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I. Introduction

The University of Maine System is working toward the goal of eliminating the structural financial gap, with expenses and revenues in balance. The System pursues this goal along with commitments to maintain academic quality and integrity, expand the core student profile, offer new programs that support economic development in Maine, deliver more efficient and cost effective operations, and enhance productivity by utilizing technology more broadly. These priorities are inter-reliant: financial sustainability, quality programs, healthy and diverse enrollments, economic development, efficient operations, and strategic enterprise technology. Together, they create the future vision of the System and contribute to the well-being of the State of Maine.

The System has developed a long-range financial planning process that evaluates the fiscal impact of key budget drivers such as enrollment; faculty and staff compensation; investments in physical plant; and State appropriation invested in the System. This report offers a transparent assessment of the System’s financial challenges, introduces the process, and presents financial elements and forecasted scenarios. It provides background on financial challenges and context for upcoming decisions. The purpose of this process is to consider the underlying financial conditions that face the System and the impact of alternative action steps that may address projected shortfalls in the future.

This report is intended only to continue the conversation that must occur within our University community and within the State to ensure that the University of Maine System is able to meet the needs of Maine and its citizens for decades to come. Like any projection and analyses, this report is impacted by the assumptions that are incorporated and the imperfect ability to predict the future. At a high level, it represents a valuable tool to understand how the major components of the budget can be manipulated to find a balance; however, it is important to note that actual application of any of these strategies will yield varying results.
II. Developing the Multi-Year Financial Analysis (MYFA)

The University of Maine System’s finances are captured in a number of “funds” – accounting categories that describe the sources and uses of monies. Annual and multi-year budgeting and financial analysis activities focus on three classifications of unrestricted funds: Education & General (E&G), Designated, and Auxiliary Enterprise activities that support the educational mission. The funds comprise the majority of the System’s compensation (salaries for grant-funded research and endowment funded positions are captured elsewhere), the State unrestricted appropriation, tuition and fee revenue, and university-funded financial aid.

The MYFA is developed utilizing assumptions from a System-wide perspective as well as campus-specific variables and analyses. The process is collaborative and iterative; as more planning information comes into focus, the forecast becomes more robust. The five year analysis process begins in August when the System and campus finance teams meet to review assumptions and develop the analysis framework. The System-wide variables and assumptions include possible tuition increases, growth in faculty and staff compensation, benefit rates, State appropriation, inflation rates, capital funding goals (expressed as a percentage of depreciation expense) and other cost factors.

Working with a common template, the campus financial professionals refine their campus-specific assumptions in September. They include details about enrollment (expressed as student credit hour enrollments), and non-personnel expenses such as fuel and electricity, supplies and services, maintenance and alterations, and library acquisitions.

In October all of the inputs are compiled, responses to goals are calibrated, results are reviewed with campus chief financial officers, and the System’s MYFA is developed. The forecast is not a crystal ball, or even a detailed budget development tool; it provides only a framework for considering the System’s major budget drivers and their aggregate impact on financial results. The Current Trend MYFA scenario is the starting point for determining the sustainable fiscal strategies for the System in the years ahead.

As development of the FY2016 budget begins, campus representatives will refine the assumptions in the MYFA based on the most current information available. Therefore, the actual FY2016 budget that results will likely differ from the projections contained in this report.
III. Current Trend MYFA
The initial forecast is called the Current Trend MYFA. This trend assumes in-state undergraduate tuition and the unified mandatory fee are held constant (0% growth). Since double-digit tuition increases in FY2008 and FY2009, the universities have made a concerted effort to reduce tuition increases. For FY2013, FY2014 and FY2015, the University System instituted a freeze for in-state undergraduate tuition and the unified mandatory fee. Compensation increases include adjustments for post-tenure, merit, step increases, and satisfactory performance adjustments and a 1% across the board (ATB) adjustment is included. Health care costs grow at the cost trend of 7%. E&G depreciation is funded at 100% in FY2015 and thereafter.

When these trends persist, revenues do not keep pace with expenses. The Current Trend projection shows that the System will need to implement course changing actions to ensure costs are in line with available resources. These actions will most likely be a combination of efforts to grow revenue beyond current forecasts and curtail costs.

