APPENDIX III

Campus Visit Summary
# Report Contents

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Introduction

The University of Maine System is engaged in a strategic planning process for the System that will result in a new plan, which will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval later this year.

While the Trustees are leading this process and are ultimately responsible for the plan, they recognized that it was essential to actively engage the various campuses in the process. This was done in two principal ways: by involving each of the University presidents as members of the Strategic Planning Task Force and by visiting each of the campuses and conducting in-depth interviews with a cross section of participants. In the fall of 2003, Vice Chancellor Elsa Nuñez and strategic planning consultants from Cambridge Concord Associates visited each campus, spending a full day meeting with representatives of the various campus groups. Each visit was coordinated by the institution’s President, so the format varied somewhat, but the same representative groups were involved on each campus.

Participants included:

- Administration
- Faculty leadership
- Faculty
- Management and support staff
- Students
- Boards of Visitors
- Community members at-large

Broad topics discussed included:

- Strengths and challenges
- Characteristics of the Preferred Future

This paper provides summaries of the key points raised at each campus about strengths, challenges, and the preferred future, illustrated by representative quotations from participants. The quotations indicate the discussion group they came from but are not attributed to individuals.
University of Maine

Strengths

Across the board people associated with the University of Maine applaud the high level of excellence in learning. Some point out that courses are consistently challenging, and adjusted to deal with an ever-changing world. Others stress that UMaine creates an integrated education, allowing students to explore options outside their own majors, and the school understands that a college experience is more than just classes. Faculty and staff focus on the “whole student” and create a seamless educational environment, sustaining a model of cooperation for the students through their own work together.

Many of those interviewed felt that one of the strengths of the University is its position as the “University of Maine,” Maine’s Land Grant institution. The University has employees and faculty throughout the state, and its programs serve people across Maine. In the last six years the University has been growing at a tremendous pace, and currently has 11,250 students. From 1997-2003 enrollment doubled, research tripled, fundraising grew, and the campus has had the highest levels of private funding ever. The UMaine campus holds an important place in relation to the state, the country, and the world. One of its roles is as the premier research institution for the state, a position that comes, many feel, with the responsibility to continue work in this area. Another role is as the state’s only library that can support research and development.”

In a number of interviews the faculty of UMaine were praised for their passion and talent, as well as for their leadership role in the current UMaine strategic plan. The Orono staff is “integrated and flatter.” Overall, as a number of those interviewed mentioned, UMaine has become a highly effective leadership training ground for students. A sense of civic engagement is fostered on the campus, as well as what some referred to as an “independent, entrepreneurial spirit.” For example, students in the Masters of Engineering program started their own company and ended up subcontracting with the University. Other strengths that were brought up in interviews included Orono’s strong safety and environmental standards, its diversity, its financial aid packages, and its partnerships with K-12 schools and the University of Maine System.

On excellence in learning

“Focus on Excellence” (Senior Staff)

“The experience here can be even better [than] at a liberal arts college.” (Students)

“We have been able to create relevant Post-9/11 Courses.” (Senior Staff)

On integrated education

“You always have the option to explore things beyond your own major. So many areas of study can be integrated.” (Students)
“We create a model for integration of students by our own model of working together.” (Faculty)

On the position as “University of Maine”

“In the state of Maine, this is the ‘University of Maine’” (Senior Staff)

“UMaine Orono has the best chance of competing nationally and internationally.” (Senior Staff)

“We all benefit by this being the state research institution.” (Faculty)

On highly effective leadership training ground for students

“This is the most effective place for people to learn leadership.” (Staff)

“The residential nature of the community promotes a sense of civic engagement.” (Staff)

“Engagement, contribution and community drive us.” (Staff)

On the library

“The Library is in good shape, and we can look ahead to more technology.” (Faculty)

“In the future we’ll have to strengthen our library, and we’ll need more resources to do this.” (Faculty)

Challenges

While the growth of enrollment and research at the University has had positive effects for both the University community and for Maine, it has led to a number of growing pains and resource issues. At the same time, the poor economic situation of the state will force the University to prioritize and make some difficult choices. Staff members are being asked to do more with fewer resources, and some note that they are not paid up to their skill level. To alleviate these problems, some urge to push for more private donors.

Even though UMaine is comparatively well known compared to the smaller UMS campuses, many who were interviewed still felt that the campus would benefit from a better marketing strategy. They feel the University is “not in control of its own image” and could market itself better if it were more certain of exactly what its niche is, and who it should be actively marketing to. This is one aspect in the challenge that some people see in sustaining Maine student enrollment and building out-of-state enrollment.

Other challenges that were brought up in the interviews included a burdensome process of applying for and getting aid, a culture that does not always appreciate higher education, the rising age demographic in Maine, and of course the economic situation of Maine, which affects all aspects of running the University. Costs of journals and other
resources are increasing, creating a challenge for the library system, which is also, according to some, in need of an improved and expanded infrastructure.

In the planning interviews, a number of people brought up the need to better define UMaine’s role among the other UMS institutions. What is the role of this ‘flagship’ campus? To what extent are other campuses like ‘feeder schools,’ and how can the relationship between graduate courses at different campuses be made stronger? How can the concepts of ‘credibility’ and the goals among institutions be better meshed?

On growing pains and resource issues

“We need to prioritize, deploying resources to best impact change.” (Faculty)

“Staff is always asked to do more with less.” (Staff)

“Classified employees being recognized and paid better.” (Staff)

“We need to increase our private donors. It’s more important than ever to make friends (Faculty)

On a better marketing strategy

“We are great at keeping our successes secret. We are not in control of our own image. What’s our product? What’s the level of service? Who’s our customer?” (Staff)

On Sustaining Maine student enrollment and building out-of-state enrollment

“The process of applying, getting aid, and affording school is difficult.” (Staff)

“The life of the mind in Maine is not highly valued.” (Faculty)

“Students can be difficult to engage, with low levels of aspiration among students and families.” (Staff)

On UMaine’s role among other UMS institutions

“We need cooperation with other institutions and other campuses in the System.” (Faculty)

“We have to be blending our concept of credibility with institutional goals.” (Staff)

“We should discuss our relationship with other schools. Right now feels it like they are feeder schools, not competitors.” (Students)

“We must resolve the role that this flagship campus will play in the whole System.” (Board of Visitors)
Future

As Maine’s Land Grant institution and the driving force for research in the state, UMaine will need to strengthen its research capacity in the future. While it is presently recognized for excellence in research, that aspect of the institution should grow in breadth and depth. This would require a significant influx of resources and the building of faculty and scholarly activities. There is some question as to where these resources would come from. Some faculty and administrators feel that UMaine suffers from the spreading of resources too thinly throughout the rest of the System. There was also a sense that not only UMaine but all components of the System would benefit from a less competitive environment between and among its institutions.

Envisioning a future state for the University of Maine, many hope to see a more connected college community. This is based on the understanding that “learning comes better in a truly enriched environment,” as one interviewee stated. This future vision would include more artistic and cultural opportunities for students, and chances for students to have experiences outside their programs. Dual courses could be created between programs, along with other creative connections across the campus. Along with this, a number of people interviewed spoke about better use of technology to empower students. Through a “bigger and better” library, “a laptop for every student,” and technological advances, students could be empowered to do things on their own, be more self-sufficient, and take more control over their own education.

Many involved with the University of Maine expressed the hope that in the future the University would be recognized nationally for its academic excellence, maintaining its high standards and working on a national scale. In the area of growth, many hope for expanding both in-state and out-of-state enrollment, while at the same time increasing graduation rates. Some expressed the need for more faculty, while others spoke of better residence halls, an improved gym, and a ‘greener’ campus. Also safety was brought up a number of times as a primary area to enhance. This all, of course, takes more money, and many interviewed spoke of the need for an endowment, and more revenue sources. This could be addressed in part, it was suggested, by using research to support entrepreneurs, attract PhDs, and aid in the economic development of the state. In this vein, many hope in the future to increase the research capacity of the school, and to expand graduate programs.

As the System’s flagship university, UMaine faces both challenges and opportunities as it looks to the future. As one faculty member put it, “We can’t just prepare for what exists now, we must look to the future.”

On a connected college community

“Have dual courses of study that connect Honors College with each major. Perhaps dual citizenship.” (Students)

“Student organizations are important.” (Students)
“Learning comes better in a truly enriched environment.” (Faculty)

“A university education entails not just the courses, but the whole experience.” (Faculty)

“Students should have experiences outside of their individual program.” (Faculty)

**On better use of technology to empower students**

“I see students being more self-sufficient, able to take care of themselves through improved technology.” (Faculty)

“Empowering students to do things on their own, while we provide the underlying System.” (Faculty)

“We could create a synthesis of technology in different fields. We have a unique ability to work in this area.” (Faculty)

**On increased research capacity and expanded graduate programs**

“We want to see a broad based education, with high quality research in all fields.” (Faculty)

“We should take part in research and scholarship, giving support to entrepreneurs and truly creative minds.” (Faculty)
University of Southern Maine

Strengths

Much of the strength of the University of Southern Maine, according to many associated with the school, derives from its understanding and attention to its specific niche in the System. The leadership of the institution has worked hard to adapt to the urban setting, while at the same time addressing a state-wide mandate. In the words of one interviewee, the school is “fiercely independent” and knows where it is going. It is this ability that has allowed it to be what some refer to as a ‘flagship campus’ in the state of Maine. The large USM campus serves both traditional and non-traditional populations. Many feel that, given the resources at its disposal, USM has been able to respond well to a highly diverse population that includes a large contingent of commuter students.

Another source of strength that came out in the interviews was the University’s connection with the community, as well as its role as a tool for economic development. Highly embedded in the surrounding community, USM has had, many feel, a long-time service mission in which it has been responsive to the needs of the surrounding area. The University, and the current administration, has taken on a leadership role in policy, diversity, and sustainable development. As a tool for economic development, USM has helped southern Maine to be the fastest growing area of the state, and through entrepreneurial energy and research and development, many at USM hope to continue to be an engine for future economic development.

A talented and committed faculty was offered as another strength of the USM campus. Composed of full-time as well as part-time faculty members, the USM faculty make strong contributions to both the school and to their respective fields, and are demanding of students.

Many who took part in the interview process saw an overall potential for growth at USM. This potential, some hope, would move the school towards greater scholarship and research. At the core of this potential, according to some, is the school’s proximity to Portland, which could open up many opportunities for growth.

