

President Craig Johnson

Testimony in Support of LD 681, "An Act Regarding Public Higher Education Funding in the State"

Maine Maritime Academy

Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

I am honored to appear before you as the 16th President of Maine Maritime Academy in strong support of LD 681, graciously submitted by Senator Grohoski and cosponsored by Representative Foster. This bill builds on last year's bipartisan work on LD 2092, whose amended language was nearly unanimously supported by this committee. We are grateful for the thoughtful dialogue and collaboration that produced that progress.

As president, I am entrusted with the long-term health of the Academy—our faculty, staff, and most importantly, our students. You will hear today from a wide range of supporters, including Maine Maritime Academy trustees, union representatives, a former president of California Maritime Academy, and others. I am deeply grateful for their commitment to our mission.

LD 681 is about aligning Maine Maritime Academy's public funding with that of other higher education institutions in Maine and, more critically, with the nation's other State Maritime Academies (SMAs). Currently, Maine Maritime Academy is Maine's most expensive public higher education institution—an unfortunate distinction it also holds among SMAs. This funding disparity has made it harder for MMA to attract and retain students, especially when other maritime academies are more cost-competitive for Maine residents. The bill before you today would incrementally bring us into funding alignment with other public higher education institutions in Maine, but more importantly closer to the nation's other state maritime academies (SMAs). Because tuition alternatives at other state maritime academies (SMAs) are significantly less, Maine resident students often choose other state maritime academies (SMAs) over Maine Maritime Academy.

Despite these financial challenges, MMA continues to lead through innovation, collaboration, and investment. To ensure long term sustainability and competitiveness, Maine Maritime Academy continues to collaborate with alumni, multiple industries, and the federal government to aggressively add new educational programs.

MMA is one of only six maritime academies in the United States offering specialized maritime programs, and our strategic location on the DownEast coast allows for hands-on training opportunities unmatched by any other institution. Over the years, MMA has expanded its curriculum to include International Business and Logistics and Ocean Sciences, recognizing the evolving needs of the global maritime industry.

Since last year, we've made significant investments and advancements:

- Supported by federal investments and working with Maine company Reed and Reed, we launched the

construction of the \$106 million pier that will be used to berth MMA's new \$330million training ship, the *State of Maine*.

- The fall 2025 delivery of the *State of Maine* will bring new employment opportunities and inject ongoing vessel maintenance and repair spending in our local economy.
- We continue Curtis Hall's \$34 million renovation, Maine's largest student dormitory.
- Supported by funding support from Senator Collins and new tuition revenue, MMA opened a new campus in Brunswick. Serving southern and central Maine, it provides new programming and supports Bath Iron Works apprentice program.
- In collaboration with Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, MMA launched a shipyard program that trains students to fill vacant trade positions. We will introduce two additional programs this summer and continue to discuss year-round program options in Brunswick and Castine.
- We created the MMA Foundation which will support the Academy.
- The Schooner Bowdoin, a historic sailing vessel and training platform for MMA students, remains an important icon for the State of Maine. In 2024, the Bowdoin successfully sailed to the Arctic, a journey that demonstrated the vessel's educational and cultural significance.
- We are reintroducing a minor and major in Nuclear Engineering Technology something vital to the maritime and shoreside industry at this moment. Our Maritime Sciences programs continue to be recognized for their research, and we are growing strategic partnership to augment learning.

MMA graduates are recognized for their academic excellence and contributions to Maine's economy. Our workforce development programs provide hands-on training to support Bath Iron Works and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, directly addressing the critical labor shortages in these industries. Additionally, our Bucksport Center's Fire Training programs play a crucial role in maritime and emergency response training. MMA is also an active partner in statewide educational and economic development initiatives, collaborating with the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine through the Maine Defense Industry Alliance. These partnerships help expand Maine's footprint in the national defense industry and create new career pathways for students.

How did we get to an environment of underfunding?

In the late 1980s, former Governor of Maine Ken Curtis, MMA class of '52 was President of the Academy when it received a state funding increase to \$8.6M annually. At the time, this represented roughly 75% of the Academy's operating budget. This annual state allocation stayed relatively unchanged for 30 years, aside from annual inflation adjustments plus or minus that were never compounded. I found testimonies from 2017 and 2019 to the legislature from then President Brennan comparing our funding to the other state maritime academies. At that time, our state funding was 30% of our budget compared with the other schools, who were between 43-63%. I was with the leadership of all the other five SMAs last week and confirmed those numbers have not changed.

