UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ANNOUNCES DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

Citing a variety of factors pertaining to the future of higher education in Maine, the Chancellor and Board of Trustees of Maine’s public universities unveiled a multifaceted plan to “re-engineer” Maine’s 36-year-old University System. Released at the end of March, the draft plan would focus on eight strategic directions that would enhance academic quality and manage administrative costs:

1. Strive for quality across the System through rigorous academic program planning, strengthened student services, and program realignment.
2. Build a high-quality and well-supported faculty System-wide.
3. Improve and expand the System’s Distance Education program by a) taking advantage of new technologies and pedagogies, and b) working with K–12 educators to make better use of existing electronic classrooms located in most high schools throughout Maine.
4. Expand and enhance the System’s library resources in ways that benefit the needs of our universities as well as the needs of other institutions and individuals across the state.
5. Strengthen and expand university-based research activity and capacity to enhance Maine’s economy.
6. Establish performance measures to ensure prudent stewardship and public accountability.
7. Centralize System-wide business and administrative functions to a) increase effectiveness of service throughout the System, b) free up resources for reallocation to priority areas, and c) maintain front-line customer services at the individual university level.

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MAINE’S UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES UNITE ON CAMPUS SECURITY

Maine’s public and private universities and colleges are working together to explore the challenges facing institutions of higher education and to share ideas about ways in which campuses can respond to security issues.

In February, the University of Maine System and Colby College, with the support of the University of Maine at Augusta and the Maine Community Policing Institute, sponsored the first in a series of Campus Security Summits, bringing together campus security officials and residential life administrators with experts in dealing with crime and terrorism at both the local and national levels.

“By continuing an open and vigorous dialogue on campus safety and security among all higher education institutions in Maine, we will all be better prepared to prevent and plan for security issues through education and training,” says Michael Sauda, safety and environmental manager for the University of Maine System.

The Campus Security Summit series will establish a new support network to ensure that colleagues in public safety and student affairs are better prepared to meet the campus security challenges of the future.

“It is reassuring to see a cooperative effort that draws upon the collective expertise and creativity of colleagues across the state,” says Kathy Dexter, UMA director of student services.

“The entire University community must become more enlightened on these topics and directly engage in looking out for one another.”
During its March meeting, the UMS Board of Trustees . . .

- Authorized the University of Maine at Farmington to offer a bachelor-of-arts degree in geology. The new degree will build on what has been a combined geology/chemistry degree. Ongoing program costs are already funded as part of UMF’s budget, according to UMF President Theodora J. Kalikow. The new program will also benefit from an endowed faculty position funded by retired UMF geology professor Archie W. “Bill” Berry.

- Authorized The University of Maine to move forward with the first phase of a privately funded expansion of the Alfond Sports Arena. The planned improvements to the 27-year-old facility, to be known as the Shawn Walsh Hockey Center, include locker rooms, offices, and training facilities for both men’s and women’s ice hockey teams.

- Reviewed and approved nominations of 43 faculty members for promotion and tenure. According to the American Association of University Professors, 60.0 percent of all college and university faculty nationwide are tenured. This compares to 62.1 percent within the University of Maine System.

- Gave permission to The University of Maine, the University of Maine at Fort Kent, and the University of Maine at Presque Isle to award honorary degrees to current nominees. Each university will make public the names of the honorees once those individuals have been notified.

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**University-based R&D Attracts Record Funding for FY03**

Maine’s public universities attracted record funding for research and development during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003, resulting in new grants and contracts, additional graduate students and programs, unprecedented collaborations with outside firms, and valuable research activity.

The University System attracted a record $91.4 million in outside research grants and service contracts in FY2003. In addition, UMS leveraged the Maine Economic Improvement Fund (MEIF) to attract $40.7 million in external funding.

“Maine’s public universities have a major impact on Maine’s economy, and these figures reflect that,” says Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal. “Research dollars fund hundreds of jobs, purchase millions of dollars in goods and services, and reflect the hard work and ingenuity of our faculty and staff.”

The $91.4 million total was $7.7 million greater than the previous fiscal year. The largest amount of funding, $45.4 million (50 percent), came from federal departments and agencies. State research and service contracts represented 30 percent of the total, or $29.5 million. Private-sector grants and contracts represented 20 percent, or $16.5 million.

The $40.7 million total, which was a $600,000 increase from FY2002, supported research and development as well as 521 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. In addition, hundreds of additional private-sector jobs have been created or supported by the infusion of those dollars into Maine’s economy.

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**UMaine Receives New Patent for Engineered Materials**

The home of the future may better withstand earthquakes, hurricanes, and other stresses, thanks to a newly patented invention at the University of Maine.

Engineers at the Advanced Engineered Wood Composites Center (AEWC) have developed a reinforced building panel that substantially increases the structural strength of a typical house.

In March, a patent was granted to Habib Dagher, AEWC director, and William Davids, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering. The patent was assigned to the University of Maine System, giving UMaine the right to license the technology for commercial development.

“The panel itself is expected to be useful in southeastern and western regions of the country at risk for high wind and seismic events, where more stringent construction measures apply,” says Davids. “Other potential uses that could impact the construction industry are currently being investigated at AEWC.”