On USM’s niche in the System

“USM is not actually regional in nature. For example, the business school has four programs with statewide mandates, and the law school is the state law school.” (Academic Affairs)

“The unique thing about this university is its urban setting. This institution has bent over backwards to adapt to the urban setting.” (Administrative Support)

“USM is fiercely independent – within ourselves we have established goals and directions. Each campus needs a mission, goals, and a plan that will lead them to their unique niche.” (Administrative Support)
“USM knows where it is going – I hope the System plan honors that.” (Academic Affairs)

**On serving both traditional and non-traditional populations**

“We have a mix of traditional residential students and a larger population of commuter students.” (Staff)

“You have a diverse array of students with a myriad of issues.” (Academic Affairs)

“USM does well given three campuses with residential life and the diversity of the student body.” (Staff)

**On the connection with the community**

“Our connections in the community, our responsiveness, and our service mission are longtime strengths of USM.” (Faculty)

“Our president is a very enterprising and aggressive voice in the community.” (Faculty)

“This administration is providing both community and statewide leadership on many issues: economic and sustainable development, policy, and diversity.” (Faculty)

**On the talented and committed faculty**

“We have a high percentage of faculty and staff to students – committed people working hard.” (Staff)

USM has an amazing array of faculty making contributions to both the institution and their fields.” (Academic Affairs)

“We have been increasing the number of part-time faculty. This is not the best way to develop the faculty community but it is a way to do more with less.” (Academic Affairs)

**On the overall potential for growth**

“We are now moving towards far greater scholarship than in the past.” (Academic Affairs)

“USM is perfectly situated. Portland is an important city to Maine.” (Board of Visitors)

“We are moving towards scholarship and research becoming a strength.” (Faculty)

**Challenges**

The **economic challenges** that have hit all of Maine are being felt strongly by USM. People involved with the institution have been straining to keep salaries up, keep tuition down, and maintain the University in a sustainable manner with the decreasing support for education and the lack of resources and grants to fulfill USM’s mission. Some feel that the campus is at a “breaking point” and needs to find new sources of money, perhaps from federal matching grants.

Students as well have been feeling the squeeze, causing difficulties in maintaining a **manageable cost of living**. Many USM students are struggling economically, often
working and supporting families while enrolled as full-time students. Low financial aid combined with the high cost of housing and declining high school graduates may make it more difficult to attract students to USM in the future. Some of those interviewed feel strongly that a better support system must be created, with more financial aid, in order to increase the number of students enrolling in college and attaining baccalaureate degrees. Also, the community around USM has been hit by the economic downslide, and the University will need to take into account, some say, of needs the area has, and the kind of workforce that will be useful to the region.

Many people expressed the opinion that, with the national trend of decreasing support for public education, there is a need for USM to take more control over the school’s own image. There is a need to build pride and to demonstrate to policy-makers and the Maine population the importance of public education and University-based R&D. Some people feel that USM is seen as a back up to Orono for high school graduates. Better publicity could create an image of USM as a unique institution, with its own talents in R&D and with attractions that are different from Orono or any other UMS institution.

Currently enrollment is rising, and USM must face up to the challenges of an increasingly diverse student population.

A number of people interviewed felt that the relationship between USM and the Community College System is stronger than the relationships the Community Colleges have with other schools. Because of this, there is a strong need felt by many at USM for a high quality of education at the Community Colleges. “Their success is our success,” one interviewee said. These people feel that in general there is too much competition between the two systems, and that the University System should work to better the Community College System.

**On economic challenges**

“We are now trying to make USM sustainable given the funding base we have.” (Senior Staff)

“We are at an interesting point – a breaking point actually – and need new resources.” (Academic Affairs)

“We have 40% of the research and graduate programs and get 20% of the funding.” (Senior Staff)

“The English department is great but we don’t have the facilities. It keeps us looking like a blue-collar institution.” (Administrative Support)

“With decreasing support for public education, there is a twofold challenge to focus on: Budget requirements, and becoming more financially sustainable.” (Faculty)

“There is a growing need for federal and matching grants (Board of Visitors)

“This institution needs consistency of support to meet its aspirations.” (Board of Visitors)

**On difficulties in maintaining a manageable cost of living**

“The traditional student is trying to stay afloat financially.” (Staff)
“There’s also a national movement: entitlement to higher education.” (Academic Affairs)

“Maine is the lowest state for attainment of Baccalaureate degrees.” (Staff)

“Compared to other places in the System our students have lowest percentage of financial aid.” (Administrative Support)

“We could use subsidized housing.” (Administrative Support)

**On control over the school’s own image**

“One of biggest challenges is to build pride in our institutions. We are beginning to do that.” (Academic Affairs)

“From a university advancement perspective, we need to be making sure policy makers understand the needs and the role of education in the state. Are they aware of USM’s strength in research and development? The System needs to use that information.” (Staff)

“The System labels all the institutions ‘universities’ – That is misleading the public. Is the assumption that the ‘university’ title is more prestigious?” (Administrative Support)

“Counselors always say that U Maine Orono is the place to go. This is a back up. People need to see this institution as something that has value in and of itself.” (Administrative Support)

**On the rising enrollment and the increasingly diverse population**

“USM continues to turn away record numbers of applicants.” (Board of Visitors)

“Greater Portland area: 10% non-white, with a growing # of multi-cultural students and refugee students.” (Staff)

“The growing population is a critical area for graduate programs.” (Academic Affairs)

“We’ve got students from many parts of Maine who never met an African American student.” (Staff)

**On the Community Colleges**

“With the coming of Community College System and with the ‘privates’ there’s serious competition.” (Faculty)

“For USM, the more aggressive the Community College System is, the better.” (Senior Staff)

“The University of Maine System needs a very strong relationship with the Community Colleges, we should be part of their team.” (Senior Staff)

**Future**

People involved in planning discussions for the University of Southern Maine envisioned a “fully reinvented institution.” This image included USM receiving **national recognition** and being seen as one of the top choices for education in Maine. Some felt the campus needs to maintain its entrepreneurial energy, while others suggested a more
cooperative management system. All of these ideas need to be worked through to create a strong sense of USM’s particular mission as it moves into the future.

This future USM, some posit, would be a “high performance organization” and be flexible in order to adjust to the changing needs of the University and of the region. To do this it might need to work with the state, keep up its R&D, and help Maine workers and Maine’s business community make the necessary shift to a more knowledge-based economy. Partnerships with industry could help this, as well as strengthening the sciences at USM, according to some of those interviewed.

Some involved in the planning process believe that USM may want to move towards greater scholarship and well-funded research, in order to reach out to a larger intellectual community. Ideas included “targeted graduate programs” and centers for life-long learning, in the hopes of attracting a larger community of “talented intellectual individuals,” as well as increasing the number of out-of-state students.

Some of those interviewed expressed a wish to see USM explore more technology options, such as a digital library system, a better defined role for the campuses in PeopleSoft, and the possibility of getting involved in the emerging bio-medical field. USM could benefit, some feel, by connecting better to Orono’s library, and by sharing technology throughout the System. Others focused on USM being a center for culture and the arts, aided by its connections to Portland. Others spoke of improving connections with the University of Maine System and working with local schools to foster a “K-16 attitude.”

On a fully reinvented institution and a high performance organization

“Looking forward 20 years – We are the New England anchor of the Boston Megalopolis.” (Administrative Support)

“Want to see us become the first, second or third choice for Maine students, and to be recognized nationally.” (Academic Affairs)

“ We need to stay student-centered and diverse enough to meet the needs of our evolving population.” (Academic Affairs)

“There should be incentives to cross boundaries, creating a cooperative and more matrixed management system.” (Faculty)

On the changing needs of the University and the region

“When you look at the economy of the state of Maine, there is a shift to the south. We need to be responsive and agile, supporting workforce development.” (Senior Staff)

“We need to be more responsive to the real situation. We should be continually pushing the envelope.” (Staff)

“Housing, facilities, services and policies must support the needs of changing populations.” (Staff)

“We should be responsive to region, vibrant, dynamic: A presence.” (Staff)
“The Governor is interested in the creative economy. We need to be programmatically prepared to lead that.” (Academic Affairs)

“It’s said that most of the jobs for the 2000s haven’t been conceptualized or created yet. We need to take the lead.” (Academic Affairs)

“The USM region should transition from a resource based economy to a knowledge based economy. We cannot require another forum for that discussion other than our universities.” (Academic Affairs)

“Maine must have an educated workforce.” (Board of Visitors)

“We need to foster a K-16 attitude. All students in the future should have to apply to higher education as a requirement for graduation.” (Academic Affairs)

On greater scholarship and well funded research

“If we pull back from research and development the state will NOT be better off.” (Board of Visitors)

“We should work with industry to support research and emerging opportunities.” (Administrative Management)

“The university should also focus on ‘targeted graduate programs,’ which could be an added revenue source.” (Board of Visitors)

“We should push expansion to better serve southern Maine, including new facilities for students, and centers for life-long learning.” (Administrative Management)

“Centers for continuous lifelong learning, funded by grants, tuition and partnerships.” (Board of Visitors)

“We can attract an expanded community of intellectual individuals.” (Board of Visitors)

On exploring technology options

“We need to look at a digital library for System – What does that mean?” (Academic Affairs)

“People Soft: We need clarity on role of System office and role of campuses.” (Administrative Management)

“The Orono message is “this is the state’s library.” If that’s so then we should be linked and people should be aware of that. We also need computers and equipment System-wide.” (Administrative Support)

“I would like to see seamless sharing of technology among campuses.” (Administrative Support)
University of Maine at Farmington

Strengths

Many of those who worked on the planning process at the University of Maine at Farmington feel the University has a relatively strong sense of its mission and niche, although there are those who want to develop it further. Farmington’s niche is envisioned somewhat differently by different people, but most seem to point to its combination of a Liberal Arts mission and a highly respected teachers college. This combination has allowed Farmington, some point out, to produce graduates who are appreciated for their breadth of knowledge, while also attracting the best education students in the state and bringing respect to the state and the school through its teachers college. Some people in the interviews noted that Farmington is accessible to students who otherwise would not have gone to a liberal arts college.

The University has a strong relationship to the community. Students, faculty and staff place a high value on service to the surrounding community and often take on leadership roles.