As a result of this we have become dependent upon raising tuition and fees as our only option to keep up with costs, continuing our cost increases and losing our competitiveness. The incremental increase proposed by LD 681 will greatly enhance our ability to deliver the world class education that our students and the industries served expect of a Maine Maritime Academy graduate. Mass Maritime and Texas A&M are just two examples that I bring to you. Passing and putting into action LD 681 will make Maine Maritime Academy an affordable option for Maine students.

In addition to our funding issues, the global shortage of licensed mariners is at its worst level since World War II—a critical issue that was highlighted in the Portland Press Herald last fall:

- Over 80% of the world's goods are transported by ship.
- Ocean freight accounts for 44% of the total value of U.S. trade.

Meetings in Washington, DC last week amplified mariner shortages and the critical role state maritime academies play in rectifying this critical shortfall. These initiatives represent the future of MMA—a future built on expanded educational offerings, workforce development, and long-term financial sustainability. However, it is important to acknowledge that these successes have been achieved with limited resources, underscoring the necessity of continued state investment.

In spite of all of the challenges facing us and the industry our students continue to prosper and we continue to offer experiences found in no other institution.

In closing, Maine Maritime Academy is not only preparing the next generation of mariners but is also strengthening Maine's economy, bolstering national security, and leading critical workforce development initiatives. Continued investment in MMA is not just an investment in our institution—it is an investment in the future of Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Craig Johnson
President
Maine Maritime Academy

MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY

Office of the President | 1 Pleasant Street | Castine, ME 04420



NATIONAL SECURITY MULTI-MISSION VESSEL

Photo credit: MARAD

The National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) leads a new chapter in U.S. maritime training, disaster preparedness and beyond. It also creates sustainable American jobs and sets a high standard for state-of-the-art design. The NSMV program has been developed to support the construction of up to five ships.

EACH NSMV ADDRESSES A RANGE OF U.S. STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES.



Photo credit: MARAD



Photo credit: MARAD



ENHANCE MARITIME EDUCATION



BOLSTER HOMELAND AND NATIONAL SECURITY



STRENGTHEN U.S. SHIPBUILDING AND MANUFACTURING



CREATE JOBS TO ADVANCE ECONOMIC SECURITY



U.S. Department of Transportation
Maritime Administration



MULTI-MISSION PURPOSE

Established primarily to address an aging training fleet, the new purpose-built NSMV enhances the Nation's maritime academies' training capabilities and serves as critical support assets for the federal government in times of need.

STATE-OF-THE-ART TRAINING CAPABILITIES

The size of the new vessel allows it to support the capabilities required to provide the next generation of mariners with a world-class education through state-of-art technologies. NSMV provides training assets to better meet each SMA's needs. By attracting more cadets and better equipping them to become part of and sustain the U.S. Merchant Marine, the NSMV will help close the critical shortfall in the maritime workforce.

Although the NSMVs will be berthed at five state maritime academies, students at all six SMAs and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) will have access to the state-of-the-art training capabilities and opportunities to cross deck to alternate training vessels when they need additional days at sea. Training capabilities include:

- Convertible classrooms and workshops
- Simulator and laboratory spaces
- Dedicated training bridge and navigation lab
- Large multi-purpose space
- Accommodations for up to 600 cadets and 100 officers, faculty, staff and crew

NSMV PROGRAM CREATES JOBS

The NSMV creates and supports good-paying, American jobs, with over **1,450 shipyard jobs during construction and additional jobs at sea and ashore once completed**, while strengthening the U.S. shipbuilding, repair and manufacturing industries.



Photo credit: Philly Shipyard



Photo credit: Philly Shipyard



Photo credit: Philly Shipyard

DISASTER RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

When not on training missions, the federal government can mobilize the NSMVs to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) in times of need. Disaster response capabilities include:

- Modern medical facilities
- 60-person surge capacity for Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief missions, up to 1000 persons for 14 days pierside (food, water, sewage)
- Helicopter landing area
- Container storage capacity of up to 60 TEUs
- Roll-on/roll-off loading ramp and vehicle stowage capabilities

