

Technology Committee Meeting

- Present:** **Committee Members:** Kevin McCarthy, Chair; Eleanor Baker, Norman Fournier, Barry McCrum and Lyndel Wishcamper. **Other Trustees:** Jim Dowe, Jean Flahive, Marjorie Medd, Victoria Murphy, and Paul Mitchell. **Staff:** Rebecca Wyke, Kelley Wiltbank, Ralph Caruso, Cindy Mitchell and Jeff Letourneau.
- Absent:** Susan Gendron, Tamera Grieshaber, Krisandra Horn, William Johnson, Wayne Newell, and Charlie O'Leary

Trustee McCarthy, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Summary of Task Force on Distance Education Technology. President Allyson Handley, UMA, reviewed the Executive Summary of the Review of Distance Learning and the University College Centers and the “*Call for a Vision of Online and Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning within the University of Maine System*” document.

Executive Summary of the Review of Distance Learning and the University College Centers.

The UC/ITV/On-line Assessment Committee was convened to conduct an analysis of distance learning. The following are the recommendations from the Executive Summary of the report the Committee compiled. The recommendations are organized by their level of focus from the Board of Trustees to the System to the campuses to University College. Because some recommendations cross these lines they were placed under those who have the primary authority to achieve it or who must lead it. Within each heading they are arranged in priority order. Many of the recommendations are inter-dependent and have relatively equal weight.

Board of Trustees

1. The mission of statewide access to higher education must be clearly articulated and supported at the presidential level. At the highest levels of the University of Maine System the mission of statewide access to higher education must be clearly articulated, and distinguished from the Maine Community College System (MCCS). Access to higher education degree programs is essential to all Maine residents and to the state's economic future. We must strike the optimum balance between access on the one hand and financial sustainability on the other.

System

2. Explore and implement a common set of self-service practices, payment policies, due dates and procedures. All students will receive one bill or be directed to a single page on MaineStreet that calculates their UMS (multi-campus) bill and directs them to one place for a unified payment process.

Take steps to enable all students to view course costs (tuition and fees) online, for each specific course, at the time that they select their courses. MaineStreet should allow a shopping cart function that calculates their total bill as they select their UMS cross-campus, course wish list.

Support the development of easily updateable transfer equivalency matrices that assist students in course selection.

3. In the interest of providing better service for students, a common process for coding distance learners who are matriculates from another campus or Center or Site-based will be adopted by the seven universities. This recommendation is closely tied to the following one, and the improvement of institutional research and has the potential to positively impact the quality of student services.
4. Use MaineStreet to strengthen institutional research for UMS distance education. Current efforts to gather data about distance education are limited by lack of programming staff and hindered by differences in coding.
 - a. Any new coding schemata for distance learning courses and technologies must be agreed upon by all seven universities. In addition, current coding practices must be examined more closely to ensure that data can be accurately tracked.
 - b. For effective strategic planning at the statewide level, and to assist individual campuses, University College must have access to appropriate institutional research resources for timely and accurate information. This is an investment that will enable the UMS to evaluate the effectiveness of the committee's recommended changes.
5. Evaluate and select a common set of distance learning technologies to expand opportunities and resources for students and faculty in the UMS. Included in this process will be improving training and support for both students and faculty. Examples of technologies to be considered include course management systems, email, web conferencing and other e-learning environments.
6. Re-envision UMS's relationship to Maine Community Adult Education Programs. Maine Adult Education Programs should continue to play a major role in the University's distance learning outreach plan, regardless of whether or not a particular location can connect to real-time ITV. Create a new paradigm for how the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System, and Adult Education will partner to promote access to higher education in Maine. Convene a task force to broadly explore and clarify roles, relationships, and required support for a formal partnership among the UMS, MCCC, and Maine Adult Education Programs.

Explore opportunities for leveraging Maine Department of Education and UMS videoconferencing facilities to enhance access to University and Adult Education programs.

7. Facilitate Enhanced Connectivity. Rural Maine distance learners do not necessarily have easy access (financial or otherwise) to broadband Internet services needed for media-rich online learning. Transition to online learning may result in a loss of access for some distance learners and, consequently, result in a loss in enrollments for the UMS. To mitigate these losses, explore options such as subsidies that support broadband access for rural Maine students, targeted financial aid that assists students in paying for connectivity from home, or mailing materials (e.g., DVDs) to students who can't afford connectivity.

