Strategic Direction 7
Vision for Shared Administrative Services

Vision
Administrative services in an institution of higher education support the core missions of teaching, research and public service. The goal of shared administrative services in a public system is to protect the core of each institution, improve services to students, faculty and staff, and free up resources for re-investment in institutional quality.

Principles
In order to maximize quality and minimize costs in the University of Maine System, administrative services -- including information technology, student administrative services, human resources, and financial services -- should be structured along the following principles to the extent possible.

- Shared administrative services must support and be designed in the context of differentiated institutional missions.
- Common policies should be established where idiosyncratic policies are not tied to mission.
- Transaction processing should be centralized, when economically beneficial, to take advantage of technology and economies of scale and to allow university staff to focus on value-added functions.
- When centralization is not cost effective, de-centralized processes should employ common standards and policies.
- Services should be designed to collaborate with the State, K – 12 education, and other higher education institutions to facilitate seamless education Pre-K – 20.
- Individual university strengths should be utilized for the benefit of the System.

Shared services do not mean that there will be a cookie-cutter approach to providing services. The differences in campus missions, sizes and locations require that the service model be flexible. However, the service model will emphasize consolidation, integration, collaboration, and standardization in order to provide a single management structure wherever possible. Together we will strive to find the best balance of centralization and decentralization to meet the needs of students, faculty and staff in the most efficient manner possible.

Delivery Model
To insure that the goals of shared services are achieved, the delivery model must be characterized by

- A focus on students and other constituents;
- A high technology, learning environment;
- Continuous improvement;

Strategic Direction 7 - Centralize the System’s business/administrative functions, where appropriate, in order to leverage resources and increase effectiveness of service throughout the System.
• Avoidance of unnecessary duplication;
• Decision making at the lowest level of the organization that is consistent with other goals;
• Adequate training to meet high standards for customer service;
• Assessment to assure that services are not compromised and that savings and cost avoidance are realized; and
• Accountability to the public.

**Tools**
There are many obstacles to implementation of shared services in the UMS. Effective leadership and perseverance are needed to effect a change in the service delivery paradigm. Change of this magnitude requires tools such as
• an enterprise-wide planning system (ERP),
• back office service centers,
• many people working collaboratively toward a shared vision,
• organizational change and transformation,
• alignment of all functions with the UMS mission and strategic plan,
• development of an appropriate method of assessing and sharing costs of shared services, and
• standardization of practices, which will often require change from custom and habit.

**Partnership**
UMS leaders in finance, technology, student services, academic affairs, and human resources are committed to working in partnership to fulfill our vision of shared services within UMS. Each Strategic Direction 7 Implementation Committee is charged with addressing the shared vision in its work on the centralization of services.

DRAFT 1/5/06
Strategic Direction 7 – THESIS/Project Enterprise
Second Report

1. Executive Summary: THESIS (Transforming Higher Education Student Integrated Services) has two goals: maximizing the quality of service to students while minimizing costs. The affected operations include Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Bursar, Advising, and Loan Collections. At a System level, the principal goal is to free up resources, which institutions can re-invest in core academic operations, while maintaining or improving standards of student service. This will occur through the consolidation, centralization, coordination, and standardization of appropriate “back office” business processes. At the level of each campus, the principal goal is to improve student service while hopefully decreasing costs by removing the need for multiple referrals to help students solve relatively simple problems. In both instances, the THESIS vision includes the development of powerful “self-help” tools, although technology will never eliminate the need for quality service to students provided by well-trained, caring personnel. The THESIS vision also includes a commitment that centralized operations will be transparent to students, thereby not interfering with each institution’s efforts to develop strong bonds with applicants and enrolled students. In addition, centralized services will support the differentiated missions of UMS campuses.

The THESIS planning teams have already produced two Interim Reports, separate from the reporting cycle for the other directions within the UMS strategic plan. Both reports have been shared with UMS senior staff, the seven university presidents, and trustees. As a result, the analysis of “above the line” student service processes (those that need to be left at the universities) vs. “below the line” processes (those that can be centralized in order to gain efficiencies and improve services) has already been accepted. In addition, the presidents have endorsed two implementation strategies: 1) the development of campus-level “one-stops,” which will unify at a minimum the “front-desk” services of each university’s registrar, business, and financial aid offices, and 2) the gradual development of a “back office” processing center. The latter, which initially will be a physical entity in a single geographic location, may later grow either physically or in a more distributive or virtual manner (with opportunities for form to follow function). A $300,000 grant from the Davis Foundation is supporting planning for both implementation strategies, and the firm CedarCrestone has been engaged to provide consulting services.

Since early fall, planning has begun in earnest for the launch of one-stops and a first-generation processing center by fall 2006. The processing center will focus on those services that have been judged to be “most viable” for early centralization (“MVPs”)—
e.g., receiving and processing applications and related materials, verifying immunizations, handling loan collections, etc.

