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# 2014 Annual Report of the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

Maine Department of Labor

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2014 Annual Report of the

# Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

February 2015

Submitted by

Jeanne S. Paquette, Commissioner

Maine Department of Labor



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**2014 Report**  
**Of the**  
**Competitive Skills Scholarship Program**

Transmitted to:

Joint Standing Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development

By:

Jeanne S. Paquette, Commissioner

Maine Department of Labor

February 2015

As Required by 26 MRSA §2033(10)

# Introduction

This report is being provided as required by the law establishing the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) and instructing the Maine Department of Labor (Department) to report on the status of the program and on any data that is collected to evaluate the program.<sup>1</sup>

The start of CSSP in November of 2007 came at a time in Maine when the effects of the national economic downturn began to impact employment levels.<sup>2</sup> This economic downturn lasted longer than any of the previous four recessions.<sup>3</sup> In Maine, employment declined further and longer than in previous recessions, its effects lingering long after it's officially declared end in June 2009.

As this report is being written many Maine workers continue to face significant reemployment challenges, and CSSP is providing an opportunity for them to train for good paying jobs that are in demand and to graduate with skills needed by Maine employers. As growth picks up, this training is more important than ever to align workers with the needs of Maine employers and to address the needs of the long-term unemployed.

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program has just concluded its seventh year and since its inception has helped many low income Mainers meet the new employment demands placed on them. This report offers findings for the 2014 program year and includes: participant career choice alignment with Maine's economic needs, education and training profiles and investments, program outcomes, participants' projected earnings, how graduates fared in the slowly recovering economy, and participant demographics. As more outcome data becomes available as more participants complete their studies, that data will drive continuous program improvement through policy review, providing insight into how to best help low-wage workers forge well-paying career paths while meeting Maine's demand for skilled workers.

## Background

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program was established with bi-partisan support by the Maine Legislature in 2007, with the primary goal of providing eligible individuals with access to postsecondary education, training for industry-recognized credentials, and support that lead to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand. CSSP provides support to adults with income lower than 200 percent of the federal poverty level and is supported by the state Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund.<sup>4</sup> The Fund is financed by contributions from employers, the cost of which is offset from their unemployment insurance (UI) taxes. Targeted outcomes from the program include: improvement of the economic well-being of participants, decreased reliance on financial support from public funds, and a workforce trained to meet ever-changing employer demand.

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1 26 MRSA §2033(10).

2 Dana Evans, "The Maine Labor Market: Trends and Issues" (Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine Department of Labor, September 2009) (<http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/pubs.html>) 23 Jan. 2010.

3 Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine Department of Labor, "Tracking the Recession" (<http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/recession.html>) 23 Jan. 2010.

4 Public Law 2007, ch. 352.

# Skills Needed in Maine's Economy Gained by CSSP Enrollees

The employment outlook from 2012 and 2022 is for 2.3 percent job growth and the continuation of a structural shift from production-related industries to service-providing industries. Net job growth is expected to be concentrated in education and health services, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality industries. During this period, thirteen of twenty-two occupational categories are expected to experience a net increase in jobs. Most new jobs and those with the fastest growth rates are expected to occur in service occupations and in professional and related occupations.

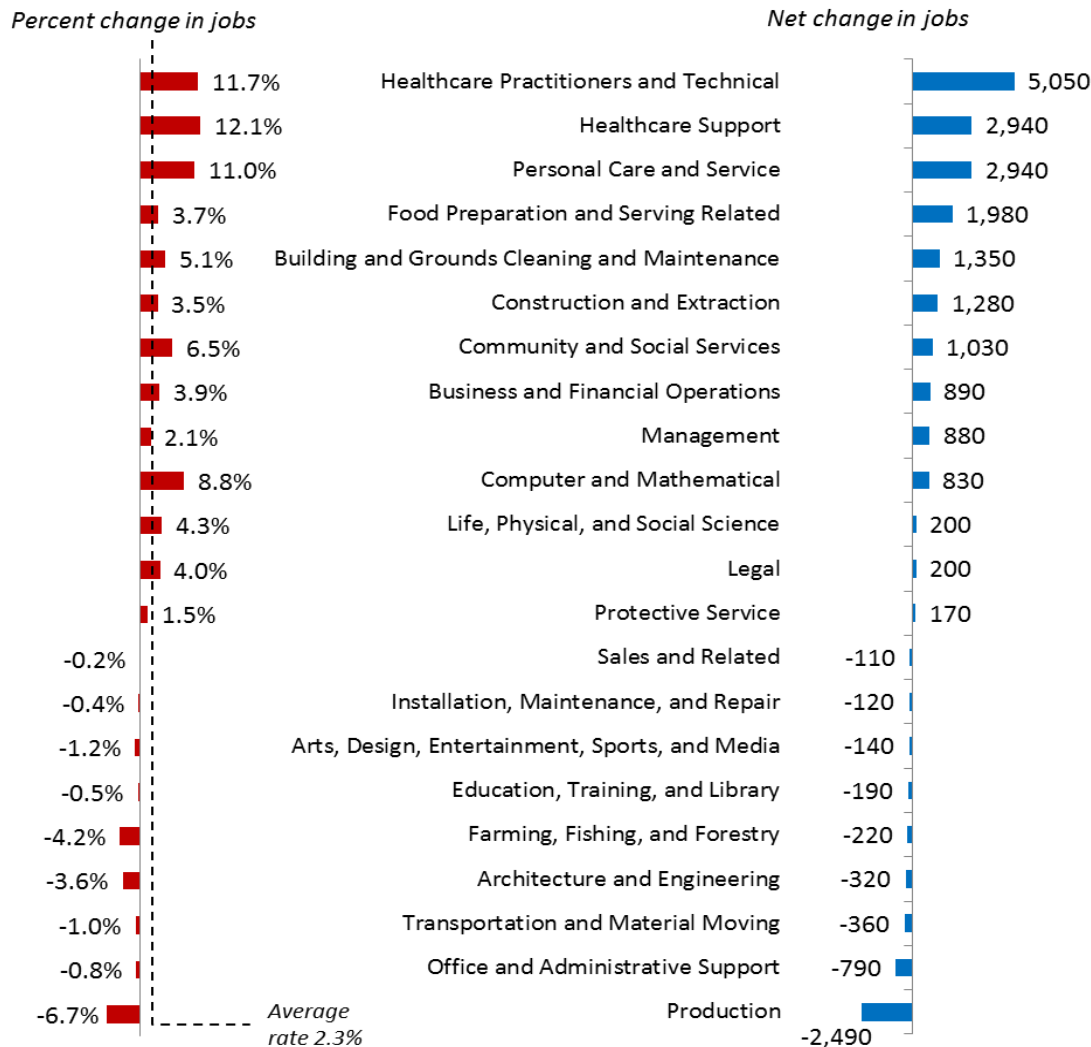
Occupational groups expected to grow at the fastest rates are: healthcare support (12%), healthcare practitioners and technicians (12%), personal care and service (11%), computer and mathematical (9%), and community and social service (7%). Occupations expected to gain the most net jobs are: healthcare practitioners and technicians (5,050 jobs), healthcare support (2,940 jobs), personal care and service (2,940 jobs), food preparation and serving (1,980 jobs), and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance (1,350 jobs).