Campuses

8. Provide incentives at the university level that support the development of programs in demand statewide. The universities must collaborate with other higher education providers and agencies such as the Maine Department of Labor to identify and develop degree programs and professional certifications that will strengthen Maine's communities by responding to the

immediate needs of business and industry. New distance programs should be presented with a time frame for the delivery and sequencing of courses.

9. When campuses are considering site based operations outside their normal service area careful consideration will be given to collaboration and consolidation of existing compatible enterprises in the region. As partnerships develop between campuses and external agencies, industries or businesses, careful analysis should be conducted with respect to coordination.

University College

10. Examine, implement and sustain a model of funding that supports University College in recognition of the necessity for community based access to quality instruction and learner support across Maine. UMA/UC will need to work closely and cooperatively with the System and the other UMS campuses to establish what services for distance learners are best centralized and delivered via UC. Today there is agreement that some aspects of distance learning are best campus based, while others are better centralized for effectiveness and efficiencies. We need to establish a common set of services. The costs of those services will then need to be determined and modeled looking forward and an appropriate funding basis established to insure it's a sustainable enterprise.
11. University College will move away from ITV to a combination of strategically selected real-time (F2F, web conferencing, video conferencing, etc.), online and hybrid programming. Begin by decreasing the number of ITV offerings in the next two years while increasing the number of offerings using emerging technologies. Two ITV broadcast channels will be sufficient, assuming courses migrate to these other delivery modes and that there is appropriate investment in technology needed to support alternative modalities.

Reducing by half the number of broadcast slots for ITV would provide a total of 50 broadcast slots. The channels and slots will be allocated among the campuses using specific guidelines and criteria that include enrollment and pedagogical considerations (i.e., the needs of first-time students) as well as a commitment by a campus to offer full, statewide program delivery.

12. Increase training of all University College staff, including our Maine Adult Education partners, to better support students and faculty as the use of emerging technologies expands. Staff working as ITV technicians can broaden their knowledge base to assist faculty and students in the use of new technologies.
13. Over the next two years, carefully monitor enrollments at the high school receive sites that receive ITV signals over the air to determine which locations will offer sufficient return on investment to be connected to ITV via land line. It is anticipated that fewer than 25% of the current sites will fit this category. Simultaneously, continue to explore other real-time distance learning delivery technologies that may require less bandwidth. The current process of monitoring and closing sites, when appropriate, will continue with appropriate consultation with affected universities.
14. Manage change through the development of guides, workshops, and other materials/experiences that facilitate an orderly movement of faculty and course content to newer technologies.

Involve faculty and administration in the process and continue the system-wide sharing of best practices. University College will continue to provide opportunities for faculty to share their teaching experiences with emerging technologies. Keep accessibility issues in the forefront. Before lease or purchase, all technology solutions must be evaluated for their ability to reasonably meet accommodation requests (closed captioning services, etc.).

15. Reassign funds to support new technologies. Base budget monies allocated to current distance learning will be reinvested to make available and support distance education programming opportunities (shared technology capacity, instructional support, training, expanded help desk hours, etc.) for the benefit of all UMS campuses.
16. Explore with each university the appropriate role for University College professional staff to provide quality service to distance learners (e.g., explore override permission for registering distance students).
17. Invest in upgrading www.learn.maine.edu to better support UMS distance learning. A robust, interactive web presence for distance learners would not simply serve as a smart recruiting tool for the UMS campuses, it would provide a single base of information and services for all UMS distance learners. Web services would include: searchable catalog, transfer, equivalency online, support services, live chat, information sessions, co-browsing, tutorials, advising, career exploration, campus policies, and best practices.

Call for a Vision of Online and Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning within the University of Maine System. President Handley explained that this “thought paper” contains collective input solicited from the Trustees, UMS administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni and the members of the UC/ITV/Online Assessment Committee. If the UMS is going to accelerate change and move boldly into the new information age on a broader and more effective scale, this effort must be guided by a coherent vision that has the support of the Trustees, Chancellor, Presidents and campuses. This white paper is a call for and a guide to achieving that vision. Below are the recommendations outlined in the white paper.

