

Maine College Transitions: College Enrollment Outcomes

December 2012

Background

Maine College Transitions (MCT) is a comprehensive approach to college readiness for adults offered through adult education (AE) programs. The program has evolved from a grant-funded Adult Basic Education-to-College initiative operating at six pilot sites into a state-funded program overseen by the Maine Department of Education, offered through 22 state grants serving 35 communities. MCT is available in about one-third Maine's roughly 100 AE sites statewide, with locations strategically chosen to serve all geographic regions of the state. "The goal is to provide high quality, cost-effective and accessible pathways to postsecondary education for adults" (Larinda Meade, quoted in Ruff 2011).

History

In 2001 the Nellie Mae Education Foundation provided grants to seven adult education sites in Maine to implement a model that included creating student cohort groups, providing basic skills instruction, and career and college counseling services. The Betterment Fund subsequently invested in conferences to educate adult education and post-secondary partners in the adult education/college transition concept and practice. In 2005 the Lumina Foundation provided funding for leadership to create a statewide program, identify best practices, create curriculum frameworks, coordinate with community colleges, and develop an assessment of program readiness for instituting the MCT model. Nellie Mae then provided an additional grant to support a second year of coordination and outreach as well as a program evaluation. The MELMAC Education Foundation provided grants to 24 adult education programs for college transition activities, and offered trainings where grantees came together to learn from field experts and each other.

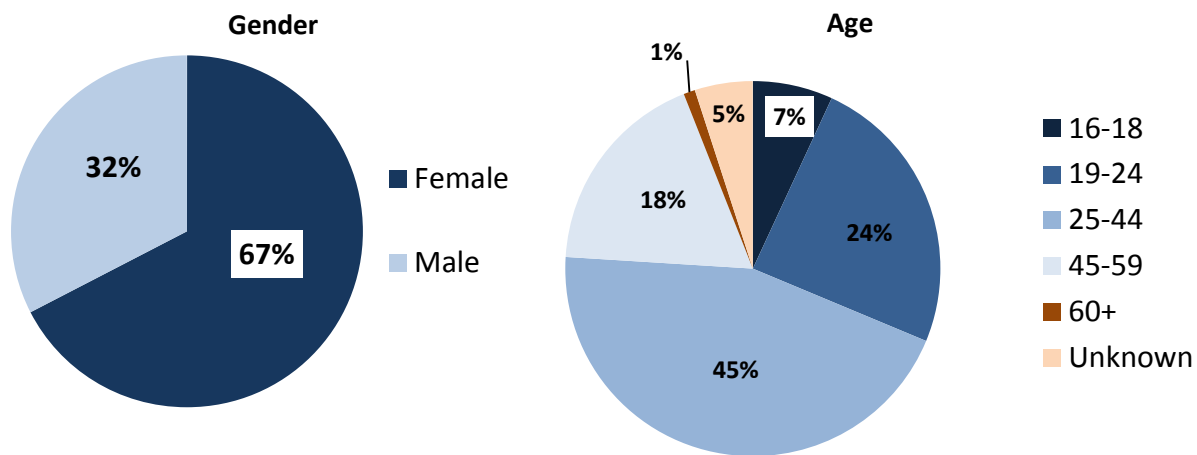
In 2006, the Maine Department of Education changed its policy to reimburse school districts for adult education transition activities, a previously non-allowable activity. The Maine legislature passed a bill to fund adult college transitions at six sites, with an initial funding appropriation of \$200,000. The Betterment Fund funded a seventh rural grantee, and Nellie Mae made a grant for program leadership. Student demand was greater than projected, and the 2007 state budget more than doubled the number of state-funded MCT sites to 22.

The momentum created by Nellie Mae, Betterment, Lumina, and MELMAC foundation grants, state funding, and the support of the Maine Compact for Higher Education and the Maine Department of Education helped Maine College Transitions move from private grant funding to state institutional funding in only five years. Maine is a leader in developing this program and has used coordination across systems and organizations, along with multiple funding streams, to ensure that MCT is accessible to Maine citizens statewide.

MCT Student Profile

5,354 students participated in Maine College Transitions during its first four academic years at the current scale, starting in 2007-2008. About 1,300 students participated during each of the four years. As shown below, about two-thirds of MCT students are women, and about 45% were between the ages of 25 and 44 at the time they entered the program. The proportions of MCT students who were employed and unemployed at entry were nearly equal—37%—with 13% not in the labor force, and employment status unknown for 13%.

