Strategic Direction 8 – Consortium
Second Report

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the System Plan was adopted in September 2004, the presidents of the University of Maine at Fort Kent, the University of Maine at Machias, and the University of Maine at Presque Isle have been meeting together routinely and working closely with Chancellor Westphal and the System Staff to develop the concept of a consortium among these three distinct institutions, each with its own special niche and community. Our approach has been not to create a separate group of “implementation committees,” but to introduce and infuse the concept and the values of collaboration and cooperation through existing offices and structures. This has enabled faculty and administrative groups to “discover” for themselves areas where shared efforts can benefit all.

This report is a progress report in very positive and exciting ways. Each time we initiate a new discussion or bring together new cohorts of faculty and staff members, the energy and ideas begin to surface. Certainly some issues are currently on the front burner in this report, such as procedures for developing budgets and coordinating capital plans, consideration of alignment of general education requirements, the hiring of a shared development officer, and so on. However, it would be a mistake to suggest that we have completed a final and conclusive design for the consortium this early in the process. Our experience over the past year has taught us that new and creative ideas for collaboration and efficiencies—as yet unimagined—will continue to evolve out of the work taking place in multiple layers among the members of our respective institutions.

Our long-term goal is to build a consortium in which all three universities are strengthened through collaboration and cooperation while developing the unique attributes of each. We do note that the principles of cooperation and collaboration are effective and important, and we hope to expand our efforts to all UMS institutions wherever that is appropriate. Furthermore, we believe the concept of geographic alliances including community colleges, institutions in Canada, and perhaps high schools as well may become part of our operational mindset.
II. BACKGROUND

Work on the consortium began with the three presidents last year. Soon our chief academic and financial officers were brought into the discussions, and since then the process of building the consortium has been systematically pushed down the organizational ladders and infused throughout the campus operations. As soon as Chancellor Westphal had presented the plan to the Maine Legislature, we initiated meetings with the vice presidents individually on each campus and then worked with directors and other administrators while the chief academic officers proceeded with their own meetings. At all levels and across multiple offices, productive interactions among the three institutions are now taking place.

In May 2005, the Consortium Presidents with the financial support of the System Office hosted a two-day Appreciative Inquiry Summit engaging forty-five leaders from all levels of the three institutions. Suggested by Trustee Margaret Weston, and facilitated by a consulting team that included Trustee Weston, the session focused on an exploration of our institutional identities and a discovery of ways in which the three campus communities could mutually support and strengthen each other. Participants included fifteen leaders from each campus in the areas of administration, faculty, classified and professional staff, students, alumni, and Boards of Visitors. The session ended with strong support for follow-up sessions to engage more people from each campus, and specific commitments by participants to work on one of eight specific projects developed during the two days including:

1. Joint fine and performing arts programs serving our campuses and communities.
2. Study of the demand for and ability to provide graduate programs through the consortium.
3. Follow-up communications to extend the messages from the two days throughout our institutions.
4. Creation of a joint student association for interested students from all three campuses.
5. Cross-fertilization of academic programs among the three institutions.
6. Consideration of a degree program in business and entrepreneurship through the consortium.
7. Establishment of a web-based writing center for faculty.
8. Further discussion of general education with a view to agreement on a common definition of an educated student.

This session provided an exciting and vital foundation for broadening the base of people and offices involved in the consortium effort as a tool to serve all three institutions.

In September, the three presidents, along with many of our campus personnel who had participated in the workshop, or other collaborative projects attended the one-day workshop for all involved with the implementation of the UMS Strategic Plan at Wells Commons.
III. PROGRESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Presidents

The three consortium presidents meet regularly. We routinely share information and discuss strategies on a wide variety of issues including but not limited to capital needs, funding, and prioritization; financial reports and planning; strategic planning for our individual campuses and the UMS; accreditation issues; and collaborative academic matters involving mission differentiation and shared resources. Prior to Presidents Council meetings and Board of Trustee meetings, we confer on agenda items that concern the consortium members or issues of special interest/concern to the smaller UMS campuses.

This process has become a welcome habit for us. As we build strong professional relationships, we learn from each other and become better presidents on our own campuses. We also are able to speak with a stronger, unified voice in representing our institutions operationally within the University of Maine System.

1. The three presidents have jointly reviewed lists of all University of Maine System committees to insure representation as appropriate, to identify instances where one campus can represent all three members, and to set up protocol and procedures for reporting back to the presidents and for sharing information among all three institutions. This has saved significant travel expense and reduced time-away for offices with small staffs.

