Substantive Change Request
for Unified Accreditation of the

University of Maine System

Presented to the New England
Commission of Higher Education

June 10, 2020

Maine's
Public
Universities

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

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June 10, 2020

New England Commission of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803-4514

RE: Unified Accreditation

President Brittingham and NECHE Commissioners:

Acting under the authority of the University of Maine System Board of Trustees' January 27, 2020 Resolution on unified accreditation, the Presidents of the currently accredited universities that make up the University of Maine System and I now formally request that the Commission unify their separate institutional accreditations and accredit them together as the University of Maine System.

The UMS Board Resolution authorizing this request, an executed Cover Page for Substantive Change Requests, and the Substantive Change Request for Unified Accreditation for the University of Maine System accompany this transmittal letter.

We look forward to the Commission's consideration and approval of unified accreditation.

Respectfully submitted,

Dannel P. Malloy
Chancellor

James R. Erwin, Chair
Board of Trustees

Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President
University of Maine
University of Maine at Machias

Rebecca M. Wyke, President
University of Maine at Augusta

Edward Serna, President
University of Maine at Farmington

Tex Boggs, President
University of Maine at Fort Kent

Raymond J. Rice, President
University of Maine
at Presque Isle

Glenn A. Cummings, President
University of Southern Maine

Ryan Low, Vice Chancellor
Finance and Administration

Robert Placido, Vice Chancellor
Academic Affairs

James B. Thelen, Chief of Staff
to the Chancellor and General
Counsel

Maine's
Public
Universities

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

January 28, 2020

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FR: Ellen N. Doughty, Clerk of the Board
RE: Notification of Board Actions

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees on January 26-27, 2020 hosted by the University of Maine, the Board approved the following action:

Unified Accreditation Authorization.
The Board of Trustees approved the following resolution:

The University of Maine System Board of Trustees directed the Chancellor and UMS University Presidents to prepare and submit an appropriate substantive change application to the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) to transition the current separate UMS university institutional accreditations to a unified institutional accreditation for the University of Maine System, covering all of its universities, in such time as to permit NECHE's initial consideration by June 30, 2020.

Board approval for unified accreditation is subject to the following conditions:

1. Unified accreditation must be planned, applied for, and administered in such ways as will follow the University of Maine System Charter, the Guiding Principles established by the Chancellor in consultation with System University Presidents, the Board's policies on academic freedom and shared governance, and current labor agreements. The unified accreditation model planned and developed by the Chancellor and UMS University Presidents will be structured to achieve the highest quality student experience, academic program quality and relevance, and university financial stability in accord with the System's mission in service to the State of Maine.

2. As the UMS substantive change application to NECHE is developed, the Chancellor and UMS University Presidents will review UMS Board Policies to ensure alignment with the unified accreditation model developed in compliance with NECHE's Standards for Accreditation. The Chancellor and UMS University Presidents will report and provide recommendations to the Board no later than the May 2020 meeting of any changes in existing UMS Board policies, or necessary new policies, that should be adopted for alignment.

3. At each Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting and every other Board meeting through NECHE's comprehensive evaluation of UMS's unified accreditation, there will be a standing agenda item for the Chancellor and Presidents to report to the Board on progress, status, and issues. The Chancellor is directed to, as soon as is

Notification of Board Actions
January 26-27, 2020 Board Meeting

practical, present to the Board a project timeline and milestones, together with a tracking plan with which to monitor progress both toward achieving unified accreditation and the Board's strategic priorities that it advances.

4. Recognizing that NECHE's Standards for Accreditation themselves establish the essential elements of higher education institutional quality, by which UMS universities, acting together in the System in a unified accreditation model, will work together to improve the System's quality, increase its effectiveness, and continually strive for collaborative excellence, the Board expects that the process of developing the unified accreditation substantive change application and comprehensive evaluation report will necessarily identify opportunities to improve System quality on each of the NECHE Standards' elements. At the same time, the Board expects to maintain progress and momentum on its Declaration of Strategic Priorities and Key Performance Indicators. Therefore, as part of the report called for in Paragraph 3 above, the Chancellor will include proposals for aligning UMS's Strategic Priorities and KPIs with the outcomes intended to be achieved through unified compliance with NECHE's Standards at the System level.

5. It is the Board's expectation that unified accreditation will not require substantial increases to System administration or governance at the expense of university administration and governance or academic program and student support resources. UMS University Presidents and the Chancellor will develop and seek from NECHE a unified accreditation model that coordinates System and university-based resources in System-wide coordinated efforts to achieve compliance with NECHE Standards across the System, and sustain those changes to ensure high quality educational experiences in accord with the Standards.
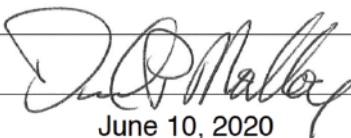
6. Appreciating the Chancellor's transparency in the unified accreditation effort to date, the Board directs that all System and university constituencies be updated regularly on the status of UMS's application for unified accreditation, progress toward achieving the same, and the nature and extent of challenges and successes that are encountered throughout the System and at UMS universities in the process.

cc:
Dannel Malloy, Chancellor
System Staff
Faculty & Student Representatives
University Presidents
Boards of Visitors

NECHE

New England Commission of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
Tel: 781-425-7785 I Fax: 781-425-1001 I neche.org

COVER PAGE FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE REQUESTS

Name of Institution	University of Maine System (UMS)
Type of proposed change (See Substantive Change Policy Pp72)	Joining separate units into a single accreditable institution.
Effective date of implementation	July 1, 2020 (requested)
Date of institutional governing board approval	January 27, 2020
Is state approval required?	x No ___ Yes, approved (date) _____ (Attach verification.)
Contact Person:	Name: Jim Thelen Title: Chief of Staff to the Chancellor, General Counsel Phone: 207-621-3441 Fax: 207-621-3074 e-mail: james.thelen@maine.edu
Please summarize the proposed change	The universities that make up the University of Maine System wish to unify their current separate institutional accreditations within the University of Maine System.
Signature of CEO:	
Date:	June 10, 2020

Introduction

The University of Maine System's present Substantive Change Request for Unified Accreditation is the culmination of five years of discussions with the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) about how Maine's public universities can increasingly share academic programs and limited resources in ways uniquely necessary in Maine to serve its people across a vast rural geography.