More than half of net job growth will occur in occupations that typically require some kind of post-secondary education for entry. About 30 percent of new jobs will be in occupations that require post-secondary education lower than a bachelor's degree; an additional 30 percent will require a bachelor's degree or higher.

Demand is created by net growth and replacement of incumbent workers. About five out of six annual openings will be due to replacement rather than growth, creating opportunities even in industries and occupations with no expected net job growth. Among occupations identified as high-wage and in-demand, more than half of anticipated annual openings are among occupations requiring post-secondary training or education.

The following employment projections represent the foundation for establishing the high-wage, in-demand occupations targeted by CSSP.

*Projected change in employment by occupation, 2012-2022*



## Maine's Workforce Needs and Career Choices

Both individual economic self-sufficiency and the meeting of employers' needs for skilled labor are the desired outcomes of the CSSP program. Participants must be enrolled in training for employment in occupations that are identified by the Department as high-wage/in-demand (HWID) occupations in Maine that will result in a post-secondary certificate, degree, or industry-recognized credentials. Occupations on the 2014 HWID list had an average wage above the median (\$15.63 per hour/\$31,251 per year) and were projected by the Department's Center for Workforce and Research Information (CWRI) to be in demand in Maine.

The HWID list is reviewed by the State Workforce Investment Board and approved by the Commissioner of Labor. Training for occupations not on the HWID list are not eligible for funding through the CSSP program. Although these criteria help target CSSP to meet the needs of Maine's employers, further comparison of CSSP participants' occupational choices with job demand is necessary. The choice of an occupational goal by participants involves many factors, including the education and training programs being offered in their area, how much time they believe they can devote to the effort, and their individual skills and interests. It is, therefore, worthwhile to analyze the extent to which the career choices of CSSP participants reflect the job market.

The following chart compares the most frequently chosen occupations of CSSP participants to date, with projected job growth and job openings in those occupations in Maine. In some occupations (for example, management occupations) projected growth of the occupation may be small, while projected annual job openings are large. This reflects the extent to which people are expected to leave or retire from the occupation, creating a significant demand for replacement workers. Thus, CSSP participants are preparing to meet the needs of both growing industries and industries that need newly trained replacement workers.

## Top Eight Occupations Chosen By CSSP Trainees

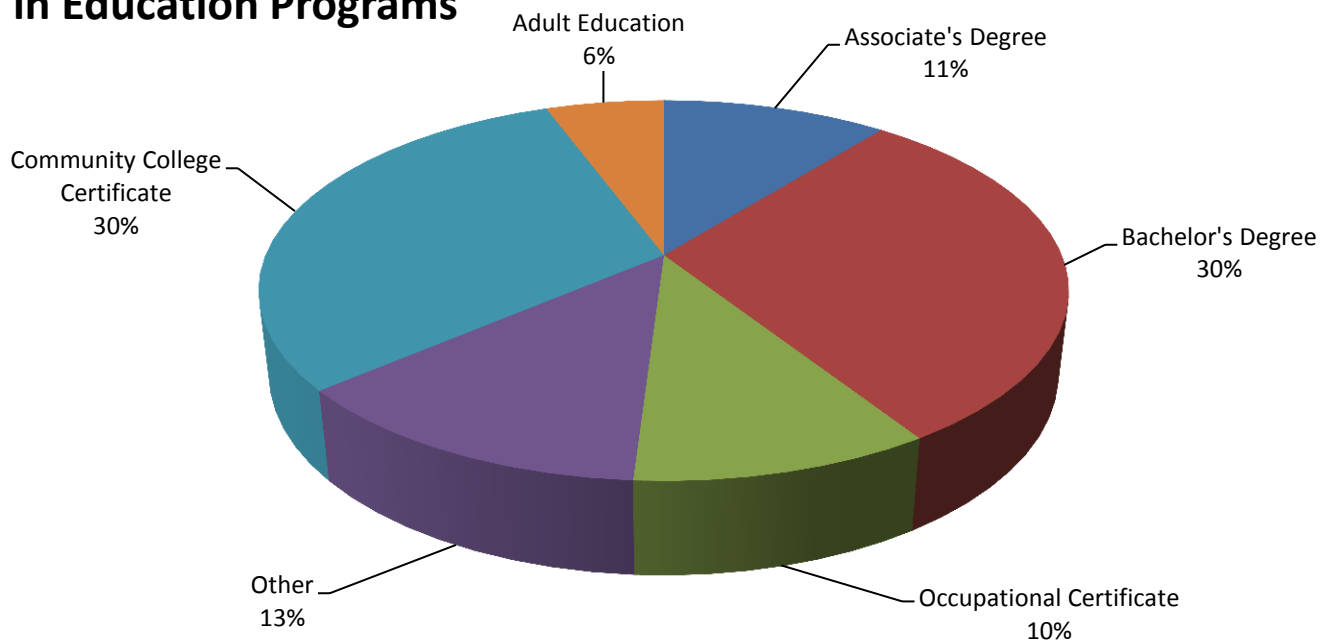
Occupational Classification	Number of CSSP Trainees Enrolled	Percent of Total	Projected % of Job Growth 2010–2020	Projected Avg. Annual Openings 2010–2020
<b>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations</b>	235	25.2%	18.6%	1,587
<b>Community and Social Services Occupations</b>	130	13.9%	6.1%	407
<b>Management Occupations</b>	109	11.7%	2.7%	1,051
<b>Healthcare Support Occupations</b>	73	7.8%	13.3%	664
<b>Computer and Mathematical Occupations</b>	58	6.2%	10.1%	274
<b>Education, Training, and Library Occupations</b>	55	5.9%	4.7%	1,111
<b>Transportation and Material Moving Occupations</b>	50	5.4%	3.2%	1,061
<b>Installation, Maintenance and Repair Occupations</b>	39	4.2%	2.6%	694
<b>Totals</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>80.3%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>5778</b>

The distribution of career choices as reflected in the chart on page 4 indicates that the job market is, in fact, a driving factor in CSSP participant choices. Of particular note, the popularity of training in health care professions reflects Maine's high projected demand in the industry. (Note: The chart on page 5 shows the top-eight major sector groups chosen by participants and reflects total enrollments in each group; it is not to suggest total program enrollments across all sectors.)