Demographic Profile of Students Participating in MCT, 2007-2011



College Enrollment Data Source

This report is based on analysis of college enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) produced in November 2012. NSC is an independent, nonprofit college enrollment and degree verification service that maintains records for more than 3,600 degree-granting institutions of higher education. It is the primary provider of these data to schools, districts, colleges, businesses, foundations, and state and federal governments. 93% of college students in the U.S. attend colleges and universities that participate in the NSC service. NSC's *Student Tracker* service uses student names and dates of birth to search within its college enrollment database, and provides detailed reports on initial college enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment.¹

College Enrollment among MCT Alumni

The National Student Clearinghouse returned records for 5,344 students that participated in Maine College Transitions in one of the 35 communities between 2007 and 2011. **Just over one-half (51.2%) of MCT students—2,735 people—enrolled in college for at least one semester.** This cohort of MCT students entered college any time from 2008 through 2012.

College Participation by MCT Community

Student enrollment totals at the 35 community MCT sites ranged from 10 to 488 students over the four program years, with a median enrollment of 110 students. Community-level college participation rates ranged widely, from 32% to 77%, with a median college participation rate of 51.6%, as shown in the table on the next page. College participation rates are not correlated with MCT program size.

¹ Three factors contribute to potential under-reporting of college attendance in the StudentTracker reports: 1) The NSC uses name and date of birth to match students' high school and college enrollment records. In some cases, this is not enough information to confirm a match, so some students who are enrolled in college will not be captured in Student Tracker reports; 2) 7% of college students nationwide attend institutions that do not participate in the Clearinghouse. In Maine, only **Kaplan University** and **Washington County Community College** are not currently part of the NSC database; 3) Roughly 5% of college students request a block on their records, so their college enrollment is not captured in the student-level NSC reports that were used for this analysis.

College Enrollment Rates at the 35 MCT Community Sites

MCT Community/Site (Alphabetical)	Number of MCT Students	Number enrolled in college	College participation rate
Augusta	224	156	69.6%
Bangor	440	216	49.1%
Belfast	123	76	61.8%
Bonny Eagle	53	24	45.3%
Camden	32	18	56.3%
Caribou	66	33	50.0%
Casco	242	126	52.1%
Damariscotta	19	12	63.2%
Dover-Foxcroft	413	168	40.7%
East Sullivan	188	97	51.6%
Fairfield	488	324	66.4%
Farmington	110	57	51.8%
Fort Kent	73	52	71.2%
Gardiner	167	92	55.1%
Gorham	32	18	56.3%
Gray	89	29	32.6%
Greenville	29	11	37.9%
Houlton	98	60	61.2%
Lewiston	282	148	52.5%
Machias	39	16	41.0%
Madawaska	69	40	58.0%
Maranacook	75	48	64.0%
Newport	144	69	47.9%
North Berwick	22	10	45.5%
Old Orchard Beach	73	33	45.2%
Portland	210	91	43.3%
Rockland	161	80	49.7%
Sanford	53	22	41.5%
South Berwick	151	72	47.4%
South Paris	196	92	46.9%
Topsham	403	209	51.6%
Waldoboro	10	7	70.0%
Whitefield	44	34	77.3%
Windham	199	81	40.7%
Winthrop	83	37	44.6%
Wiscasset	243	78	32.1%
Total	5,344	2,735	51.2%

MCT Community/Site Listed by college participation rate	
Whitefield	77.3%
Fort Kent	71.2%
Waldoboro	70.0%
Augusta	69.6%
Fairfield	66.4%
Maranacook	64.0%
Damariscotta	63.2%
Belfast	61.8%
Houlton	61.2%
Madawaska	58.0%
Camden	56.3%
Gorham	56.3%
Gardiner	55.1%
Lewiston	52.5%
Casco	52.1%
Topsham	51.9%
Farmington	51.8%
East Sullivan	51.6%
Caribou	50.0%
Rockland	49.7%
Bangor	49.1%
Newport	47.9%
South Berwick	47.4%
South Paris	46.9%
North Berwick	45.5%
Bonny Eagle	45.3%
Old Orchard Beach	45.2%
Winthrop	44.6%
Portland	43.3%
Sanford	41.5%
Machias	41.0%
Dover-Foxcroft	40.7%
Windham	40.7%
Greenville	37.9%
Gray	32.6%
Wiscasset	32.1%

College-bound MCT alumni were most likely to enroll in one of Maine’s public higher education institutions. The table below shows the ten colleges with the highest MCT student enrollment: six community colleges and four University of Maine System campuses. 88% of MCT students who went to college enrolled in one of these ten institutions.

Enrollment by Postsecondary Institution (Top Ten)

College	MCT Students Enrolled	
	Number	Percent
Kennebec Valley Community College	609	21.8%
University of Maine at Augusta	553	19.8%
Southern Maine Community College	397	14.2%
Central Maine Community College	328	11.7%
Eastern Maine Community College	224	8.0%
Northern Maine Community College	98	3.5%
York County Community College	71	2.5%
University of Maine	64	2.3%
University of Maine at Fort Kent	56	2.0%
University of Southern Maine	46	1.7%

College Enrollment Intensity

Part-time (49%) or mixed (39%) college enrollment was far more common among MCT alumni than was pure full-time (14%) college enrollment. Many MCT students who enrolled in college were co-enrolled in multiple postsecondary institutions within the same semester at least once.