Farmington faculty and administration believe they know how to create a positive four-year college experience for students. This includes strong programming, good advising, and teachers engaging with their students. Farmington’s faculty is committed and enthusiastic, with the ability to both support and challenge students, and to work together across disciplines. There is also a strong relationship between the school and the alumni, in which alumni are continually involved with the school, and the school looks to the alumni for ideas and support. All of this has helped the University of Maine Farmington to create a tight-knit community. Half of the student body lives on campus, professors are accessible and easy to get to know, and students feel like respected individuals that the school cares about. As one student put it, University of Maine at Farmington is “the type of community where people hold doors open for one another.”

On having a clear mission/niche

“There is a nobility to our mission: Our kids would never be able to go to a private liberal arts college.” (Senior Staff)

“We are a liberal Arts College that includes a college of education in tandem, both building on one another’s strengths.” (Faculty Leadership)

“Our public liberal arts mission is strong.” (Support Staff)

“We bring greater national recognition to Maine, for example our feature in US News and World Report.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

“This institution brings value to this System and money to the state.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)
“Superintendents love our graduates, because of the breadth of liberal arts and sciences we offer.” (Senior Staff)

“We have a highly respected Education school. If I want to teach I go to Farmington.” (Students)

“This is the only place Mainers apply for teacher education.” (Senior Staff)

**On the strong relationship to the community**

“Students are incredibly engaged. They take on leadership roles and then go off and provide leadership in communities.” (Faculty Leadership)

“Service to community is seen as a way of life – valued by faculty, staff and students.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

“We all become very involved in our communities.” (Senior Staff)

**On providing a quality four-year college experience**

“We have an attitude of focusing on students.” (Senior Staff)

“Although we want to link with other institutions, we do want to educate our kids here for four years whenever possible. It’s a whole experience.” (Senior Staff)

“We understand our own issues – buildings, advising, programming – We know how to do these things.” (Senior Staff)

“We are about engagement.” (Support Staff)

“Many students are changed by their experiences here.” (Support Staff)

**On the committed and enthusiastic faculty**

“We (the faculty) work together closely and across disciplines – this is the hallmark of a liberal arts college.” (Faculty Leadership)

“The enthusiasm of the faculty is great, but we don’t have the funding to take advantage of this.” (Faculty Leadership)

“The faculty works above and beyond.” (Support Staff)

“There is a focus on students, both supporting and challenging.” (Support Staff)

**On the relationship with alumni**

“The newer people are connected to affinity groups, then stay involved as alumni.” (Senior Staff)

“We keep in contact with students over time.” (Professional Group)

“We care what the alumni think.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

**On the tight-knit community**
“There is a unique culture within the school – a strong community of students.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

“It’s easy to get to know professors.” (Students)

“I’ve been shown that the school cares about us.” (Students)

“A student feels like an individual, not just a body in a classroom (Students)

“I don’t get feeling anyone is alone here.” (Students)

**Challenges**

Like people at universities across Maine and the nation, many interviewed at the University of Maine at Farmington have been feeling the pain of a poor economic situation. The lack of resources at the University has led many who were interviewed to feel limited in the directions in which the school can move. Some said that the wages for faculty are too low, and that they do not have strong enough financial aid to compete with larger schools for students. Facilities have also been brought up as a problem, including the quality of labs and residence halls. Partly due to this, faculty members end up “juggling too many hats.” Sometimes other parts of life, like family life, are sacrificed, and some say that retention of faculty is lower than desired. Much of this, of course, stems from the fact that Maine’s economy is in a decline, that industry has fled and young people are leaving the state. These economic realities call for new, creative solutions.

One challenge that arose in conversations a number of times is that of increasing Farmington’s public relations and image. Some people said that many see the university as mainly a teachers college, but that most of the students who do attend are attracted to its liberal arts mission. They feel that, though the reputation of the Teachers College is a great boon for the school, there is a need to further disseminate the impression of University of Maine at Farmington as a liberal arts school. Others point out the constant need to maintain recognition and respect throughout the state, and at least one conversation called for a more exact mission, in order to better advertise correctly what the institution is about.

Since the Farmington campus is so imbedded in the surrounding community, with faculty doing research there, and faculty and staff in various service positions, the changing relationship between the school and the community is always a challenge. Some point out that a balance needs to be found between the needs of the campus and the needs of the community. Other issues brought up in the interviews include the aging population of Maine and the increase in retirees who might need retraining, advising issues at the school, the need for more parking, and competition with the Community Colleges.

**On the lack of resources**
“Lack of resources hinders us from thinking creatively about new programs and initiatives. We want to be able to fully develop the public liberal arts model.” (Faculty Leadership)

“Lack of money limits direction.” (Support Staff)

“We are almost insulting our PhDs: The quality of their work is very high, but the pay is too low.” (Faculty Leadership)

“We have difficulty attracting students while larger campuses are fighting for ability to offer financial aid.” (Faculty Leadership)

**On the faculty “juggling too many hats”**

“We rely on full-time faculty with only a few adjuncts.” (Senior Staff)

“Professors are juggling so many hats and chairing so many committees and are not really paid or rewarded well. This sometimes makes it hard to find new faculty members.” (Professional Group)

“The System is not holding on to people.” (Professional Group)

“All faculty are doing the job of 4 or 5 people, often sacrificing family time.” (Faculty)

**On the need to build public relations and image**

“The perception that we are a ‘teachers college’ is still with us. Any strategic plan should see us as a public liberal arts college. Students are attracted because of the Liberal Arts program.” (Faculty)

“We are understood better than some of the UMS institutions, but we are under-communicated – our PR needs work.” (Senior Staff)

“Recognition and respect are imperative.” (Faculty)

“We need acknowledgement of our place in the System.” (Senior Staff)

**On relationships with the local community and schools**

“We want students to experience and understand how a real community should work.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

“Relationship with public schools: we are incredibly imbedded. UMF professors do, and are encouraged by the superintendent to do, research in the schools.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

“Balancing the needs of campus with the needs of the community, making choices and seeing priorities. The school was once seen as elitist in immediate community, but that has changed.” (Board of Visitors and Administration)

“Are the Community Colleges becoming Liberal Arts Colleges?” (Professional Group)

**Future**
In every interview with students, faculty, and staff at the University of Maine at Farmington, ideas arose as to how to increasingly make Farmington an inviting and attractive campus. While understanding the funding limitations, the vision being proposed of the Farmington campus includes a new ‘green’ education building, new science labs and art studios, new classroom spaces and new or renovated dorms. Other ideas included increasing the ease of access to libraries and journals, and better transportation between campuses. Due to economic difficulties, these visions will need to be prioritized.

To add to this enhanced vision of the Farmington campus, many of those interviewed suggested changes in curriculum and courses that could increase the school’s academic strength. Some people saw a move from 3-credit classes to 4-credit courses, while others hoped for expanded majors, more programs for athletes, and more foreign-language and inter-disciplinary courses. One person brought up the freshman seminars, stating that their number should be decreased, while another posited that a few more faculty members might be needed. On the issue of core courses, some feel that a System-wide core could be advantageous, while others would prefer that Farmington stay with its own unique core. In the area of strengthening technology, many envision a day when all faculty and students have their own laptops.

In this growing version of the Farmington campus’s future, many interviewed saw increasing numbers of out-of-state and international students, as well as a rising number of in-state students. In order to attract more students, and to support those already attending the university, some note that stronger need-based financial aid would be necessary, including work opportunities for students who need them.

Some members of the faculty and staff hope for an increasingly positive reciprocal relationship with the surrounding community, not only as an employer, but perhaps going into the high schools and making connections with future generations of college attendees, offering a “place of exploration” for high school students. This may be one method of reaching another goal that some of those interviewed hoped for, which was to help create an environment in Maine that overtly values and supports higher education. These people want the people of Maine to learn about what the Universities have to offer them, and what a college education can mean for Maine citizens. The schools, they say, should “foster pride” in the institutions and should try to “blend the vision of Maine with higher education.”

Those who spoke of the mission of the University of Maine at Farmington felt that the mission should remain more or less the same. However, as one interviewee said, Farmington may want to “learn better what it means to be a liberal arts campus.” As far as the day-to-day living on campus, some of those involved in the planning process stressed the need to keep the current quality of faculty/student contact, but want to build community on campus by having more dorms. This would allow more students to live on campus and would bring in a more diverse student body. Other ideas that arose from these discussions included furthering the environmentally friendly vision of the campus, perhaps through new hybrid vehicles, effectively bringing in Community College
students without decreasing any of the current quality of classes, and adding a nursing component to the hospital.

**On an inviting, attractive campus with strong facilities**

“Changes in the overall look of campus: new athletic and education center, science labs, performing arts center, student academic services and support center.” (Senior Staff)

“If we don’t do something with the dorms in 10 years they’ll self-destruct. They aren’t warm, and they are close to impossible to maintain – the old buildings are very costly to repair (lots of deferred maintenance) and students don’t take pride in them due to their being in bad shape. We need good useable buildings.” (Professional Group)

“A new ‘green’ education building” (Faculty)

“We have hopes for more classroom space.” (Faculty Leadership)

“The state must invest in labs. Now we have better ones in local high schools. Most of today’s campus was built in the 60’s and 70’s.” (Senior Staff)

“We want to be recognized as a ‘Jewel in the Crown’ of UMS.” (Senior Staff)

“Innovation: how can we creatively do facilities?” (Support Staff)

“An education building, where students and faculty can work and where public school teachers can come and learn.” (Support Staff)

“The Art department is full, and kids cannot get into courses they need.” (Professional Group)

“We must continuously evolve the System-wide library, with increased access to journals and a more open library system.” (Faculty)

“Need to make it easier to have seamless access to library resources.” (Support Staff)

**On changes in curriculum and courses**

“I would like to see fewer freshman seminars. (Now there are 20, should be 12)” (Faculty)

“I want to see every student and faculty member with a laptop.” (Faculty)

“We need to continue strengthening our technology.” (Support Staff)

**On increasing numbers of international and out-of-state students**

“Would want to grow beyond where we are now only with more statewide representation and maybe 20-30 % out of state.” (Senior Staff)

“We need to recruit more out of state and international students.” (Faculty Leadership)

**On the environment of Maine overtly valuing and supporting higher education**
“We need to help the public understand the value of a liberal arts undergraduate education at a small residential college.” (Faculty Leadership)

“We need to blend vision of Maine with higher education.” (Professional Group)

“I would like the community and surrounding towns to appreciate what they have in the University of Maine Farmington.” (Support Staff)

“The public perception needs to shift. The whole System should foster pride and a strong public image instead of different campuses competing to make a name for themselves.” (Support Staff)

“Some people assume they can take 2 years of Community College Systems and then come here. How can we maintain quality and yet still bring Community College students in?” (Support Staff)

On building community

“I want less of a ‘suitcase campus’ and more residential, with a higher percentage of students living on campus.” (Faculty Leadership)

“I would like to see more freedom for freshmen so that they can explore more. Right now their choices are very set – large classes.” (Faculty)

On the relationship with the community

“I want a continued strong relationship between us and community.” (Faculty Leadership)

“In the future we will continue to be an important employer (Professional Group)

“Would like to see UMS do more with teachers in Maine schools. Our campus could be place of exploration for all high school students (Support Staff)
University of Maine at Augusta

Strengths

Many of those interviewed at the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) felt that the school’s strength derives in part from an educational culture that is supportive of both traditional and non-traditional students. Faculty and staff are both understanding and flexible, allowing the school to tailor courses of study to students’ particular needs and schedules. This unique characteristic attracts a range of students and offers educational opportunities to those who otherwise may not have gone to college.