Recommendation # 1 –

The UMS should proceed decisively and immediately to create and implement a strategic vision for online and technology-enhanced teaching and learning within the University of Maine System.

Recommendation #2 –

Create system-wide and university based policies, practices and procedures that dramatically increase the effective utilization of technology-enhanced education and shared services within the UMS, while expanding local, national and international access to UMS programs and degrees.

Recommendation # 3 –

Create UMS standards and benchmarks for technology delivery (hardware and software) and enhancement of the undergraduate experience building upon the existing work of the “Teaching Through Technology Task Force” (T4).

Recommendation # 4 –

Create standards for technology literacy among the faculty. Fund the necessary initial professional development and instructional support for faculty through campus prioritization of E&G funds and a system-wide revolving incentive loan fund.

Recommendation # 5 –

Going forward, decisions about teaching technology utilization within the UMS should be coordinated and should be informed by research and best practice.

Recommendation # 6 –

Incentivize the development of online programs through System support and campus rewards for actions, and expand online marketing for distance programming through an improved University College web site.

General Information Technology Updates.

Financials Upgrade. Ms. Cindy Mitchell, Director of Administrative System Development and Support, explained the PeopleSoft Financials upgrade was very successful. The e-payables, which are the electronic payments to vendors, and the travel and expense direct deposit have been implemented.

Financial Aid. Ms. Mitchell announced the last module for the campus solutions was the implementation of Financial Aid. This was a major milestone for the students to have on-line access to the financial aid information. The next steps for Financial Aid will be loan processing and by late summer of 2009 the disbursement of financial aid for the fall semester.

2009 Initiatives. Ms. Mitchell explained some of the 2009 initiatives include enhancements to the faculty and student self-service, new housing software for some of the campuses and retiring the mainframe computer system.

2010 and Beyond. – Looking to 2010 and beyond, Ms. Mitchell commented that there will be upgrades for the Campus Solutions, Human Resources and Finance. In addition, a full portal for the students, faculty and staff will be implemented and the implementation of the Advance System for the Development Offices. The second phase of the Financial System will need to be implementation, which includes grants, contracts, and billing.

Student/Faculty Portal. Ms. Mitchell explained the concept of the portal for faculty, students and staff. It will be a digital home that will bring together disparate web services to a single point for UMS services, campus applications, and campus communication tools. It will provide a platform for blending campus services and UMS services in order to reduce users' confusion.

Maine Research and Education Network (MaineREN). Mr. Jeff Letourneau, Associate Director of Communication and Network Services, provided an overview of the Maine Research and Education Network (MaineREN). The MaineREN is a fiber optic based research and education network from Bar Harbor to Boston to assure Maine's research and education community has the communications infrastructure necessary to recruit top quality faculty and researcher and complete on a level playing

field for federal research funding. The project is funded by UMS 2007 supplemental appropriations, the Jackson Laboratory R & D bond, MDI Bio Lab NIH grant and the University of New Hampshire. The UMS is also working with the North East Cyberinfrastructure Consortium (NECC) to expand the network to include parts of New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Delaware, New York, and Connecticut as well as a link from Brunswick to Bar Harbor. The funding for the expanded network will be through a \$6 million federal grant.

Maine School and Library Network (MSLN). Mr. Letourneau explained the Maine School and Library Network (MSLN). The MSLN is a state-wide network for K-12 schools and public libraries. The UMS has operated the MSLN since the mid 1990's under various contract vehicles. The UMS role will change from a vendor to a member to allow the UMS to fully participate in the planning and design. MSLN will continue but will be lead by NetworkMaine. NetworkMaine's mission will be to include the operation and management of the state-wide telecommunications delivery system and services developed to support education, research, public services, government, and economic development. It will provide high-quality, cost-effective telecommunications and support services that meet participants' needs, and will operate a secure, reliable and robust manner maximizing Maine's investment in public section communications. The sponsoring agencies include the UMS, Maine Department of Education, Maine State Library, and the Maine Office of Information Technology. A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by the four sponsoring agencies.

Adjournment

Ellen Doughty for
J. Kelley Wiltbank, Clerk of the Board