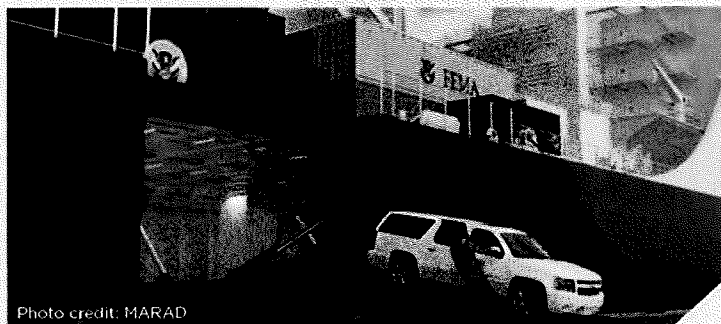


Photo credit: MARAD

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit www.maritime.dot.gov

For media or congressional inquiries, contact the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at maradpressoffice@dot.gov

INNOVATIVE MODEL

The NSMV showcases a new model of federal government shipbuilding, in which the U.S. leverages the expertise of commercial owners/operators/shipbuilders with experience building U.S.-flagged vessels. By applying this new approach to government-owned vessels, MARAD benefits from commercial best practices of design standards and construction. This efficient and cost-effective process better supports U.S. national security interests by building vessels **as designed, in accordance with set schedule dates for a fixed price.**

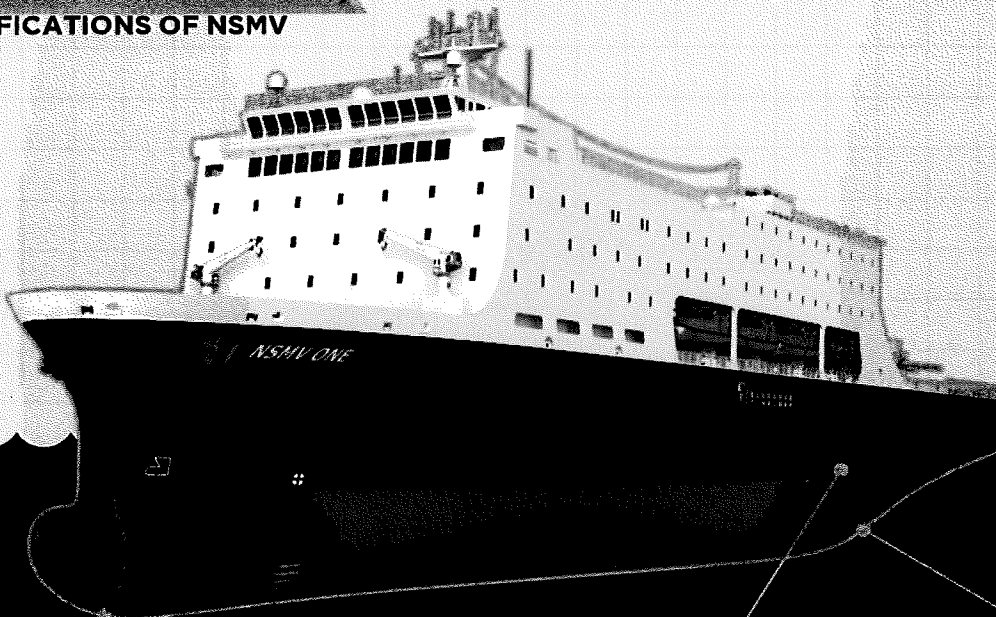
Additionally, each ship will meet or exceed the latest environmental standards.

HIGH LEVEL OF SAFETY

Classed as a Special Purpose Ship, the NSMV design meets national and international safety requirements, such as the Safety of Life at Sea and Public Nautical School Ship requirements.

EACH SHIP WILL MEET THE HIGHEST CURRENT AND FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS.

BASIC SPECIFICATIONS OF NSMV



PRINCIPLE DIMENSIONS

- Length 160.05 m (525'-1")
- Beam 27.0 m (88'-7")
- Depth 16.8 m (55'-1.5")
- Design Draft 6.5 m (21'-4")
- Range: 10,000+ miles at 18 knots

PROPULSION, SPEED AND CONSUMPTION

- Diesel electric
- Four main engines segregated in two engine rooms
- Total installed power - 16,800 kW plus 900 kW Emergency Generator
- Two sets of electric propulsion motors in series with an output of 9,000 kW
- Full speed - 18 knots with 15% sea margin
- Cruising speed - 12 knots with 15% sea margin

MANEUVERING

- NSMV designed with capability to perform normal docking without assist tugs
- 1800 kW Retractable, Azimuthing Bow thruster
- 890 kW Stern thruster
- Flap type rudder



@DOTMARAD



Maritime Administration



NSMV PROGRAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY

With the NSMV, the United States becomes better equipped to increase the ranks of a well-trained maritime workforce, improve its security interests at home and around the world and bolster critical sectors of its economy.



