



News Release

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NMCC preparing to welcome largest-ever incoming class

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College is preparing to welcome what will likely be the largest incoming class in the institution's 48-year history. Less than a week out from the August 24 start of fall semester classes, the College has enrolled 581 students in the incoming class of 2009, a jump of 11 percent over the week before classes began last year.

"The increase in our enrollment for the 2009-2010 academic year is related to several factors," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. "Our efforts to reach out to the northern and southern regions in Aroostook County through expanded course and program offerings at our centers in Houlton and the St. John Valley, and new programs added to our academic inventory over the past few years that have directly responded to the demands of the region are key to our growth. In addition, the cost and quality of the education we offer is drawing students from greater distances, while increasing the number of students coming to us from the local area."

The College will begin delivery of its associate degree nursing program and early childhood education associate degree program in the St. John Valley with the start of the fall semester. Nursing courses originating on the Presque Isle campus will be delivered, via videoconference, to a classroom at Madawaska High School. The clinical component of the program will be offered on-site at healthcare facilities in the region. The entire early childhood education curriculum will be taught on-site in the Valley.

The NMCC nursing program has been offered for several years to students taking courses at the Houlton Higher Education Center in southern Aroostook through a partnership between NMCC, the University of Maine at Presque Isle and Houlton Regional Hospital.

According to Crowley, academic programs added on the NMCC campus in recent years have also driven numbers up this fall. The new offerings are now at or reaching capacity in the first year of the two-year programs.

Among the top enrolled of the new offerings on campus is the wind power technology curriculum, which is the first of its kind in New England. The intention, at the time the associate degree program was announced a year ago, was to enroll a co-hort of 18 students in the inaugural class this fall. Earlier this year, after demand for the program far exceeded capacity, College officials decided to add a second group and will welcome 36 students when classes begin on Monday. NMCC received 58 qualified applications from prospective students throughout Maine and beyond for entry into the wind power technology program this fall.

In two programs introduced over the past few years to respond to need articulated by the County's healthcare sector, enrollment in the incoming class of both the associate degree program in medical assisting and the certificate offering in medical coding have more than doubled this fall over last. Significant growth has also been realized in the relatively new precision metals manufacturing associate degree program, which is one of 12 academic offerings under the College's trade and technical occupations department.

Many of the trades related courses are realizing record numbers this fall as area displaced workers are turning to NMCC for education and training for new careers as a result of the economic downturn. The College launched an unprecedented new semester in March to accommodate those laid off. More than 40 unemployed workers from the Fraser Timberlands Mill in Ashland took advantage of the special session.

"Our willingness to offer programs and courses when needed has been very well received – not only by the students – but by people and policy makers across Maine. The March special semester helped unemployed workers transition into the College, engaged these individuals and provided a springboard for the coming fall semester," said Crowley.

Aside from larger numbers of students entering NMCC this fall who are considered non-traditional, the College has also seen a significant increase in the number of traditional-aged students. The number of 17 through 24 year olds in the entering class of 2009 is 14.5 percent greater than the incoming class of 2008. Included in that number is one of every eight students graduating this past June from high schools in Aroostook County.

Accommodating the record numbers at NMCC presents a unique set of challenges according to Crowley, especially since the College is coming off a year that saw its budget reduced through a curtailment order by \$400,000.

"The College is being stretched to respond to this demand—a demand created by a team effort in enrollment management, new programs that attract students, high quality instruction and services at a reasonable cost, as well as our commitment to the County to respond when we are called upon," said Crowley. "In a year when we have reduced our budget by a significant amount, we are preparing to serve what will likely be the largest entering class ever. It is a tribute to the willingness of the faculty and staff to step up to this challenge that has allowed us to provide the education people are looking for."

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