And the Request comes amidst challenges disrupting higher education nationally that have never been more acute – even before the onset of the present pandemic. The need for efficiency, collaboration, academic innovation, and market relevance in program planning, delivery, and assessment by and between Maine's public universities has never been greater.

In a time of increasingly constrained state budgets and declining demographics, Maine's public universities, acting together as the accredited System, will be able to share academic programs and resources far more efficiently, and in ways far better suited to serve Maine's people, even as they retain their own individual missions – complementary to the System's mission as a whole – and deliver properly resourced, high-quality, locally controlled academic programs and public services on their own.

Therefore, with the University of Maine System Board of Trustees' January 27, 2020 authorization that they do so, Maine's public universities now formally request that the Commission unify their separate institutional accreditations and accredit them together as the University of Maine System.

Across the span of UMS's 52-year history, the question of whether the separately accredited universities that make up the System have sufficiently coordinated, collaborated on, and integrated academic programming among them to best serve state-wide needs has been called again and again.

Indeed, the promise of the System's formation in 1968 was that Maine's public universities, mostly small and arguably underfunded, could offer more educational programs more effectively if they cooperated and coordinated between them to do so. But a statewide task force reviewing higher education in Maine in the mid-1980s judged that the System had not then yet developed a comprehensive assessment of Maine's needs for higher education opportunity, and also had not assessed how those needs could best be met by its program offerings and coordination between the System's universities. The task force commended each System university's attainment of regional accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (now NECHE) as having contributed to academic quality, but also presciently observed that *the process of separate campus accreditation failed to address how any one or more of the universities contributed to the overall quality, purpose, and mission of the statewide System.* The task force then boldly recommended that statewide/system-wide accreditation be considered:

> The Committee recommends that efforts be made to have the accreditation process apply to the University System as well as to the separate entities within it. … [T]he System as a whole has not received its own accreditation. There are instances throughout the country in which systemwide accreditation has been achieved. It would be desirable for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to give special attention to the System at some juncture in the future.[1]

The UMS Board's Educational Policy Committee at the time "applaud[ed]" the task force's accreditation recommendation, calling it a "novel and intriguing concept" and "an excellent opportunity to pioneer in the pursuit of excellence." The full Board agreed, voting on February 24, 1986 to "seek accreditation for the System in an appropriate time frame."[2]

Another review 10 years later, however, showed stalled progress, noting that "fine tuning" was still necessary to provide statewide vision, planning, coordination, and accountability across the System. Further, it noted concern both in Maine and nationally about the inefficiencies of duplication of programs and services among System universities at a time when state funding for higher education was shrinking. Finally, the review expressed concern that there was no clear information about, or availability or coordination of, statewide course and program offerings.[3]

Over the next two decades, facilities aged and costly-but-necessary maintenance was deferred. Enrollments failed to grow as projected. State appropriations did not keep pace with inflation or the System's rising expenses, and tuition rates climbed higher than Maine families could reasonably afford. Every System university budget was strained to varying degrees by some combination of all of the preceding factors. All the while, Maine's needs for market-relevant academic programs grew, and the number of sufficiently credentialed citizens failed to keep pace with job market changes and workforce needs. And across the System, each university's separate NEASC (NECHE) accreditation required that it maintain control over its own academic programming, with no clear standards to permit, let alone foster, innovative shared programs to make the most efficient use of limited academic resources between the System's universities.

The System began serious discussions with the Commission in 2015 about the possibility of one institutional accreditation for all System universities to better fulfill its statewide mission and coordinate its academic program offerings in a resource-constrained environment. A primary issue addressed in all discussions since that time is whether the System can meet its chartered mission to coordinate its academic program across and among all UMS universities with its universities separately accredited, requiring each to maintain control over its own academic program and be sufficiently resourced to meet all accreditation standards on its own.

Independent reviews commissioned by both NECHE and UMS all pointed toward the path down which UMS now

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[1] Report of the Visiting Committee to the University of Maine, at 15, 17, 24 (R. Strider II, Chair, January 1986).

[2] See "A Review and Evaluation of The Report of the Visiting Committee," at 4 (UMS Board of Trustees Educational Policy Committee, February 24, 1986); and UMS Board Minutes, at 6, February 24, 1986.

[3] Final Report of the Commission on Higher Education Governance, App. Four, at 15–16, 18 (State of Maine, 1996).

wishes to travel. Dr. Ellen Chaffee, retained by the System in 2015–2016 to facilitate academic portfolio integration, recommended a System-level accreditation in her 2016 report to the UMS Board to overcome the barriers that separate university accreditations imposed to greater multi-university academic collaboration. Aims McGuinness, in an April 2017 review for NECHE of UMS's unified financial structure and multi-university collaborative program plans, encouraged the Commission to work collaboratively with UMS to explore opportunities for new thinking about institutional accreditation. And together, UMS and NECHE retained legal counsel Jay Urwitz, who opined that the System itself could be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an accredited entity, a view that has been favorably received by Department of Education staff.

Finally, the System's Board issued a declaration in December 2018 that prioritized the expansion of market-relevant collaborative and multi-university academic programs that could better serve statewide workforce and economic development needs — a priority bolstered by the State of Maine's own recent Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020–2029. It will take the full coordinated effort of the System's universities working together to expand academic programming and research across the state to meet the Strategy's goal of adding 75,000 properly credentialed people to Maine's workforce over the next 10 years.

Unified accreditation is a bold step forward, not only for UMS — which the Chronicle of Higher Education had already labeled "a laboratory for the future of public higher education" for its work to share resources and programs between its universities[4] — but also for NECHE and the U.S. Department of Education for their roles.

The reasons for UMS transitioning to a unified accreditation now range from the pioneering and noble to the pragmatic. The foundation and outcome of the effort must of course be improved service to students, enriched and more relevant academic programming, and the highest standard of academic quality, all achieved through the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars that ensures the survival of UMS universities where they are in service to the people of Maine.

The narrative that follows describes how the University of Maine System, acting as a unified accredited entity for and through its universities, meets the *Standards of Accreditation.* ■

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[4]Gardner, L., 'How Maine Became a Laboratory for the Future of Public Higher Ed," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 25, 2018.

Standard One
Mission and Purpose

The seven distinct universities that form the University of Maine System (UMS) are united as a single legal entity with the common purpose of providing first-rate higher education at a reasonable cost in order to improve the quality of life for Maine's citizens. UMS universities range from a high research activity land grant university to a masters' level university in an urban setting to a small public liberal arts university to smaller rural regional anchor universities. UMS's public universities, through their campuses, centers, facilities, and extension sites spread across Maine, New England's largest and the nation's most rural state, together carry out public higher education's traditional tripartite mission – teaching, research, and public service to the state. And acting together in the System, Maine's public universities are a major resource for the state, directly linking the education of its people and the application of research and scholarship with Maine's civic and economic health and growth.

