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VCAA Commentary

Welcome to the first issue of Academic News, a newsletter from the University of Maine System (UMS) office to share the latest information and developments on various System-level, academic work. Although the newsletter obviously will highlight campus and System initiatives, the real purpose is to provide a level of awareness such that the office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) can be a resource, or at least a point of contact, for questions, further information, idea sharing, and assistance to individuals across the UMS. Thus, in this inaugural commentary from me, I wanted to provide information in three areas: First, the following list summarizes the current initiatives directly under the purview of the VCAA's office, and the administrative leaders for those efforts:

- Adult Degree Completion (Rosa Redonnett, Kay Kimball)
- Program Innovation Fund (Kay Kimball, Carol Kim)
- Institutional Research (Robert Placido, Rosa Redonnett)
- Data Governance (Robert Placido, Bob Neely)
- Online programming with Academic Partnerships (Robert Placido, Bob Neely, Rosa Redonnett)
- Course cross-listing (Robert Placido, Bob Neely)
- Early College (Carol Kim, Amy Hubbard)
- Programs for Examination (Bob Neely, Kay Kimball)
- MCCS Relations (Rosa Redonnett, Kay Kimball)
- Development of guidelines for multi-campus programming (Carol Kim, Kay Kimball)

Should you desire information about any of the above projects, please feel free to reach out to the leaders, or directly to the VCAA office.

Second, please be encouraged to review the draft directional resolution ([Declaration of Strategic Priorities](#)) shared by the UMS Board of Trustees (BOT) after their November 19, 2019 meeting. The resolution outlines a variety of strategies, many of them related to academic directions, to respond to Maine's workforce crisis, student debt, and today's fast-changing higher education environment. The resolution was offered in draft form to allow for engagement with campus communities and external constituents. Should you have comments on the draft resolution, please be encouraged to share them with your BOT Faculty representatives. Alternatively, your Provost may have an established communication strategy for collecting input from faculty and academic leaders.

In addition to the Declaration of [Strategic Priorities](#), November's Board of Trustees meeting included the following items of academic interest: The Board approved revisions to [Policy 311 Intra-System Student Exchange](#) to better address multi-campus student needs. These revisions were determined through an inclusive and iterative process. Additionally, Academic Partnerships, our new online program management provider, presented [an overview](#) of their services and business model, including supporting data on their track record in the field. Dr. Amy Hubbard, the UMS Early College Lead Coordinator, reported on the success of [Early College initiatives](#) across the system, including enrollment growth, retention, student supports, and potential career pathways (please see page 2 for more information). Finally, Rosa Redonnett, Ryan Low, and Jonathan Henry presented the [Fall 2018 Enrollment Report](#), which included overall gains in out-of-state enrollments, head count, and credit hours, plus highlights from UMA's enrollment turnaround.

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Continued VCAA Commentary

Lastly, the UMS continues to develop the systems and capabilities now consistent with contemporary expectations for access and use of data analytics (please note the two initiatives in the list above related to Institutional Research and Data Governance). Many people across the campuses and System offices have been involved in this effort, with too many to acknowledge individually, but to all of whom gratitude is expressed. The development of a consistent, system-wide, data-management strategy is no small task as these individuals cope with issues of data integration, data quality, and software inadequacies - before even moving to the possibility of predictive modeling. Nonetheless, progress is being made on a variety of fronts (e.g., general system dashboards are now available at <https://academics.maine.edu/ums-dashboard/>). Automated and easily-accessible reports and dashboards are certainly useful, but the real value will eventually come when the availability of reliable data begins to influence institutional culture and thinking by blurring organizational silos as we develop common understanding(s) of trends, performance, and outcomes. Of course, debates about the data will ensue, but the information and the debates surely will lead to new ideas for improvement and perhaps new ways for faculty, programs and campuses to collaborate. As these capabilities evolve, I and my team look forward to keeping you informed.