This planning for improvements in student service and business processes has been linked to planning in three related areas: 1) the implementation of PeopleSoft software; 2) the development of common policies and procedures (at least to the extent that inconsistencies are not driven by differences in institutional mission); and 3) the acquisition and deployment of a document management system. There is substantial progress on all three fronts. In fact, the close relationship between PeopleSoft implementation and THESIS planning has led to a reorganization of planning efforts, so that a single Project Enterprise Executive Advisory Committee and a single set of Sponsors are now overseeing both projects.

At this juncture, work is proceeding on finalizing the business case and financing approaches for one-stop and center development. Preliminary models were developed last spring by consultants from Thundercloud. Their data have been revisited, and an updated report, with assistance from CedarCrestone, should be completed in January 2006.

2. Short Background on the Process: THESIS planning began in earnest in January 2005, with the creation of a Core Team, an Executive Advisory Committee, and an Executive Sponsors group. The first two bodies included representation from all UMS campuses. The Advisory Committee included student representation. The firm Thundercloud Consulting was hired to assist with planning.

By the end of the June 2005, preliminary planning was complete. Two Interim Reports were published; recommendations were shared with UMS Senior Staff, the seven university presidents, and the Board of Trustees. The Presidents endorsed the “above the line” vs. “below the line” process maps and further endorsed planning to develop campus-level “One-Stops” and a first-generation Processing Center for the 2006-07 academic year.

Over the summer of 2005 the Sponsors secured a $300,000 grant from the Davis Foundation to undertake the next steps of implementation planning. CedarCrestone was chosen early in the fall to provide consulting services for the next stages of planning. In addition, several new planning groups were organized. First, One-Stop planning teams were created at every university. Second, a Back Office Processing Center Planning Team, with representation from all the campuses and from the subject-matter experts working on PeopleSoft conversion, was developed. Finally, the Executive Advisory Committee and Sponsors Group were reorganized under a Project Enterprise masthead and charged with responsibility for coordinating planning for: PeopleSoft, document management, common policies and procedures, student service business process redesign, and related workforce management policies.

Since early fall, coordinated implementation planning has begun in earnest. Each campus has filed a preliminary progress report on One-Stop planning, and the CedarCrestone
consultant has visited every campus. In addition, the chairs of these planning teams have had one planning meeting together, with others scheduled. Center planning has focused on the identification of MVP’s (most viable processes for centralization) and a discussion of potential Center sites. Planning discussions have recently focused on the business case and financing options for an evolving Center.

On the technology side, vendor selection for document management was completed during the fall semester. As for PeopleSoft, two modules have already been implemented—HR (now being upgraded to version 8.9) and Financials. Plans for a phased implementation of Student are in place, and training and communications plans for this are being developed. A limited license for Customer Relations Management software (CRM) will allow a fall roll-out of the electronic application, which is needed if the Center is to begin functioning in 2006. Meanwhile a working group is studying electronic payment options.

3. **Strategies and Recommendations for Implementation:** What follows is simply an updating of the strategies and recommendations for implementation that were included in the June 2005 report. These are logical pieces of the core strategies and recommendations—viz., to develop Campus One-Stops and a Back Office Processing Center based on the already completed Process Maps for Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Bursar, Advising, and Loan Collections.

   a. Complete work on identified differences in policies and procedures (standardizing wherever possible; maintaining differences wherever critical to mission differentiation) in order to proceed with timely PeopleSoft implementation and THESIS reorganization.

   b. Complete the planning for business process redesign, reconfigured job descriptions, training, facilities renovations, and assessment that will allow campus One-Stops to begin operating in fall 2006 (with the understanding that local circumstances may dictate only a partial emergence and gradual evolution in subsequent semesters at some universities).

   c. Complete the business case and financial planning models for the Back Office Processing Center to provide needed context for ongoing UMS and university budget planning.

   d. Complete the design and implementation planning (including plans for oversight, accountability mechanisms, and assessment) for a first-generation Center, which will begin operation in fall 2006, and coordinate with implementation planning for document management, CRM, electronic payment, etc.

   e. Coordinate One-Stop and Center planning with completion of a workforce management policy and plans.
f. Develop potential scenarios and timelines for later stages of Center development.

g. Develop powerful, user-friendly, web-based self-service options for students and advisors.

4. **Budget**: Completed budgets and financial models for the One-Stop and Center projects are currently being developed for review by UMS senior staff and the seven university presidents.

5. **Decision-Making Matrix**

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6. **Implementation Timeline**

Our CedarCrestone consultants, working with project sponsors, are developing a comprehensive planning calendar for all the components of this complex project (business process redesign, facilities planning, business case, policies and procedures, workforce management, training, One Stop and Center start-up, etc.). It will be published in a Project Charter that will be available by the end of January 2006.

Note: If the One-Stops and Center are to begin functioning in 2006-07, then the One-Stops have to be in place by August 2006 (in time for the start of the new school year). The Center needs to be in place by October 2006 (in time for the start of a new admissions cycle).