UMS is chartered to "develop, maintain and support a structure of public higher education in the State which will assure *the most cohesive system possible* for planning, action, and service in providing higher educational opportunities" to Maine's citizens.[5] UMS is charged to implement its charter so that the benefits of an appropriate higher education are available to all of its citizens.[6] Maine State law requires the System to maintain its present universities – the University of Maine (UM), the University of Maine at Machias (UMM), the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA), the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF), the University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK), the University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI), and the University of Southern Maine (USM) – where they are.[7] (1.1, 1.3)

UMS's Board of Trustees, appointed by Maine's Governor, is the System's governing and planning body. One of its most important responsibilities is the approval of mission statements and strategic plans for the System as a whole and each of its universities. UMS Board Policy 301 recognizes that mission statements and strategic plans for both the System and its universities provide a framework for the development of appropriate programs and services. To meet the System's overall mission of teaching, research, and public service to the state of Maine, the Board recognizes that the universities' missions and strategic plans must each be in alignment with the System's strategic plan and mission, and be both broad enough to allow the flexibility required by vital, responsive universities and, at the same time, limited enough to define the specific roles of each university within the context of the seven-university System. (1.2, 1.4)

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[5] 20-A Maine Rev Stat §10902(3) (emphasis added); and UMS Charter, §1-A.

[6] 20-A Maine Rev Stat §10902(6).

[7] 20-A Maine Rev Stat §10901-A(1)(A-G). These provisions of Maine state law do not define "university" or provide how the System's universities are to be accredited (e.g., separately or together). The University of Maine at Machias, as the Commission knows, has been accredited as a re-gional campus/additional location of the University of Maine since July 1, 2018.

The Board envisions that successful mission statements will provide direction for strategic planning, allowing the System as a whole and its universities to offer leadership in education, research, and public service for the future, while responding to the state of Maine's immediate needs and challenges. (1.1, 1.4)

System and university-specific mission statements are subject to review and approval by the UMS Board on a five-year cycle, although the Board, in consultation with the UMS Chancellor, may call for review and revision of a mission or strategic plan outside of that normal cycle. (1.5)

University-level mission statements are the product of a university-wide discussion and deliberation led by that university's president, discussion with the Chancellor, and approval from the university and then the Chancellor before UMS Board review and approval at a regularly-scheduled public Board meeting. Mission statements for the System as a whole and each university are posted on the UMS website. (1.2)

The role that each university plays in the System's overall mission is reflected in that university's most recent Board-approved individual mission (1.5), each of which are provided following the System's mission here:

UMS Board Policy Section 301.1: University of Maine System Mission

The University of Maine System unites seven distinctive public universities in the common purposes of providing first-rate higher education at reasonable cost in order to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Maine. The System, through its universities, carries out the traditional tripartite mission – teaching, research, and public service. As a System, it extends its mission as a major resource for the state, linking economic growth, the education of its people, and the application of research and scholarship.

The University of Maine System Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Chancellor, is the governing and planning body of the University System responsible for developing and maintaining a cohesive structure of public higher education in the state of Maine. As such, the Board has final authority over all matters within its jurisdiction, including all educational, public service, and research policies, as well as all personnel and financial policies. The Board provides leadership on higher education policy within the System and the state, is committed to strengthening the unique characteristics of each university's mission, and advocates aggressively for adequate resources to support the System and its universities.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.2: University of Maine Mission

The University of Maine advances learning and discovery through excellence and innovation in undergraduate and graduate academic programs while addressing the complex challenges and opportunities of the 21st century through research-based knowledge.

Opportunity for all members of the University of Maine community is a cornerstone of our mission. The university welcomes students, research partners and collaborators into an atmosphere that honors the heritage and diversity of our state and nation.

Founded in 1865, the University of Maine is the Land and Sea Grant institution and the flagship campus of the University of Maine System. This vibrant and dynamic university serves the residents of Maine, the nation, and the world through our acclaimed programs in teaching, research, and outreach.

Inspiring and dedicated teaching propels students into new fields of learning and promotes interdisciplinary understanding. Our educational goals are to help students develop their creative abilities, communication, and critical thinking skills, and understanding of traditions in ethics and rationality within the arts, sciences, and professions.

Internationally recognized research, scholarship, and creative activity distinguish the University of Maine as the state's flagship university, where faculty and students contribute knowledge to issues of local, national, and international significance. As the state's doctoral-granting institution, research and education are inextricably linked.

Comprehensive outreach, including public service, Cooperative Extension, continuing education, and distance learning, engages learners of all ages in improving their lives and communities. Using research-based knowledge, outreach efforts promote sustainable use of Maine's abundant natural resources and build intellectual, cultural, and economic capacity throughout Maine and beyond.

Through integrated teaching, research, and outreach, the University of Maine improves the quality of life for people in Maine and around the world, and promotes responsible stewardship of human, natural, and financial resources.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.3: University of Southern Maine Mission

The University of Southern Maine, northern New England's outstanding public, regional, comprehensive university, is dedicated to providing students with a high quality, accessible, affordable education. Through its undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, USM faculty members educate future leaders in the liberal arts and sciences, engineering and technology, health and social services, education, business, law and public service. Distinguished for their teaching, research, scholarly publication and creative activity, the faculty are committed to fostering a spirit of critical inquiry and civic participation. USM embraces academic freedom for students, faculty, and staff, and advocates diversity in all aspects of its campus life and academic work. It supports sustainable development, environmental stewardship, and community involvement. As a center for discovery, scholarship and creativity, USM provides resources for the state, the nation, and the world.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.4: University of Maine at Augusta Mission

UMA transforms the lives of students of every age and background across the state of Maine and beyond through access to high-quality distance and on-site education, excellent student support and civic engagement, and innovative professional and liberal arts programs.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.5: University of Maine at Farmington Mission

As a premier teacher education and public liberal arts college for the state of Maine, the University of Maine at Farmington prepares students for engaged citizenship, enriching professional careers, and an enduring love of learning.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.6: University of Maine at Fort Kent Mission

UMFK will nurture and engage a diversity of learners and aspiring professionals in Maine's rural communities and beyond through affordable, technologically-enhanced and professionally-focus education programs.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.7: University of Maine at Machias Mission

Through our Environmental Liberal Arts core, distinctive baccalaureate programs, and student-centered community, the University of Maine at Machias creates enriching educational opportunities that prepare graduates for professional success and lifelong engagement with the world. UMM embodies an active community of diverse learners who share a commitment to exploration, leadership, collaboration, and interdisciplinary problem solving. Inspired by our unique coastal location, UMM's creative energy, applied research, and community engagement enhance the social, cultural, economic, and natural environments of the state of Maine.