INNOVATION CORNER

Micro-Credentials, A Stackable Innovation

As we know, there is a growing movement across the US related to the development of “stackable credentials” which can demonstrate a student’s (and employee’s) achievement of key skills and competencies gained from a range of learning experiences, in- or outside of the classroom. These kinds of stackable credentials are especially useful for working adults as a way to both document their additional learning and create a more manageable and achievable pathway to the ultimate completion of a degree. The credentials may take the form of digital badges and other micro-credentials through more traditional certificates and degrees. There are several instances of badge and credential development occurring with the UMS:

- * Engaged BlackBear at UM
- * Engaged Clipper at UMM
- * Badge development at UMA and UMPI related to student involvement
- * School of Business at USM will be including badging and micro-credentialing within their degree requirements for the class entering in 2020
- * USM is exploring the use of digital badging as a way to track a faculty development initiative

In addition to the actual development of badges and credentials, discussions are underway around the development of a statewide badging ecosystem, led by Dr. Claire Sullivan at UM. Also, the UMS is participating in a pilot supported by the Lumina Foundation to develop a national credential registry that includes all credentials offered within higher education, within licensing organizations, and as a part of business training programs. The goal is to ultimately emerge with a transparent system for identifying credentials and their competencies. And finally, the higher education systems of ME, NH and VT are working collaboratively to explore the concept of the development of a rural credentialing system that would better map the workforce needs of the region (including cross-regional needs) and to create a platform that learners and employers could access to identify local needs and opportunities as well as available programs and providers.

Early College

Early College, Early Promise

The University of Maine System's (UMS) Early College programs allow high school students to enroll in college courses and earn credits on both their high school and college transcripts. Early College programs are based on partnerships between Maine's Public Universities and high schools to help students, especially those who may not aspire to a college education, successfully transition to college. Early College includes *Dual Enrollment* (concurrent enrollment at the high school), *Aspirations* (at the university or online), and *Bridge Programs* (with Career and Technical Education at the high school).

Funds were generously provided to the UMS by the Maine legislature to increase enrollment and improve the quality of UMS Early College programs. In order to meet the legislative benchmarks, all seven campuses have coordinated and collaborated over the past year, resulting in markedly improved enrollment. As of October 15, 2018, we have increased the Early College headcount by 23% over the Fall 2017 figures. Importantly, we are also increasing access to these programs for Maine high school students across the State. UMS Early College programs are available to students from 380 different Maine communities in all 16 Maine counties.

To attain our quality goals, we are working toward the National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) standards, and are setting a high bar for our Early College programs. UMS Early College students follow the national trend and are more successful at university than high school students without Early College experience. UMS Early College students who matriculate at a UMS campus in Fall 2017 have, on average, 12 credit hours toward their degree (compared with 3.6 credit hours for students with no Early College experience) and are more likely to persist for a second year (86% for Aspirations, 81% for dual enrollment) compared with students with no Early College experience (74%).

High school students often do not understand the connection between an academic major and a job in their future. With workforce development in mind, we crafted and implemented a *Pathways to Careers Early College Program*, through partnership with the Maine Community College System, to boost enrollment in the UMS Early College programs and increase matriculation at UMS campuses. UMS campuses are now marketing their Early College programs through pathways to specific careers, such as engineering, nursing, teaching, or business. UMS universities are able to partner with local businesses for sponsorship, as these businesses can see more clearly their connection to Early College through these pathways to careers. UMM has created eight Early College Certificates/Pathways to Maine Careers, and five of these certificates are currently available online. UMFK has initiated certificate programs in forestry, business, behavioral science/human services, criminal justice/public safety administration, and in collaboration with UMPI, nursing and healthcare, all available online through Rural U in Fall 2019.

The State funds were also used to build infrastructure and programming critical for student success. One key purchase was a subscription to NetTutor, a customized, online tutoring service available 24/7, 365 days a year. NetTutor provides access to live tutoring in over 100 subjects from algebra to zoology with tutors holding four-year or advanced degrees in their subject specialty. Another strategic acquisition was a software management system, Canusia, which is designed specifically for Early College programs and will be integrated into the UMS PeopleSoft system. Canusia will help the UMS campuses and high schools work together seamlessly to provide a bridge to serve students, parents, teachers, college faculty, and program coordinators and to make it easier for students to sign up for classes, expedite data collection, and organize the results of faculty site visits to high schools.