Augusta accomplishes this flexibility, according to many involved with the institution, through a continuum of educational choices. It offers two-year programs, which are attractive to students hesitant about the feasibility of college, and then makes it very easy for students in these programs to shift into full degree programs. Once students have experienced college and have been able to work together with the University to accommodate their busy life, they are encouraged to extend their stay. Another example of the Augusta campus’s supportive culture is its distance learning programs, which can offer entire degrees done off-site for those unable to come to campus.

The UMA campus has had positive experiences partnering with UMS and Community Colleges. This includes public service programs that stem from contracts with the System, and a Bachelor of Applied Sciences that is integrated with local Community College programs. Augusta offers a very liberal transfer program, and the University is willing to work with students from other schools in order to create a degree program that utilizes the student’s previous credits. This has led the University of Maine at Augusta to have a very high number of transfer students, currently 800.

University of Maine at Augusta works to be a part of the surrounding community, and the people in the area feel that it is their institution. This relationship is reciprocal; the University offers much to the community. One example of how UMA gives back to the community is its strong mental health program that trains students as case managers and community support workers to work with communities of greatest need.

On the continuum of educational choices

“Students pick UMA for two-year programs then often chose to move forward to do the last two years for full diploma.” (Senior Staff)

“Students come in for two-year programs, then see models for further education – transition becomes real – possible.” (Administrative Group)

“We don’t think about it as ‘continuing education’ – day or night the quality is not going to vary.” (Academic Leadership)

On the culture supportive of traditional and non-traditional students
“There is a culture of caring – taking care of vulnerable students.” (Senior Staff)

“We work with lots of non-traditional students who must achieve a difficult balance of home, family and work.” (Senior Staff)

“Greatest strength: 40 years of supporting people who may never have had a chance to go to college – that’s our niche.” (Administrative Group)

“Adult students are welcome here – people who need specially tailored courses timed to accommodate their schedules.” (Academic Leadership)

On partnerships with other UMS institutions and Community Colleges and the transfer program

“We have the most liberal transfer program. If you have a degree from an accredited institution, then you can transfer those credits and we will work with you to create a degree program.” (Academic Leadership)

“We work with so many campuses to make sure students are successful.” (Board of Visitors)

“Bachelor of Applied Sciences: Integration with Community College Programs.” (Senior Staff)

On being part of the community

“There is a long tradition of the campus being part of the community.” (Academic Leadership)

“It is amazing how this campus has raised the Lewiston/Auburn area.” (Board of Visitors)

“People see us as their campus.” (Faculty)

Challenges

As did their colleagues at other UMS institutions, people involved with the University of Maine at Augusta focused on a painful lack of resources. Augusta relies mainly on tuition for its financial support, and this leaves it vulnerable to enrollment fluctuations. Courses in the Dental School, Nursing School and other programs have turned out to be quite expensive. Many at the University hope to find new avenues to receive money, as well as an increase in current sources.

This problem is heightened by a student population highly dependent on aid for tuition, and a high number of non-traditional students needing special services. Three quarters of University of Maine at Augusta students are working and supporting families. The economic realities of Maine have affected everyone, and as students feel the pinch, Augusta has more and more difficulty keeping up with the needs of its diverse students.

According to some of those interviewed, the relationship between University of Maine at Augusta and the local Community College System is constantly evolving. As is true across Maine, there appears to always be a question as to how the state universities should relate to the Community Colleges, and how this could be improved upon to avoid
wasteful competition and instead cooperate to create the educational opportunities that the people of Maine need.

When speaking of the Augusta campus’s challenges in attracting students, some of those interviewed point to a lack of visibility. For example, many Maine citizens do not know of the existence of the Bangor campus. Many feel that new methods should be developed to market to the local, state and national communities.

In the 21st century, technology is always a question. Some of those interviewed pointed out the need for both new hardware, such as writing labs, and new software to allow for online testing and to keep up with fast-paced technological changes.

**On the lack of resources**

“UMA isn’t going anywhere until we have the necessary resources.” (Senior Staff)

“We’ve filled our niches, but with high cost courses: Dental, Nursing, Studio Art, Etc.” (Senior Staff)

“We need the $250,000 coming from the dental and veterinary schools.” (Senior Staff)

“We now function with 1/3 of our budget from state appropriation and 2/3 from tuition. We would like to reverse the percentages to 2/3 from appropriation or outside sources and 1/3 from tuition.” (Senior Staff)

“Right now we are too vulnerable to enrollment fluctuations.” (Senior Staff)

“We need new methods and approaches for funding. Presently it is too tuition driven.” (Academic Leadership)

**On a student population highly dependent on aid**

“Pell grants cover most of tuition.” (Senior Staff)

“Many students don’t have time to just study – if anything they stretch their education out.” (Academic Leadership)

**On the high number of non-traditional students needing special services**

“So many students come with problems almost unhelpable. We can’t do enough for them” (Faculty)

“Students deal with regionalization and certain economic realities: My concern is that we don’t help students realize the connection between education and good careers” (Board of Visitors)

“For so many of our students, Orono is not an option” (Faculty)

“Because plants and mills have closed, many people’s self-worth has diminished. There are so many lost jobs and a high need for childcare.” (Administrative Group)
On the evolving relationship with Community Colleges

“To enhance/complete the distance education model we need to link with Community Colleges and other institutions.” (Administrative Group)

“We need to plan how to pull this all together with the Community College System. There should be a continuing role for two-year degrees here.” (Board of Visitors)

“UMS should take the lead in more progressive programming with the Community College System.” (Faculty)

On the lack of visibility

“We suffer from lack of CURB appeal.” (Board of Visitors)

“We have to deal with the invisibility of Bangor. People don’t know we exist. Students come and find us, and for them we have become a refuge.” (Faculty)

On technology

“Online Testing: We need writing labs and math labs statewide.” (Academic Leadership)

“We need stronger web based student services.” (Academic Leadership)

“WEB is cutting edge, but falling behind.” (Faculty)

Future

Envisioning a future for the University of Maine at Augusta, a large number of people see an enhanced role for distance education. Staff, faculty and administration members are calling for more on-line courses and degrees, and an enhanced distance-student government. These aspects would be part of the complete ‘hybrid education’ model, which strives for a balance between on-line courses and classes based around the campus.

Increasing the number of BA degree options and improving access to graduate programs for Augusta’s non-traditional student base were identified as important for the future. With more BA options the administration believes Augusta could attract more students, and even sell courses to other states. Some ideas include a teaching school and courses in criminal justice. To accomplish these goals, of course, more faculty members would be needed. This is financially difficult and additional funding avenues would have to be found before this could become a reality. Another consideration is the desire by some to maintain Augusta’s small campus feel.

Some believe that the Augusta campus could play an even bigger role as a cultural center and an economic development tool, bringing art and music to the community, and fighting for environmental sustainability. It could also make stronger connections to K-12 programs, helping to ensure that when students graduate from 12th grade they are academically prepared for college, and smoothing the transition to college.
Some envision a campus that specializes in **aiding students in making transitions** across the System. This could include attracting students from other campuses to the Augusta campus, or helping Augusta students move along to other opportunities.

**On an Enhanced role for Distance Education and the Hybrid Education Model**

“I see distance education becoming the norm. The ATM model: Students want classes when it works for them.” (Senior Staff)

“I would like to see more courses/degrees on line” (Administrative Group)

“We should enhance/complete the distance education model, link with Community Colleges and other institutions, and further develop things like our distance education student government experience.” (Administrative Group)

“U Network Maine: more web-based courses, more alternative delivery models, more hybrid models.” (Academic Leadership)

“Nursing is a good model of a combination of a campus based program and distance learning.” (Faculty)

“I was not a fan of ITV when started, but now I love it. We are really good at it. For us it is a way of life.” (Faculty)

**On more BA degree options and graduate courses**

“We must move a bit more forcefully to get the baccalaureate degrees people want.” (Faculty)

“We need to develop teacher education: we are the only campus not offering education/teaching degree.” (Faculty)

“We should look into post-baccalaureate degrees: programs to make career transitions.” (Senior Staff)

“What I’d like to see is graduate offerings accessible to our students. The System needs to offer graduate programs. For example, we could pool faculty across the state for an art program.” (Academic Leadership)

“Will move towards offering graduate degrees to our students. We have to figure out where and how graduate education will be possible.” (Senior Staff)

“We are a relatively small institution, and I want us to stay there.” (Faculty)

**On having more faculty members**

“We need to increase the number of full time faculty.” (Senior Staff)

‘We want enough full-time tenure-track faculty members to get the job done.” (Faculty)

**On becoming a cultural center and economic development tool**

“We should become more responsible and vocal environmentally – encouraging sustainability.” (Administrative Group)
“We need to be more of a cultural center. Augusta (and Maine) needs us as an economic development tool.” (Administrative Group)

On stronger partnerships with K-12 and others

“Partnerships with K-12: connecting expectations on a college level with coordination of quality and outcomes from senior year.” (Administrative Group)

“Creative collaborations are key, whether with high schools, Community Colleges, IT sites, or adult education.” (Administrative Group)

“We could offer distance college prep courses designed to be part of the high school experience.” (Administrative Group)

“We want to partner in regions to form a ‘magnet school,’ for example in the arts, to serve juniors and seniors; a learning lab for alternative teaching methods. We could help students with problems in math, but using arts as a tool.” (Academic Leadership)

On aiding students in making transitions

“Within the state, we need more seamless transitions between institutions.” (Academic Leadership)

“We see ourselves as the ‘transition institution’ in the future.” (Academic Leadership)

“Ability to coordinate across the state – putting the right faculty on the programs.” (Academic Leadership)

“We are beginning to pick up students from Orono, who are coming here to have lab courses, and because we are more personalized and our professors can challenge them.” (Faculty)
University of Maine at Fort Kent

Strengths

A large number of those interviewed at the University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK) felt that much of the campus’s strength derived from its **connection to and support of the surrounding community**. It has aided in strengthening the local high school, from which 40 to 100 of their students come. It is tied in with the local culture, and programs are created to involve the whole community. Because of this, one planning committee member said “The Valley sees this as their institution.” Economically the region is dependent on the school, and, some say, would have difficulty surviving without it.