College Enrollment Intensity among MCT Alumni who Enrolled in College

Enrollment intensity	Number	Percent
Full-time	331	12%
Part-time	1,311	48%
Both full-time and part-time	1,089	40%

Location and Type of Postsecondary Institution

Fully 88% of MCT students who enrolled in college attended institutions only in Maine. 171 students, 6% of the college-going MCT alumni, attended only postsecondary institutions outside Maine, and 4% attended institutions both within and outside Maine.

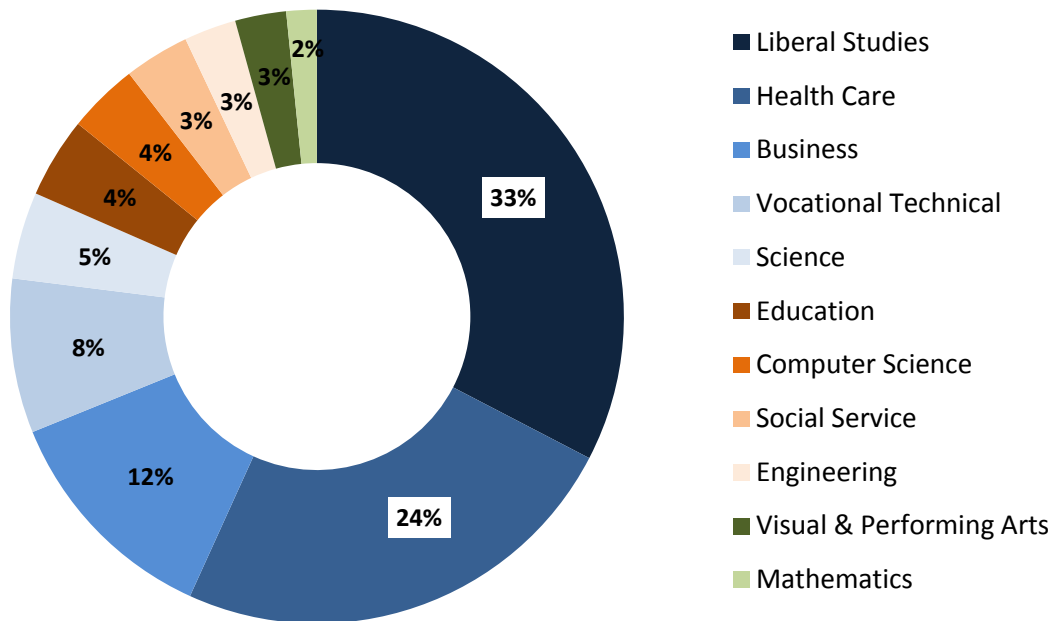
Most MCT alumni who enrolled in college (1,562 or 57%) attended only two-year institutions; 797 students or 29% attended only four-year institutions; and 372 students or 14% attended both two-and four-year institutions.

Nearly 10% of MCT alumni who enrolled in college appear to have transferred from a two-year to a four-year degree program during the study period. Of these, about one in three—261 students or 32%—completed a degree by the end of 2011.

Fields of Postsecondary Study

The NSC reports include information on the field of study of about two-thirds (64%) of the MCT alumni who enrolled in college. Of those with field of study indicated, the top five fields are Liberal Studies (32%), Health Care (24%), Business (12%), Vocational Technical—e.g., automotive, construction, culinary arts, and machining—(8%), and Science (5%).

MCT Alumni Postsecondary Field of Study



College Persistence and Completion

One-half of the 2,735 MCT students who enrolled in college (1,375 students or 50.3%) remained continuously enrolled once they entered college. The number of semesters of college study among this cohort of students ranged from one to 18 semesters—including summer sessions. The median length of enrollment among MCT students who persisted is three semesters of postsecondary study.

