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VCAA Commentary

Programs for Examination

The 2018 – 2019 academic year was the first year for implementation of the "Programs for Examination" (PFE) process (BOT Policy/APL 305.7). During the development of this policy, the Chief Academic Officers Council and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs assured those concerned about a new process involving quantitative thresholds to examine specific programs that the this new approach was intended for two purposes: (a) to use some simple metrics to serve as a conversation starter about program trajectories in the hopes of preemptively developing strategies to maintain program health; and (b) to engage in a regular, systematic process across the System focused on program needs and enrollment patterns. From my perspective as the VCAA, the latter point was one mechanism for identifying areas for potential programmatic collaboration in accordance with the One University philosophy, i.e., should similar programs across multiple campuses find it difficult to attract majors, then a single multi-campus program might be one strategy to ensure a rich learning experience for students, depending on a variety of factors related to disciplinary needs and pedagogical approaches.

Early on, we emphasized that the new PFE endeavor was not a "programs for elimination" process. I believe the first-year results serve as ample evidence of our sincerity about the purpose of the process. Initially, 130 programs were identified as having failed to meet the threshold for number of majors and/or number of graduates (three-year rolling averages). Of those 130 programs, 97 were removed from further examination because of various reasons related to mission-critical focus, service to other disciplines, individualized-studies options, regional relevance, workforce importance, etc. Of the 33 programs remaining on the PFE list, only 8 programs were identified for suspension, one of which was actually suspended years ago, but the formal process for suspension had not been completed. Requirements for suspension of a program are outlined in BOT Policy 305.1 (APL Section 305.4), and program suspension is not synonymous with program elimination; separate processes are outlined in BOT policy for suspension versus elimination. Programs can exist in suspension for a maximum of three years, during which time reinstitution is a possibility; however, if the program is not reinstituted after three years, it must be eliminated in accordance with BOT policy (APL Section 305.5) and removed from the program inventory.

The 25 programs remaining on the PFE list will be engaged in various strategies in the coming year(s) to foster student interest. Examples of such strategies include curricular revision, marketing-rebranding, collaboration, new partnerships, program merger, use of Early College experiences for recruiting, program review, exploration of distance/online/hybrid modalities, etc. In all cases, the faculty and academic administrators are to be thanked for their constructive participation this year, and their willingness to offer ideas to ensure programmatic – we offer our appreciation from the VCAA office and look forward to continued interaction.

Academic News

Complete College America

The State of Maine is participating in the national work of "Complete College America" (CCA), and the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System are actively engaged with and are partnering in many of the initiatives coming out of the work of CCA. Our campuses are pursuing strategies such as Think30/15 to Finish/ Finish in Four which encourage enrollment in 30 credits per year, putting students on track to finish their undergraduate degree in the traditional four-year window. Campuses have plans in place to ensure momentum to the degree through the development of degree pathways and proactive advising to keep students on track, including both the math and English pathways to ensure students are in the appropriate coursework for their major and to reduce the barrier of excessive remedial/developmental credits. Faculty across both the UMS and MCCS currently are collaborating on a Math Pathways project. Our Adult Degree Completion initiative is in sync with CCA's "A Better Deal for Returning Adults" which focuses on providing accelerated courses and programs, predictable schedules and use of prior learning assessment to give credit for the learning adult students achieve through their work or other life experiences. The UMS and MCCS are co-sponsoring a leadership summit in June to further our work with CCA and our collective work across our two Systems to best ensure the success and completion of our students. For more information about CCA, go to this link: https://completecollege.org/

DATA CORNER

Burning Glass Data

Although the statewide narrative regarding economic and demographic conditions is not positive in Maine, great opportunity does continue to exist in our beautiful state. Approximately, eighty-four thousand jobs are posted online every year in Maine. The top-twenty, most-posted jobs in the past year that required a Post-Secondary Education included nursing, physical therapy, software developers, occupational therapy, childcare workers, and managers. We now have access to such market labor information through a new software resource available to the UMS. During this past spring, the UMS acquired software licenses to BurningGlass, a company that collects millions of job postings annually. The power behind BurningGlass comes from an artificial intelligence engine that analyzes, categorizes and curates the postings into a datastore. The BurningGlass datastore is then joined with other publically available data, such as the Bureau of Labor and Statistics and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). We can now explore any discipline and provide detailed information about past and future opportunities, as well as other higher education competitors. For example, for Computer Science, a BurningGlass analysis demonstrates that 3,593 jobs were recently posted requiring a Bachelor's degree, and that Computer Science jobs are projected to grow by 7.6%. Additionally, we can see that seven universities in Maine compete for Computer Science students; further, two of these universities have not conferred a Computer Science degree in the past three years.