# Education and Training Programs

CSSP participants are in a variety of programs ranging from short-term certificate programs to four-year degree programs. Many participants in developmental courses were simultaneously in courses providing credit toward their certificate or degree. Many participants continue to transition from two-year degrees to four-year degrees. As of December 31, 2014, 733 trainees enrolled in CSSP had started 971 educational programs to advance their skills and credentials for high-wage high-demand occupations.

## CSSP Trainee Engagement in Education Programs

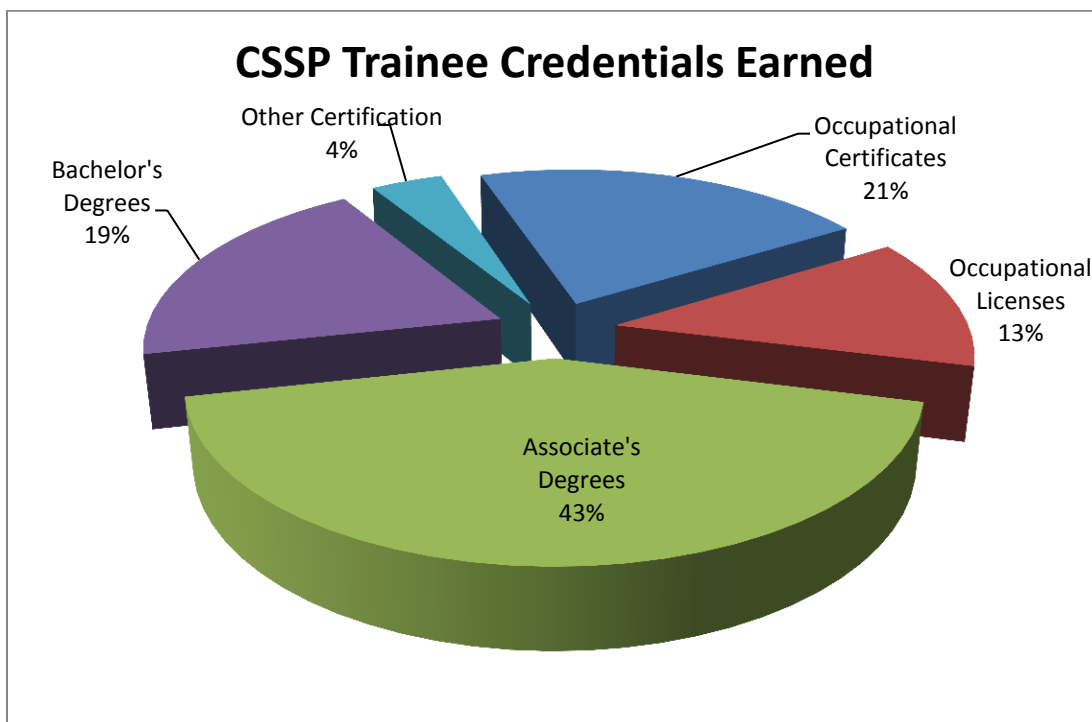


- 46 (5.65%) were enrolled in basic education courses offered through the adult-education system.
- 140 (12.75%) individuals were supported through CSSP to engage in non-categorized training which includes a combination of work-ready skill training offered through the CareerCenters and short-term certificate programs offered through approved educational institutions.
- 336 (30.60%) were enrolled in training offered through the community college system and technical colleges, with 90 percent of those individuals pursuing two-year certificate programs.
- 449 (40.90%) were enrolled in two- and four-year college degree programs; with 74 percent (331) trainees pursuing four-year degrees.



## CSSP Participants Status after Training and Education

Of 1,203 trainees enrolled in CSSP over the life of the program, 801 have exited and are no longer receiving funding from the program, leaving a total of 402 individuals enrolled as of December 31, 2014. Program completion must result in a post-secondary certificate, degree, or credential that is recognized by the trade or industry. Of the exited trainees, 367 individuals successfully advanced their credentials, earning 414 certificates and/or degrees from a broad spectrum of approved training institutions. The highest credentials earned by the 367 individuals are represented in the pie chart below.



### Employment and Earnings – Are Participants Better Off After Training

It is expected that on average, successful completers of the program will significantly increase their earnings, bolstering job retention based on their marketability as well as instilling self-confidence and self-esteem. In addition, most could expect health coverage and other benefits in their new occupation at a level never experienced before. Five-hundred-thirty-nine trainees entered employment after exit from CSSP. The entered-employment rate to date is 67 percent.

**\*Please note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

The assertion that successful trainees will increase their wages is well supported by reviewing the data of exited CSSP trainees. The average wage at entrance to CSSP was \$11.75 and the average wage post CSSP was \$14.38. Six month average earnings pre-CSSP was \$9,387 and the six month average earnings post CSSP was \$12,760; a 26% increase in average wages earned. In addition to earning a higher hourly wage, CSSP trainees who successfully complete their educational programs will have more opportunities for future advancement because of the education received through the CSSP program.

#### **WAGES EARNED DURING THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS AFTER EXIT FROM CSSP**

The following chart depicts the wages of individuals exiting to employment following their participation in CSSP.

	Individuals Earning Wages	Total Wages For Quarter	Average Quarterly Wage Earnings
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Wages	539	\$3,081,871	\$5,717
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter Wages	527	\$3,030,105	\$5,750
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter Wages	494	\$3,046,260	\$6,167

Of those who exited CSSP Between 2008 and December 31, 2014, a total of 539 (67.3%) exited to employment in the first quarter, averaging \$5,717 in wages or a total of \$3,081,871 in wages during that time.

