Institutional Profile

Introduction

The presidency at the University of Maine at Fort Kent offers a wonderful opportunity for an energetic leader seeking to take a solid small campus to its next level of excellence. The faculty and staff are poised for change, and will enthusiastically support a leader who will build on the accomplishments of outgoing President Richard Cost. The new President’s strategic tasks will be to implement a vision of the campus as a distinctive place featuring rigorous academics, experiential learning, a commitment to the natural environment and sustainability, and community involvement. Specific goals are to rebuild enrollment, strengthen the financial base, enhance UMFK’s reputation as a rural liberal arts college with excellent professional programs, and sustain positive relationships within the regional community and the state as a whole.

The University of Maine at Fort Kent Today

Located in a particularly beautiful part of a destination state, UMFK is nestled in the St. John River Valley at the confluence of the St. John and Fish rivers. For over a hundred years, UMFK has been the higher education center for this region of northern Maine. It enrolls approximately 850 students in four academic divisions: Nursing, Education, Arts and Humanities, and Natural and Behavioral Sciences. Programs of study include environmental studies, forestry, business management, computer applications, E-commerce, the French language, and rural public safety administration. The University hosts the Acadian Archives, one of two such resources in the country, and cherishes its Acadian and Quebecois history and culture. It is also home to the newly established Center for Rural Sustainable Development.

The faculty and staff at UMFK (75 full and part-time faculty; 85 staff), students and most others in northern Maine relish the out-of-doors. Superb fishing, hiking, and boating on the region’s many lakes and streams punctuate mild northern summers. The lovely Allagash Wilderness Waterway flows nearby. The campus is a center for winter sports and hosts the Olympic quality Maine Winter Sports Center. Lonesome Pines Alpine Ski Lodge is located within minutes of the campus, while miles of
cross country ski and snowmobile trails attract visitors from across the US and Canada. UMFK is an ideal situation for individuals and families who appreciate the natural environment as the locus for academic study, recreation and personal development.

**Campus Assets**

Anyone seriously considering this leadership position will want to assess UMFK’s substantive assets, as well as the real challenges to be faced. These are the most prominent strengths that will support positive change:

- A faculty and staff poised to support positive change and able leadership
- A surrounding community and its political representatives who make UMFK their top priority
- The recent completion and wide endorsement of a sensible, flexible strategic plan and supporting plans
- Solid academic programs in the liberal arts as well as professional programs aligned with the career aspirations of students
- An attractive, modern physical plant, wireless access throughout the campus, several ‘smart’ classrooms, well equipped physical education and recreational facilities and handsome grounds
- Though located in a small town setting, UMFK is a morning’s drive from Quebec City, one of the most cosmopolitan venues in North America
- Demonstrated success in distance education including fast growing enrollments in such programs as Nursing, Rural Public Safety Administration, Special Education, and Criminal Justice. On line credit hour production has more than doubled in the past three years
- Consistent recognition in the Princeton Review as one of the best colleges in the Northeast
- A state funding appropriation that equals the annual payout of an $85 million endowment
- Support from the University of Maine System that covers a variety of administrative functions and costs including legal services, payroll, purchasing, information systems and a distance education network

**The Challenges**

UMFK needs a moderate turnaround focused initially on enrollment and finances, and over time on reputation building and strengthening the academic core. The enrollment challenge derives partly from a fall-off in participation from Canadian students in a teacher certification program. As the adjacent Maritime Provinces began to offer their own certification programs, enrollment dropped by 125 students. This reduction, coupled with lesser declines in participation from regionally based
students, reversed a multi-year growth trend. The campus is awaiting the report of enrollment management consultants on the most effective strategies for restoring growth.

The international recession has contributed to shortfalls in Maine state revenues, and resulting cuts to funding for higher education. Of course, the enrollment shortfall further reduced campus income. Shielded partly by greater cuts at the System level and reserves, UMFK is accommodating these reductions within its budget. Finally, a recently completed and very attractive residence hall remains at 85% occupancy.

If the immediate need is to revitalize enrollment management, the new president will also want to focus on institutional marketing, reputation building and attention to the array of academic programs. Fortunately, UMFK enjoys positive regard in its region—it is the first choice for 75% of applicants—and the assets summarized earlier plus the eagerness of the university community to set about this work will support presidential leadership.

Preferred Leadership Characteristics

The campus, the community and the System have identified these features as important for presidential candidates:

- Entrepreneurial leadership skills and success in building enrollment and retention levels
- A willingness to work with the campus and larger community to move UMFK forward
- An appreciation for the distinctiveness of Franco American heritage and culture
- Commitment to the values of academic quality, strong student support, experiential learning and sustainability in a small campus environment
- Commitment to the liberal arts and professional programs
- Appreciation for the surrounding community which enjoys unusually close connections to the campus
- Sensitivity to the important role of elected officials at the local, state and federal level
- Experience with distance education
- Comfort with shared governance, the open exchange of ideas and problem solving in a collective bargaining environment
- Ability to work constructively within a system with a unified board of trustees and a chancellor to whom the president reports
- Respect for traditional and non-traditional students, and the unique educational needs of each group
- Demonstrated ability in budgeting and financial management
• Experience with successful fundraising, plus the capacity to work with high net worth donors and foundations for transformational gifts
• A terminal degree in an academic or professional discipline

The University of Maine System

The University of Maine System consists of seven universities located across the state. Its Chancellor reports to a sixteen member Board of Trustees who hold ultimate governing authority for the System. Campus Presidents report to the Chancellor, with initial appointments and continuing contracts subject to Board approval. The Board, acting through its Chancellor, holds high expectations for presidential leadership and management of their university, and expects presidents to play an active role in the educational, economic and social development of their regions and the state as a whole. The System’s current strategic plan, *New Challenges New Directions*, can be located through the links below and is a must read for candidates.

To discuss this position in confidence, or for more information

Those interested in learning more about the search process and the position could contact the search advisor, Terry MacTaggart, at tjm@maine.edu.

For more information on UMFK and the University of Maine System, refer to these links:

• UMFK [http://www.umfk.maine.edu/](http://www.umfk.maine.edu/)
• UMFK Strategic Plan [http://www.umfk.maine.edu/stratplan/default.cfm?ref=5](http://www.umfk.maine.edu/stratplan/default.cfm?ref=5)
• Acadian Archives [http://www.umfk.maine.edu/archives/](http://www.umfk.maine.edu/archives/)
• Center for Rural Sustainable Development [http://crsd.umfk.maine.edu/](http://crsd.umfk.maine.edu/)
• University of Maine System [http://www.maine.edu/](http://www.maine.edu/)
• UMS Strategic Plan [http://www.maine.edu/chancellor/NCND.php](http://www.maine.edu/chancellor/NCND.php)
• Fort Kent, Maine [http://www.fortkent.org/](http://www.fortkent.org/)