



# Maine Community College System

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:** Helen Pelletier

Phone: 207-767-0116, ext. 3

hpelletier@mccs.me.edu

## **Community Colleges Report Record Number of Applications**

*Applications up 8 percent over last year*

AUGUSTA, ME — Maine's community colleges are reporting an 8 percent increase in the number of applications for the 2008/09 academic year. Applications are up by over 900, to 12,200, as of early August. That number is expected to continue to grow over the next few weeks.

System officials attribute the increase to a weak economy and uncertain job prospects. When the economy softens, the state's community colleges typically see an increase in both applications and enrollment. "People who are unemployed or underemployed, high school graduates who are just starting out, and workers who need to upgrade their skills are all knocking on our doors," notes MCCS President John Fitzsimmons. "Maine doesn't have an aspirations problem it has an access problem. We are doing everything in our power to keep the dream of a college education affordable and accessible. The challenge is finding funding to hire more faculty and staff."

The colleges reporting the greatest growth in applications are Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield (up 18%), Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle (up 12.8%), York County Community College in Wells (up 10.9%), and Central Maine Community College in Auburn (up 10.5%). Southern Maine Community College in South Portland has seen a 6.6% increase in applications over this time last year. Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor is up 1.8%. Washington County Community College is down 9.4%, due in part to the fact that many of those laid off from Louisiana Pacific and Domtar in the past few years have already enrolled or completed retraining at the college.

Demand for on-line courses also continues to grow, a likely result of high gas prices. Kennebec Valley Community College, which has more students enrolled in on-line courses than any other community college in the state, reports a 14.5% increase in the number of students registered to date for on-line courses.

The growth in applications for the coming academic year continues the System's dramatic enrollment growth since the transition from technical to community colleges in 2003. Over the past five years, degree seeking enrollment at the state's seven community colleges has grown by 55%.

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