The patent is the sixth approved on the basis of AEWC research since the 33,000-square-foot center opened in 2000.
8. Strategically modify the System’s organization and structure in ways that a) clearly define the niches and interrelationships of institutions, b) ensure that the System serves the higher education needs of the state, and c) move the System toward greater financial stability and sustainability.

“The Strategic Plan addresses the academic and economic realities facing our universities and our state,” explains Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal. “The proposed changes will result in a stronger, more focused, and more effective set of public universities.”

The strategic planning process was initiated by the UMS Board of Trustees to address several factors affecting public higher education in Maine: the recent creation of the Maine Community College System; significant increases in operating and health care costs; decreased state funding; and the need for Maine’s public universities to play a more prominent role as partners and resources for economic and social development.

Under the draft plan, the structure of the University System would be changed as follows:

— The University of Maine, located in Orono, would be strengthened as the System’s flagship, land-grant institution to achieve increased state and national prominence as a leading teaching and research institution.

— The University of Maine at Augusta would become a campus of the University of Southern Maine, phasing out its associate-degree programs while adding a number of graduate-level programs currently unavailable through UMA.

— USM would maintain its role as an urban comprehensive university and accept administrative responsibility for six existing University College outreach centers.

— The University System’s institutions in Fort Kent, Presque Isle, and Machias would merge to become the University of Northern Maine, with campuses remaining at each location. Though its associate-degree programs would be phased out over time, the new entity would begin to offer a limited number of graduate-level degrees to serve the needs of northern and Down East Maine. UNM would also oversee two existing University College centers.

— The University of Maine at Farmington would undergo a name change and continue serving as a small public liberal arts college with strong teacher-education programs.

Chancellor Westphal and the Board of Trustees are holding a series of campus forums at each university throughout the month of April to give faculty, staff, students, and members of the community an opportunity to discuss the plan and offer feedback. The formal public comment period will close on June 30, 2004, and a final version of the plan will be issued in September, with trustees expected to act on the plan sometime during the fall 2004 semester. More information is available at www.maine.edu/spp.

AROUND THE SYSTEM

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Michèle Montas, a respected journalist who has endured hardships to bring fair and objective news to the people of Haiti, will be the speaker at UMaine’s May 8 Commencement. Nearly 1,900 people are expected to receive UMaine degrees. UMaine professors Marie-Christine Therrien and Georges Tanguay are researching the economic effects of tighter U.S./Canada border security. UMaine student engineers finished fourth in the U.S. Dept. of Energy’s annual Energy Challenge April 3 in Colorado. The challenge for student teams was to design and build a snowboard from paper industry materials.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA

UMA will host the Old Fort Western 250th Anniversary Distinguished Lecture Series from May to September. The 13-part series, which features leading historians and humanists from around the country, will examine how present society deals with many of the same issues that confronted 18th-century communities. The Fort’s main house, a National Historic Landmark and America’s oldest surviving wooden military building, was constructed in 1754 in Augusta.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT FARMINGTON

The UMF Institute on Rural Poverty and the campus Diversity Committee teamed to present a five-part public series on rural poverty from February to April. The well-attended series explored a variety of issues affecting Maine communities, including: why poverty exists, public perceptions of the homeless, issues affecting educators in dealing with disadvantaged students, teen homelessness, and what is being done to help impoverished people in the state.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT PRESQUE ISLE

As part of UMFK’s ongoing 125th Anniversary Celebration, the campus staged an original musical, April 22–24, that was written, composed, and produced by three UMFK faculty members. More than 250 athletes and thousands of spectators flocked to Fort Kent in March for the 2004 Biathlon World Cup. UMFK’s new 150-bed residence hall housed many of the participants, and the campus served as the administrative headquarters for officials and as the host site for cultural events.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT MACHIAS

The UMM Libra Distinguished Lecture Series, which concluded in April, created a forum for the university and surrounding community to explore the nature of intercultural conflict and create successful strategies for resolution of local issues. Lecturers focused on three general areas: coastal access, local governance, and education. The mission of the series was to develop and realize a shared vision for the future of Washington County.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA

Business students at UMPI will receive hands-on experience using enterprise resource planning software, thanks to a donation from PeopleSoft Inc., valued at $1,796,475. Through an agreement with PeopleSoft’s On Campus Program, the university will receive a suite of application software, applicable end-user training software and documentation, and training for faculty and technical support staff.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

Thanks to more than $3.3 million in private donations, the top three floors of USM’s Albert Brenner Glickman Family Library in Portland have been completed, featuring the UnumProvident Great Reading Room with breathtaking views of Casco Bay, an entire floor dedicated to USM’s special collections, and a new state-of-the-art computer facility. The library opened to the public on April 16, with a public open house scheduled for June 5.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OUTREACH CENTERS

The Western Maine University and Community College Center opened its doors in March and will hold a formal opening ceremony on May 5. The new center, located in South Paris, is a union between University College at Norway/South Paris and Central Maine Community College. The collaboration optimizes programs and services available to students and marks the shared commitment of the University System and Community College System to strengthen public higher education in Maine.
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