![Current Trend Projection](image)

While the challenges continue, it is important to recognize the positive fiscal impact of various cost saving measures that have been implemented over the past few years. Many of these cost saving initiatives were based upon a foundation that required rescissions in staff, faculty, and programs; efforts to “bend the trend” in the cost of health care; efficiencies and economies to reduce costs; as well as understanding and cooperation from bargaining units to preserve the long-term interests of the System and its valued employees.

The fiscal position of the System will also be impacted as outcomes from the Board of Trustees Strategic Outcomes (adopted July 2014) are achieved. The Board’s Strategic Outcomes address the need to guarantee student success, meet Maine’s workforce needs, and provide a system for 21st century educational delivery, while ensuring the financial sustainability of the University System. Over the past two years, Administrative Reviews were conducted and future savings identified in the areas of Information Technology, Strategic Procurement, Human Resources, and Facilities Management. The Transfer Credit and Adult Baccalaureate Completion/Distance Education Initiatives continue to progress with the outcome of maintaining and increasing enrollments.

The analyses that follow highlight some of the financial elements that contribute to the gap between revenue and expenses, define emerging challenges that alter the multi-year projections, and describe strategies that may create a sustainable financial forecast for the System.
IV. Expense Drivers

The University System has worked hard to curb spending. Since October 2007, the University System has reduced its workforce by 705 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, or 13%. Although the University System closed a structural gap in FY2014 originally projected at $42 million to balance the budget, the FY2015 budget required $11.6 million from reserves to bring it into balance. As the chart in the prior section demonstrates, the revenues that support educational operations continue to lag behind the growth in expenses, requiring still deeper cuts in the future combined with new and increasing revenue sources.

a.) Health Care Costs and Total Compensation

Health care costs (including dental insurance) for current employees and retired employees represent more than 56% of the current year benefits budget. The accounting requirement to recognize the future cost of retiree health care when it is earned and the soaring cost of health care in the United States are major drivers of the University System’s overall benefit rate which is currently 51.5% of a full-time employee’s salary and is now projected to reach 55.5% by FY2020 if the 7% trend continues.

The System recognizes that benefit packages—in particular health care coverage—are important components of compensation. The employee health care plan is crucial to attracting and retaining highly qualified faculty and staff, but its rapidly escalating costs crowd out the University System’s ability to increase salaries and wages and invest in other mission-critical expenses.

The Employee Health Plan Task Force (EHPTF) is focusing on improving the health status of employees and their dependents and protecting them from catastrophic cost while managing the costs of the health care plan. The Task Force is pursuing savings via employee education and wellness programs, and partnerships with employees, bargaining units, and health care providers. The EHPTF recommendations include the “bend the trend” goals of decreasing growth rates that begin at a 6% increase in FY2012 and eventually move to a more modest 3% increase in FY2016 and beyond.
Attaining the EHPTF “bend the trend” goals will save nearly $19 million annually by FY2020 and more than $55 million over the five-year period of the MYFA.

Minimizing health care costs will be a team effort; and all employees can contribute to this effort. If the goals of the Task Force are realized, the System may be able to shift budgeted compensation dollars from benefit costs to salaries.

Even without any ATB increases, employee salaries in aggregate increase each year given promotions, post-tenure review, step, and satisfactory performance increases that are negotiated in bargaining-unit contracts or stipulated in employee policies. Without any ATB adjustment, salary costs across the System will increase on average 1% annually. This graph reflects the total compensation & benefit costs projection included in the Current Trend.

b.) Fully Budgeting Depreciation

The operating budget of the University of Maine System comprises the direct education-related costs of faculty and staff as well as program and service delivery. These expenses are forefront on the minds of campus stakeholders as the System strives for balanced budgets. But the physical plant that accommodates the people and programs is also vital to the future health and sustainability of the University of Maine System. Historically, low capital renewal spending has contributed to a significant backlog in critical deferred maintenance with repairs estimated at $433 million and total asset reinvestment needs of $942 million. The percentage of space with a renovation age of more than 50 years has increased to 40% of all space as of FY2013, up from 29% in FY2006. As a result, the System is not adequately protecting approximately $2.3 billion of physical assets.
Since 2007, the System has worked with the campuses to implement a more disciplined approach to budgeting and funding capital investments by phasing in full budgeting for depreciation. The System uses annual depreciation expense (an accounting total based on the age and value of existing physical assets) as a metric to move toward a more fully funded capital program.