During the subsequent two quarters, CSSP participants show a continued increase in average quarterly wage earnings even though the total wages earned for the quarter goes down during the second and third quarters. This is because all wage data is not yet available for all participants. As additional wage data is finalized, total and average quarterly earnings is expected to increase.

**\*Please note that wages and percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

## Occupations Reported at Exit

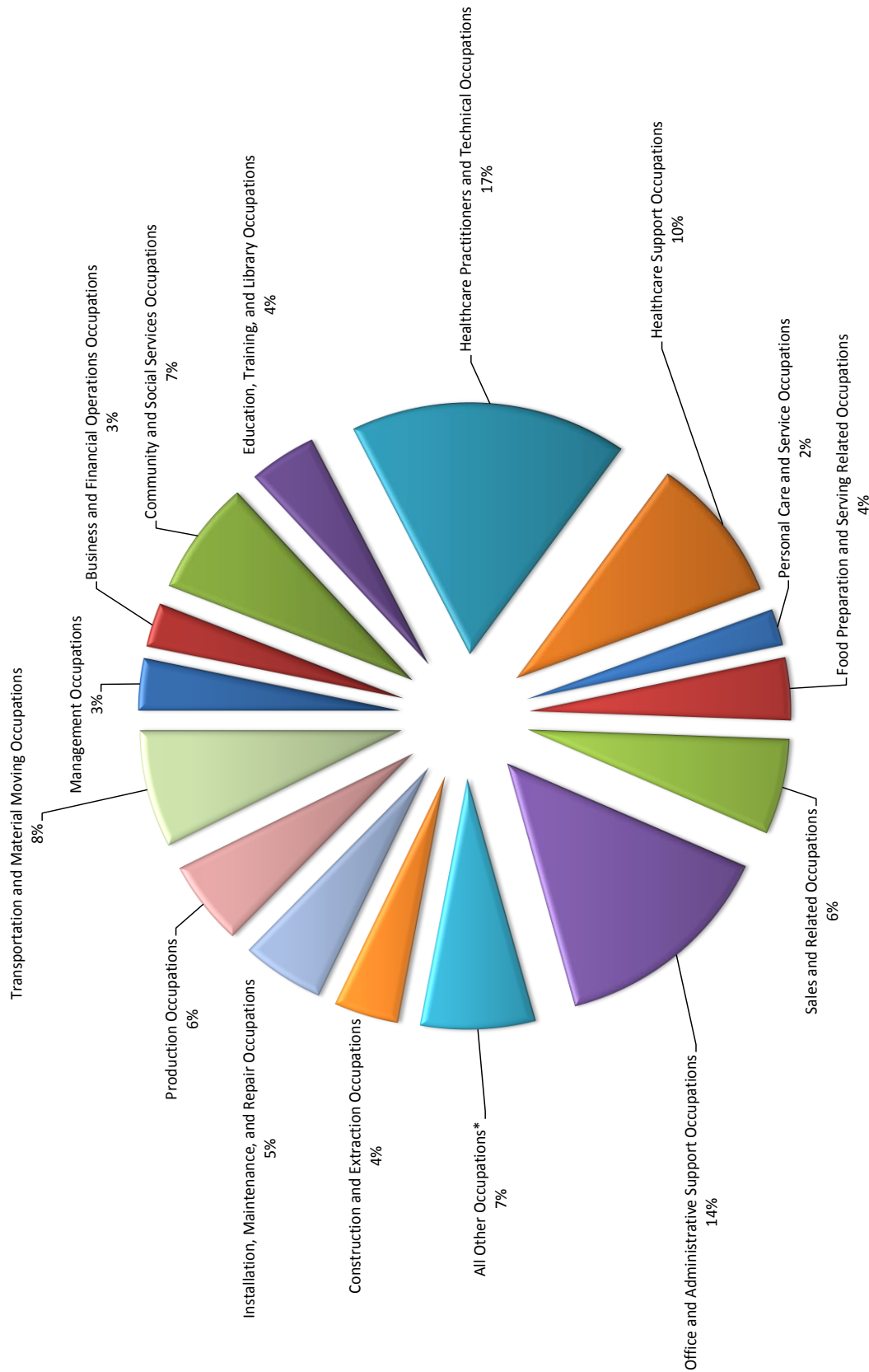
The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System is a system developed by the federal government and used by the Maine Department of Labor to collect, classify and compare occupations across data sets. The following chart shows 22 different major occupational groups into which 426 individual CSSP participants entered employment upon their exit from CSSP. Wage data represents the average wage and the lowest and highest ranges of pay for the number of participants in each SOC occupation depicted. Job titles and hourly wage data provided are reported by the trainee at the time of exit from CSSP. The average hourly wage reported by all individuals who exited CSSP between 2008 and December of 2014 is \$14.38

Occupational Group	Number of CSSP Trainees Placed in Employment	Low Range of Hourly Wage at Placement	High Range of Hourly Wage at Placement	Average Hourly Wage Reported at Placement
Management	14	\$10.00	\$33.85	\$16.14
Business and Financial Operations	12	\$10.00	\$24.42	\$16.29
Computer and Mathematical	8	\$12.00	\$21.91	\$15.95
Architecture and Engineering	3	\$8.50	\$21.16	\$15.22
Life, Physical, and Social Science	3	\$16.00	\$18.00	\$17.10
Community and Social Services	31	\$9.50	\$20.00	\$13.85
Education, Training, and Library	18	\$8.50	\$25.60	\$14.34
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	2	\$12.77	\$13.00	\$12.89
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	73	\$8.19	\$59.00	\$18.85
Healthcare Support	40	\$8.00	\$22.00	\$12.33
Protective Service	6	\$10.50	\$16.00	\$12.73
Food Preparation and Serving Related	17	\$7.25	\$18.62	\$11.38
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	6	\$9.00	\$22.75	\$13.62
Personal Care and Service	10	\$7.74	\$14.00	\$9.85
Sales and Related	26	\$7.50	\$31.50	\$11.50
Office and Administrative Support	60	\$7.50	\$24.00	\$11.76
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	2	\$9.30	\$15.00	\$12.15
Construction and Extraction	17	\$9.90	\$41.50	\$14.76
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	22	\$8.00	\$18.48	\$12.59
Production	23	\$7.25	\$19.00	\$13.00
Transportation and Material Moving	31	\$8.50	\$39.00	\$13.03

## Sector Occupations

The chart on page 10 represents the percentage of participants entering employment in the major employment sectors listed. Sector distribution is consistent with employment projections, participant training outcomes and jobs in demand.