UMS Board Policy Section 301.8: University of Maine at Presque Isle Mission

The University of Maine at Presque Isle is an undergraduate institution in rural Maine that
- nurtures the intellectual and personal development of students who want to own their learning and use it to better themselves, their communities and the world
- supports research-based pedagogical techniques and a campus setting to promote deep learning
- partners with accreditors to set high academic standards for every student and every program
- embraces technological innovation while preserving the power of personal mentoring
- connects to our alumni and employers in Aroostook County, the state of Maine, and western New Brunswick to provide real-world work experience prior to graduation and to connect graduates with employment prospects
- provides educational opportunities for adult and distance learners as well as community members throughout Aroostook County and western New Brunswick
- stimulates regional economic development and enhances the region's quality of life through research, public service, and cultural and athletic programming, and
- promotes environmental sustainability.

University of Maine School of Law

While not provided for in the UMS Charter, State law, or Board policy as a separate unit of the University of Maine System, the University of Maine School of Law is in the midst of a governance transition from being a part of the University of Southern Maine (where it has been recognized as such for U.S. Department of Education Title IV purposes) to being directly governed, effective July 1, 2021, by UMS in a similar manner to how System universities are governed.

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

As noted previously, System and university-specific mission statements are subject to review and approval by the UMS Board on a five-year cycle, although the Board, in consultation with the UMS Chancellor, may call for review and revision of mission statements outside that normal cycle. As part of the Self-Study process following initial unified accreditation, the Board is expected to review the mission statements for the System, each university, and the law school to ensure alignment among them and the overall goals of improving teaching, research, and public service in the state of Maine through the enhanced collaboration and resource-sharing unified accreditation is expected to permit and foster. (1.5). ■

Standard Two
Planning and Evaluation

There are several levels of planning and evaluation across the University of Maine System (UMS) starting with the fiduciary and oversight responsibilities of its Board of Trustees. The Board governs major System planning initiatives implemented through the offices of the Chancellor and Vice Chancellors (of Academic Affairs and Finance and Administration). Board committees (Executive, Academic and Student Affairs; Audit; Finance, Facilities, and Technology; Human Resources and Labor Relations; and Investment) operate to ensure fiscal and functional acumen and viability for the System. Specific responsibilities for each may be found here.

Additionally, the Board meets yearly with the universities' Boards of Visitors in a retreat format to develop a broader understanding of university-specific, as well as statewide and System-wide issues, and to establish a shared sense of priorities. The Board also holds its own retreat, most recently in October 2019, which yielded a set of action items aligned with both NECHE Standards and the Board's own strategic priorities established in December 2018. These strategic priorities advance outcomes adopted by the Board in May 2016 to serve the educational needs of Maine's citizens and strengthen the economy of the state. The strategic priorities include advancing workforce readiness and economic development, as well as position the institution to improve student success and enhance UMS fiscal stability.

There are also several System-level work groups that coordinate planning and evaluation for specific functional areas. The Presidents Council, under the purview of the Chancellor, addresses shared administrative concerns at the senior-most level, and coordinates action on issues that affect most or all universities (e.g. COVID-19 efforts, statewide initiatives, and other large-scale efforts that require continuity planning and response). The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) manages the Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC), which addresses multi-university academic programming, collaborative opportunities, program approval and assessment processes, policy and process concerns, and discusses faculty hiring requests. The group shares program plans and the VCAA maintains the System's portfolio of all academic programs. Other UMS professional groups, such as the librarians, enrollment managers, student affairs officers and chief business officers, meet regularly to discuss issues in common, seek collaborative approaches to solving problems, and work toward a shared understanding of responsibilities.

The Chancellor recently convened a UMS Faculty Shared Governance Committee to maintain curricular oversight of multi-university programs and provide input into System academic policies. The VCAA is now working directly with that group in furtherance of academic initiatives related to multi-university programming. The group is also providing input into academic policy proposals and this substantive change request.

Participation in planning and evaluation activities is widespread across the System, and communication efforts include electronic and in-person outreach to multiple constituencies. The Chancellor's 61 campus visits and meetings in fall 2019 and early spring 2020, for example, provided multiple opportunities for faculty, staff, Boards of Visitors, alumni, and others to raise questions and provide feedback on the System's pursuit of unified accreditation. As part of its commitment to transparency, the UMS also facilitated two System-wide surveys and set up a publicly accessible website for all documentation related to unified accreditation.

Resource distribution across the System is in both personnel and expertise, and in budget allocations. The UMS has multiple offices that manage System-level activities and that support the universities. All offices include a planning function for the System, and each evaluates its effectiveness through ongoing review. The full list of UMS offices and their functions can be found here. Strategic Procurement, for example, handles requests for proposals, bids, and contracts. UMS Institutional Research (IR), housed in the VCAA's office, provides data for multiple System-wide and university-specific research needs.

System-level planning and evaluation require ready and accurate data. The System officially created UMS IR in 2016, expanding on the one IR analyst position already in place. The first two analysts, of what would become a three-person office, collaborated with UMS Information Technology (IT) to build the infrastructure for managing data integrity, reporting, and analysis. The UMS IR team collaborates with university reporting officials on student records, financial aid, human resources, and financial data. A third analyst was hired in March 2020 to focus on data modeling.

In its first three years, the UMS IR team in collaboration with UMS IT helped to standardize data definitions across seven universities, create a data governance structure, and begin to develop a data warehouse. Some of the UMS universities maintain independent IR offices, whose work the UMS IR team augments by adding a System-wide lens and scope. Other UMS universities do not have a local IR team, in which case the UMS IR team provides all their data analysis needs.