For many students who come to Fort Kent, it was the **small size of the campus and the rural location** that brought them. The campus is seen by many as safe, and “close to pristine.” This has helped to create, in many people’s eyes, a tight-knit community, with a strong student life, where the **flexible and accessible faculty and staff** are able to give individual attention to students. The President is actively engaged, sitting on all committees. Many interviewed felt strongly that, in any strategic plan, this “personalized approach” must not be lost.

This year’s **enrollment of almost 1,000 students** was the largest enrollment ever, suggesting the draw of this small campus. Students are attracted, some interviewees posited, because of the school’s **rural focus**, with “no fluff.” This is aided by the fact that the school is embedded in a rural area, and that the programs are very hands-on. This **mission, or niche**, of focusing on the **rural environment**, was put forward as one of the main strengths of the University of Maine at Fort Kent.

On the **connection to and support of the surrounding community**

“We make a concerted effort to ‘open the doors’ to the community.” (Senior Staff)

“40 to 100 graduates of the local high school come to the campus – We’ve strengthened the high school over the years, and those coming from the Valley are better prepared than those coming from many other areas, especially in writing.” (Senior Staff)

“We are tied in with the community and culture of the area.” (Open Meeting)

“We have a commitment to the area as well as to the job.” (Open Meeting)

“If we took away the University of Maine at Fort Kent this area would die. It’s so much of what the region is about.” (Senior Staff)

On the **small campus and rural location**

“Kids come looking for a small campus, and a rural environment.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“The campus tends to draw students who like small campuses.” (Faculty)
“Fort Kent is a very friendly place for non-traditional student.” (Faculty)

On the rural focus

“We have a unique program: hands on and specifically rural. Forestry, environment, business, public safety and so on, in a rural environment.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

Challenges

The University of Maine at Fort Kent is beset by economic difficulties, which have resulted in a strained infrastructure. Some feel that this is partly due to limited public funds, and that UMFK should look to new ways to secure external funding. Others feel that there should be a focus on creating an endowment in poorer areas. More classrooms and office spaces are needed, some say, and a more efficient use of space could help in this. One interviewee expressed the opinion that this might also be a result of “trying to be too many things to too many people.” Others point to the lack of cross-System resource sharing and cooperation. Much could be gained, some feel, by working more closely with the System. At the same time, some feel the System may be involved too closely with issues such as graduate programs and distance education.

Some of those involved in the planning process saw a difficulty in the workload expected of faculty members. One faculty member, it was said, had taught 25 different courses over the years. This workload offers little time for research and professional development, and idea sharing among colleagues. Many of those interviewed felt the school itself, being a small school far from large population centers, lacks good visibility. Even the System itself, it was noted, does not rely as much as it could on the smaller campuses. Other challenges that arose were worries that the school might not remain in Fort Kent, and the fact that the UMS website does not have enough focus on the smaller campuses.

On economic difficulties and the strained infrastructure

“We face financial challenges and limited public funding. We need to raise endowments in not so rich areas.” (Faculty)

“We lack campus ability to secure external funding. Should we be looking for System help with this? UMS and Orono have leveraged research money.” (Academic Leadership)

“Our infrastructure is strained: we need classrooms and office space.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“HR infrastructure continues to be stretched. We need more efficiencies in infrastructure use, with no duplication.” (Faculty)

“We are feeling the impact of trying to be too many things to too many people. We need more focus.” (Faculty)
On cross-System resource sharing and cooperation

“We need to work closer with other campuses and have them work with us. We cannot be in competition with our own System’s campuses all the time.” (Senior Staff)

“If there is anything good about the System, it’s the ability to share resources. But it’s not happening.” (Academic Leadership)

“Maybe the System has too much control over some things, such as graduate education or distance education.” (Academic Leadership)

On the work-load expected of faculty

“The faculty emphasis on teaching is good but they need some research time, time to develop professionally.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“Faculty don’t have much chance to share ‘best practices’. Everyone is teaching too many courses.” (Academic Leadership)

“We are still ‘people poor.’ We can’t afford to lose any positions.” (Academic Leadership)

“Distance is a challenge for professional development.” (Open Meeting)

On lacking good visibility

“We need a systematic way to gain more visibility.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“The System tends to rely on larger campuses, assuming we smaller campuses have little to offer.” (Senior Staff)

“How can we keep this college here? There is always sense of danger of someone taking it away.” (Faculty)

Future

One topic that arose in multiple discussions of the preferred future state of UMFK was strengthening and growing the campus and the curriculum. Ideas included further developing Fort Kent as a center for rural studies, strengthening the environmental sciences and rural public safety and administration, building French linguistics studios, and strengthening the broad liberal arts offerings.

To add to improvements in Fort Kent’s curriculum, many expressed hopes that UMFK would be able to more effectively link with the rest of the System. Specifically, some mentioned wanting to link with Orono’s graduate programs for UMFK students. At the same time they would like to be able to offer a Masters of Liberal Arts without losing students to Orono, and perhaps even offer programs to the System themselves, such as the UMFK forestry component. This increased connection, and the avoidance of “turf wars,” some feel, could help to ameliorate issues around the transfer of credits from one institution to another.
The relationships between University of Maine institutions and the state of Maine could be increased so as to benefit both parties, some of those interviewed posited, especially with the current economic situation. With strong programs, UMFK might help to “stem the tide of out-migration” from the state. It could address issues of land-use, wildlife and environmental sustainability, because of its special niche in tying its courses to this area of study. R&D at the University could be increased, as well as connections to Maine businesses.

A number of those interviewed felt that they would like to see more acknowledgment from the System and Trustees of the role that this campus plays in the System and in the state. And beyond acknowledgement, some feel that the campus and its programs simply need to be more visible and better understood. Another idea that came up is increasing opportunities for faculty members to learn from each other, perhaps through exchanges, and to do scholarly work.

On strengthening and growing the campus and curriculum

“UMFK should strengthen its ability to create a rural center, the Center for Sustainable Rural Development, as the centerpiece of our offerings.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“We should strengthen our liberal arts offering, broaden our focus.” (Senior Staff)

“I have a concern regarding planning. If there is any more downsizing in facilities it would hurt us.” (Senior Staff)

On more effectively linking with the rest of the System

“We want to make a Master of Liberal Studies available to our students without their having to move to Orono. This would require help from the System.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“A while back the System studied the possibility of a statewide graduate program, and it resulted in turf war. But we need to consider it and the possibility of using technology for networking.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“We should adopt the attitude: ‘The System as a whole is only as strong as its component parts.’” (Faculty)

“We need to get rid of the political issues around transfer of credit.” (Open Meeting)

“We have a strong forestry component. We offered it to the System and many were interested.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

On the relationships between U Maine institutions and the state of Maine

“We must be aware of the needs of region: Teachers (special needs are high on the list), social service workers (foster placement/care), masters degrees, health facilities providers, culture and the arts, and contributions to economic development.” (Senior Staff)
“We will be playing a role in stemming the tide of out migration in Maine.” (Strategic Planning Committee)

“We should be tying all programs into sustainable rural development.” (Academic Leadership)

“We are a strong institution but not exclusive. We would like to see about 20 – 25% of students from outside Maine.” (Senior Staff)

**On opportunities for faculty members to learn from each other and do scholarly work**

“Faculty should be encouraged to do exchanges, to do one or two years of scholarly work.” (Academic Leadership)

“New blood brings in new ideas, we need incentives for this.” (Academic Leadership)

“I would like to see gatherings of faculty within disciplines.” (Academic Leadership)

“We need more avenues for faculty to be involved with scholarly work.” (Academic Leadership)
University of Maine at Machias

Strengths

One of the strengths of the University of Maine at Machias (UMM), according to many associated with the institution, is its hands on, personalized curriculum. With a low faculty-to-student ratio, faculty members work closely with individual students, build relationships and create curriculums that reflect students’ needs. Small classes and a “homey environment” add to a culture that is proudly student-based.

The University of Maine at Machias, many felt, serves a great need in its area. Many of its students might not go to college if the Machias campus were not there. In the interviews many pointed out that the school’s location on the coast of Maine is an asset. A number of people also pointed out that the school has formed a good relationship with the surrounding community and created service opportunities for students. All students are encouraged to do community service and job training. Thus students are able to get hands-on field experience starting very early on in their educational careers.

UMM has already created its own strategic plan that, many feel, has helped them succeed in the areas they focus on. Faculty, students and staff feel they have a good understanding of what their “signature programs” are. Areas of study that people felt were Machias’s strengths include marine biology, outdoor recreation, interdisciplinary arts and humanities, senior education, health and fitness, and environmental management.

Further strengths that were brought up in interviews include the low tuition, and the maintenance of strong relations with alumni. Many felt that, through cooperation and a passionate staff and faculty, Machias has been able to be quite resourceful and to “do more with less,” an important skills in these difficult economic times.