# CSSP Placement Occupation Distribution by ONet SOC Clusters



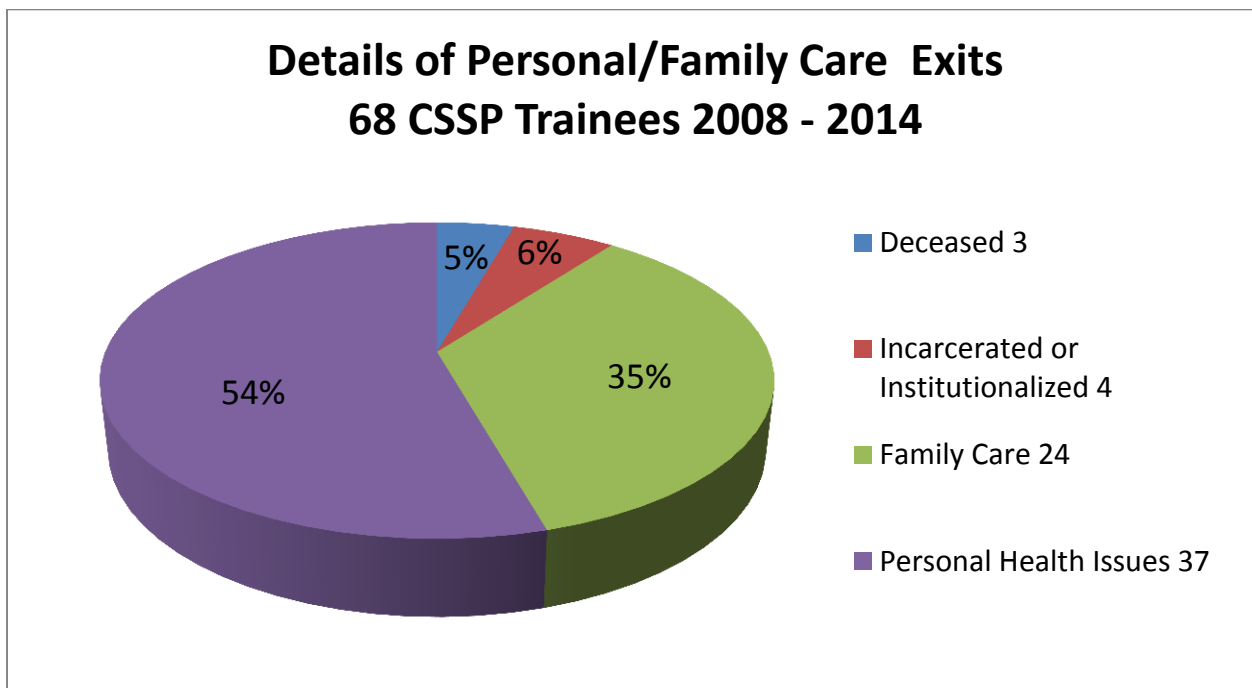
## CSSP Exit Details

CSSP is making a difference in the employability of individuals enrolled and exiting the program. A total of 801 (67%) of the 1,203 participants originally enrolled have exited the CSSP program since 2008. Of the 801 individuals exited, only 33 percent were employed upon their acceptance into the CSSP program. In contrast, 539 (67%) of those exiting CSSP were employed and earned wages during their first quarter after exiting

Between 2008 and 2014, short-term certificate programs and one- and two-year post-secondary degree training represent a significant share (87%) of the exit numbers. Increasing numbers of participants are exiting the program as longer-term training programs come to an end. The percentage of trainees completing CSSP training with Bachelor's level degrees has increased from 13 percent in 2012 to 19 percent in 2014. It is anticipated that the percentage of trainees completing Bachelor's level degrees will continue to make up a larger share of the total exits as four-year training programs conclude.

### Exit Exceptions

Review of exit data on 68 participants show separation from the program due to unforeseen or unexpected circumstances. Exceptions are not included in the entered employment denominator due to the nature of the exit. The following depiction represents these exceptions.



The percentage of individuals exiting the program for whom we have no wage data or other indicator of employment has dropped from 38% to 24% since our last report. A lack of wage data does not necessarily indicate that individuals are not employed; this group includes individuals that are self-employed and/or not employed in Maine.

**\*Please note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

## CSSP Exits by County and Wages

The average last reported wage at time of entry to CSSP was \$11.75 per hour, while the average wage at exit from the program for the trainees reported as entered employment at exit was \$14.38 per hour. It is important to note that many individuals reported higher wages at entry than at exit, but many of those individuals were not employed when they began the program due to job loss prior to application. In other words, the job that they lost or no longer had at their time of entry to the program paid more than the job they entered upon exit from the CSSP program.



## CSSP Exits vs. Wage Earnings Reported in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter after Exit

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### 869 Individuals Exited Including Global Exclusions

County	Number of exitors with wages in the 1st Quarter	Number of trainees exited CSSP	Percent of exitors earning wages in the 1st quarter after exit
Androscoggin	55	83	66.27%
Aroostook	75	107	70.09%
Cumberland	39	70	55.71%
Franklin	12	21	57.14%
Hancock	22	40	55.00%
Kennebec	69	89	77.53%
Knox	6	13	46.15%
Lincoln	6	10	60.00%
Oxford	30	43	69.77%
Penobscot	93	144	64.58%
Piscataquis	4	9	44.44%
Sagadahoc	12	20	60.00%
Somerset	40	52	76.92%
Waldo	10	16	62.50%
Washington	67	96	69.79%
York	33	56	58.93%
Statewide Data	573	869	65.94%