Specific goals state that E&G depreciation will be fully budgeted by FY2016. (Auxiliary Enterprise depreciation was to be fully budgeted by FY2011.) In the MYFA, the progress toward the goal is measured by investments in Capital Expenditures and the repayment of Debt Service Principal. The goal by FY2016 is for the annual operating budget to include the total depreciation expense and be balanced. This budgeting discipline ensures that the operating budget anticipates the true cash outlays required to fund debt service principal obligations and current capital needs. That discipline is a major cost that has not been fully budgeted historically, so it contributes to expense growth. Fully budgeting depreciation is only a starting point; while the budget impact is significant, budgeting for current depreciation expense does not generate sufficient cash to address the substantial backlog of critical deferred maintenance and repairs.

Consistent State support for capital construction improvements in higher education facilities (similar to the funding structure in place for K-12) would free more of the E&G operating budget for education-specific costs of programs and services.

V. Revenue Drivers
The two largest sources of operating funds are net tuition revenue and E&G State appropriation. Currently net tuition revenue (tuition and fee charges, less financial aid) represents 41% of unrestricted revenue sources and the State appropriation represents 35%. Dining and residence revenue represents 12% of unrestricted funding and other auxiliary sales and services contribute 9%.

Following are the prognoses for the two major revenue sources, appropriation and tuition.
a.) State Appropriation

The Current Trend MYFA assumes that the E&G State appropriation allocated to the University System is flat (0% increase) for each of the five fiscal years of the projection. The following chart shows that stagnant State appropriation does not keep pace with rising expenses and that State appropriation covers a smaller percentage of operating costs each year. In the FY2015 budget, E&G State appropriation funds represent 34% of the System’s operating budget, however with costs of operations increasing at an average rate of 2.7% annually over the next five fiscal years, this level of support is projected to decline to 29% by FY2020.

This chart illustrates that an annual 3.4% increase in State appropriation would maintain the current level of State support for operating costs at approximately 34%, which will help the University System to keep pace with the growth in expenses and curb future increases in tuition. If the 3.4% increase in State appropriation continued through FY2020, it would have a major impact on keeping tuition affordable and closing the structural gap.

b.) Enrollment and Tuition Pricing

Student revenue is comprised of tuition and fees, and auxiliary dining and residence revenue. This analysis focuses on net student revenue (student revenue less financial aid) because the System is committed to maintaining its level of financial aid and scholarships as a percentage of tuition cost. This mirrors the
System’s commitment to providing accessible and affordable education to Maine students. Net student revenue currently represents 53% (41% for tuition and fees less financial aid and 12% for dining and residence revenue) of the current FY2015 budgeted revenues.

In December 2009 the University of Maine System engaged Noel-Levitz, a consulting firm specializing in enrollment management, to conduct a comprehensive study of markets, strategic pricing, and financial aid to help the System improve access and affordability. The report on the first phase of the project provided enrollment management assessments for each campus; price sensitivity research among college-bound high school students, parents, and other prospective adult undergraduates in the state of Maine; and, most significantly for planning purposes, projections of probable new student enrollment levels over the next decade. The report presented grim enrollment projections because the System campuses’ approximate 30% market share among Maine high school students is impacted by the state’s shrinking demographics of this segment of the population. This projection continues for transfer student enrollments which are projected to decline 7% - 18% by 2020.

In light of the importance of the baccalaureate degree to Maine’s economic future and the priority for public higher education to offer programs that are accessible and affordable, the System must carefully consider any tuition increases. This priority, along with declining demographic trends and flat enrollment projections, means that there are limits to the growth of tuition revenue to fill the gap between expenses and funding sources.

Currently there are two system-wide initiatives being implemented to increase student enrollment and success as well as meet the State’s workforce needs and grow System tuition revenues.