The UMS IR team also collects and manages the data for the university Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to strategically manage their academic programs. This process is called the Programs for Examination (PFE, described below within Evaluation, and in more detail in Standard Four). In addition to collecting and analyzing internal data, the UMS IR team manages relationships with external data sources (e.g. Maine Department of Education, Maine Department of Labor, National Student Clearinghouse, IPEDS, Burning Glass Technologies, and more) making those data available for UMS planning and evaluation purposes. (2.2)

Planning

The UMS engages in effective strategic planning directives in concert with the Board and the senior leadership of the universities. The Board's 2018 Declaration of Strategic Priorities was adopted "to strategically guide resource allocation and investment within UMS through 2021." The Declaration amplifies and refines the four primary and two secondary outcomes from the Board's 2016 plan (increase enrollment, improve student success and completion, enhance UMS fiscal positioning, support Maine through research and economic development; and pursue relevant academic programing and university workforce engagement respectively). With this document, the Board specifically charged the UMS leadership with the achievement of strategic goals undertaken more collaboratively. Toward that end, and with some targeted allocations from the State Legislature, the UMS launched multiple coordinated initiatives to serve early college students, enhance adult degree completion, and establish micro-credentialing efforts across the System.

The Declaration has guided university strategic planning, as well, so that those plans align across the System with the Board's strategic priorities. Each campus shall have a long-term plan with tactical and strategic components that have cohesion with a System-wide strategic plans. The University of Maine's 2020 "Strategic Vision and Values" plan, for example, makes the alignment obvious in its pursuit of explicit goals around workforce development, research and service, and quality and efficiency. In 2018 the University of Southern Maine (USM)

adopted Vision 2028, a new academic vision to be realized over a 10-year period focused on four essential pillars of the student academic experience at USM. USM's call for the first round of "Pillar Grants" in support of Vision 2028 may be found here.

UMS also adopted a set of Guiding Principles in pursuing a System approach to accreditation that establishes guidelines for planning and communicating a transition to unified accreditation in a consistent and transparent manner.

Budgeting and strategic financial management are critical to all planning efforts. The Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration (VCFA) meets weekly with the universities' Chief Budget Officers (CBOs) for planning and coordination. The group serves as the management team for shared services. In that capacity they adopt best practices, solve problems in common, adhere to a budget calendar and process, and address specific issues that might emerge in the budget cycle (e.g. unemployment insurance rates, budget implications of union contracts, etc.). Decisions are reached by consensus, and apply to all universities with exceptions determined by the group. Planning is built into the budget process, and the results are evaluated on a regular basis with changes incorporated into the next cycle.

The UMS academic structure also requires robust and transparent planning efforts. Since 2018, under the leadership of the VCAA, the System has undertaken a review of academic policies toward greater policy coherence, which will be necessary under unified accreditation. Policies on academic program approvals have been revised, a System-wide policy on academic integrity has been developed, and an annual iterative process for examining the entire portfolio of programs across the System has been established (see below). The next step will be to create a "policy on policies" so that the System can continue to develop and systematize appropriate Board policies and administrative practices.

The CAOC routinely engages in cross-university strategic planning for academic programs, and its members benefit from System contracts with Hanover Research and Burning Glass Technologies to study trends, refine program proposals, and conduct program reviews. The group also shares results of the Programs for Examination (PFE) iterative process to find opportunities for collaborative approaches. One example is the development of a shared French language program between the University of Maine (UM) and the University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK). The program was slated for elimination at UMFK, but this collaboration will allow students at both universities to major in French.

The CAOC has also been exploring opportunities for System-wide academic programs. In one example, under the leadership of President Joan Ferrini-Mundy, the UMS will be developing a proposal for a Doctor of Physical Therapy program. Burning Glass Technologies labor and market data and direct consultation with professionals in the field indicated a strong need for the program and the potential success of a collaborative approach. Another promising approach to developing system-wide programs is being prototyped by the Maine Geospatial Institute (MGI). This is a collaboration organized by Geographical Information System (GIS) faculty and staff professionals in all seven universities. The group has worked together for three years to create the Institute, which is now supported by funds from the UMS Program Innovation Fund (PIF), which was developed to incentivize and support innovative academic collaborations that expand opportunities and address regional and state needs while attracting and retaining students. The MGI draws on the diverse strengths of people in all seven universities, each of whom makes unique contributions to the organization. The cornerstones of the group's success are a shared academic mission, the absence of a hierarchy, and a governance structure giving equal voice to all members. USM and the University of

Maine at Augusta (UMA) now offer master's degrees in Cybersecurity with a shared, collaborative curriculum so that students can seamlessly move among courses at either university. The collaborative nature of this degree allowed the two universities to pool resources to offer a degree neither one could have offered alone. UM and USM are currently working to design a pre-Artificial Intelligence curriculum that will prepare students in any major at both universities to enter graduate programs in AI.

The VCAA also meets monthly with the Enrollment Management Council to share ideas, discuss and align tuition rates, develop recruitment and orientation strategies, explore co-branding opportunities and streamline processes. One example of the latter is the recent examination and implementation of more streamlined processes within the shared processing center (opened in 2006) to process applications with greater efficiency.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis has underscored the primacy of planning at the System level. UMS has been able to address the needs of the state and support its communities through careful coordination of planning and resources during this crisis. University incident commanders have been meeting daily with the UMS Chief Facilities and Management and General Services Officer. The Presidents and their senior staff have also been meeting regularly with the Chancellor and his staff to coordinate policy and practices in alignment with State and federal protocols. These meetings include planning, coordination, and regular debriefing to evaluate actions taken and further actions needed, the results of which will undoubtedly inform the System's response to and ability to plan for future crises. (2.3)

Recommendations and actions from the Board are grounded in the committee structure outlined above before moving to the full Board for final decisions. The Board also hosts an annual two-day retreat to develop and discuss strategic directions with university Presidents and System staff. A draft form of the previously mentioned Declaration of Strategic Priorities emerged from that planning process, and was further expanded to encompass UMS workforce development and state service initiatives.