Photo credit: MARAD

TIMELINE (FY)

2017

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT AUTHORIZES NSMV PROGRAM

2019

MARAD SELECTS TOTE SERVICES, INC AS VESSEL CONSTRUCTION MANAGER AND AUTHORIZES CONSTRUCTION OF NSMV 1 AND NSMV 2

2020

TOTE SERVICES, INC SELECTS PHILLY SHIPYARD, INC. TO CONSTRUCT VESSELS

2021

MARAD AUTHORIZES CONSTRUCTION OF NSMV 3 AND NSMV 4 AND SECURES FUNDING FOR NSMV 5 TO COMPLETE THE STATE-CLASS

2023

FIRST VESSEL DELIVERED FOR ASSIGNMENT TO SUNY MARITIME COLLEGE

2024

SECOND VESSEL DELIVERED FOR ASSIGNMENT TO MASSACHUSETTS MARITIME ACADEMY

2025 –
2026

THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH VESSELS DELIVERED FOR ASSIGNMENT TO MAINE MARITIME ACADEMY, TEXAS A&M MARITIME ACADEMY AND CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MARITIME ACADEMY, RESPECTIVELY



Photo credit: MARAD

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit www.maritime.dot.gov

For media or congressional inquiries, contact the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at maradpressoffice@dot.gov.



