An Invitation to Lead the University of Maine System

As Its New Chancellor

The chancellor’s role presents a singular opportunity to assert positive leadership at an institution that is critically important to the educational, economic and cultural future of Maine. The University of Maine System is the right size to adjust to the new economic realities and expectations for performance—seven universities with distinctive missions; 32,000 students; a $700 million annual budget for total operations. Its sixteen member Board of Trustees as well as the seven university presidents are committed to a program of constructive change led by the System’s chief executive. The senior staff in the central administration are experienced, competent and loyal. Thanks to the contributions of retiring Chancellor Richard Pattenaude, the System is financially well managed and presents a balanced budget; enjoys substantial legislative and popular support; has begun a process of achieving greater efficiency through selective centralization; and experiences generally positive relationships between the central administration and the component universities. The System as a whole is poised to develop a sustainable educational and business model that will enable it to serve the needs of this remarkable state for the foreseeable future.

The Board of Trustees invites applications and nominations for this leadership position. The links at the end of this document provide additional information about the System administration, the component universities and the Chancellor’s job description. Applications and nominations should be sent electronically to umschancellorsearch@maine.edu or may be mailed to Chancellor’s Search, University of Maine System, 16 Central St., Bangor, Maine, 04401. Potential candidates and interested parties wishing to discuss the opportunities and challenges of this position in confidence may contact the search consultant and former Chancellor, Terry MacTaggart, at tjm@maine.edu.

Leadership from the Chancellor

The Chancellor’s position is a highly visible and respected one within the state. The post follows the strong leader model with significant authority invested in it. A single governing Board of Trustees comprised of 16 members appointed by the Governor, including the state’s Commissioner of Education as an ex officio voting member, oversees the statewide administration and the constituent universities. Each institution hosts an advisory Board of Visitors. The Chancellor selects the seven university presidents subject to System Board approval of the nominee. Presidents serve rolling two-year terms. The Chancellor is responsible for evaluating presidential performance and recommending contract renewals to the Board. The presidents serve on a Council which meets monthly to advise the Chancellor on management issues and policy options.
The Board of Trustees includes a diverse membership of business, education and civic leaders from across the state. The Board and the System it governs operate with a large measure of independence from state regulatory control. For example, the Board can seek bond financing independent of the state; it manages its own collective bargaining and sets compensation for its employees; and allocates what is essentially a block grant of funding from the state to the constituent campuses and the central administration. In contrast to the more usual highly regulated model, this “charter” status contributes significantly to the system’s operating efficiency in managing its own affairs and endows the Chancellor with greater management authority and responsibility than in many higher education systems.

The Chancellor leads the statewide administration which seeks to strike an effective working balance between campus independence and central control and services. Central functions include academic affairs; finance and administration; human resources including collective bargaining and contract administration; information technology; legal services; student affairs; and legislative relations. Located in downtown Bangor, the System’s 160 staff operate out of three floors of a modern office building.

It is widely recognized within the state that the continuing transition from an economy reliant on natural resources and service to one with stronger knowledge-based components requires a highly educated workforce. The Chancellor is expected to assert leadership on educational and economic policy toward this end. The University System’s Charter describes the Chancellor as “the spokesperson for higher education.” While the University System receives the largest portion of the state’s investment in higher education and serves the largest number of students, it shares postsecondary educational responsibility with Maine’s public system of community colleges and the Maine Maritime Academy.

Seven distinctive universities

The System is made up of seven universities with distinct missions and capacities. The University of Maine located in Orono is the state’s land, sea and space grant university. It is Maine’s research university, recently listed in the top 50 such institutions without medical schools. It educates approximately 12,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The University of Southern Maine is the state’s largest metropolitan university enrolling some 10,000 students at campuses in urban Portland, Gorham and Lewiston. The University of Maine at Augusta serves a high proportion of mature students at campuses in the state’s capital and in Bangor. The Augusta campus is also the headquarters for the statewide distance education program with numerous centers around the state. The University located in Farmington in the foothills of Maine’s western mountains is the state’s public liberal arts college.

