

University of Maine System Strategic Planning

FALL UNIVERSITY STAKEHOLDER VISITS

Thank you for meeting with us. During our conversation, we hope to a) hear your perspective on existing system challenges while b) uncovering innate strengths and transformative ideas upon which UMS can build a more sustainable future.

Data Book Findings

The data points highlighted below underscore the urgent need to establish and implement a strategic vision that will support a vibrant future for the University of Maine System. For additional information on the contextual factors affecting the System, please consult the Data Book, which can be found on the UMS Strategic Planning website.

- **Enrollment** – Between Fall 2012 and Fall 2021, UMS experienced a near 10% decline in enrollment. **Going into the Fall of 2022, UMS experienced a decline in total student headcount of 6% relative to Fall 2021, with first-time student enrollment down 15%.** (Data Book, Slide 7)
- **Labor Market** – Between 2021 and 2030, job growth in Maine is forecasted to be nearly flat at .2%, growing from 692,835 to 694,020 jobs, with an emphasis on industries such as healthcare, education, manufacturing, tourism, and professional services. UMS is positioned to educate the workforce needed to meet this demand. (Data Book, Slides 22-25)
- **State Funding** – Between FY10-21, state appropriations increased annually and accounted for 28-31% of the System's nonoperating revenue. However, **rising inflation during that time reduced purchasing power**, significantly intensifying existing financial constraints. (Data Book, Slide 40)
- **Research** – UMS has a strong research footprint and a successful record of securing **funding for growing R&D activity from \$137.5M in 2019 to \$153.9M in 2021**. Expanded R&D activity can help to advance state economic development priorities in pioneering industries such as bio-based alternatives, responsible food sources/technologies, and artificial intelligence. (Data Book, Slides 21, 28)

Peer University System Transformations

UMS is not alone in facing disruptive challenges. The public university systems highlighted below faced similar challenges while pursuing different paths to addressing them. They commonly cited declines in state funding, financial deficits, and declining enrollment due to demographic shifts as key drivers to transform in order to enhance sustainability and deliver on the shared mission to provide affordable access to public higher education. **The two change efforts highlighted below are provided as examples only and are not meant to suggest prescribed future action for UMS.**

- **Vermont State Colleges (VSC)** restructured its three institutions into the newly accredited Vermont State University, delivering a new academic model that shares programs across campuses, reducing dependence on physical facilities, and leveraging hybrid learning enabling a 15% reduction in base tuition for in-state students.
- **University of Wisconsin System (UWS)** reorganized its system structure in 2017 by joining the 13 two-year college campuses with nearby comprehensive four-year universities. In parallel, they combined UW-Extension units with the flagship at UW-Madison, resulting in a design enabling greater financial viability, streamlined operations, improved program design, and affordable access points for students.

Discussion Questions

We are eager to hear your thoughts on opportunities for collective, sustainable, and innovative transformation for the System.

- **Curriculum** – Where are the most promising opportunities for further collaboration across academic programs? What new academic programs would be most attractive to Maine employers and future students?
- **Infrastructure** – What should the strategic plan focus on with respect to strengthening spaces, facilities, technology, and processes System-wide?
- **Enrollment** – Noting the data points highlighted above, how might a System-level strategy help to address these challenges in the future?
- **Marketing/Branding** – Going forward, what should UMS strive to be known for? What initiatives could the strategic plan elevate to better tell the story of UMS' impact and value?
- **System Office** – What current or new initiatives would you encourage the System Office to support in order to realize the aspirations you see as being more important for the System as a whole?