



# Maine Community College System

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, September 24, 2007

**CONTACT:** Helen Pelletier

Phone: 207-767-0116, ext. 3

Cell: 207-215-4652

### **Enrollment in Maine's Community Colleges Soars 57% in First Five Years**

***November bond critical to colleges' ability to meet increased demand.***

SOUTH PORTLAND, ME — Enrollment in Maine's community colleges has grown 57 percent—to 11,801 degree seeking students—since the Governor and Legislature changed the name and mission of the former technical colleges five years ago. In announcing preliminary enrollment numbers for 2007, MCCS President John Fitzsimmons noted that an additional 4,283 students are now seeking degrees at the seven colleges than were enrolled in 2002, the year before the community colleges were established. Governor John Baldacci and members of Maine's legislative leadership joined Fitzsimmons in making the announcement today at a press conference at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland.

President Fitzsimmons also announced that the number of students entering directly from high school has jumped 65 percent during the five-year period and 6.5 percent this year alone. (The numbers are preliminary, but are not expected to change significantly by the official census date of October 15<sup>th</sup>.)

In helping to announce the enrollment numbers, Governor Baldacci, who led efforts to create the community college system in Maine, noted: "Maine's community colleges are a great Maine success story. The colleges are not only making a major difference in the lives of thousands of Maine people, they are also helping to build a stronger Maine economy by increasing the skill level of our workforce."

Fitzsimmons praised Governor Baldacci and the Legislature for recent investments in the colleges. "In five short years, Maine's community colleges have proven that if Maine people have access to a low-cost, high quality education, they will respond," said Fitzsimmons. "We built it, and they came. We are just beginning to realize the power and potential of the community colleges. A Governor's commission last fall called for the System to more than double its enrollment over the next decade. We know the challenge is not student interest but rather our ability to hire faculty and staff to keep up with the student demand."

-more-

Fitzsimmons noted that Question 3 on this November's ballot—which includes \$15.5 million in bonding for the community colleges—is critical to the colleges' ability to meet the dramatic increases in demand.

“The tremendous growth of the community colleges has severely taxed our facilities,” he said. “The need exists across the System to renovate buildings and reconfigure classroom and laboratory spaces to make them more efficient and better equipped to serve increasing numbers of students.”

### **Celebrating 5 Years, Looking Ahead to 10**

Southern Maine Community College has experienced the most dramatic growth of the 7 colleges over the past five years. It has seen a 140% increase in degree seeking students since 2002 (from 2,019 to 4,851 this fall). Other colleges have also experienced sustained growth: Central Maine Community College in Auburn has grown by 43% over the five years (to 1,919 students), Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor by 37% (to 1,643), and Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield by 36% (to 1,469).

In looking forward to the colleges' tenth anniversary year, Governor Baldacci and President Fitzsimmons presented each of the seven colleges with a \$2,000 scholarship to be awarded to a high school student in their home area in 2012/13. Jeanne Crocker, principal of South Portland High School, accepted the scholarship on behalf of the high schools. In doing so, she noted the importance of the community colleges to her students and their families: “For many of our students who didn't think college was an option, the community colleges have opened the door to higher education and gotten them a big step closer to achieving their full potential.”

### **Other Enrollment Highlights**

Degree seeking enrollment at the colleges has increased 6.5% this year alone. Three of the colleges have experienced double digit growth this fall: Washington County Community College in Calais is up 15.9% over last year, to 379 students. CMCC is up 13.1 percent this fall, and York County Community College in Wells is up 11.6% to 780 degree seeking students while surpassing 1,000 in head count for the first time in its history. Eastern Maine Community College has seen a 9.5% increase in degree-seeking students over last year, KVCC a 6.3% increase, and SMCC a 3.5% increase. Although Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle experienced a slight decline of 2.9% (to 760 degree seeking students), it saw an increase in the number of students enrolling directly from high school (up 3.7% to 168) and in the number of first-year students (up 4.7% to 517).

### **MCCS Attracting More High School Students**

Since the community colleges were established in 2003, the schools have also experienced dramatic growth in the number of students enrolling directly from high school. Compared to five years ago, 65 percent more of these students entered the community colleges this fall, for a total of 2,065. The System's Early College for ME program, which targets students who have traditionally not gone to college, has played a role in this growth by offering college transition services, early college courses, financial assistance, and guidance before and during college.