Three smaller, regional institutions make up the remainder of the System. The University at Fort Kent in northern Maine is a bi-lingual campus which emphasizes the state’s French heritage. The University of Maine at Presque Isle enrolls approximately 1,400 students in Aroostook County, while the University of Maine at Machias has an environmental liberal arts focus and serves the needs of students in the Downeast region of coastal Maine.
Expectations of the new Chancellor

It will be no secret to anyone aspiring to this position that the country will be facing economic challenges for some years to come. Often labeled “the new normal,” this situation is especially acute for public institutions which have relied heavily on state funding and focused their revenue generating attention on maintaining that investment. To be sure, public support will remain a priority. But creative ways of generating other sources of revenue and of permanently reducing costs have become equally important. The Board believes that legacy methods of coping with financial constraints will not meet the realities we face now and for the likely future. What is needed is a new operating model that enables the System to offer high quality, affordable education to Maine students coupled with lower operating costs. Most systems in the country are struggling to evolve a new way of doing business that meets these goals. Thus far, few would claim to have developed a sustainable approach. There is strong potential for Maine to become a national leader in this regard thanks to its size, governance structure and operational independence from state regulation. The new Chancellor will be expected to work with the Board, the presidents and other stakeholders including faculty, staff, students and community leaders in developing this new operating model for Maine’s higher education enterprise. The Board expects that the System and its new Chancellor will take on even greater responsibility for resource allocation and strategic decision making going forward.

Preferred characteristics

The desired features listed below grow out of the expectations for change leadership, the unique assets that Maine provides to support positive change, and the commitment of the Board of Trustees to supporting the new executive in this work.

- Senior leadership experience in a complex organization be it a college, university, public university system or a business, non-profit, government or other major enterprise
- Experience in bringing positive change to a complex organization with diverse internal constituencies and great public interest in the change
- Direct experience in working with a board of trustees or directors and with institutional presidents or management leaders in bringing positive change
- Knowledge of various models for change especially those that engage diverse groups both within an organization and with larger communities outside of it
- Familiarity with the culture of public higher education, including both the drivers of and barriers to change within that environment
- Awareness of the impact and ramifications of online education and distance learning as a growing part of the System’s offerings
- Commitment to the values of workforce and educational diversity throughout the System
- Familiarity with the realities of collective bargaining and success in working with represented personnel
- Understanding of and respect for shared governance
- Success at constructing strategic and implementation plans that convert ideas for change into reality
• Versatility in communicating with and making the case for change with a variety of stakeholders
• Skill at working with political figures, policy and opinion leaders and local, state and national government officials to advance an organization like the university system
• Ability to intentionally adjust their own leadership behavior to meet the demands of a changing environment and evolving goals
• A resilient personality that faces obstacles and pushback with equanimity and good humor
• Advanced degree in a professional or academic field is preferred but not required

An attractive location in a destination state

While the work of the new Chancellor spans the state, the System offices are located in downtown Bangor, Maine’s third largest city. Built on the banks of the mighty Penobscot River which flows fast and deep from northern Maine to the Atlantic, Bangor is a major retail, transportation, health care, recreational and educational center. A few miles from the University of Maine in Orono, the region supports the Collins Center for the Arts, the Bangor Symphony Orchestra, the Maine Discovery Children’s Museum, as well as several colleges, universities and excellent public and prep schools. The city is within easy reach of Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park, the state capitol in Augusta, major ski resorts and thousands of square miles of accessible wilderness. A few hours by car are other attractive cities including Portland and Boston to the south, and the world class Canadian cities of Quebec and Montreal to the west. Maine itself is a remarkably beautiful state with the Appalachians and the famous Appalachian Trail on its western border and what is often described as the best sailing in the world along its extensive rocky coast on the east.

Compensation

Compensation and benefits are comparable to similarly sized public university systems. The Chancellor receives a housing allowance, an automobile for professional use, a ten percent contribution to TIAA-CREF, comprehensive health insurance and an adequate expense allowance.

Application process and timeline

Applicants should send a 2-3 page letter addressing the items listed under the preferred characteristics section of this document, an up to date resume and the names and contact information of five references to umschancellorsearch@maine.edu or by mail to Chancellor’s Search, University of Maine System, 16 Central St., Bangor, Maine, 04401. Applications received by October 14 will receive full consideration by the Search Committee.
Additional Information

The following links will provide useful information about the System, its component universities and the Chancellor’s job description. As noted earlier, anyone interested in the position may discuss it further in confidence with the search consultant and former Chancellor, Terry MacTaggart, at tjm@maine.edu.

Links related to UMS
http://www.maine.edu/ (UMS site with information about the System and links to all seven universities)
http://www.maine.edu/UMSdatabook

Links related to Bangor and Maine
http://downtownbangor.com/
http://www.bangorregion.com/
http://www.visitmaine.com/travel-resources/movingtomaine/

9/13/2011