

Maine's PELL GRANTS:

Heavy Lifting

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this survey was to document the access Pell Grants provided for students attending Maine's community colleges in both the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters, both of which are represented in the totals. The survey instrument was developed by Frank Mensel, who has provided leadership for similar studies conducted by the Education Policy Center in recent years (this study of Maine is the 19th study of Pell Grants conducted by the Center since 2011). Data collection in Maine was conducted by Dr. William Warren, Academic Vice President Emeritus at Southern Maine Community College, who succeeded in gathering survey returns from all seven colleges in the system.

This study of Maine reconfirms previous EPC findings that Pell Grants are the wellspring of college access in rural America. That claim - that Pell Grants are rural America's most important human resource development program - has been branded as hyperbole by some, but was confirmed by prior EPC surveys of Iowa (2011; found at: <http://www.uaedpolicy.ua.edu/pell.html>), Kansas (2012; found at: <http://www.uaedpolicy.ua.edu/pell.html>), and our three-state study of community colleges in Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana (2013; found at: <http://www.uaedpolicy.ua.edu/pell.html>). Data from these studies have been presented on behalf of the Rural Community College Alliance at the U.S. Department of Education (2011, 2012 and 2013), the White House (2012 and 2013), and on Capitol Hill (2013). This study pushes these claims a notch higher.

The Maine survey was undertaken in the hope that by obtaining responses from all seven community colleges across the state, different and more accurate measures of access could be obtained, and data could be reported on a more timely basis than is routinely reported by community colleges to the U.S. Department of Education as part of its IPEDS data system. The EPC targeted Maine as a vehicle to examine more deeply college opportunity in rural America. We note the changing demography and economic realities, most notably the findings from the Rural Policy Research Institute that less than 2% of the 74 million rural Americans are engaged in agriculture period, and less than 1% of rural Americans obtain their primary source of income from agriculture. The "learning how to learn" lifetime learning skills rural community colleges provide is of clear importance to rural America's prosperity and its future, for its most important asset are its people. Their advantage in cost and convenience has made community colleges the primary door to higher learning and better job skills across rural America, and for many rural families the only door.

The accompanying table speaks volumes about college access as a building block of the rural economy and culture. The large majority - 60% - of the nation's community colleges are rural, as classified by the 2010 Basic Classification of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and they serve 38% of the nation's community college students. All seven of Maine's community colleges fit that classification, with its largest, Southern Maine, which serves metropolitan Portland, the state's largest city, classified as Rural-Large.

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Maine tells the Pell story on access in spades. Counting only students who complete degree-based credits – which is the intent of Pell – over half of Maine's total full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment is generated by Pell Grants (6,847 of 12,767 students, or 54% of the total). In other words, Pell Grants carry well over half of the enrollment working toward degrees in all of Maine's seven community colleges.

The largest, Southern Maine Community College, makes a case study by itself, because it has more than half the combined headcount enrollment of the whole system. Its headcount enrollment for 2012-2013 was 10,321, while its FTE was almost even in terms of gender – 2,371 men (or 51%) and 2,295 women (or 49%), a percentage split mirrored in the credits earned data. In terms of Pell Grants awarded, however, women rule by larger margins. A total of 139,976 credits were earned by Southern Maine students in 2012-2013, but of the 68,680 credits earned by students on Pell Grants, 31,857 or 46% went to men, and 36,823 or 54% went to women. Of the \$12.1 million in total Pell awards, men drew \$5.5 million and women \$6.6 million. At the second largest community college, Central Maine, a headcount of 4,425 drove an FTE enrollment of 1,980, of which slightly more than half were women, who led the credits earned by a slightly larger margin. In terms of credits earned by Pell awardees, women were still farther ahead (15,409 or 57% compared to 11,614 or 43%).