At this time, the UMS has purchased a few licenses for System staff and two licenses per each UMS University. University leaders are collecting feedback and interest, so that they may increase the number of people who have access to the data if they see a need.

Academic News

Micro Credential

Maine has established a statewide educational attainment goal of 60% of Maine adults ages 25+ having a post-secondary degree or a vocationally significant credential by 2025. Projections through 2026 and beyond clearly show a major shift toward a workforce that has at least some post-secondary education. Coming out of the Adult Degree Completion Report and Recommendations (June 2018), developing a series of "stackable credentials" that enable adult learners to build their attainment across the continuum of credentials, and in accelerated course formats, will be an important additional level of program development that will enable the UMS to better meet the needs of Maine's employers and the educational goals of its people.

Initiatives across the country are focusing on the development of micro-credentials that represent the attainment of critical skills and competencies of need for the workforce – both those that are considered 21st Century skills (the so called "soft" or foundational skills) and those that are more technical in nature. A Micro Credential Steering Committee is currently developing a framework for micro-credential development in the UMS and potentially statewide, along with a set of implementation recommendations including the identification of appropriate program delivery modalities and credential development, priority external partnerships, timelines and budget considerations. Ultimately, the goal is to implement and execute strategies to provide adult learners with affordable, flexible, stackable credential- and degree-based programming that is aligned with the needs of the adult learner population and their employers.

This is an evolving, transformational concept within higher education; the UMS is developing a plan which is designed to put it at the forefront of this rapidly expanding approach to skill and credential attainment closely aligned with the needs of the state's economy and workforce. The Workforce Engagement Report issued in March 2019 gave a preview of this concept; The Report and Recommendations of the Micro Credential Steering Committee will be presented at the May 2019 UMS Board of Trustees meeting.

Academic News

EAB-Navigate

EAB (formerly Education Advisory Board) provides technology and techniques designed to maximize student success and completion. From the beginnings of the Foundation tool, which provide predictive analytics associated with student success and risk within key course and major milestones (all seven campuses participate in this tool), to the current Navigate suite currently implemented at three campuses (UMA, UMM, UMPI) with another scheduled for this summer (UM), our work with EAB enables campus teams to identify patterns of student success and failure, plan strategic interventions, coordinate student support, measure impact of these interventions, enable advisors to "nudge" students at critical points in the semester, provide more intentional success coaching to students, and allow mobile access to scheduling and success messaging.

As part of the Fall 2018 rollout of Navigate, our campuses identified pilots as a way to introduce this work:

* UMA began this work with a campaign focused on student engagement and appointment scheduling, and is expanding this to a progress report initiative for TRIO students and select faculty advisors, a pilot early alert project and a pilot appointment initiative for unenrolled students.

* UMM focused its first work on progress reports at weeks 2, 4 and 8 (identified 250 students at risk; ad hoc interventions put in place); follow up advising appointments were scheduled and 64% of those tidenified at risk followed through and ultimately re-registered for Spring 2019. There was an 81.6% Fall to Spring retention rate for those student who were a part of the appointment/registration project.

* UMPI developed a "central command" case management model to handle faculty-issued alerts. Progress reports were sent to all students at the midterm point of the semester, alerts that needed intervention automatically created a "case" and a "central command" staff member triaged this and arranged for advisor follow up and multiple connections to the student. UMPI reported far more effective outreach and much faster response and support for the student; 71% of the students identified in this way and who had a positive outcome of the intervention (90% of the total identified) persisted into the Spring 2019 semester.

Pending Program Approval Policy Revision

Over the past year and a half, a group of faculty and administrators (loosely referred to as the "multi-campus approval task force) has been exploring options for collaborative, expedited approval of multi-campus programs across the UMS. Eventually, those discussions led to the realization that the process of program approval, multi-campus or otherwise, was simply too cumbersome, both as a function of Board of Trustees (BOT) policy requirements and, in some cases, campus-based processes. Calls for university nimbleness in academic programming have been evident in the higher education literature for at least 40 years (i.e., my career in higher education), but have been difficult to achieve, with the exception of some experimental academic units. Within the UMS, the length of time for program approval varies across the seven campuses from about four months to up to two years in some cases.

Over time, a recommendation evolved in the task force around the idea that program approval could be streamlined with two simple revisions to BOT policy: (a) elimination of the "intent-to-plan" process, and (b) elimination of mandatory external review of new program proposals. These revisions to the BOT program approval policy have been uniformly endorsed in meetings with the Chief Academic Officers Council, the Presidents Council, the BOT faculty representatives, and others. Thus, such changes to the existing program approval policy will be presented to the BOT for consideration as an information item in May and likely as an action item in July.

