



NEWS RELEASE

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Harold Alfond Foundation Investing \$75 Million in Maine's Community Colleges; Largest Grant in MCCS History *Five-year Grant Will Fund 70,500 Short-Term Workforce Students*

SOUTH PORTLAND, Maine – The Harold Alfond Foundation (HAF) is investing \$75.5 million into short-term, workforce training programs at Maine's community colleges over the next five years in what is the largest grant ever for the Maine Community College System.

"This is truly a transformational investment that will directly benefit Mainers and Maine businesses across the state," said David Daigler, president of the Maine Community College System (MCCS). "Maine faces persistent workforce shortages across all industries and age groups, and employers are desperate for skilled workers, fast. These programs, developed side-by-side with Maine employers large and small, give Maine workers free access to the skills they need to enter and progress in today's workforce."

The grant was announced Thursday at Southern Maine Community College. This is the third HAF grant awarded to The Foundation for Maine's Community Colleges for short-term workforce training programs. The first, in 2018, was for [\\$3.6 million](#), and the second, in 2021, was for [\\$15.5 million](#). All together the three HAF grants total almost \$100 million, supporting short-term workforce training for 100,000 people.

"We are very grateful to the Alfond Foundation board for their long-term vision and commitment in fueling the spectacular growth of short-term workforce training at Maine's community colleges, particularly at a time when it is so critically needed," Daigler said, referring to the economic disruption of the pandemic.

It was the second HAF grant, combined with \$35 million in one-time, pandemic relief funds from the state through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, that launched the community colleges' robust roster of short-term workforce training programs, overseen by the system's new Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce. Since 2022, more than 26,000 students have taken short-term workforce training classes through the [Alfond Center](#).

The training has three distinct components: basic occupational skills training for people looking to enter a field or career; upgraded skills training for current workers so they keep up with evolving industry standards; and scholarships for workers looking to pursue an associate degree or certificate.

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“These programs are critical to building Maine’s skilled workforce, and we’ve seen outstanding results at Maine’s community colleges in recent years. We’re proud our grantmaking will lead to so many people getting the relevant, responsive job skills so needed by our economy,” said Greg Powell, chairman of the Harold Alfond Foundation.

Short-term workforce training programs generally just take days, weeks, or months to complete, and are free or discounted for the students. They are offered on a rolling basis throughout the year, onsite at the colleges, at workplaces, online, and through third-party, industry-approved instruction.

The short-term programs are in addition to the community colleges’ traditional offerings of two-year associate degree programs and one-year certificate programs, which are largely workforce training as well. More than 80 percent of degree-seeking students at Maine’s community colleges are enrolled in career and occupational programs.

“We want to give anyone who is looking for training, at any point in their working life, the opportunity to learn new skills,” said Dan Belyea, chief workforce development officer for MCCC and the director of the Alfond Center.

One of the longest-running short-term programs is in welding, which comes with a guaranteed interview at Bath Iron Works, a \$500/week “earn while you learn” incentive, and campus housing for some students. Dozens of short-term healthcare programs are also available, including four weeks-long phlebotomy classes, six months Advanced EMT classes, and nine-months long medical assistant programs.

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Maine’s seven community colleges have the lowest tuition and fees in New England and serve more than 30,000 students a year through early college, short-term workforce training, associate degree, certificate, and advanced certificate programs.