All of these numbers are consistent with the revolution that community colleges and Pell Grants have thrust upon American higher education. Together they have propelled women into both a majority of U.S. undergraduate enrollments and a three-to-two lead in terms of four-year degrees completed nationally. The growth of women enrollees has boosted community colleges into the largest proportion of U.S. undergraduates, and their lead is still growing. As the recovery from the "Great Recession" gains steam, new and old jobs are increasingly filled by women. These trends are of growing concern to legislators and other policy-makers, at both the federal and state levels. Are educators up to the challenge of refitting their works to the skill demands of global

competition? Will we see system transformation or disruption by external forces? Such questions are no less pertinent to Maine's community colleges than they are elsewhere.

Consider how differently, yet importantly, the Pell Grants play in two very different colleges, York County and Northern Maine, which are fifth and sixth in size among the seven colleges in the system. Campus housing is available on five of the seven campuses (about 60% of the nation's 600 rural and tribal community colleges have it), but was not a factor weighed in this survey, as it carries less than ten percent of the enrollment at all five of the institutions.

Partly a residential college, Northern Maine is the state's second smallest public college. About ten percent of its 1,400-plus students live on campus; for them, their overall cost of attendance substantially exceeds a full Pell Grant. Yet 60 percent or more of its students each semester are getting Pell Grants. Is it realistic to think the college would survive without Pell? And without the presence of Northern Maine Community College, the region it serves would find its payroll, cultural life, and access to both continuing education and job training badly diminished.

At York, the community is the hub of commerce in the southern-most corner of Maine. And the college and Pell Grants are hardly less important to the economic and cultural future than the commerce, as 51% of the FTE enrollment is carried by Pell Grants. No less than Northern Maine, York would be devastated by the loss or decline of Pell Grants, even as the two colleges contrast sharply in terms of enrollment by gender. At York, men and women are equal in terms of enrollment by both headcount and FTE, yet women run far ahead of men in Pell as a percentage of FTE enrollment (a 70-30 margin) and total dollars of Pell Grants awarded (\$810,157 compared to \$1,987,070).

The gender imbalance is even more pronounced at Kennebec Valley Community College. By gender, its total headcount enrollment of 2,095 is split -- 671 men and 1,424 women -- a margin of 2:1. Similar splits can be found in FTE en-

rollment and credits earned. Total 35,642 credits generated were 12,103 men or 34%, and 23,539 women or 66%. Among the 1,283 Pell Grants awarded to headcount students, women drew 911 or 71% and men just 372 or 29%. A similar 2:1 margin of Pell as a percentage of FTE enrollments was found by gender and Pell as a percentage of credits earned. In terms of dollars awarded in Pell, women received \$2,943,590 compared to \$1,296,839 to men, a margin of more than 2:1.

Such imbalance raises more questions about workforce development and change. With women not only moving far into the lead in degrees but also leading in new employment, will marriage become less and less traditional? Women are obviously determined to erase their lag in pay for the same work. Will their growing leverage in the workplace make them more inclined to raise children without a dad in the house? The throng of women electing to bear and rear children on their own has been growing steadily for a generation.

Men appear to be reacting mainly by looking the other way. Are they too busy watching football or chasing golf balls? While most community colleges feel no pain at having no organized football (most presidents are probably glad not to be so encumbered), they probably can't help but wonder if the football mania might be thinning out university dedication to higher learning especially among men. Perhaps more important, as community colleges go on growing as the leading provider of advanced job skills and lifelong learning, will their resources be sufficient to meet global competition? Pell Grants clearly are used for both for-credit workforce training as well as being used for access to the baccalaureate. Is there a larger key to the hope of resuscitating the middle class, and in choosing national priorities, isn't leading the skills race easily as important as leading a swollen arms race? It is the view of the authors that only corporate America would answer no.

In all, the data on Pell Grants at Maine Community Colleges should raise the same question at every college and in related state offices: are legislators and taxpayers well informed? It is our belief that universities may be taking students for granted: since they also take Pell Grants for granted, they can't deny it. It's a bad habit that community

colleges can ill afford. The Pell benefit is maximized in the convenience and cost of community colleges, nowhere more so than in rural America. Every other college student from rural homes is on a Pell Grant – if not more. In Maine and every other State, the community colleges have a duty to tell this story, writ bigger and bigger.