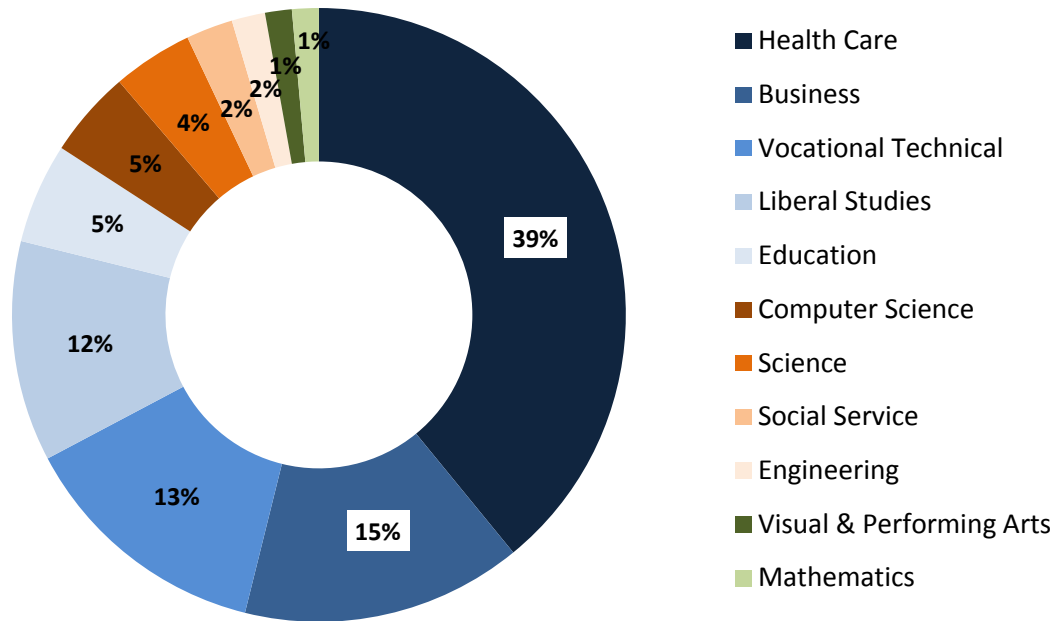
Considering the large proportion of MCT alumni enrolled in college part-time, most of them have not yet had sufficient time to complete college. **Nevertheless, 344 students have already earned a postsecondary certificate or degree, for a completion rate of 12.6%.** Among completers, the number of semesters of college enrollment ranged from two to 18 (including summer sessions), with a median of eight semesters.

Among students who earned degrees:

- 207 (60%) earned associate degrees;
- 36 (10%) earned occupational certificates;
- 34 (10%) earned bachelor's degrees;
- 3 (1%) earned master's degrees; and
- 62 (18%) earned a degree or certificate that was not specified in the NSC report.

The NSC data include fields of study for 83% of the students who completed a certificate or degree. Health care fields were the most popular majors among MCT degree-completers (39%). As shown in the chart below, other top fields among postsecondary completers were business, vocational technical, and liberal studies.

MCT Postsecondary Degree Completers' Fields of Study



Comparison with Other Studies

GED Completers

The GED Testing Service has been studying adults who passed the GED test in 2004. Nationally, 43% of these students enrolled in postsecondary education by 2011. The college enrollment rate was lower, 31%, for Maine GED passers. Students who passed the GED seem to be a good comparison group for MCT students, all of whom entered college after attending adult education. **MCT students were more likely to enroll in college than were GED completers nationally—50% compared with 43%—and much more likely than the Maine cohort of GED completers—50% compared with 31%.**

College persistence, defined as continuing directly from the first to the second year of college, was 29% among the national cohort of GED completers—much lower than the 50% achieved by MCT students. This is despite the fact that our definition on college persistence—remaining continuously enrolled once entering college—is more stringent.

The GED Testing Service found a six-year college completion rate of 12% nationally, but only 9% for Maine students (Zhang et al.). These rates are slightly lower than the 12.6% completion rate among MCT students.

All Adult Learners

The National Student Clearinghouse recently published its own report on national college completion rates among students who entered college in the fall of 2006. It reported a six-year college completion rate of 42% for adult learners, defined as students who entered college at age 25 or older, compared with a 57% college completion rate among younger college students (Shapiro et al.).

Once the cohort of MCT alumni in this study has had more time since entering college and more of them reach the six year benchmark, the completion rate—currently 13%—will certainly grow, but it remains to be seen whether it will reach the 42% achieved by all U.S. adult learners.

Summary

The development of Maine College Transitions from a grant-funded pilot program to a more widely-available, state-supported program in only five years demonstrates the state's commitment to providing access to postsecondary education for adults who did not complete high school and those who do not have any education beyond high school. The data on college enrollment detailed in this report show the payoff to this investment. The college participation, persistence, and completion rates for these first 5,344 MCT alumni—students who initially enrolled in adult education programs all over Maine—are promising, with just over one-half enrolling in college, one-half of those remaining continuously enrolled, and 13% already completing a postsecondary certificate or degree.

Linking these outcome data with community-specific program information and student demographics would provide valuable information on which program elements and implementation methods are most effective, and on who tends to benefit most from participating in MCT. The state should also continue to track the college outcomes of current and future MCT alumni over time to fully measure the program's effects.

Sources

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