UMS has already centralized important System-wide services in finance, human resources, information technology and application processing to strategically manage System resources more efficiently. Savings realized from those efforts are applied to System and university priorities. The UMS also developed a new financial allocation model, which compares peer funding levels, to establish appropriate funding for universities and the System to achieve priority goals. (2.4)

Multiple indicators demonstrate System success in implementing its plans. The UMS peer-based budget model allows it to develop those plans more effectively. Using Hanover Research expertise, each university has a set of peer institutions against which to measure its resources and needs for the annual budget cycle, and can adjust the list of peers as statuses change. Academic program approvals and the PFE processes demonstrate ongoing, iterative program planning and assessments across the System. The planning and communication efforts at each university toward unified accreditation were the result of System-wide coordination. The UMS appropriately responded to Board priorities by embedding them in university strategic planning and related System initiatives. (2.5)

Evaluation

The System regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes through the use of internal and external data and research. The UMS asks Hanover Research, for example, to conduct comparative and benchmarking analyses of a variety of targeted studies including use of library fees, student attrition and return rates, part-time faculty salaries, university peers, and more. The UMS and its universities also use Burning Glass

Technologies market and labor studies in program planning, program proposals, and assessment processes. Burning Glass Technologies is just one source purchased by UMS for System-wide use, and rapidly emerging fields will be studied for appropriateness and may require additional sources. The PFE process (described in greater detail below and in Standard Four) is another strategy employed for evaluating the educational mission of the System, and maintaining its quality. Each of the above reflects evidence-based practices employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to support the System and its statewide educational, research, and service mission. Furthermore, the UMS is committed to maintaining distinctive missions already in place at its universities to support its greater statewide reach and national resonance. These missions entail vital regional education and service to communities across the state (see Standard 1.1 for details).

The System routinely tracks data appropriate to achieving its mission, including generating annual reports focused on student success, first-generation students, enrollment metrics, financial aid and student debt, and completion reports. Key performance indicators, particularly those focused on financial and student matters, are tracked continuously on the UMS Dashboard. Additional tracking also takes place at the university level. The data serve as accountability metrics that inform university, System, and Board initiatives and planning efforts like providing targeted financial aid toward reducing student debt, or emphasizing adult learners in a climate of demographic decline for high school enrollments. Going forward there will be a balance of both quantitative and qualitative data in more visible and meaningful ways. (2.6)

Planning and evaluation are particularly critical for the academic programs that comprise the heart of the System's educational mission. The UMS has a well-developed program evaluation process in place, the details of which may be found in Section 305.3 posted on the System website.

Guided by the PFE process, under the authority of the VCAA, the System undertakes an annual review of each program in the System portfolio based on selected metrics including number of students in the major, number of dedicated faculty, number of graduates, and more. CAOs review PFE results for their university's programs and present the outcomes to the Board annually to demonstrate accountability. University and System leaders collaborate to determine whether a program should be grown, maintained, transformed, or suspended. The PFE process includes 242 Bachelor programs and 101 graduate programs. Each year the process expands the number and detail of the factors used for evaluation. The newest PFE model will include more than 20 data points. Working with the VCAA's office, the Faculty Leadership Group has developed protocols in line with Board policies and System processes to provide appropriate shared governance oversight for multi-university programs.

The PFE process has matured from initially being a way to identify programs that had become too small to maintain quality outcomes to a now being process that strategically manages UMS's entire academic program portfolio. As an example, in 2019, one university flagged just two programs of its 44 programs for further review due to their low number of degrees conferred. This year's PFE process has just begun, but the same university has identified 21 programs to grow, 15 to maintain, six to transform, and two to study further. These data will be aggregated at the System level for additional discussion, review, and action. Data from all the System's universities combined will provide a clear statewide picture of where investments can be made to create high-quality educational opportunities that best meet the needs of the state and our students.

The strength of the evolved PFE process is that it includes all key stakeholders. The PFE process begins with a self-study done by the academic department through each university's CAO. The process expands to a university-wide discussion, including appropriate academic shared governance bodies at the university level. The VCAA then

synthesizes all the evaluations to make recommendations to the Chancellor and the Board, thus giving the Chancellor and Board an effective means of carrying out their fiduciary responsibility.

Academic program review at each university in the System focuses on student outcomes and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning. The evaluation process includes review by external parties with multiple opportunities for students, alumni, program advisory boards, and other relevant constituencies to provide feedback during the review process. The results address educational improvement through understanding how and what students are learning in their academic program. The UMS will need to develop a plan for collecting student feedback at the System level; however, there is already a System-wide practice of deploying the National Survey of Student Engagement every three years, which could provide a model for a unified approach for gathering student feedback on program reviews. (2.7)

Throughout its enterprise and across its universities, the UMS practices a continuous improvement process that includes appropriate budget allocations and revised university peers selections with multiple opportunities for feedback from campus constituencies. The academic program approval and review processes ensure appropriate university- and System-level participation and evaluation. Among the latter is the PFE iterative process for ongoing assessment with results ranging from maintaining, revising, suspending, or eliminating programs. System-level work groups coordinate efforts and review results while aligning those efforts with Board directives and expectations. For its part, the Board has embedded in its calendar an annual cycle of planning and evaluation that touches on all aspects of the UMS mission through its own collective actions and its committees. (2.8)

With unified accreditation, the System will also adhere to all accreditation standards for those programs that have separate accreditors (e.g. Nursing, Education, Engineering, Business, etc.). In anticipation of the transition to unified accreditation, university academic leaders have been working with program-level accreditors to ensure that program accreditations remain intact.

For example, UM has confirmed that, upon application, AACSB will permit an ongoing unit-level (in other words, university level) program accreditation for the university's business programs. The university has also confirmed that transitioning to a unified System-level accreditation will not impact program-level accreditations from the International Society of Wood Science and Technology and the Society of American Foresters (for the School of Forest Resources' B.S. in Forest Operations, Bioproducts and Bioenergy), as well as the latter's program accreditation for the M.S. in Forestry and B.S in Parks, Recreation and Tourism. UM's engineering degree program accreditations, along with the engineering school's accreditation itself, all from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, will not be affected by a unified accreditation transition either, as ABET will permit separate, location-based/university-level program accreditation that is common at other multi-campus universities. More recently, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and the National Association of Schools of Music confirmed, respectively, that program level accreditations would continue for the university's B.A. in Art Education, Art History, Studio Art, and Music; B.F.A. in Studio Art; M.F.A. in Intermedia; and B.M. and M.M. in Music Education and Music Performance under unified accreditation.

Similarly, the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) has confirmed that Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation program-level accreditation for teacher preparation programs will continue when UMS transitions to a unified accreditation.