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About the authors:

Frank Mensel and William Warren first teamed up in 1983, when Warren used a year's sabbatical to work with Mensel as a Congressional Liaison for the Association of Community College Trustees. Much of their legwork in 1983 and 1984 went into reauthorizing the New GI Bill (the fourth), spearheaded by the Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery of Mississippi. They were instrumental, as widely noted by Rep. Montgomery, in helping make it the first GI Bill to allow individuals in the military to start using their college benefits after basic training, and not waiting until after they left the service. It was later named by Congress the Montgomery GI Bill.

Heavy Lifting: Pell Grants at Maine's Community Colleges, 2012-2013

	Southern Maine CC		Central Maine CC		Kennebec Valley CC		Eastern Maine CC		York County CC		Northern Maine CC		Washington County CC		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Headcount Enrollment	10,321		4,425		2,095		2,457		3,540		1,413		589		24,840	
Men	5,414	52	2,133	48	671	32	1,189	48	1,220	34	707	50	271	46	11,605	47
Women	4,907	48	2,292	52	1,424	68	1,268	52	2,320	66	706	50	318	54	13,235	53
Headcount on Pell	3,693		1,818		1,283		1,432		1,542		652		296		10,716	
Men	1,690	46	759	42	372	29	657	46	433	28	307	47	127	43	4,345	41
Women	2,003	54	1,059	58	911	71	775	54	1,109	72	345	53	169	57	6,371	59
Pell as a % of Total Headcount Enrollment	36%		41%		61%		58%		44%		46%		50%		43%	
FTE Enrollment	4,666		1,981		1,187		1,655		1,853		747		338		12,427	
Men	2,371	51	964	49	403	34	834	50	646	35	394	53	159		5,771	46
Women	2,295	49	1,017	51	784	66	821	50	1,207	65	353	47	179		6,656	54
FTE on Pell	2,289		1,177		721		990		951		469		251		6,848	
Men	1,062	46	517	44	225	31	472	48	287	30	236	50	122	49	2,921	43
Women	1,227	54	660	56	496	69	518	52	664	70	233	50	129	51	3,927	57
Pell as a % of Total FTE Enrollment	49%		59%		61%		60%		51%		63%		74%		55%	
Credits Earned	139,976		47,491		35,642		29,736		21,886		22,422		10,200		307,353	
Men	71,115	51	22,808	48	12,103	34	14,167	48	7,427	34	11,822	53	4,692		144,134	47
Women	68,861	49	24,683	52	23,539	66	15,569	52	14,459	66	10,600	47	5,508		163,219	53
Credits Earned on Pell	68,680		27,023		21,621		14,850		10,807		14,063		6,584		163,628	
Men	31,857	46	11,614	43	6,739	31	7,080	48	3,198	30	7,083	50	3,430	52	71,001	43
Women	36,823	54	15,409	57	14,882	69	7,770	52	7,609	70	6,980	50	3,154	48	92,627	57
Pell as a % of Total Credits Earned	49%		57%		61%		50%		49%		63%		65%		53%	
Pell in \$\$, Total	\$12,130,452		\$6,392,949		\$4,240,435		\$5,104,563		\$2,797,227		\$2,409,484		\$1,106,259		\$34,181,369	
Men	\$5,513,763	45	\$2,662,549	42	\$1,296,839	31	\$2,367,976	46	\$810,157	29	\$1,181,068	49	\$505,193	46	\$14,337,545	42
Women	\$6,616,689	55	\$3,730,400	58	\$2,943,596	69	\$2,736,587	54	\$1,987,070	71	\$1,228,416	51	\$601,066	54	\$19,843,824	58

Data Source: Education Policy Center, University of Alabama, Survey of Pell Grants awarded to Maine community college students in Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters. We acknowledge the contributions of EPC Senior Fellow Frank Mense and William Warren, Academic Vice President Emeritus, Southern Maine Community