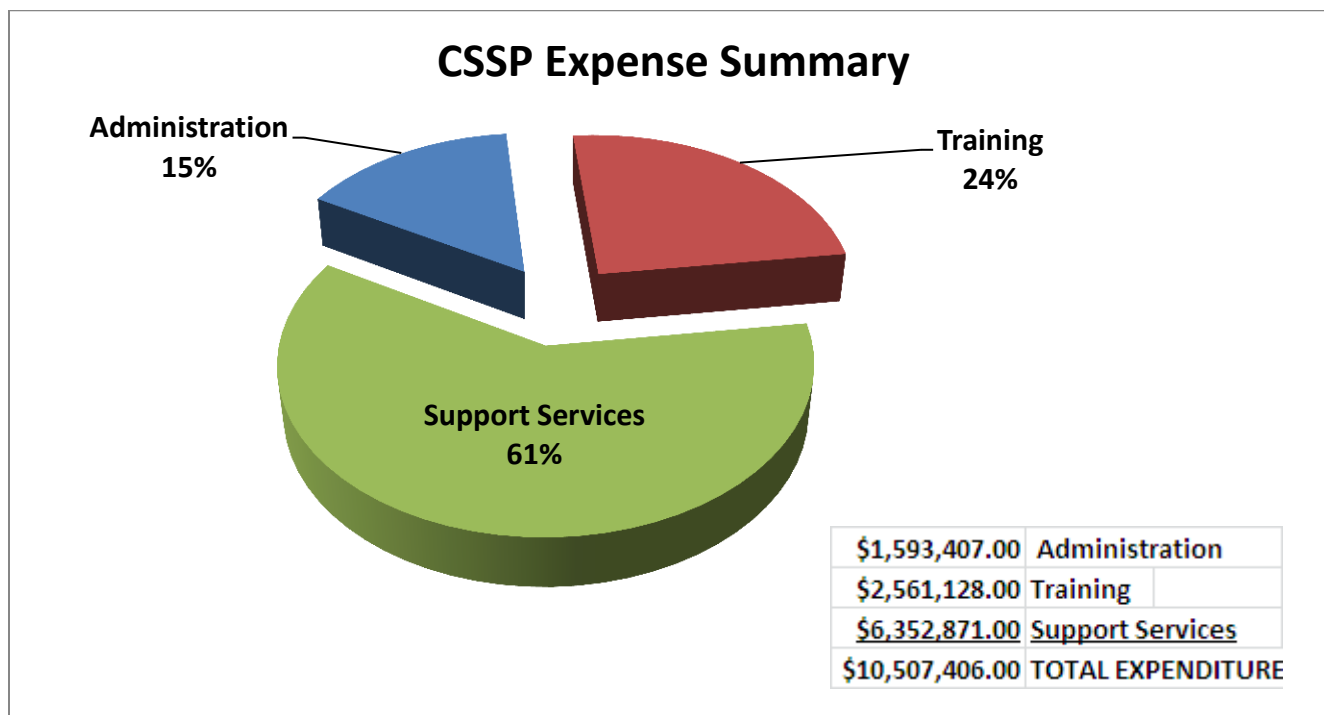
## CSSP Expenditures — Program and Administration

CSSP assists trainees with essentials such as tuition, fees, books and supplies not otherwise covered by financial aid, as well as assistance with transportation and child care while attending training. A small stipend is available for those trainees with income below 125 percent of the poverty level and reserved for trainees who have either exhausted their unemployment benefits or were determined ineligible for unemployment compensation. In 2014, 125 percent of the poverty level was \$29,813 for a family of four and the maximum monthly stipend available to eligible CSSP trainees was \$533 for those enrolled under old CSSP rules. Under new CSSP rules, the maximum monthly stipend is \$332 for those enrolled in CSSP participants on or after July 1, 2014. The amount of the current stipend is determined annually by calculating one-third of the average unemployment benefit.

The average annual revenues directed toward the program, including interest, total \$3.2 million. Program expenditures have averaged \$2.1 million per year. Due to extensive rule changes which took longer than anticipated to finalize, open enrollment was curtailed for nearly 2 years which decreased the amount of fund expenditures.

Since July of 2014, a total of 210 new CSSP participants have been enrolled through individual applications received through the CareerCenters. The CSSP Employer Driven Program piloted in 2014 currently has 24 trainees enrolled. The program is designed to meet individual business training needs for CSSP-eligible new hires or to advance income-eligible incumbent trainees. CareerCenter staff work directly with businesses to help identify their workforce needs and trainees who meet business and CSSP eligibility guidelines. CSSP Employer Driven Program trainees are either CSSP income eligible incumbent employees in entry level jobs or income eligible individuals recruited directly through the CareerCenter. Businesses choose which CSSP eligible applicants to accept into the training program that meets their business needs. At the conclusion of training, successful trainees earn an industry-recognized certificate or degree and a job that pays a minimum of \$14.00 per hour. Revenue balances in 2015 will be used to continue funding existing program participants and to enroll an additional 390 CSSP participants through open enrollment periods held at CareerCenters and an additional 136 individuals through the CSSP Employer Driven Program.

The following chart depicts cumulative training, support and administrative expended through 2014.

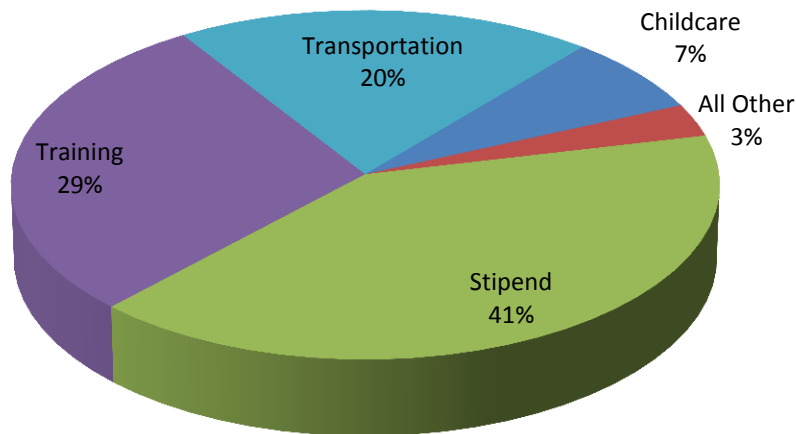


Through 2014, a total of \$8,913,999 or 85 percent of total funds were spent directly on CSSP participants. Participant funding was primarily dedicated to training costs, transportation, income stipends, and childcare expenses incurred by CSSP participants. When reviewing the data presented below, it is important to note that almost all CSSP trainees enrolled in college degree programs receive federal PELL grants that per CSSP rules are applied to their tuition, books, and fees prior to accessing CSSP funds. In many cases, the PELL grants cover the majority of the direct training costs while the support services covered by CSSP are used to pay for the indirect yet real cost of participating in training. Without the support of CSSP, the PELL grants would not be sufficient to allow the CSSP trainees to pursue post-secondary education programs.