2. The three presidents generated a job description for a shared development professional to serve all three institutions. Chancellor Westphal approved the concept for funding for an initial four years. We began the search process, conducted a series of telephone interviews, and are scheduling campus interviews for early January 2006. We are also examining other areas where this model might be effective, such as institutional research and grant writing.

3. We are very excited about the possibilities evolving through Project Maine-France. President Cost represented the consortium in a visit to partnering institutions in France in November. As small institutions we cannot afford full time operations dedicated to this purpose, and the small numbers of our students involved will not support trips or permanent relationships; however, by working through the system initiative, our students and our faculty can become full participants in these valuable educational experiences. For us to include these opportunities in our promotional materials represents an important attraction.
4. We have also recognized the possible need to create ground rules for the consortium. For example, we may want to agree that when two institutions wish to undertake an activity and the third does not, we can move forward.

B. Chief Academic Officers (and Faculty)

The three consortium chief academic officers meet monthly and confer on several ongoing projects, including but not limited to the following:

1. As part of the process of differentiating our academic offerings in relation to our distinct missions, the CAO’s have broken our various degree programs into three categories.

   a. Signature programs that are unique to a single campus and typically have a direct tie to the mission of that campus, such as Physical Education at UMPI and Marine Biology at UMM.
   **Recommendation:** These programs should not be duplicated within the consortium, and we should seek opportunities to share courses where advantageous and appropriate.

   b. Programs that should be offered on all three campuses because of the strong need for them in our rural regions, which are commonly characterized by depressed economies, static or shrinking populations, and low percentages of residents with college educations. These programs include business, teacher education, and environmental studies.
   **Recommendation:** These programs should continue to be offered at each of the three campuses, and we share courses and faculty wherever possible in order to increase efficiencies and enhance students’ options.

   c. Programs that are offered on two or more campuses, but which include specific unique features or concentrations that differentiate them from one another. The biology program at UMFK, for example, is tied closely to the Fort Kent nursing program, while the biology program at Machias has close ties to marine biology and environmental studies.
   **Recommendation:** Efforts should be made to further differentiate these common programs, so that students’ degree options among the consortium members are further enriched.

2. The CAO’s have initiated and coordinated discipline- and degree-specific meetings between the faculty at the consortium institutions. Thus far, faculty in the business, history, English, education, fine arts, environmental studies, recreation, biology, and criminal justice/rural public safety programs have held meetings, either live on a single campus or using Polycom technology.
a. Over the summer and fall semesters, faculty members representing our three business programs met and designed a new concentration in rural entrepreneurship that includes shared courses and student experiences. 

**Recommendation:** This collaborative project should be fully supported by the consortium administrations, who should seek to make funding available for course development and necessary professional development for the faculty involved.

b. In November, genetics classes (30 students) from UMPI and UMFK met in Caribou to exchange ideas and information. In the words of the faculty members who created the day, the meeting gave students a chance to learn from one another.

**Recommendation:** Faculty should explore opportunities for similar joint meetings for faculty and students in other academic areas.

c. Funded by a Maine Department of Education grant, faculty in our three education departments have been jointly involved in offering the required cluster of courses for certification in special education. This project includes emphasis on recruitment from high school students (through early college courses), Native Americans, and people with disabilities.

**Recommendation:** Seek revenue streams to more easily allow this work to continue past the life of the Maine DOE grant.

3. The three CAO’s and faculty leaders have examined the general education requirements at all three campuses and proposed a plan that will lead to agreement on shared principles underlying general education programs. Their goals include the following:

a. To develop vibrant, robust general education programs for all three universities that enhance opportunities for ready transfer among our institutions; develop the foundation upon which joint academic programs can be constructed, and strengthen the educational programs and distinctive missions of all three institutions.

b. To advance dialogue across the University of Maine System on complementary general education programs.

c. To enhance inter-campus faculty dialogue and understanding of relevant issues.

**Recommendations:**

a. Coordinate discussions with the results of SD #1’s development of UMS-wide general education goals. (Spring 2006)

b. Foster discipline-based gatherings to discuss, among other things, general education goals and methods. (This has already occurred in the areas of business and the sciences. Fall 2005-Spring 2006)

c. Develop venues for institution-based discussion of goals, assessment, and means of general education. This will occur through established and ad hoc venues. (Spring 2006)
d. Send faculty to the spring 2006 AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) conference addressing outcomes-based general education. (Spring 2006)

e. Host off-campus experts to work with faculty on each university. Individuals (from NEASC and/or other UMS faculty) will assist in developing understanding and dialogue on general education goals and assessment. (Spring 2006)

f. A joint committee of faculty representatives will draft a proposed shared general education plan, with appropriate mission-based variations. The draft will be based on principles developed through the previous multiple dialogues for an outcomes-based general education plan. (Summer and Fall 2006)

g. Present the resulting plan to all three faculties for their consideration. (Fall 2006)

4. The three CAO’s have also been asked to address the regional need for graduate programs and our potential to meet these needs through the consortium and working with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Teacher education has been identified as a top priority, with business as a possible second priority.

