



Responding to the Challenges of the Maine Workforce

Maine Has a Serious Workforce Shortage

Maine's population continues to age. Working age adults will decrease by 64,000 between 2014 and 2024. At the same time, Maine is losing young adults to out-migration; more than 1,800 workers younger than age 26 left between 2011 and 2015. And the number of high school graduates continues to decline; down from 17,000 in 2008 to 14,600 this year and a projected 12,350 in 2032.

Higher Education is Essential to Addressing that Shortage

By 2020, researchers project that 66% of all Maine jobs will require post-secondary education. Of these jobs, 36% will require some college, a postsecondary certificate or a 2-year degree, and 30% will require at least a 4-year degree. Today, only 39% of Maine adults have a college credential, and only 62% of Maine students enroll in college in the fall after high school graduation. Nearly half of Maine high school graduates who enroll directly in the MCCS require at least one remedial course in math or writing.

The Workers that Maine Colleges Need to Develop Have Very Limited Money and Time

- **They are poor.** Maine per capita income is the lowest in New England and 23rd in the nation. Currently, 76% of full-time community college students are eligible for financial aid even though tuition (at \$92 per credit hour) and average fees total \$3,600 per year, making them the lowest in New England and the lowest in Maine by more than half (university tuitions range from \$217 to \$279 per credit hour).
- **Because they are poor, they must work while going to school, leaving limited time for education and training.** Nearly 60% of all community college students attend school part-time. More than a third work at least 30 hours per week while in school, and 20% work at least 40 hours each week.
- **They are focused on acquiring the skills they need to enter the workforce and/or on transferring and saving money on a four-year degree.** 70% of community college students are enrolled in occupational programs for immediate employment. The remaining 30% are looking to save money on their first two years of college to help pay for the last two years when they transfer.

To Address this Workforce Shortage Maine Must Develop its Community Colleges

Community colleges are:

- **Focused on Occupations.** Maine's community colleges offer nearly 300 options in over 140 occupational fields. 75% of these offerings are the only ones available in the state.
- **Adaptable to Employer Needs.** In the past two years alone, the community colleges have changed over 75 of those 300 options to make them more responsive to workforce needs.
- **More Affordable.** As noted above, community colleges are far less expensive than other colleges in Maine.
- **Faster to Market.** The community colleges' short-term training, 1-year certificates and 2-year degrees offer faster paths to employment than 4-year degrees.

Community Colleges Produce a Substantial Return for Maine and Its Citizens

94% of community college students come from Maine, and 92% stay in Maine. The average first-year full-time wage of an MCCA degree holder is \$34,000, and the lifetime earning value of a two-year degree is \$423,000 more than a high school diploma.

Community Colleges Can Expand Their Impact on Workforce Development Statewide

In its biennial funding request, the community college system has requested base funding to continue existing occupational programs and new funding for:

- **Short-term Training.** Funding to staff and implement centralized business and industry training; develop and implement a training-needs assessment tool for businesses; expand short-term non-customized high-demand trainings; and expand short-term customized trainings.
- **Certificates and Degrees.** Funding to expand high-demand occupational programs; expand student support services to graduate more students more quickly; and expand connections to high schools, especially CTE's.