@DOTMARAD



Maritime Administration

facebook

Texas A&M Maritime Academy's Post

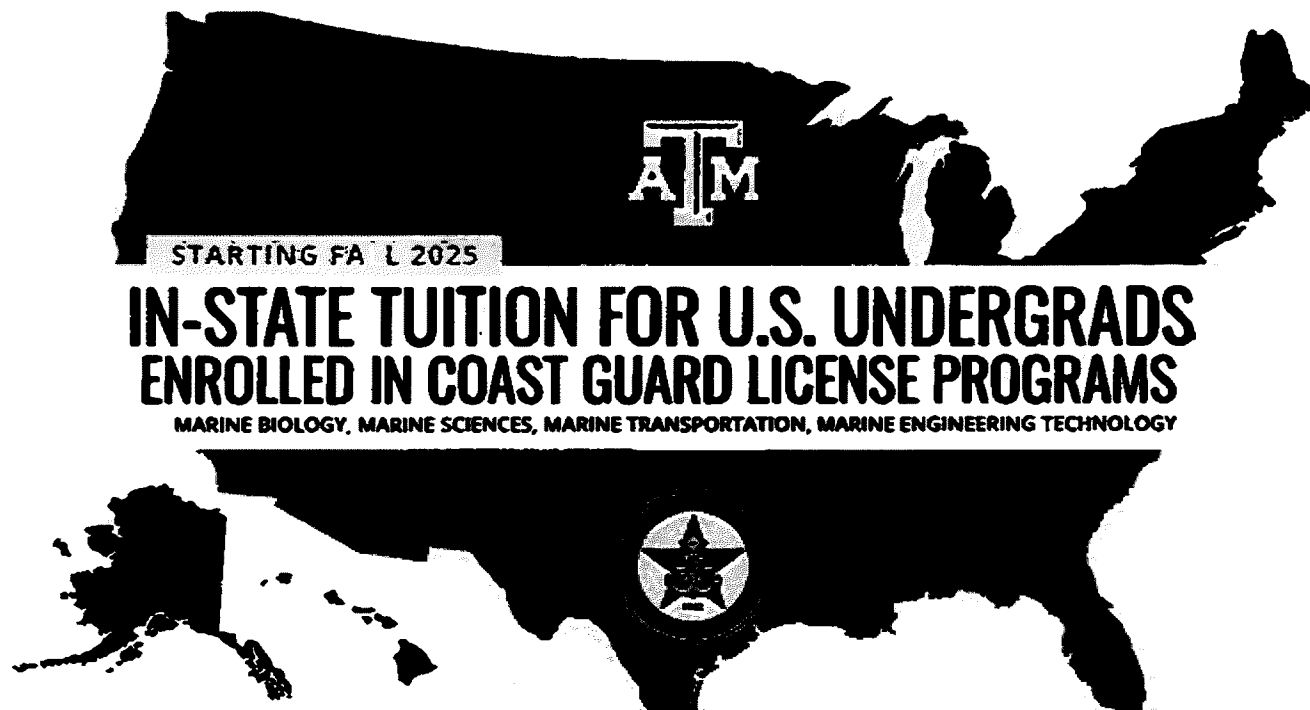


Texas A&M Maritime Academy

February 13 · 🌐

Texas A&M University is offering in-state tuition for all incoming U.S. undergraduate students who select a U.S. Coast Guard license program offered at its Galveston Campus beginning the 2025 fall semester. The move aims to offset the national shortage of maritime professionals in fields critical to national security and economic prosperity.

More info: <https://news.galveston.tamu.edu/texas-am-offers-in-state.../>



119

19 comments, 97 shares

Instagram



IN-STATE TUITION FOR U.S. UNDERGRADS ENROLLED IN COAST GUARD LICENSE PROGRAMS

MARINE BIOLOGY, MARINE SCIENCES, MARINE TRANSPORTATION, MARINE ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

More posts from texasmaritime



texasmaritime and aggiesbythesea



texasmaritime 6w

Texas A&M University is offering in-state tuition for all incoming U.S. undergraduate students who select a U.S. Coast Guard license program offered at its Galveston Campus beginning the 2025 fall semester. The move aims to offset the national shortage of maritime professionals in fields critical to national security and economic prosperity.

More info at the link in our bio!



_willismagilis_2000 6w

Must be nice

2 likes Reply



950 likes

February 13



Add a comment...



https://www.galvnews.com/news/texas-a-m-maritime-academy-fights-workforce-gap-with-tuition-waiver/article_997d6b58-6b1f-5bf1-8f07-8073793c3077.html

EDITOR'S PICK

CENTERPIECE

FEATURED

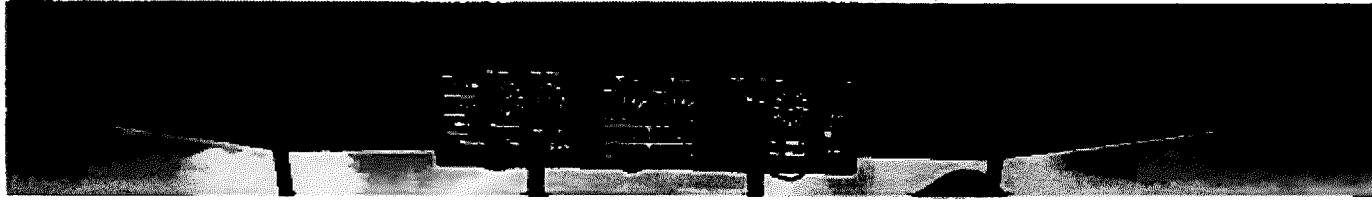
Texas A&M Maritime Academy fights workforce gap with tuition waiver

By LAUREN FRICK The Daily News

Mar 8, 2025

1 of 2





GALVESTON

Tillman Horn, a Tennessee native, knew very little about the maritime industry before starting his first year at the Texas A&M Maritime Academy, he said.

Horn in 2023 was a sophomore general studies major at the University of Kentucky, unsure of what direction his future would go in, he said. Then, someone suggested researching the academy, and he knew he found the right fit.

“I remember just doing research on it, just finding it cool that all the stuff we have around here was most likely brought in by a ship, which you just don’t think about in your day-to-day life,” Horn said. “I thought that was pretty cool, just being able to contribute to something bigger than yourself.”

The academy is looking to attract more students like Horn through its tuition waiver initiative, which will offer in-state tuition for all U.S. undergraduate students who select a U.S. Coast Guard license program offered at the Galveston campus, beginning in the fall 2025 semester.

“It’s huge,” said Aidan Ussery, a junior maritime transportation major from Georgia. “It’s something I wish we would have had when I first started coming here.”

In-state tuition costs for U.S. Coast Guard license program students was \$6,806.15, while out-of-state students paid \$10,406.15 in tuition for the spring 2025 semester. The academy offers a license option for the following degree programs: marine transportation, marine biology, marine sciences and marine engineering technology.

