



NEWS RELEASE

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MAINE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES ANNOUNCE A NEW APPROACH TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A \$60 million investment will provide training to more than 24,000 Maine workers

SOUTH PORTLAND, ME – A \$15.5 million grant from the Harold Alfond Foundation (HAF) to The Foundation for Maine's Community Colleges (FMCC) will enable Maine's seven community colleges to vastly expand and strengthen short-term training and education for incumbent workers, those seeking to enter the workforce, and those seeking to earn a credential of value. The Maine Community College System (MCCS) will combine these funds with \$35 million in funds through Governor Mills' Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan enabling Maine's community colleges to provide low- or no-cost workforce training to more than 24,000 frontline Maine workers over the next four years.

The historic \$60 million initiative will be housed in a new virtual "Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce," said David Daigler, president of the MCCS. The new funding is supplemented by another \$10 million in matching funds provided by the private sector, other grants, and existing workforce training funding.

"The Harold Alfond Foundation is very pleased to support this initiative that significantly expands the breadth and reach of workforce training in Maine," said Greg Powell, chairman of the board of trustees for HAF. The gift to FMCC was announced on Tuesday at a press conference at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland.

"Maine's community colleges have demonstrated over the years that they can quickly provide workforce training that is highly responsive to employers' needs and gives Maine workers the skills they need to enter and progress in today's workforce. This is a life-changing opportunity for Maine workers at a transformative moment in time for our state."

The \$35 million in funds through Governor Mills' Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor on July 19. It will be available for use on October 18. New workforce training covered under this initiative has already launched this fall.

"Maine has grappled with a serious workforce shortage for decades — one that has for far too long stifled our ability to grow our economy, create and maintain small businesses, and provide good-paying jobs across the state," said Governor Janet Mills. "My Administration is committed to tackling this problem head-on, which is why I dedicated more than \$100 million in workforce development funding, including \$35 million directly to Maine's community colleges, through the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan. When combined with the \$15.5 million grant from the Harold Alfond Foundation, this represents an historic and unprecedented investment to address Maine's workforce shortage. These funds will go directly to equipping Maine workers with skills to succeed in good-paying jobs, which will help them thrive, help businesses grow, and strengthen our

economy — a win-win as we recover from the pandemic and build a better economy for Maine and our people. I am grateful to the Harold Alfond Foundation for its generosity and the Maine Community College System for its ongoing work to improve our economy.”

In addition to expanding the number of low- or no-cost workforce training offerings across the state, MCCS is using the rare confluence of public and private investments to overhaul its workforce training portfolio. MCCS is working with Maine businesses and adding new supports and resources for workers who want to earn a college degree or other credential of value. In recent months, more than 80 businesses and associates have [signed a compact with MCCS](#), pledging to help this new effort that supports Maine workers at every stage of their work life.

“It’s not enough to provide training for just their first job, or even mid-career training,” Daigler said Tuesday. “With these funds, and the new compact with Maine businesses, Maine’s community colleges can provide a streamlined, affordable path so workers get personalized training and support from their first job and continuing all the way to earning a college degree or other credential of value. That level of coordinated effort between the business, the college, and the learner creates an unprecedented sea change in workforce development and career mobility for workers.”

“This once-in-a-lifetime financial investment allows Maine’s community colleges to leapfrog individual steps broadening the scope of our workforce training that might have taken years to accomplish otherwise,” Daigler said.

The approach pulls together various workforce training initiatives, creating a single logical and accessible system that cuts through red tape and maximizes efficiency. The Center will also be a resource to the state’s businesses, providing low- or no-cost training options for Maine’s small- to medium-sized employers who may lack the resources to sustain in-house training departments.

“The Harold Alfond Foundation has been our long-time partner in helping Maine build a skilled workforce. This grant will allow us to provide workers seeking employment with the technical skills they need to qualify for good-paying jobs, which in turn will provide businesses with the talent they need to compete and prosper in the new economy,” said John McKernan, former Maine governor and chairman of The Foundation for Maine’s Community Colleges.

The Harold Alfond Foundation, a longtime supporter of Maine’s community colleges, previously awarded a [three-year \\$3.6 million workforce training grant](#) to The Foundation for Maine’s Community Colleges in 2018. That grant fueled the first major expansion of workforce training at MCCS.

The plan for the Center was developed with feedback from workforce training and economic development authorities. Labor economist John Dorrer described the concept as “bold and timely.”

“It is most appropriate that the concept should be advanced by the single most important set of institutions that are able to offer programs and curricula that will equip the largest segment of Maine’s workforce with the skills and performance competencies needed for a dynamic economy,” wrote Dorrer, the former director of the Maine Center for Workforce Research and Information.

Bill Cassidy, the chairman of the MCCS Board of Trustees applauded the collaborative nature of the Center.

“There is such high demand right now for comprehensive training and support for lifelong learning. We are so grateful to have the support of partners in both the public and private sectors in putting together a visionary, collaborative effort that will benefit a generation of Maine workers,” Cassidy said.

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Maine’s seven community colleges have the lowest tuition and fees in New England and serve more than 29,000 individuals a year through degree programs, customized training, and opportunities for lifelong learning.