On the hands on, personalized curriculum

“We have a low student/faculty ratio; we know our students by name.” (Faculty)

“Programs are very hands on; it’s one of few schools where you can go into the field in your first year and see if you like an area.” (Students)

“With a small campus, we can reach out to individual students, traditional and non-traditional.” (Staff)

“Within a big university system, Machias gives a personalized curriculum big campuses can’t offer.” (Board of Visitors)

On serving a great need in the area

“We’ve read the needs of the state well: recreation management, business, etc.” (Faculty)

“We serve a very remote area—we’re the only show in town. This is a strength and a challenge. We may be small, but we serve a great need in this area.” (Staff)
“The campus reaches many people in this area who would not go anywhere else.” (Board of Visitors)

On the location on the coast of Maine

“We are learning to use our geographic location as an asset rather than a detriment. We’re on the coast of Maine; people want to get out of cities. We’re focusing on environmental studies and marine biology. There are lots of artists and writers in the area too.” (Senior Staff)

“The location is unique and interesting; all the different programs can relate to it.” (Students)

On the relationship with the surrounding community

“We have a service learning concept: everyone must do something, give back to the community.” (Students)

“There are many opportunities for students in community development and job training.” (Senior Staff)

On signature programs

“We have the only interdisciplinary arts/humanities program in the state.” (Senior Staff)

“Our marine biology and environmental programs are recognized internationally.” (Staff)

Challenges

Machias’s location on the Coast of Maine and its small, intimate structure, cited as strengths, also present major challenges for the success of the institution. Its location, for instance, leaves it isolated from population centers. The small size of the school’s programs does not allow it to benefit from economies of scale, and the size of the curriculum can be limiting for students; although there are a number of majors, each major is spread thin, and it is sometimes difficult to get the necessary classes.

Limited resources are a constant challenge. Beyond the larger effects of Maine’s economy, some at Machias feel that the campus is not strong enough politically to compete adequately for the necessary funds.

One result of these resource issues is that the faculty is “spread too thin.” Each faculty member is asked to do a great deal of work, with limited time for professional development. Another result of having limited resources, according to some of those interviewed, is that the infrastructure has been somewhat neglected, and there is much maintenance that needs to be done.

As a small, somewhat isolated school, U Maine Machias struggles with increasing its visibility, according to many who were interviewed in the planning process. Some hope for better marketing, especially to out-of-state students, to attract them to Maine and to the Machias area. Some of those interviewed also want the local Washington County community to understand that the University is there for them.
On being isolated from population centers and having small programs

“The number of degrees and majors is incredible, but it’s spread too thin and doesn’t concentrate on the strong ones.” (Students)

“It is academically frustrating because programs are small, classes get cut, or you have to take classes in the summer somewhere else.” (Students)

“We’re small, and have no efficiencies of scale. We can’t offer all electives. We need to grow.” (Faculty)

“We don’t know what support is available. We might want to push our business program toward being more entrepreneurial and cooperate with USM, but we don’t know if there’s support.” (Division Chairs)

“It’s hard to fit outdoor recreation into a larger context; we talk about tourism but we struggle with how to do it.” (Division Chairs)

On limited resources

“Most funding goes to Orono and USM. We could do a great program in R&D transfer about fishing and aquaculture, but we need resources.” (Senior Staff)

“We don’t attract enough attention from the System office on funding. We’re politically weak.” (Faculty)

On the faculty being ‘spread too thin’

“We’re facing resource challenges, both human and financial. Everyone is spread thin. There is little professional development, limited research facilities. (Senior Staff)

“We lack for funding and salaries. A small core group of full time faculty have to do everything.” (Faculty)

“We don’t have enough full time faculty to cover all courses so must use adjuncts.” (Division Chairs)

“The administration is too lean, people asked to do too much.” (Board of Visitors)

On increasing visibility

“It’s a challenge for us to prove to Washington County that we’re here for them. Washington County needs a lot of help. We need to address how we partner with them.” (Senior Staff)

“We have a plan for bringing out of state students, but we don’t know if it will work.” (Division Chairs)

Future

For the sake of the University of Maine at Machias, of the region, and of the state of Maine, a large number of those interviewed felt that the campus should increasingly focus its energy around sustainable resource management. This area includes programs such as marine biology, aquaculture, and outdoor recreation. Some feel that Machias
could offer a model of sustainable development to the state of Maine. This should include, some feel, continued cooperation with the University of Maine, offering field experience and avoiding competition.

Others of those interviewed, however, stressed that they wanted to maintain Machias as a small liberal-arts community with a good mix of programs. They also want to make sure the school does not lose its current close-knit community by growing too much too quickly. A well-formed mission for the Machias campus would, according to some, give it a specific niche that will also help it to be an engine of economic growth for its region. It would also allow it to better collaborate with other campuses, avoiding competition.

A number of interviews lead towards a discussion of relationships with the community surrounding the Machias campus. One aspect many would like to see change would be the attitudes of people in the surrounding community who do not value higher education very highly, or who are afraid that if someone gets a college education they will inevitably leave the area. They want to see a culture of appreciation of higher education grow in Maine.

In order to respond to the needs of the community and aid the local economy, some involved with UMM feel there should be an increased focus on entrepreneurship, so that students are prepared to keep up with the changing face of business. The engine for economic growth in Maine, many feel, must stem from the Universities. The state must adjust to a post-manufacturing economy, although no one knows exactly what such an economy might look like.

As many of the local teachers retire, the University could offer help in teacher development programs. 50% of educators in Maine will be retiring in 5 years, and a future plan for U Maine Machias needs to take this into account. All of this may require more cooperation between the Machias campus and the System and Community Colleges. Some feel that U Maine Machias should let the Community Colleges work with the population that would not go to college otherwise. The Machias campus could, then, “get on with the job of being a liberal arts college.”

There are some other needs that came up in planning discussions, one of the most discussed being the need for more research, labs and facilities. Some see a need for more basic buildings, such as dorms, research facilities and libraries. Others see a new masters program in science, or more athletic fields. And, as with most smaller schools, some people feel the need for more marketing and visibility to make more people aware of what the U Maine campus at Machias has to offer.

**On sustainable resource management**

“Maine needs healthy resources, terrestrial and marine, and we need to provide people who can sustain and manage healthy resources.” (Faculty)
“Businesses will be less based in natural resource extraction. All our natural resources in the north—forests, blueberries, paper, potatoes, fish, lumber—are controlled by Canada. We need to learn to deal with foreign owned businesses and competition.” (Board of Visitors)

“As we prepare students for tourism and recreation management, we also need to train them for sustainable resource management.” (Senior Staff)

“We are on the threshold of a new era—wild lands are changing ownership from paper plants to...we’re not sure. Recreation and aquaculture will be accelerated in the future.” (Faculty)

On being a small Liberal Arts community with good mix of programs

“Flexibility is key; we educate kids in liberal arts and creative thinking they can apply where needed.” (Faculty)

“I see us as a nice, small liberal arts college with a mix of programs including interdisciplinary fine arts, marine biology, and liberal arts.” (Division Chairs)

“We should grow but not too much; stay small with a strong community feeling.” (Students)

On a well formed mission/focus

“We should set goals for the entire System for education, research, and public service. We could have each institution serve as economic development engine for its region, and also each one should have a unique mission.” (Senior Staff)

“The UMM niche should allow us to complement others: collaborating in marine biology with Orono, and in business program with USM (Senior Staff)

“We will be a small university on the Maine coast with 2000 kids. We’ll model how to sustain this environment.” (Senior Staff)

On relationship with the surrounding community

“As the economy declines, the community will need more social services, and health care.” (Faculty)

“Reach into the community for mentors and teachers. There are lots of resources in this area—retirees, CEOs, etc.” (Board of Visitors)

“We need to change attitudes about post-secondary education; convince people it’s good. There’s a fear that if people get post-secondary education they’ll leave. We need to change the culture to one that prizes education.” (Senior Staff)

“We need attitude of wanting to send all kids to college — we don’t have that in Maine.” (Faculty)

On aiding the local economy

“Access and affordability of higher ed will be even more important as state cuts appropriations.” (Faculty)

“Maine leads the country in decline of manufacturing jobs. We are in transition...but to what? Engines for social and economic transition will grow out of the university.” (Faculty)
“Economic development is all geared to Southern Maine. We are losing jobs in this area, so people are forced to move.” (Staff)

“More fish farming, sea produce; create new businesses around resources that fit each area.” (Staff)

“Retraining: as people lose traditional jobs, they need new skills, technologies.” (Faculty)

“We’re the poorest county in Maine; if the state wants us off welfare they must help. This school is the nucleus and they need to invest in it.” (Board of Visitors)

“We can do technology transfer to traditional industries like fishing. We must show people they don’t have to give up traditional lifestyle to embrace tourism.” (Senior Staff)

“We can do technology transfer to traditional industries like fishing. We must show people they don’t have to give up traditional lifestyle to embrace tourism.” (Senior Staff)

“Tourism is Maine’s biggest industry. We need a program to show people what they can do in tourism.” (Students)

**On teacher development programs**

“Maine loses 200 math and science teachers each year, but UM only puts out 50.” (Faculty)

“Being able to provide teachers is critical for the future of K-12. We need to provide good practical experience for students; if we grow more we won’t be able to do at the same level.” (Faculty)

**On cooperation between the Machias campus and the System and Community Colleges**

“In the Community College System the fastest growing major is liberal studies. Education at the Community Colleges is not to our standards. They can’t just do two years there and transfer in.” (Faculty)

“We should have articulation agreements with the Community College; they serve people who wouldn’t traditionally tackle college. If they focus on those students, the university can get on with being a university and not wear too many hats, trying to do what the Community College does.” (Board of Visitors)

“We need to collaborate with Washington County Community College to reduce demand on our intro courses. But how will students move from the Community College to UMM?” (Division Chairs)
University of Maine at Presque Isle

Strengths

The University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI) caters to a diverse array of students, in backgrounds and preparedness. This includes first-generation students, students from the Community College System, place-bound students and other non-traditional students. Through a small, supportive atmosphere and personal attention from professors, many believe Presque Isle is able to help these students “realize their potential.”

One reason cited for the school’s success in this area, is that Presque Isle has a dedicated faculty and staff that create ‘dynamic classrooms’ by offering individual attention and forging strong relationships with the students. This is aided by a unique governance structure, in which faculty, staff, and students are involved in the university senate. Presque Isle is relatively affordable. This is especially important for in-state students, although the out-of-state price is very reasonable as well.

Students have opportunities at Presque Isle for hands-on work in the surrounding community. This community has become an asset for the university, as students find leadership opportunities as well as opportunities for field experience and entrepreneurial work. Conversely, Presque Isle is an important resource for the surrounding community. It trains students in areas that are useful in the community, and often these students remain in the area. It also offers aid in continuing education to local employees and connects with high schools in order to help improve the secondary school system.