**\*Please note that numbers and percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**



## CSSP Participant Expenditures 2010-2014



## Collaboration and Leveraged Resources

CSSP program administrators pursue opportunities to collaborate and align available resources within and outside the Maine Department of Labor to support CSSP service productivity. Many participants (41%) leverage other resources (such as co-enrollment in federal Workforce Investment Act-funded programs, utilizing federal PELL grants or other available non-federal grants) in combination with CSSP funds to pay for their training. The collaborative effort between the Maine Department of Labor's CSSP program and the Department of Health and Human Services has led to a partnership between the two agencies to assist some of Maine's most financially needy individuals. The Food Supplement Employment and Training (CSSP FSET) program has assisted 122 CSSP FSET trainees and has to date leveraged \$369,292 in resources. As part of an expansion of this partnership, the Department of Labor entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Family Independence. This Agreement endeavors to provide short term employability support for up to 1,000 Food Supplement recipients and training and support through FSET CSSP for up to 75 Food Supplement recipients.

## CSSP Administration

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program is administered through Maine's CareerCenter system, a network of 12 comprehensive centers located throughout the state. Since launched in 2007 as a small pilot project, the program has been overwhelmed with applications for a limited number of slots. In 2011 CareerCenters saw an increase in the number of applications for the CSSP program from TANF recipients in response to 50 additional CSSP training slots made available through collaborative efforts between the Maine Department of Labor and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. During the 2014 application period held for two weeks beginning on June 19, CareerCenters received 756 CSSP applications for 300 openings available statewide. Because of high demand, the selection of applicants for the limited number of openings is conducted through a

lottery. This helps ensure every applicant has an equal and equitable opportunity for selection. The overwhelming demand for CSSP services is represented in the following chart. Since the inception of CSSP, 20 percent of eligible applicants have been accepted into the program.

#### Overwhelming Program Demand – CSSP Applicants and Enrollees 2007–2014

	2007–2009	2010–2011	2012–2013	2014	Totals
<b>Eligible Applicants</b>	1,122	3354	672	756	5880
<b>Enrolled Applicants</b>	552	291	130	230	1203
<b>Percent Accepted</b>	49%	9%	19%	30%	20%

## Program Eligibility

To be eligible for the program, applicants must be at least 18 years of age, have the aptitude to undertake and complete the selected occupation-specific training for high-demand employment, not possess a marketable post-secondary degree, and have income less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. First and foremost, CSSP eligibility is an income means-based program. Applicants to the program are income eligible when their household income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Each year, updated federal poverty income guidelines are included in the eligibility determination process.

## Distribution of CSSP Openings

CSSP slots are distributed to counties based on the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) fund-allocation formula provided to states annually by the U. S. Department of Labor. Applicants are chosen by random selection to fill the predetermined open slots in their region.

#### 2014 Slots Available by County – Total 300

COUNTY	SLOTS	% of TOTAL	COUNTY	SLOTS	% of TOTAL
Androscoggin	25	8.3%	Oxford	16	5.3%
Aroostook	22	7.3%	Piscataquis	6	2.0%
Cumberland	45	15.0%	Penobscot	38	12.7%
Franklin	9	3.0%	Sagadahoc	6	2.0%
Hancock	15	5.0%	Somerset	18	6.0%
Kennebec	25	8.3%	Waldo	10	3.3%
Knox	8	2.7%	Washington	14	4.7%
Lincoln	7	2.3%	York	36	12.0%

**\*Please note that numbers and percentages may have been rounded to the nearest whole number.**

## Enrollment Trends 2007 to 2014

Since the start of the program, enrollment has grown steadily with the exception of 2013 when an open enrollment period was not held due to pending program rule changes. Between 2007 and 2014, a total of 1,203 individuals have been enrolled in CSSP. Over the 7 years of the program's existence, on average 150 new participants are enrolled in CSSP each year. As of December 31, 2014, 402 individuals were active.

### Overwhelming Demand CSSP Applications 2007 to 2014

CSSP YEARLY ENROLLMENT	2007-2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
New Enrollees	372	180	157	134	126	4	230	1203
% of total enrollments	30.92%	14.96%	13.05%	11.14%	10.47%	0.33%	19.12%	100%

## Demographics of CSSP Participants

CSSP was intended by the legislature to reach low-income workers who were likely to have a history of receiving unemployment compensation and who need the support of CSSP to succeed in gaining skills for better, more stable career paths. The data indicates that CSSP is reaching this intended population.

A review of individuals enrolled in the program during 2014 shows that 75 percent (172) of 2014 CSSP enrollees had household income below 100 percent of the poverty level (\$15,730 annually for a household of two), well below the eligibility limit for the program of 200 percent of the poverty level.

A review of data on 1,203 CSSP participants enrolled since the CSSP was launched shows that 62 percent of CSSP participants are female; the average age of CSSP participants is 36.5, ranging from 18 to 73 years of age; the average number of people in a CSSP household is 2.4; and 29 percent of participants are single parents. In analyzing the income and employment status reported by participants enrolled as of December 31, 2014, we found the following:

### Income

- 40 percent reported wages of less than \$10 per hour.
- 41 percent reported wages within the \$10 to \$14.99 range.

### Employment Status at Time of Application

- 33 percent, or 397, were employed and 67 percent or 806 of participants were unemployed.
- 29 percent, or 250, were receiving unemployment benefits at the time of application.
- 845 (71%) of enrolled trainees had either exhausted their unemployment insurance (UI) benefits or were otherwise determined ineligible to receive benefits.
- Of the trainees who were employed at the time of application, the average hourly wage was reported as \$10.89.

# Individual Success Stories

The individual success stories of CSSP trainees like Heather Stewart and Victoria Henderson provide insight into how the program positively impacts individual earning abilities.

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Client Heather Stewart



Heather Stewart was laid off from work in 2007 and had exhausted her unemployment benefits. She was a single mother of two and relying on child support to care for her children. In order to get meaningful work and provide a quality of life for her children, Heather knew she needed more education.

In 2008, Heather applied for the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program and was accepted and subsequently enrolled in the UNE College of Pharmacy in August of 2008.

As a student, she was invited to present on pharmaceutical waste collection data and comparisons to the 2012 International Symposium on Environment, Athens Institute for Education and Research, Athens, Greece. She made similar presentations in Boston and to the Hudson University faculty of Pharmacy, South Portland, Maine.