Recommendation: Conduct a market study to assess the need for specific areas of graduate education in Washington and Aroostook Counties, and then launch appropriate collaborative discussion with the graduate schools at UM and USM.

C. Chief Financial Officers (and Staff)

1. The three Chief Financial Officers meet routinely and have proposed a format and procedure for presenting budgets that provides for both individual campus accountability and joint tables and data.

2. The CFO’s attended a presentation by the Massachusetts Higher Education Consortium, a group purchasing organization initiated in Massachusetts and approved to operate in other states. We will join individually or as a consortium and use this organization for savings and to encourage vendors from our region to sell through the consortium.

3. Machias has been served very well by a partnership with the University of Maine Bookstore. We will explore the possibility and advantages of extending that relationship to the other two consortium campuses along with other possible options.
D. **Chief Student Affairs Officers (and Staff)**

Out of their regularly scheduled sessions, the following solid core of recommendations has emerged.

1. Support for the purchase of One-Card Systems for the consortium institutions. This is a safety and security issue.

2. Student Activities Coordinators will seek to block-book visiting performers at a savings to all three campuses.

3. Working together will enable us to provide higher quality professional development speakers and opportunities at lower cost.

4. The three campuses are reviewing each other’s policy manuals and propose to exchange Resident Assistants periodically in order to learn from each other. The RA exchange will take place over a weekend during the spring 2006 semester, and one Resident Director will also travel with the RA’s.

5. We will open up participation in each other’s study abroad agreements in order to expand options for our students. This fits well with our participation in Project Maine France cited elsewhere in this report.

6. As a general comment, note again that items III.D.1 through III.D.5 all suggest similar opportunities in other programs and disciplines.

7. All three submitted planning grant proposals to the MELMAC Foundation to consider retention studies and efforts as a consortium. Each campus was awarded $6,000 by the Foundation to prepare full proposals during the coming year. This was accomplished and all three institutions in November 2006 submitted proposals sharing common components.

8. Student Life staff have scheduled a Consortium Leadership Conference for April 14-15 at UMFK. Each campus will have fifteen to twenty student participants, who will be housed overnight on the Fort Kent campus. Student Life staff members from all three campuses will lead the workshops, and a keynote speaker will be invited to deliver the main address.

E. **Public Relations Directors**

The three Public Relations Directors have begun working together closely. They plan joint purchasing of advertising space during spring 2006 in markets that we cannot afford on our own with small college consortium pieces. They have been meeting routinely and have drawn up an excellent list of ideas including joint
directories and press releases. UMM and UMFK are also considering joint underwriting of Maine’s High School Basketball Tournament.

IV. BUDGET

In addition to the funds for travel and communication we currently spend through institutional budgets, we have two accounts specific to the consortium.

1. The first was funded at $120,000 for the hiring and initial year of a shared development officer, office, and staff. Now that the advertising for the position and the interview process is underway, we will begin drawing down on this account. Given the time of the year, we anticipate that we may not spend this entire amount in the current fiscal year.

2. We were also funded at $120,000 in seed money to initiate consortium activities. The three presidents jointly control that budget. We have encouraged proposals relating to marketing and visibility of the three institutions, student affairs including joint activities and/or professional development, and support for faculty meetings including travel as it relates to the consortium. It is our intent to allocate all of these funds this fiscal year.

V. TIMELINE

We are pleased with the speed and effectiveness with which the concept of the consortium is permeating our three institutions. Our short-term goals for the current year include coordinated budget development, plans for transferable and coordinated general education programs, hiring of a shared development officer to serve all three institutions, and the coordination of capital and facilities master plans and needs.

What we hope this report demonstrates is that within every office and every discipline, the ability to learn from each other and to expand our service to our students exists through mutual cooperation. In this sense, however far we go today, we can still go further tomorrow; in this sense, our agenda will always be developing.

The consortium is well underway, and it will continue to grow and evolve over the coming months. We look forward to engaging in similar ways with other institutions within the University of Maine System, and with System staff and trustees as a strong entity that embraces three vibrant institutions.