On the diverse array of students

“We serve a broader range of need in our region than most colleges our size do. We refuse nothing and struggle to meet expectations with a bimodal student population.” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“We take students who don’t do well and help them realize their potential. A strong student support program.” (Professional and Classified Staff)

“Students have great diversity of abilities and backgrounds, and we manage to create dynamic classrooms for both advanced students and the less prepared” (Academic Leadership)

“Regional location is important for non-traditional students who can’t travel.” (Board of Visitors)

On the small, supportive atmosphere

“UMPI is a small university, personable, helpful” (Board of Visitors)

“A safe place—important for city kids and international students.” (Professional and Classified Staff)

On the dedicated faculty and staff

“Dedicated faculty and staff go above and beyond expectations.” (Senior Staff)

“Professors really know you and pay attention to you; they’re there for you academically and emotionally.” (Students)
On being affordable

“We offer a private school product at a public school price” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“Cost is very important for in-state students (also out of state is reasonable). It’s small and affordable and you can get a really good education.” (Students)

On the hands-on work in the surrounding community

“We provide entrepreneurial opportunities for students.” (Senior Staff)

“Active learning, lots of hands-on opportunities” (Academic Leadership)

“Good relationships with the community; students get field experience” (Professional and Classified Staff)

On being an important resource for the surrounding Community

“We have programs that are identifiable in the community, like social work, criminal justice, education. Many graduates stay in the area.” (Academic Leadership)

“We’re taking more AP courses to high schools, so we can interface with high school students and perhaps attract more strong students here.” (Faculty)

“The University provides continuing education for employees in the area.” (Board of Visitors)

Challenges

Like its peer institutions, Presque Isle struggles with limited resources. At times this leads to creativity that allows the University to “do more with less.” However, the issue still remains. Across the University, people feel that faculty salaries are low and there is little money for equipment, scholarships, and other needed programs and activities.

Several staff, students and faculty stated that UMPI’s mission and niche could be articulated and communicated more clearly to the people of Maine. Some are asking to what extent should UMPI focus on being a Liberal Arts college, and to what extent should it focus on professional programs or be more comprehensive.

UMPI struggles with public perception. Small UMS campuses often lack the resources to publicize themselves, and so they feel overshadowed by the larger UMS campuses, as well as being perceived as ‘inferior’ to private colleges. They also have a complex relationship with the Community College System. In one sense, UMPI and the Community College System compete for students, and it is difficult for UMPI to compete with colleges that can offer courses for lower prices. Many believe that UMPI courses are of a higher caliber, and this should attract more students, but sometimes first-generation and other students do not make this distinction. Concern was expressed that some Community College students transfer and find that they are not adequately prepared for university courses.
Due to **changing demographics of Maine**, the local population is declining and thus there is a significant “out-migration” of traditional students. As it is a small school, there are a **limited number of teachers, classes and majors**. If a student needs a certain class for a major and it is not being offered, or if a student does not mesh with certain teaching styles, it can be difficult to find alternative solutions. Also, faculty can sometimes feel isolated with a small number of colleagues. With such a diverse population of students who need individual attention, limited faculty size can mean that all faculty cover many jobs.

Professors sometimes run up against the challenges of **students who are unprepared** for the level of education offered at Presque Isle. Although UMPI has often been able to deal well with this issue, tailoring education to the needs of students with different backgrounds and abilities, the problem still persists.

**On limited resources**

“Limited resources; most increases go to things like health insurance and salary, and there’s nothing left for equipment, etc. Once you get the attitude that you’re poor, it hinders creativity” (Senior Staff)

“The System didn’t convince the Legislature to support enough technology and we’re behind the curve. 20 years ago we were known for distance education, but no longer.” (Senior Staff)

“Not enough resources, so we fight over them. We’re chronically under-funded.” (Academic Leadership)

“Insufficient support for scholarship and research; there’s an expectation that you’ll publish, but no support, no release time.” (Faculty)

“Faculty salaries are low, and salary opportunities for spouses are also low.” (Faculty)

“Our location is hard for fundraising since there’s not a big business base.” (Professional Staff)

**On mission not formulated clearly enough, nor communicated clearly**

“We have difficulty prioritizing and try to do too much” (Academic Leadership)

“We have several different versions of what we might be—liberal arts, professional programs, comprehensive—and they compete with each other.” (Faculty)

“Our mission is incoherent; we can’t decide what we want to be—a place for liberal arts or a campus that is increasingly professional programs?” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“No clear vision for this campus. This is frightening because of the competition for funds. If we don’t articulate our vision, we won’t attract away students.” (Board of Visitors)

**On the relationship with the Community College System**

“How do we relate to the Community College? They offer credits for $40 less than ours. We’re working on articulation, but it’s hard to compete with the “same” program that costs less.” (Senior Staff)
“Community College courses are less expensive, and many non-traditional students don’t distinguish the quality differences. Students mix and match courses to fulfill requirements and there’s not a clear distinction in the community.” (Professional and Classified Staff)

“Community College: first generation students may be intimidated by a four-year college, but not by a two-year. Would be better to have one System for both, with one chancellor.” (Board of Visitors)

**On struggles with public perception**

“There’s a perception that UMS isn’t as good as private colleges.” (Faculty)

“USM and UM sell themselves well, but the smaller campuses do not. Small campuses don’t have resources to publicize what they do, and they compete with one another.” (Faculty)

**On the limited number of teachers, classes and majors**

“Because it’s small there are not a lot of classes, all classes aren’t always offered. You may need a course for your major, but it isn’t offered for a couple years.” (Students)

“Few professors, so if you don’t match with the teaching style in your major you could have problems.” (Students)

“There are a limited number of majors.” (Students)

“Faculty are quite isolated, few colleagues.” (Faculty)

**Future**

In every conversation, faculty, staff, students, directors and others expressed the need to define the niche that UMPI will hold in the UMS System. Though there is no current consensus on what that niche might be, many solid suggestions were made and there are many discussions still to be had on the topic. These suggestions include: investment in programs such as social work or athletic training, “adventurous learning,” becoming the “Farmington of the North,” and educating human services professionals.

Another common theme among interviews was that UMPI needs to communicate the value of an education in the System. UMPI needs to demonstrate that a public university education can help raise individuals and communities out of poverty, as well as opening up new opportunities.

Many people at UMPI hope for future growth, which could come in a number of different ways. Some suggestions include improved facilities, more technology, more dorm and faculty space, and a new residence hall. Other suggestions include more computers and a greater number of majors. Concerns were occasionally put forth, however, that too much growth could affect the community negatively.

Some suggested that a possible future direction for UMPI would be increased collaboration with the Community College System as well as with the University of
Maine System. This could lead to strong partnerships and also could avoid some of the current competition, such as that existing between UMPI and Fort Kent. This could also help to leverage the System’s resources more effectively.

There was a sense that the University of Maine at Presque Isle could dedicate itself even more to the health of Aroostook County. The region already relies on the university, and there are opportunities to further improve this relationship. Additionally, many feel that PI has the opportunity to take better advantage of its location. This could include anything from literature courses in the wilderness, winter sports, recreation, and connecting with agricultural businesses.

On defining UMPI’s niche

“We should invest in signature programs such as athletic training, criminal justice, social work, PE, recreation, cross country ski instruction—and get national recognition.” (Senior Staff)

“Niche: We educate human services professionals: social workers, educators, criminal justice personnel, recreation managers. With the aging population, we could add programs in gerontology. We should capitalize on the services that rural areas need.” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“Focus on criminal justice—with homeland security, maybe we could attract federal funds.” (Board of Visitors)

“Niche: the Farmington of the North—very good liberal arts school with professional programs too. Integrate that with the idea of being a regional campus that allows students to get the degrees they want without leaving home.” (Faculty)

On communicating the value of an education in the System

“We need to clarify in the public’s minds the opportunities afforded by higher education; we must reach parents, first time students, and the community so they understand what’s in it for them” (Senior Staff)

“We must communicate that a university is different from a Community College. We must show results in the communities so people understand that going to college can break the cycle of poverty. Community college education will help you remain level; a university education will raise you up.” (Faculty)

“The best thing System can do is to sell the value of a baccalaureate degree to the people of Maine.” (Professional and Classified Staff)

On future growth

“Growth will have to include technology, which will require state money.” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“Facilities: more living accommodations, more space for departments like science.” (Professional and Classified Staff)

“Tap into the Canadian population of students; the Atlantic provinces represent untapped potential” (Academic leadership)

“Keep small college atmosphere but still have more majors” (Students)
“Stay same size; strength is in the relationships” (Students)

On increased collaboration with the Community Colleges and the UMS System

“Address the intense competition between UMPI and Fort Kent. Each institution must be dedicated to the health of Aroostook County.” (Academic Leadership)

“Provide incentives for smaller campuses to work together. Is there a way to get a tri-campus (UMPI, UMFK, UMM) to work?” (Faculty)

“Have one president for UMPI and UMFK and come up with the same vision and do it for Aroostook County. We can’t be so parochial that everything must be in Presque Isle.” (Board of Visitors)

“Joint programs with NMCC—they provide tech, we provide liberal arts base, in areas like health informatics, behavioral science informatics.” (Academic Leadership)

On dedicating the Campus even more to the health of Aroostook County

“Ten years from now the health of UMPI, UMFK, and NMCC will all depend on the health of Aroostook County.” (Academic Leadership)

“I’d like to see some kind of graduate program for local teachers; they support us a lot, we’d like to be able to deliver courses to them. We’re at the mercy of the larger programs to make anything happen for the teachers of Aroostook County.” (Academic Leadership)

“UMPI might get more involved in the economy and community, more representation on local economic development council.” (Professional and Classified Staff)

“Emphasize social services and address the aging population in Maine.” (Board of Visitors)

“Emphasize entrepreneurship more in business. Many programs are geared to big corporations, but there aren’t many big corporate jobs in Maine.” (Board of Visitors)

“If we’re trying to keep our children here, then they must be able to study something that equips them to stay here and work.” (Board of Visitors)

On taking better advantage of location

“Take advantage of the area: ski coaching, Maine Winter Sports, etc. We should marry our mission to our location and recognize the opportunities the environment represents.” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“Invest in developing a Center in the Maine woods that would attract students. In literature students read about the experience the wilderness. Recreation is a given, other areas could build in learning experiences.” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“Can we take advantage of agricultural business and science and business?” (Budget and Planning Committee)

“Adventurous learning—take advantage of this area” (Professional and Classified Staff)
UMS Centers

Strengths

The University of Maine Centers reach a population that would otherwise find it difficult or impossible to get a higher education. The Centers focus their energy on **Service to non-traditional Maine citizens and place-bound students**, and they are able to do this through the utilization of resources at 11 centers, ITV, on-line and live instruction. Populations include working adults, alternative students, and college age kids doing summer classes, all of whom can work towards 35 different degrees. For many of these non-traditional students, the Centers are a great opportunity because **Centers are nearby and accessible**. For students around the state who otherwise could not travel to the University of Maine campuses, Centers provide “a place to call home.”