INLAND FOCUS

The academy is one of six state maritime academies in the country and the only academy in the southern United States. Half of the academies are in Northeastern states.

By waiving out-of-state tuition, the academy hopes to grow the workforce by increasing awareness and access to students living in land-locked states, Capt. Augusta Roth, a professor of the practice for the Department of Maritime Transportation, said.

Roth estimated out-of-state students make up as much as 30 percent of the total license program students in a given year, with a majority of students coming from nearby states such as Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida.

“Everybody knows that we have oceans and we have plenty of ports on the East Coast, West Coast, in the Gulf of Mexico, but all the way through the United States, there’s inland waterways that also carry barges, and the students that go through our program are able to also be employed on those,” Roth said.

“All the way through Illinois, on the Ohio River, and all the way down into the Mississippi River, all those rivers, those use our graduates too.

“We would like to get more opportunities to spread throughout the nation, so bringing down the out-of-state tuition, or changing the out-of-state tuition structure, is to help benefit everybody.”

WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

The tuition initiative aims to help offset the national shortage of maritime professionals, the academy said.

A 2021 report from the Baltic and International Maritime Council and the International Chamber of Shipping described a shortage of about 26,000 officers certified to work on ships in international waters and predicted it would triple by 2026.

Col. Michael Fossum, superintendent of the academy, said the maritime workforce is vital to the economy.

“Most of us are blind to the maritime industry’s impacts on our lives, the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the phone you’re holding, a maritime professional made that possible,” Fossum said.

“They are the backbone of the nation’s security and economy, driving the \$1.5 trillion blue economy, and span every industry sector, providing endless opportunities for our graduates.

“Industry pay and employment conditions are the best they’ve been in decades and employers are knocking at our doors, desperate for skilled employees.”

SPREADING THE WORD

Ussery and Horn are confident the tuition waiver will help the academy grow its out-of-state student population, they said.

Continuing to spread the word about the maritime industry and the tuition restructure, especially to high school students in inland states, will be key, Horn said.

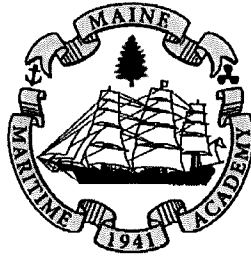
“Me, personally, if I’m a high school student, I’m hearing this and I’m eating it up,” Horn said. “This is awesome.”

Ussery, who works for the academy calling potential students who have been admitted to the academy, but haven't yet accepted their spot, said the tuition restructure has already swayed incoming students.

"I called this one student from California, and he was like, 'Yeah, I'm still looking at my options,'" Ussery said. "I was like, 'Well, just so you know, you get in-state tuition next fall.' He was like, 'Wait, actually? That's perfect.'"

Lauren Frick: 409-683-5230; lauren.frick@galvnews.com

Lauren Frick



Comparison: Maine Maritime vs. Massachusetts Maritime

(3 Prospective Students)

Maine Maritime Academy is not currently operating on the same playing field as Massachusetts Maritime or Texas A&M Maritime. If the significant net price disparities continue over the next few years—especially when paired with the aggressive digital marketing campaigns from both Mass Maritime and Texas—we are likely to experience a notable decline in enrollment. While I haven't seen a direct impact yet in this cycle, it's possible we'll observe it in the summer melt.

Texas has specifically targeted eight of our unlimited license, non-traditional first-year students. We are actively working with three of them at the moment, though it's still unclear how many admitted or deposited students may ultimately choose Texas instead. By fall, I'll be able to analyze where our applicants, admits, and deposits ended up enrolling if they did not choose us.

- **Student A (Maine Resident, High Need)**
 - Family Income: \$50k-\$75k
 - **Maine Maritime:** Covers 28% of direct cost (**25% of need**)
 - **Mass Maritime:** Covers 63% of direct cost (**67% of need**)
- **Student B (Massachusetts Resident, Low Need)**
 - Family Income: \$100k-\$200k
 - **Maine Maritime:** Covers 21% of direct cost (**94% of need**)
 - **Mass Maritime:** Covers 10% of cost (**100% of need**)
- **Student C (Out-of-State, No Need)**
 - Family Income: \$200k+
 - **Maine Maritime:** Covers 24% of direct cost (**0 need**)
 - **Mass Maritime:** Covers 52% of direct cost (**0 need**)

Comparison: Maine Maritime vs. Massachusetts Maritime (3 Student Perspectives)