1.) Adult Baccalaureate Completion/Distance Education
   In response to the decline in traditional-age students, this initiative has developed a comprehensive, system-wide plan to enhance baccalaureate degree attainment and completion by Maine’s adult and non-campus based citizens incorporating consideration of the multiple pathways (certificates, associate degrees, prior learning assessment, etc.)

2.) Credit Transfer Project
   This project is aimed at improving the college credit transfer process to make it easier for students to move among Maine’s public universities (intra-system) and the community colleges (inter-system). Students who can easily and seamlessly transfer will experience fewer issues as they transfer, can maximize their credits as they transfer, and can progress to graduation at a faster pace. Increasing the numbers of baccalaureate degree holders in Maine is in alignment with the State’s workforce development needs for the long term economic future of the State and will also enhance System revenues.
VI. Dynamic Trend MYFA

This report’s focus has been on the Current Trend MYFA that points out the challenges represented by the factors driving both costs and revenues.

However, a more dynamic model would seek to improve the salary and wages component of employee compensation over time while reducing the trend at which health care costs increase. A more dynamic model would also recognize that tuition cannot remain flat indefinitely. This dynamic model changes the assumption in the MYFA to provide a modest annual ATB increase based on the consumer price index (CPI) as projected by the Maine Consensus Economic Forecasting Commission issued February 2014. This model also assumes that the EHPTF goals to reduce the health care cost trend are met and incorporates appropriation and tuition increases equivalent to CPI. In adjusting the cost of tuition, the University System must pay particular attention to price sensitivity as this level of annual increase may not be sustainable over fiscal years 2016-2020. These changes result in a net decrease to the gap of $31 million for a total gap of $59 million in FY2020.

As in the Current Trend, it should be noted that the Dynamic Trend does not include any contingency for a reduction in appropriation which would increase the projected deficit.

While the Dynamic Trend MYFA shows a $59 million gap in FY2020, that distance can be closed by ensuring reasonable and predictable increases in State appropriation; a reduced but more competitively compensated workforce that is also more collaborative, efficient, and productive; resources that keep pace with current capital needs; and strategies to recruit and retain a more diverse student population that result in both improved enrollment projections and higher educational attainment for Maine citizens.
VII. Level of Change Required by Variable – Dynamic Trend

The following scenarios adjusts the key budget variables of the Dynamic Trend to illustrate the level of change required in a single variable to close the gap in FY2020 through adjustments to State appropriation, tuition, enrollment, capital renewal commitment, or full time equivalent employees.

Variable I – Appropriation

To eliminate the $59 million structural gap in FY2020, state appropriation would have to increase by 7.4% per year for FY2016-FY2020.

State appropriation to the UMS has been declining as a percentage of the State budget and as a percentage of the UMS budget for the past twenty years. The State appropriation for FY2015 is $6.2 million below the FY2008 level. While Maine’s General Fund revenue is forecasted to experience modest growth over the next couple of years, there is pent up demand for state support from K-12, Medicaid and other programs and competition for these funds will be fierce. Therefore, obtaining even modest increases in the state appropriation for the UMS will be challenging.

Variable II – Tuition

To eliminate the $59 million structural gap in FY2020, tuition would have to increase by 5.5% per year for FY2016-2020. [Note: this level of increase in tuition also supports a corresponding increase in institutional financial aid.]

The UMS’ ability to raise tuition will continue to be restrained by what Maine people can afford. Maine’s three-year moving average of median household income for 2011-2013 is $50,487, a decrease of $2,497 from the highest point in the 2005-2007 3-year period. Absent the application of financial aid, the weighted average of tuition and fees as a percentage of Maine’s three-year moving average of median household income is 18%. Therefore, even the modest tuition increases modeled in the Dynamic Trend will be challenging for students and their families.

Variable III – Enrollment

To eliminate the $59 million structural gap in FY2020, enrollment would have to grow at 4.2% per year for FY2016-2020.