Through connections between the Centers and the University of Maine System, the **Centers bring enrollment to University of Maine campuses** that they would not otherwise have. The **Centers also bring the University of Maine System into the communities**, serving as representatives of the campuses. Centers are uniquely embedded in the communities they serve and have the ability to work collaboratively throughout their different communities. This puts them in the position of being able to aid in the economic development of the communities, and to train a new generation of community leaders who might be encouraged to stay in their communities and help to build a stronger Maine economy. Centers take advantage of this link with their communities by making **connections to local Community Colleges and high schools**. This includes the Maine High School Aspirations Program, which allows high school students to take college credits.

The Centers are able to **tailor an education to the needs of the student**. Its knowledgeable professors are flexible and can develop curriculum on a case-by-case basis. Also, students have the option of taking classes at both a Center and at one of the seven campuses.

**On servicing non-traditional Maine citizens and place-bound students**

“Distance learning opportunities are essential for Maine.” (Executive Council)

“The bulk of the centers have students in their 20’s, 30’s 40’s” (Executive Council)

“The Centers are nearby. Many wouldn’t have been able to go to college otherwise.” (Students)

“Centers give students around the state a place to call home.” (Faculty)

“The Centers can continuously address unmet needs.” (Community Members)

“Centers are more accessible than campuses.” (Community Members)
On bringing enrollment to campuses that they would otherwise not have

“We are delivering campus programs and in doing so we are playing a recruiting role for campus programs.” (Executive Council)

“If students don’t get into USM and cannot go to UMA campus, they can take courses through the Centers.” (Faculty)

“The vast majority (90%) of students move on to baccalaureate degrees.” (Executive Council)

On bringing UMS to the people in the communities

“We are a distribution system, distributing projects throughout the state.” (Executive Council)

“Centers serve an essential purpose: bringing UMS to the people in the communities. We are seen as representatives of the campuses.” (Executive Council)

“We are in the community, we are a part of it.” (Executive Council)

“Centers are critical to Maine’s economic future.” (Students)

“Centers keep people here through job awareness and job placement.” (Students)

On tailoring education to students’ needs

“Teachers are flexible. You can take one course at a time.” (Students)

“Centers are attitudinally responsive and organizationally nimble.” (Community Members)

“The Centers give you a sense that everyone is cared for.” (Students)

“A mixed experience is possible, studying at both centers and campuses.” (Students)

“A great community of people.” (Students)

Challenges

Like all public schools in Maine, the UMS Centers are negatively affected by the struggling Maine economy, and, as ever, limited resources are a burden to plans for the future. Some point to a lack of visibility, a need for better marketing of the Centers within their own communities and across Maine. Others note the need for a broader course selection, specifically in the areas of science and math.

Despite the Centers’ ability to reach non-traditional students, some feel they still must deal with the difficulties of distance education. These include the chance that some distance students might not feel connected enough to the schools, alienated in some ways from the University culture and community, or that distance education systems such as “blackboard” are not sufficient for a complete positive distance education experience. Some people feel the need for new technology to address these problems, while others
feel that the answer lies in better utilizing the technology the Centers have now. The solution may lie in both places. Also, a number of people have stated that it is difficult to offer good advising to non-traditional and distance learning students.

Although many people at both at the Centers and the campuses have pointed out the benefit of the Centers to the University of Maine System, some feel that the Centers are not fully appreciated or utilized by some of the campuses. They call for more exploration of the role the Centers play in the UMS System, and better connections to the campuses. Students at the Centers, some note, feel like they are not completely University of Maine students, and sometimes it is difficult for others to see them as such. Some of this may stem from difficulties in collaborating between campuses and Centers, and in transferring credits. Each campus has different requirements, and though a good effort is given to create mixed educations, sometimes this is not possible. And despite the Centers’ connections with their communities, in some areas of Maine the Centers have run up against a lack of appreciation of a college education. This lack of community support has been felt by interviewees at a number of UMS institutions.

**On the need for a broader course selection**

“People are waiting for specific classes to finish their degree.” (Students)

“There is a need for more baccalaureate programming, more science and math.” (Executive Council)

**On the difficulties of distance education**

“Distance students can feel disenfranchised.” (Faculty)

“Students are sometimes not linked effectively.” (Faculty)

“Distance education should employ new technology to allow students to communicate easier.” (Faculty)

“Sometimes there are problems getting on-line courses if a student lives within 45 minutes of a campus.” (Students)

“Make education accessible. If a student has go over 15 minutes participation drops off.” (Community Members)

**On the need for better advising for non-traditional students**

“Advising can be frustrating as an adult. We need to further develop how to advise non-traditional students.” (Students)

“Distance students don’t get the best advising.” (Faculty)

**On the lack of understanding and utilization of Centers by some campuses**

“Question: How much do campuses buy in to distance education?” (Executive Council)

“There is a lack of understanding of value of Centers on the part of some campuses.” (Executive Council)
“Sometimes it is difficult to see our students as University of Maine students.” (Executive Council)

Universities don’t capitalize on our work.” (Executive Council)

“USM views us differently than UMA, a difference that reflects the unique nature of each campus and their faculty.” (Executive Council)

“Off-campus students are often not looked at as USM students.” (Faculty)

On the difficulty collaborating between Centers and campuses

“The transition from Center to campuses are sometimes difficult.” (Students)

“Centers are seen as competing with UMS campuses.” (Executive Council)

“It is important to continue being partners with campuses. We are a presence in the state of Maine.” (Executive Council)

“There is an impediment in brokering programs from different campuses because each campus has different requirements.” (Community Members)

“We should be more of a ‘faculty of the System’, through exchanges and collaborations.” (Faculty Leadership)

On the lack of cultural appreciation of going to college

“There is not a tradition of going on in school in mill towns.” (Community Members)

“The people of Maine are not yet actively supporting higher education. How do we, as a System, deal with it?” (Faculty Leadership)

“We find many students lack certain amount of general knowledge.” (Faculty)

Future

Since distance education and other ways of reaching non-traditional students are among the Centers’ specialties, there were people in almost all of the interviews who wanted to discuss ways to become even more responsive to non-traditional students. Some of the ideas that emerged included new technology to make distance education easier, increasing the flexibility of programs, and retraining people to be able to cope with the shifting global economy.

In a similar vein, a number of those interviewed at the Centers showed an interest, perhaps greater than at any other UMS institution, to work closely with the local high schools and especially with the Community Colleges. The Executive Council showed a strong interest in actually reaching students through the delivery system of the Community Colleges, or at least having a presence on the Community College campuses and linking their classes and Center classes to create the most appropriate educational opportunities. This shows an understanding of some at the Centers that the population
that they and the CC’s are serving is similar. People also felt that the Centers could play a unique role in helping students through transitions, and could connect with local high schools to help prepare students, and to get more technology into the schools.

Two issues that continually arose at the interviews were how the Centers could best play a role in the economic development of the state of Maine, and how they might aid in other state issues, such as the need for health-care workers. Community members who were interviewed had especially clear ideas on how the Centers might be able to help their regions economically. They want the Centers to continue to ask the communities what they need and try to be responsive to that. They mentioned wanting the System to work with the local business community, acting as a conduit between the businesses and the community, and perhaps pushing for tuition help from employers whose workers want to go back to school. Others hope that the Centers, as well as the rest of the System, can help attract people to Maine, and can aid the economy through an educated work force and research and development.

Some of those involved in the planning process expressed a hope that in the future there will be more people in Maine thinking of education as a core value in and of itself. This may involve a change in marketing to heighten the appeal to those without academic backgrounds or experience. The hope among some is that this shift in the local culture would lead more students to study at college, and that as more accessible and transitional institutions, the Centers could play an important role as a first step for students otherwise skeptical of higher education.

In many interviews, as people spoke of their preferred future state for the Centers, they expressed hopes for growth and expansion. Especially among students, these hopes included more space, more students, more face-to-face classes so as to have a good mix on in-person and on-line courses, and more graduate programs provided to keep students in the state of Maine for graduate school.

**On Centers becoming even more responsive to non-traditional students**

“I want the Centers to be responsive to people who first say they don’t want education and then come back and deserve to be educated on their own terms.” (Community Members)

“Retraining is essential, which is why it is so important to be sensitive to non-traditional learning.” (Community Members)

“Students working from home on their PC. Different students work best in different environments.” (Faculty)

**On more partnering with Community Colleges and local high schools**

“It would be helpful if Community College courses linked with UMS courses.” (Faculty Leadership)

“I would like to see an education system seamlessly cover K-16, a continuum not a transition.” (Executive Council)
“I want to see Centers partnering with the Community College System to use their infrastructure to deliver services, and to have a presence on the Community College campuses.” (Executive Council)

“I would like to use the delivery system of the Centers to work with all schools, Universities and Community Colleges, to create appropriate programs.” (Executive Council)

“We become the facilitators of individuals going through transitions; we play a brokerage function.” (Executive Council)

**On the Centers’ role in the economic development of the state**

“I would like an influx of people to move to Maine because of the accessibility of education and industry.” (Executive Council)

“Centers could be a conduit for the business community to connect with the System.” (Community Members)

“The System could work with businesses that would offer tuition reimbursement to workers who attended college.” (Community Members)

**On the Centers aiding in other state issues**

“There are huge issues with Maine right now in terms of age demographics. Centers could be helpful in addressing this.” (Community Members)

“Maine needs improved communication, problem solving, math skills, etc.” (Community Members)

“We should be involved in the nursing crisis.” (Executive Council)

**On more people thinking of education as a core value in and of itself**

“I want to see employers requiring college education.” (Executive Council)

“We want 95% of people going through our doors to be 2nd generation college grads.” (Executive Council)

“The Centers need to work to come across to the communities as a bit less ‘academic’.” (Community Members)

**On Growth and Expansion**

“Hope for more space.” (Students)

“People signing up in large numbers.” (Students)

“More face-to-face classes, so as not to have most classes online, or add discussion component to online classes.” (Students)

“More opportunities to learn from other students.” (Students)

“Still valuing both technology-based courses and in-person experiences.” (Students)