Heather consistently made the dean's list, was the Dean's Ambassador in 2012, and received the Community Service Excellence Award in 2012. The CSSP allowed Heather to advance her education full time. Although she was scheduled to graduate in May 2015, she actually graduated in May 2014. She received a few job offers but accepted a full-time position with Walgreen's pharmacy on June 6, 2014, with full benefits.

Since Heather began working for Walgreen's in June she has been promoted to pharmacy manager. Without the availability of this scholarship, it is unlikely that Heather would have been able to return to school or to find a position that allowed her to be self-sufficient and able to take care of her two children. Heather is very proud that she is a good role model for her children and hopes that through her example they will also be willing to pursue a college education.

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Client Victoria Henderson

Before being laid off in 2009, Victoria Henderson worked for over 20 years as an administrative medical assistant for an optometry business in Portland. Like many people laid off during the Great Recession, Victoria decided to take advantage of federal funding available to enroll in school using funds leveraged by CSSP through the federal American Reinvestment Recovery Act (ARRA) as a student at Southern Maine Community College with her sights set on earning her B.S. at the University of Southern Maine in industrial manufacturing technology. Victoria did very well while she was studying at Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) where she was on the dean's list each semester.



When the CSSP ARRA Program was about to end, she applied for regular CSSP and was selected to continue as a regular CSSP participant. While attending the University of Southern Maine full time, Victoria worked as an adjunct instructor at SMCC through the 2012–2013 academic years. Through her hard work and perseverance, Victoria graduated in May 2014 from the USM with a B.S. in Industrial Manufacturing Technology. As a result of her degree from USM and work experience at SMCC, Victoria was offered a permanent part-time teaching position in the Department of Electrical Engineering at Southern Maine Community College. Without the assistance of the CSSP, Victoria would have been unable to pursue a college education or to be employed in her current position with SMCC.

## Looking Ahead

The Bureau of Employment Services continues to work toward the overarching CSSP goal of providing eligible individuals with access to postsecondary education, training for industry-recognized credentials, and support leading to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand.

In 2014, the CSSP Employer Driven Program was piloted and currently has 24 trainees at five enrolled Maine businesses. CareerCenter staff work directly with businesses to help identify their workforce needs and recruit trainees who meet business and CSSP eligibility guidelines. CSSP Employer Driven Program trainees are either CSSP income-eligible incumbent employees looking to advance their skills and wages or income eligible individuals recruited directly through the CareerCenter. Businesses choose which CSSP eligible applicants to accept into the training program and receive up to \$6,000 per CSSP-enrolled trainee to offset the costs of the business-specific training. At the conclusion of training, successful trainees are guaranteed employment in a job that pays a minimum of \$14.00 per hour to start and earn an industry recognized certificate and/or degree. Plans are being developed to effectively promote and expand the CSSP Employer Driven Program. Our goal is to have a minimum of 10 CSSP Employer Driven trainees enrolled in each of Maine's 16 Counties by the end of 2015.

CSSP will begin its seventh year in operation since it was launched in the spring of 2008. By the end of 2015, we expect that the program will have enrolled more than 1,500 people who aspire to improve their work skills, their competitive position in the local labor market, and their financial stability due to improved earnings. The demand for this program outweighs capacity. The program is meeting an otherwise unmet need for skilled workers in high-wage, high-growth occupations, helping to fill a gap for Maine businesses.

## Conclusion

Our ongoing experience with CSSP has provided important information. We know from the large number of applications for the program compared to the number of openings available that it remains in high demand. The benefits of postsecondary education and training are both tangible and intangible. Employers who are hiring will be more inclined towards the more educated, better trained, and more experienced job seekers as they will have the competencies (critical thinking, problem solving and analytic skills, communication and interpersonal skills, collaboration and ability to execute, flexibility and adaptability, information processing, and capacity for change) most important for success—both individual and corporate in the twenty-first century (Deprez/Butler, 1/2012).

CSSP is one of the few remaining state-funded programs allowing flexibility to support our state's specific training and employment challenges. The benefits of this program go beyond financial and reach far into society, making it possible for low-income adults to begin a journey on a career pathway leading to self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. Additionally, education better-protects workers from losing their jobs during recessions – such as the one we are currently recovering from – as economic downturns have the greatest impact on workers with the least education.

We know from the huge number of applications for the program since 2008 (5,880 applications received; 1,203 or 20 percent accepted) that CSSP is in high demand. The Department is working toward moving the CSSP application period from a once-a-year event to an ongoing open-enrollment process with the goal of maintaining 600 CSSP trainees in the program on a regular basis. Applications for the traditional CSSP program are currently being accepted in eleven of Maine's sixteen counties and we plan to accept new applications in all Maine counties by June of 2015. This shift will provide an opportunity for more people across Maine's sixteen counties to access training leading to degree or industry-recognized credential in an ongoing basis as space in the program becomes available in their county of residence.

Analysis of participants' training choices in light of projected job openings indicates that the program is successfully connecting people with training for jobs that are in demand in Maine. Further, it is widely recognized that persons with more education and training increase their chances of employment in good paying jobs, and they possess the marketability to keep those jobs or advance in their professions. Finally, participants themselves have provided important insights into the critical role that CSSP is playing in helping them succeed. CSSP was designed by the Legislature to help participants prepare for high-wage, skilled jobs that are in demand by employers in Maine, and the program is meeting that objective.

## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program Brief Overview

Program Start-Year	2007
Total Served	1203
Per year average new participants	172
Average wage at Entrance	\$11.75
Average Wage Training Related Employment	\$14.38
Six Months Average Earnings Pre-CSSP	\$9,387.00
Six Months Average Earnings Post-CSSP	\$12,760.00
Average 1st Quarter Earnings of Participants	\$3,081,877.00

### Expense Summary

Administration	\$1,593,407.00
Training	\$2,561,128.00
Support	\$6,352,871.00

### Average Costs

Average Cost Administration	\$1,325.00
Average Cost Training	\$2,129.00
Average Cost Support	\$5,281.00
Average Cost Per Person	\$8,735.00

### Allocations and Revenue

Average Annual Allocation	\$3.2Million
Average Annual Expenditure	\$2.1Million
Revenue Balance	\$3,487,490.00

### Demographics

Female/Male	62/38%
Age Average	36.5 years
Single Parent Family Status	29%

### Employment Status at Application

Employed	33%
Unemployed	67%