On the other hand, UMS has not yet finally determined how the Council on Social Work Education's separate program-level accreditations for the three UMS universities that offer undergraduate (University of Maine at

Presque Isle, USM, and UM) and graduate (USM and UM) Social Work degrees will be administered in a System-wide unified institutional accreditation model. And the program-level accreditation implications are not yet clear for Nursing either. All four UMS Nursing academic programs (UMA, UM, USM, and UMFK) are accredited, either by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), but work remains to confirm how to continue such accreditations with UMS as the accredited institution, as the UM encountered accreditation challenges in attempting to expand its Nursing curricula to its regional campus. the University of Maine at Machias (UMM), as part of the primary partnership between those universities.

With unified accreditation in the nascent stages, the matter merits continued attention. Program-level accreditors that have responded favorably have generally done so on the basis that the legal structure and authority of the university offering the accredited program is not changed under unified accreditation, as well as that the program continues to be offered by an accredited institution (UMS under unified accreditation). It is likely that, as long as UMS is accredited by NECHE, the majority of individual program accreditors will support continued program accreditation. UMS expects that the response of most individual program accreditors to unified accreditation will be that programs should continue operating as they have been. That said, following a transition to unified accreditation, some program accreditors may require some change(s) to the process of reaccrediting individual programs. Finally, those accreditors that either accredit multiple programs across the UMS or who generally require that all similar programs at an institution be accredited will probably require additional conversation, explanation, and effort for UMS's individual universities to maintain them.

Upon attaining unified accreditation, UMS recommends that it work with NECHE and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to develop a joint letter from the Chancellor and UMS Presidents that would be sent to every professional/program-level accreditor that accredits one or more programs in the UMS academic program inventory. Ideally, the letter would include:

1. an overview of unified accreditation steps taken to date;
2. a clear statement of why the change has occurred and what UMS universities collectively seek to achieve as a result;
3. assurances of our close working relationship with NECHE and the UMS Board of Trustees in transitioning to unified accreditation;
4. a request for individual accreditors to identify any barriers to continued program-level accreditation by their organizations as a function of UMS being the accredited entity, along with the steps necessary to remove those barriers; and
5. a commitment to respond to any questions or concerns accreditors may have and keep them apprised of developments/timeline/outcomes in the process, etc.

With unified accreditation, those academic programs that are accredited will have to work individually with their accreditors to clarify expectations as to how to proceed. UMS Academic Affairs, through the VCAA, can provide coordinated support to UMS universities to assist them with maintaining program-level accreditations. System-level coordination would be undertaken in a manner consistent with NECHE's Standards for Accreditation in a unified accreditation model, recognizing that a UMS university with an unaccredited program similar to one that is accredited at another UMS university, or vice versa, may require such coordination.

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

System-wide planning and evaluation efforts have inherent within them opportunities to learn, adapt, and improve, and unified accreditation will bring additional opportunities to check System and university initiatives for alignment and appropriateness. Continued communication to and from universities will further awareness about opportunities to be strategic and innovative in fulfilling the missions of the universities and the needs of the state of Maine.

This section highlighted ways in which the institution has identified early on that it can do more with regard to planning and evaluation. For example, the System has an opportunity now to strategically allocate resources beyond the current system of shared services and budget coordination. In order to facilitate this, each campus shall have a long-term plan with tactical and strategic components that have cohesion with a System-wide strategic plan.

The System has an opportunity now to rethink resource allocation more strategically beyond the shared services and budget coordination that is already in place. The UMS could use the current budget calendar and process to create funding for consensus priorities, like planning and evaluation, that require System-wide coordination and Presidential agreement. A particular initiative with System-wide implications, like enrollment and retention planning, could be proposed, discussed by the Presidents and senior System and university staff, and ultimately funded through targeted resource allocation prior to distributing budget allocations to the universities. (2.1). ■

Standard Three
Organization and Governance

Governing Board

The Charter *(P&S Laws 1985, chapter 532 as amended) of the University of Maine System (UMS), State law (Title 20-A MRSA, chapter 411)*, and the UMS Board of Trustees bylaws (Section 103) and policies describe the public policy on higher education; the authority and responsibilities of the Board and its appointed officers (Chancellor, Presidents, Treasurer, and Clerk); and the governance relationship among the Board, administration, faculty, and students.

The System is the institution for the purposes of demonstrating NECHE's Standards of Accreditation are met. The System is comprised of seven universities as required by Maine law: the University of Maine (Orono), the University of Maine at Augusta (Augusta and Bangor), the University of Maine at Farmington, the University of Maine at Fort Kent, the University of Maine at Machias, the University of Maine at Presque Isle, and the University of Southern Maine (Portland, Gorham and Lewiston-Auburn).

The Board is the governing and planning body of the System and is responsible for supporting and enhancing its mission, providing sound financial management, exercising prudent stewardship of the assets, evaluating the Chancellor and Presidents, allocating resources and planning strategies for programs that most effectively serve the educational needs of citizens, developing and maintaining a strong system of accountability to the public for performance results, visibly advocating for higher education as a means to strengthen the economy and communities of the state, and establishing mechanisms for review and approval of programs.

The Board has final authority over all matters within its jurisdiction, including all educational, research, and public service policies; financial policy; and the relation of the System to the State and federal governments.

The Board consists of 16 trustees appointed by the Governor. Fourteen trustees are appointed for five-year terms, a full-time student serves as a voting member for a two-year term, and the State Commissioner of Education serves as an ex-officio voting member.

The Board conducts its business through meetings of the full Board and its standing committee structure: Executive Committee; Academic and Student Affairs Committee; Audit Committee; Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee; Investment Committee; and Human Resources and Labor Relations Committee. Board Policy 206: Ethics Code and Conflict of Interest governs the ethical conduct of Board trustees. The Board annually engages in a self-evaluation process, as well as an evaluation of the Board chairperson's performance. The Board meets as a whole in-person six times per year to conduct business. Additionally, the standing committees meet in the intervening weeks. The Board also holds an annual two-day retreat as well as a yearly summit with the Boards of Visitors from all campuses.

Internal Governance

The Board appoints the Chancellor, the UMS Presidents, the Treasurer of the Board, and the Clerk of the Board. The Board also approves members of the Boards of Visitors for each of the UMS universities. The responsibilities

and authorities of these officers and the Boards of Visitors are defined in the Charter, State law, and the Board's bylaws and policies.

Under State law, the Chancellor is the chief administrative and education officer of the System. The Chancellor provides leadership to the System in addressing the state's highest priority needs; establishes a vision and planning to provide quality education that is affordable and accessible for students and strengthens the economy of the state; promotes planning for academic and student affairs, outreach and community services, financial operations, capital plans and resource allocations; prepares operating and capital budgets, appropriation requests and bond issues; takes an active role in the nomination, appointment and evaluation of the university Presidents and other major staff positions; develops and implements an effective statewide public relations and legislative program; provides centralized management oversight of services; and coordinates academic offerings.