One additional change will be presented to the BOT involving the need for a consultation with either the UMS or a campus-based institutional research office to investigate the potential demand for the program under consideration. The UMS recently has made available to all campuses a new software resource to analyze program and labor demand in real time. The consultation is intended to replace the laborious analysis and justification of program demand in both the current intent-to-plan and final program proposal processes. Consultation with institutional researchers likely requires no more than an hour or so, and can yield a wealth of information regarding competitor institutions, number of graduates, # of job postings, most often requested skill sets, projected job demand over the next 10 years, related careers opportunities, etc. – all by user-determined region(s). Each campus has access to the new software access for use in other endeavors.

Lastly, to ensure timely campus review of program proposal submissions, the Chief Academic Officers will be asked to explore in the coming year with their campuses new program evaluation strategies to ensure campus review of any new program proposal within 120 days of submission (i.e., basically one semester). Such changes in BOT policy and campus processes should accelerate the rate of new program review and implementation.

Early College

Early College

Early College programs allow high school students to enroll in college courses and earn credits for their high school and college transcripts. By providing tuition-free courses to high school students, they earn transferable credits upon matriculation to a university. UMS Early College students follow the national trend and are typically more successful at university than high school students without Early College experience. For example, UMS Early College students 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%). Because Early College students have higher retention and persistence rates, it follows that they will have less debt upon graduation and will have a higher likelihood of finishing in four or fewer years. UMS has set aside $385,000 in scholarships for Early College students as an incentive to matriculate to a UMS campus, reducing the debt burden. In addition, it is estimated that Early College students save up to $14,000 in tuition, fees and other expenses based on transferring up to 30 credits to a UMS campus.

To support the high school students in their Early College efforts, the UMS provides student success support with strategies such as 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. In addition, the UMS has provided funds to incentivize innovative strategies from UMS campuses to develop other student success support, especially as Early College students transition to the university campuses, when they often need the most support. The UMS Early College network is also actively participating in the National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), a national organization that supports the network of members sharing best practices, research and advocacy (www.nacep.org), to help spur new innovative ideas.

Campus News

University of Maine at Augusta

UMA's Bachelors of Architecture just was approved for external accreditation. UMA's program is the only such public offering in New England. Eric Stark(eric.stark@maine.edu) is the program coordinator, and he can provide more details. This was over 8 years in the making...so we are all excited (and a bit relieved!)

University of Maine at Machias

This spring, the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Machias approved new initiatives designed to address the need for special education teachers in Maine. UM's Elementary Education students will now have the option to complete an Area of Specialization in special education. This 24 credit hour specialization comprised of special education courses offered through UMM will enhance knowledge and skill in working with students who have special needs, as well as provide coursework toward an additional teaching endorsement in special education.

Students in this program will also benefit from a new 4+1 agreement in special education created under the UM-UMM primary partnership. Through the 4+1 agreement, students enrolled in UM's Elementary Education program with an Area of Specialization in Special Education, UMM's Bachelor of Education with a Concentration in Special Education, or UMM's postbaccalaureate Teacher Certification in Special Education Program will be able to articulate 12 credit hours in special education coursework into UM's M.Ed in Special Education.

Academic News

University of Maine System Board of Trustees' Declaration of Strategic Priorities

In December, 2018 the University of Maine System Board of Trustees (BOT) issued the **UMS Declaration of Strategic Priorities** to unite "Maine's public universities in the common purpose of higher education" and to provide direction to the UMS leadership and campuses to address "critical student and State needs in service to the people, communities, and businesses of Maine." In the declaration of priorities, four goals were outlined:

1. *Advancing Workforce Readiness and Economic Development*
2. *Increasing Maine Educational Attainment*
3. *Aligning Academic Programs and Innovation to Drive Student Success and Employer Responsiveness*
4. *Maintaining Competitiveness and Sustainability to Meet Critical State Needs*

Throughout the document, key themes of cooperation and collaboration remain an emphasis for the UMS, but with a greater focus on nimbleness and responsiveness in responding to the state's needs and overall challenges facing higher education in Maine and throughout the nation. As an example of this greater sense of urgency, Goal 3 includes the development of process(es), procedures, and structure that "foster rapid, responsive program development, deployment, and evaluation."

