



Maine Community College System

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 5, 2009

CONTACT: Helen Pelletier
207-767-0116, ext. 3
hpelletier@mccs.me.edu

Community Colleges See Dramatic Increase in Mid-Year Applications

As unemployment climbs, applicants turn to state's two-year colleges for new job skills

AUGUSTA, ME — Maine's community colleges are experiencing double-digit growth in the number of applicants seeking admission for the spring 2009 term that begins this month. Applications are up 20 percent across the System, with the largest increases at Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield (up 38 percent) and Central Maine Community College in Auburn (up 25 percent).

System officials attribute the increase to the weak economy and rising unemployment. During past economic downturns, the state's community colleges have experienced an increase in both applications and enrollment as individuals have sought to upgrade their job skills or prepare for a new career.

The increased demand for community college offerings comes at a difficult time for the colleges which have absorbed a 63 percent increase in enrollment since the transition from technical to community colleges in 2003 and have had to confront a \$2.9 million curtailment in state funding for the fiscal year that ends in June.

"We are doing everything in our power to keep the doors open as wide as possible, but we are stretched thin and will not be able to serve all of these applicants," noted MCCS President John Fitzsimmons. "With unemployment predicted to reach nearly 9 percent in Maine in 2010, getting people back to work has got to be a top priority for our state. Maine people understand that and are turning to our colleges to gain the skills they need to find solid jobs and economic security."

Nearly 600 more individuals have applied to the community colleges for admission for the spring semester than did last year. Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor has seen a 21 percent increase in its spring applications. Applications at York County Community College in Wells have risen by 19 percent, at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland by 15 percent, and at Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle by nearly 14 percent.

More information about enrollment trends at Maine's community colleges is available at <http://www.mccs.me.edu/about/enrollment.html>.

- end -