Program Innovation Fund



"UMA student, Drew Gordon consulting with Dr. Lester French, UMA instructor for the MEP 100 Introduction to Engineering course."

Engineering Pathways Project is a Win-Win-Win

One of the most successful Program Innovation Fund projects has been the Maine Engineering Pathways Program (MEPP). Prospective engineering students spend their first year in the program at one of the participating UMS institutions, which currently include all but UMFK. Upon successful completion of their first-year courses, students then can transfer into an engineering program at either the University of Maine or USM.

MEPP grew out of the earlier Engineering Program Integration Team work. It launched this fall with an initial cohort of thirteen students enrolled in a new course specific to the program: MEP 100 Introduction to Engineering, a one-credit foundational course taught by Dr. Lester French from UMA and delivered to all participating campuses and centers. Of the thirteen, five are at UMA, five at UMM, one at UMPI, and two at UMF.

University of Maine's College of Engineering Dean Dana Humphrey, who is spearheading this initiative, is gratified by its initial success and excited by its potential. "I've been an engineer for forty years and have never seen demand this high! And I am confident the program is on track to meet all its objectives."

The enterprise addresses multiple goals for the UMS and the state: growing enrollment for participating campuses, supporting student career plans, and producing new engineers for Maine's workforce. According to Dean Humphrey, "We'll be able to build enrollment in the program and reach students who, either through their location or lack of preparation, are not quite ready for direct entry into the program, and be able to get them where they need to be while delivering what the state needs."

Adult Credential and Degree Completion

A critical element of Maine's economic future centers on increasing statewide educational attainment so that 60% of Maine adults ages 25+ have a post-secondary degree or a vocationally significant credential by 2025. Given Maine's demographics, that number cannot be reached without a major increase in the number of adults seeking and obtaining post-secondary credentials.

Engaging adult learners is a well-established UMS priority. For example, UMS's Adult Degree Completion (ADC) initiative has been active since 2013 and in November 2013, the BOT passed a resolution recognizing adult learners as a core student constituency. More recently, led by the UMS, Maine was one of four states selected by SHEEO with funding from Lumina to participate in a multi-state pilot for engaging and retaining adult learners. As part of that initiative, the UMS became a founding member of the MaineSpark state attainment effort to achieve the 60% benchmark. The UMS now needs to better integrate its adult learner initiatives and programs in order to respond to this challenge.

An Adult Degree Completion Working Group conducted a review of our current state, researched what has been done nationally and in Maine, reflected upon and learned from our post-2013 ABCDE experience, and built a plan that reflects best practice, makes the case for why this population MUST matter to us and lays the groundwork for the work to come. More information related to the recommendations can be found here: <http://staticweb.maine.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ASA-MtgMat-103018-rev102918.pdf?0d0f03>.



UMS Scales Up with Academic Partnership

In an effort to explore all options for expanding the national reach of selected UMS programs, the University of Maine System (UMS) posted an RFP to explore online management providers capable of providing services to build on UMS strengths in online education, and to back-fill where we lack resources. The primary foci for such services included market research, effective marketing strategies, lead generation, and student performance tracking, with optional instructional design and general management support. Academic Partnerships (AP) was ultimately selected for further discussion and evaluation. The goal is to bring additional enrollments to the UMS and to expand our programmatic footprint regionally and nationally, thereby bringing greater enrollment and financial stability to UMS campuses.

After over a year of due diligence, including multiple campus conversations, financial modeling, and reference checking, a UMS master contract was signed at the 2018 September Board of Trustee meeting. This master contract outlines the general framework for the agreement, with addenda subsequently developed for partnering campuses, in which specific programs are identified for the AP partnership. At this time, a small select list of programs from USM, UMFK and UMPI in nursing, education and CBE were agreed upon in partnership with AP, university executive leaders, and program faculty. Other programs will have the option of considering participation in the collaboration with AP after the launch of these initial programs.

Implementation of the new programs begins with a 6 to 7 week assessment, after which a project plan will be created and initiated. The time needed to launch a new program is greatly dependent on available resources and program readiness; however, our goal is to launch some of the programs in Fall of 2019.