The complete *Declaration of Strategic Priorities* can be found at:
http://staticweb.maine.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Declaration-of-Strategic-Priorities-as-of-12-18-18-1.pdf?0d0f03

In addition to the Declaration, two other resources that provide valuable insights into the BOT's expectations include a Workforce Engagement report (Workforce Engagement Report) developed earlier this semester to support Goal 1, as well as a report on adult degree completion (Adult Degree Completion) being used in conjunction with adult educational attainment in Goal 2. Further, a steering committee has been hard at work in developing a framework and report for a coherent micro-credentialing strategy across the UMS as an outcome from Goals 1, 2 and 3. The latter report with a micro-credentialing recommendation should be available in early summer. As this work suggests, throughout the coming year and with the upcoming hire of a new Chancellor, the Declaration obviously will be the foundation for strategic planning throughout the UMS, but particularly related to academic programming and processes. We look forward to engaging the faculty and CAOs in this work and the discussions.

Academic News

Fort Kent and Presque Isle Nursing Partnership Off to a Great Start

In a desire to both expand its ability to address the nursing shortage in its region and contribute to a growing partnership with its sibling institution, the University of Maine at Fort Kent is now delivering its nursing curriculum to the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Through this collaboration, students at UMPI can earn a BSN by taking all their general education and introductory requirements from that university, and their upper-level nursing courses through UMFK without having to travel to Fort Kent. The UMPI curriculum and modality mirrors the UMFK nursing students' experience, with UMFK faculty mentoring UMPI nursing students throughout their program.

The nursing partnership launched this past fall and currently enrolls 16. The program is already demonstrating its potential with nearly 50 applicants for fall 2019. Clinical placements will be done locally, thus supporting needs in the Presque Isle and Houlton areas and minimizing travel for those students. Dr. Erin Soucy, Dean of Undergraduate Nursing at UMFK, cites a shared "student-centered emphasis" for the success of this partnership, specifically acknowledging that "the UMPI faculty, staff, and leadership are welcoming and gracious, helping nursing faculty new to the UMPI campus feel comfortable in their new teaching environment".

For its part, UMPI has been responsive and supportive even going so far as to devote some of its bond funding to build a dedicated simulation nursing lab for students on its campus. President Ray Rice indicated his unfaltering support for the agreement as one that allows local students to take advantage of the Pell-eligible financial aid packaging at UMPI while they pursue their career goals and meet what he calls the "urgent healthcare needs" of the central and southern regions of Aroostook county. He further stated, "This is a great example of how institutions can collaborate in sharing faculty and aligning resources to provide the highest quality instruction to our communities".

The project is an exemplar of multi-campus collaboration, and reflects a commitment from both institutions to provide avenues for student success and career preparation while addressing the region's need for trained nurses. As one first-year nursing student at UMPI recently told the Board of Trustees, "I am so grateful that the University of Maine at Fort Kent has expanded its Bachelor of Science in Nursing program to Presque Isle so I can follow my dream of having a great career in Nursing without the constraints of commuting an hour each way for my coursework. I have three young children and having a shorter commute is a real help because, like many others, I have to juggle school with a busy family life and associated work. Having UMFK deliver this program on the UMPI campus is especially important for place-bound students like me, who want specific healthcare careers, but need a Bachelor's degree in order to pursue further education. My plan is to become a Certified Nurse Midwife and the work UMFK is doing to offer their BSN program in Presque Isle is perfectly suited to my career path."

Academic News

2019 PIF Awards

In order to address challenges facing higher education in our state, the University of Maine System launched the Program Innovation Fund (PIF) to support and foster the development of collaborative academic programs vital to the success of seven campuses of the UMS and ultimately the State of Maine. The 2019-2019 PIF criteria closely aligned with Board priorities: address workforce needs, increase adult attainment, and develop credentials of value, with enrollment growth, collaboration, feasibility, and expediency completing the list.

This year's PIF process began on September 21, 2018 with a request for pre-proposals from interested faculty on each of the seven campuses. A total of twenty pre-proposals were submitted. Of these, fifteen were selected by the Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC) to move forward to the full proposal stage and twelve were finally submitted. Eight of those proposals have been selected for full or partial funding:

- *Increasing Workforce Development Programmatic Capacity for Working Learners through CBE*– (UMPI lead campus)

- *Core Education Tailored to the Adult Online Student*– (UMF and UM)

- *Mental Health and Rehabilitation Cooperative Minor*– (UMM and UM)

- *Credentialing Maine Adults for Transition into Careers in Information Systems and Computing*– (UM lead campus, with UMM, UMPI, USM, UMF, and UMA)

- *A Pilot for Enhancing Nurses' Competency at Graduation through Clinical Immersion* – (USM and UMA

- *Aquaculture Workforce Development: Aquatic Systems, Health and Husbandry*– (UM and UMM)

- *Northern and Downeast Pilot to Expand Inclusive Early Childhood Education*– (UMM and UMPI)

- *Portable Dental Assisting Program*– (UMA and UMPI)

Summaries of proposals and their progress will be available on the VCAA website.