Maine’s 15 to 24 year old population will decline 19.5% between 2010 and 2020. Merely maintaining current enrollments will be challenging and will require our universities to work differently in order to improve our market share and to retain and attract more students, including adults and the nearly 50% of high school graduates who currently do not enroll in college. Year over year increases in enrollment of nearly 4.2% will be extremely difficult.
**Variable IV – Capital Renewal Commitment**
Eliminating capital investments would reduce the FY2020 $59 million structural gap by 46% to $32 million.

The UMS owns more than 550 buildings providing more than 9 million square feet of space located across the State. Forty percent of System space is more than 50 years old in terms of renovation age, which has increased from 29% in 2006. Critical building needs and investments can be expected in facilities with an estimated renovation age of more than 25 years-- and even more so in the older 50+ category. The age of facilities, limited capital renewal funding, code changes, and functional obsolescence have resulted in a critical deferred maintenance estimate of $433 million and a total asset reinvestment need of $942 million. The current level of resources committed to capital renewal is already insufficient to maintain safe functioning campuses that are attractive to prospective students. Decreasing this commitment further or eliminating it altogether is not practical.

**Variable V – Workforce**
To eliminate the $59 million structural gap in FY2020, the workforce would have to be reduced by 14.5% or 685 FTE.

Compensation and benefits constitute 75% of our E&G operating budget and represent the single largest cost driver in the budget. Particularly challenging is that benefit costs have been increasing at a rate that exceeds the growth in revenue sources. Even though the workforce has already been reduced by 705 FTE, or 13%, the workforce is still not scaled to what the UMS can afford given the current restraints on revenue, including declines in enrollment. If the UMS is to reach the goal of eliminating the structural financial gap and achieving a sustainable budget, it has no real alternative other than further reducing the size of its workforce. This will require a significant collective effort among the seven universities and University Services to improve efficiency and productivity enterprise-wide so that the UMS can continue to offer quality education and to provide the services that support our students, faculty and staff.

**VIII. Closing**
This report contains combinations of various strategies to form scenarios for achieving a balanced budget in FY2020. It is intended only to continue the conversation that must occur within our University community and within the State to ensure that the University of Maine System is able to meet the needs of Maine and its citizens for decades to come. Like any projections and analyses, this report is impacted by the assumptions that are incorporated and the imperfect ability to predict the future. At a high level, it represents a valuable tool to understand how the major components of the budget can be manipulated to find a balance; however, it is important to note that actual application of any of these strategies will yield varying results.

Negative financial and demographic forces require the University of Maine System to undergo transformative change to preserve and improve quality and ensure financial sustainability.
Of all the factors impacting the University System, the State of Maine’s fiscal performance is the most significant. The global financial environment continues to require the State to make significant adjustments for losses in revenue. As a result, State funding for the University of Maine System has been negatively adjusted through curtailments and reduced appropriation, continuing a twenty year trend whereby State appropriation for the University System has declined as a percentage of the State budget as well as a percentage of the University System’s budget. Additionally, State support for capital infrastructure improvements is sporadic and declining. At present, the economic recovery is slow and volatile conditions persist, placing future State appropriation and bonding for the University System at risk.

Further, current demographic projections indicate that the number of Maine high school graduates will decline over the 2010 – 2020 timeframe leading to reduced enrollment of traditional age college students. This demographic change also implies that for Maine, today’s workforce is also tomorrow’s workforce. Increased competition for both traditional and non-traditional students and the options in higher education delivery mechanisms require that the University System rapidly adjust to attract market share and serve more students in ways that best meet their needs.

In addition to the escalating national trend in health care costs, since 2008 governmental accounting standards require the System to account for other post-employment benefits (OPEB), primarily health care, on an accrual basis. This means that the expense is recognized at the time it is earned by an employee (present), rather than when it is used in retirement (future). This accounting requirement has added significant expense for the University System, as it has for every governmental entity in the nation.

Another factor outside of the System’s control is the market-driven compensation required to attract and retain a talented faculty and staff. The System competes for quality faculty and researchers in an increasingly global marketplace to ensure that our graduates and Maine businesses can also compete in that marketplace.

Most importantly, as the University of Maine System engages in the work ahead, there is an opportunity to craft a System that is vibrant, innovative, and relevant—meeting the evolving knowledge, research, public service, and education needs of students and the citizens of Maine.