Breaking News on Collaboration

University of Maine

UMaine partners with USM and UM-Farmington to offer the M.Ed in Instructional Technology degree, along with 2 new graduate certificates and a Certificate of Advanced Study in this area. Faculty from all three institutions deliver the curriculum for this fully online program. Since the collaboration was launched in Summer 2016, 113 new students have been admitted, reflecting more than a 200% increase in total degree and certificate students.

University of Maine at Farmington

As a result of program integration conversations, six of the seven campuses are involved in a pilot project whereby a single, online Secondary Education Math Methods course serves the needs of qualified Secondary Education Mathematics majors on those campuses. UMF and UMA faculty collaboratively developed and are delivering the course this fall. Through this collaboration, students at all campuses now have access to a discipline specific methods course that focuses on best practices in making mathematics relevant and meaningful for students in grades six through twelve.

University of Maine at Augusta

The UM Foundations program is a joint partnership between the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Augusta. This program is designed for students who are not eligible for admission at UM, but well within the admission criteria for UMA. These students are admitted as UMA students, but living in the residence halls at the UM campus. UMA faculty from the Bangor campus teach UMA courses at the Orono campus. Advising staff from the Bangor campus visit weekly to provide extra student support. After the third semester, if the student's grades are acceptable, the student is automatically transferred as a UM student. After their fourth semester, a reverse transfer will occur and the student will obtain a UMA Associate's Degree in Liberal Studies. This establishes a pipeline from UMA to UM, as well as allows students to benefit from all of the student life opportunities offered at the land grant campus.

University of Southern Maine

The MGI executive group met with the Maine's GIS professional group last week for a round table. Among other things, the MGI team checked in about industry needs, talked about curriculum development, and discussed grant opportunities. The group's hoping to move ahead with a statewide curriculum cross-listing for our introductory courses in the early part of next year. One of the grant opportunities that has generated significant interest at USM was proposed by the GIS managers from Portland and Auburn, both USM GIS alums, who have suggested looking at seeking funding to support the development of a smart cities/communities project. Matthew Bampton, Yuseung Kim, Firooza Pavri, and Brenda Joly of MSPS have all expressed an interest in this, and are now looking at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundations "Healthy Communities" program as a possible target funding Source. All six other campuses have offered to support these efforts

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ContinuedBreaking News on Collaboration

University of Maine at Fort Kent

The UMFK and UMPI President's Cabinets have met jointly on several occasions this year to discuss collaboration opportunities. Additionally a Joint Collaboration Committee including multiple representatives from each campus has also met on several occasions this year to consider collaboration opportunities. With joint appointments of the Enrollment Manager, The Director of Financial Aid, and the Registrar, and with each campus offering a degree program on the other's campus, the discussions are wide ranging. The most recent meeting of the Joint Collaboration Committee included discussions with representatives from Academic Partnerships (AP) as the two campuses prepare to launch their AP course offerings next fall. The UMPI and UMFK cabinets now meet jointly at least once per semester

The English faculty from UMFK and UMPI have met three times this fall to discuss how the two programs can collaborate to offer a single English degree program. It is intended that the English program collaboration planning will serve as a model for future collaboration planning between other academic departments from the two campuses.

University of Maine at Machias

This Fall UMM and UMA piloted a solution for students to seamlessly take courses from each other's University, termed course cross-listing. The pilot course was meteorology. Meteorology is offered by UMM and UMA students need the course for their Aviation program. Seventeen UMA students enrolled in the UMM course from within their own registration system without the need for lengthy applications, transfer requests, and financial aid waivers. The pilot was successful enough to repeat this Spring, with UMA students already registered

University of Maine at Presque Isle

A Collaboration Task Force has been instituted between UMPI and UMFK. The Task Force has now had the opportunity to meet at each campus with Academic Partnerships being the most recent topic of discussion. UMPI continues in its program collaboration efforts with UMFK with the newly established Nursing Transition Program. An English Program collaboration is also underway between UMPI and UMFK; faculty from both institutions have met and are examining program alignment. Additionally, UMPI has been exploring other potential areas of collaboration by holding joint Cabinet and Board of Visitors meetings with UMFK.