Goal: Increase student success rate to 57% for fall 2018 cohort and 59% for fall 2019 cohort <i>Student success rate: percent of students in an entering fall cohort who graduate, are still enrolled, or have transferred at 150% time to completion. Includes degree-/certificate-seeking students who entered the college as first-time or transfer in students, enrolled full- or part-time.</i>			
Objectives		Strategies	
Increase MCCS credential completion rate		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support colleges in the implementation of their strategic work plans.• Support colleges in the implementation of a holistic student support infrastructure.• Fully implement math pathways systemwide.• Pilot guided pathways.• Develop a targeted response to address the specific challenges that adults with some credit but no degree face in completing a credential of value.• Revise the program review process to focus more intently on assessment as a tool to increase student success.	
Increase MCCS fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce reliance on remediation; increase percent of students who are placed in college math and college English upon enrollment in a program of study.• Collaborate with secondary schools on the expansion of math pathways.	
Increase the number of MCCS students who transfer on to 4-year programs of study, mindful that receiving institutions determine access and affordability.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen existing pathways and develop new ones between MCCS and UMS that decrease cost of attendance and time to completion (block transfer, reverse transfer, meta-majors, connected pathways).• Strengthen tracking and reporting of transfer activity between MCCS and UMS.	
Foundational Supports			
Finance	IT	Data & Institutional Research	Professional Development
Secure funding for operational costs and needed capital investments so that programs and facilities meet both existing and emerging needs of students and employers Keep MCCS affordable <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MCCS tuition and fees remain lowest in New England• At least half of full-time MCCS students continue to receive grant aid that covers tuition and fees.	Expand use of technology and systems to track, support, and analyze student progress. Complete implementation of new learning management system (D2L)	Strengthen capacity of MCCS IR to track and analyze student progress Strengthen capacity Systemwide to present, communicate, and understand data Develop a data-sharing agreement with UMS to support transfer Report on ATD metrics two times each year Assist IT in master data management initiative	Support high-impact practices in teaching, learning, and advising. Implement plan to sustain the work of ATD at end of Kresge funding in 2020.

#3 Keep them connected: lifelong learning and workforce development

MCCS seeks to reengineer its delivery of workforce training and create new educational pathways that lead from short-term training to post-secondary credentials for Maine adults. The goal: to build an innovative, demand driven workforce development system that is responsive to Maine's established and evolving industry sectors and that provides Maine people with ready access to the training and education they need to build a more prosperous future for their families and their state.

The need is great. Large numbers of Maine adults have left the labor force or been left behind in low-wage employment. Today, Maine has nearly 130,000 adults, age 25 to 64, who are not working.⁶ Only 63% of the state's population 16 and over was in the labor force in 2018,⁷ and tens of thousands of unskilled workers are trapped in minimum wage jobs. Too many Maine adults, lacking a credential of value, are clustered at the bottom of the wage scale and are significantly more likely to be unemployed, even in a tight labor market.

At the same time, those Mainers who are currently employed in mid-level and skilled jobs are not immune from the workplace challenges posed by rapid innovations in technology, changes in consumer demand, and the pressures of foreign competition. These forces have resulted in rapidly changing workforce needs and job performance requirements across the state. Across Maine industries, automation is driving systematic change, and the skills of too many Maine workers are increasingly out of alignment with the demands of the workplace. This trend will only continue. By one estimate, as many as a third of American workers will need to switch occupations by 2023 because of rapid automation.⁸

Progress in 2019:

- **In 2018, MCCS provided short-term training to 897 individuals; in 2019 the number served grew to 1,602; and in just the first six months of the current academic year, MCCS has trained over 2,000.**

⁶ Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine Department of Labor, [Maine's Workforce in 2019](#), published October 2019.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ McKinsey and Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/skill-shift-automation-and-the-future-of-the-workforce>, August 2019

#3 Keep them connected: Lifelong learning & workforce development			
Goal: Strengthen alignment of MCCS programs and services with the needs of Maine employers and workers to enhance the employability and career development of adults served by MCCS and to better address the state’s workforce challenges.			
Objectives		Strategies	
Strengthen MCCS workforce training programs and services to ensure their relevance and responsiveness to employers and adult learners statewide		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine industry sector training needs• Track and assess new programs launched with 2018 workforce development funds• Develop a three-year training plan to address statewide needs• Expand marketing, outreach, and partnership development with employers• Assess and track employer satisfaction with MCCS training programs• Strengthen capacity to assess graduate and trainee outcomes in the workforce• Develop capacity to reconnect with and market to those who participate in MCCS training programs• Continue to strengthen partnerships with the state’s trade associations, the Maine Office of Innovation, and the Maine Departments of Economic and Community Development, Labor, and Corrections	
Increase types of credentials of value		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to build and expand pathways from non-credit to credit• Support continued development of digital badging and micro-credentialing• Build/expand new delivery models and employer partnerships that are highly responsive to the needs of industry, incumbent workers, and other adult learners	
Increase the number of adults served by MCCS		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See Priority #1 for list of strategies	
Foundational Supports			
Finance	Information Technology	Data & Institutional Research	Professional Development
Secure funding for operational costs and needed capital investments so that programs and facilities meet both existing and emerging needs of students and employers	Implement a technology solution for payment, enrollment, and tracking of short-term training Build badging support structure	Increase capacity to analyze and share key labor market data in order to inform program development and delivery	Support faculty and staff in their efforts to redesign curriculum, test and introduce new pedagogies, and develop new pathways and delivery models for adult learners.
Secure funding to expand and strengthen the capacity of the Workforce Development Division	With IR, explore development of standardized employer feedback loop	Strengthen partnership with MDOL to access wage and outcomes data on a regular, reliable basis	
	Build badging support structure	Update capacity to count and report on individuals and employers served	