The Presidents each serve as the chief administrative and educational officer for their respective university, with responsibility for day-to-day operations and development of the academic program within the limits defined by the Board and the Chancellor. This includes oversight of admissions, curriculum development, extracurricular programs, long-range planning, and supervision of the faculty.

The Chancellor, Presidents, Vice Chancellors and additional UMS senior staff, and the Dean of the University Maine School of Law together comprise the Presidents Council and serve as the leadership team of the System.

The Treasurer of the Board has custody of all monies received for the System; makes all expenditures upon authentication; exercises revenue bonding authority with the approval of the Board; and prepares the annual financial report of the System. The Clerk of the Board manages Board affairs and records all proceedings.

Two Vice Chancellors oversee the primary academic and administrative operations of the System, as follows:

Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration and Treasurer (VCFA/Treasurer). Reporting to the Chancellor, the VCFA/Treasurer is the chief financial and business officer of the System and Treasurer of the Board. The VCFA oversees the System's financial and administrative operations by working collaboratively with the university Presidents and providing leadership to the university Chief Business Officers, each of whom has a dual reporting line to the VCFA/Treasurer and their respective university President.

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA). Reporting to the Chancellor, the VCAA is the chief academic officer of the System and, with the authority described below regarding program changes, approval, suspension, or elimination, maintains the System-wide academic program inventory. The VCAA is responsible for coordinating the academic programs between and among the UMS universities by working collaboratively with the university Presidents and providing leadership to the Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC). The CAOC, comprised of the VCAA and the seven university Chief Academic Officers (CAOs), works collaboratively to formulate academic policies and strategically manage the System's academic portfolio. At UMFK and UMPI, the university President also serves as the university CAO and at UMM, the Head of Campus also serves as the university CAO. At all other universities the CAO is a separate executive leadership position reporting to the university President.

In regard to maintaining policies and procedures for admission, retention, and completion of programs, the CAOC reviews all such material as a part of the program development process and ensures consistent application of such processes across the institution. The VCAA, with input from the CAOC, has authority to decide on proposed substantive changes to existing academic programs and makes recommendations to the Chancellor on program

approval, suspension, and elimination, regardless of whether a single university or multiple universities offer the program at issue; the Chancellor, in turn, advances the VCAA's recommendations to the Board for final action.

Under State law, the faculty enjoy traditional academic freedoms in teaching, research, and expression of opinions, and faculty are to be consulted in the formulation of academic policies.

The Statement on Shared Governance, approved by the Board in 2007, affirms the Board's support of governance systems and processes that are characterized by collaboration between the Board, the administration, faculty, staff, and students in communication and decision making. This statement also sets forth the Board's commitment to fostering an atmosphere of trust, communication, and participation through an approach to governance whereby the talents and collective intelligence of the System community are used to make effective and efficient decisions.

All UMS universities have established faculty and student senates or assemblies—and in some cases, a staff senate or assembly—to engage in university-level shared governance. These university-specific bodies will continue to have primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of curriculum offered fully by that university.

To initialize the establishment of a unifying System-wide mechanism for shared governance for all academic collaboration and programs involving two or more universities in the System, the Chancellor convened the university faculty senate/assembly leaders to meet with him, and members of his senior staff, in January 2020. The key to effective shared governance is communication, and the faculty leaders were encouraged by the opening of this new channel for the exchange of information and ideas. At that meeting, the faculty leaders agreed that during these nascent stages of a unified approach to shared governance (and accreditation) the seven senate/assembly presidents, with the VCAA participating in an ex-officio capacity, would form a UMS Faculty Governance Council (Council) to address issues of multi-university academic and curricular policy and programming. Iterative, dynamic review will be given to the need for expansion and/or delegation of responsibilities to sub-committees as the System matures as a unified institution.

Next Steps and Opportunities under Unified Accreditation (Faculty Governance)

Noting the early stage of the unified accreditation effort, there is still much work to be done to further review and define the Council's role in a System-wide accredited institution. The Council's evolution and maturation will be iterative, most notably during the coming Self-Study and Comprehensive Evaluation period. Initial work will be undertaken to confirm alignment with individual university faculty governance bodies (assemblies, senates, and faculties of the whole), as well as with already existing frameworks and contractual language offered by the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine (AFUM) for cooperating department proposals, which refers to collaborative academic program proposals designed for partnership of two universities. UMS leadership will continue to support this work as a priority. Over the next two years, the Council will work with faculty, university, and System leadership to refine this comprehensive structure, working on policies and practices that manifest the true spirit of shared internal academic governance and offer a platform for equal representation of all universities and their stakeholders.

An example of a timely issue that the System has recently shared with the Council is the development of a governance structure to accompany the implementation of the new learning management system (LMS) called Brightspace. The implementation plan is to roll out several pilot classes in the Summer 2020 term and fully migrate from the System's current LMS, Blackboard, to Brightspace in the Fall 2020 term. One of the goals of the proposed

new LMS governance structure is to clarify and strengthen faculty governance of the LMS. Members of the Council reviewed a potential governance framework provided by UMS Chief Information Officer David Demers and submitted a list of issues for consideration; these issues are currently under discussion.

Given the significance of System-level academic internal governance in Standard Three, notably 3.14 and 3.15, the initial UMS Faculty Governance Council Charter is provided in full here. It will evolve through the Self-Study and Comprehensive Evaluation period.

Initial UMS Faculty Governance Council Charter

Establishment of the Council

Sanctioned by the UMS Board of Trustees, as part of the University of Maine System's initial unified accreditation structure, the Chancellor authorized the development of a multi-university academic programming shared governance model founded on the principles of collaboration, equity, transparency, and accountability. The Council will serve as an instrument for exercising faculty purview over multi-university programs and related academic initiatives. The intended framework will outline appropriate faculty governance process and policies necessary to ensure that the System meets the NECHE Standards that require faculty to have primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum, and have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. (3.15)

The Faculty Governance Council will be responsible for being attentive to issues relevant to multi-university programs, which are defined as programs involving two or more universities collaborating on developing, delivering, and maintaining a single program (degree, certificate, or other credential). The Council will offer an appropriate framework of/for ensuring consistent oversight of multi-institutional programming proposals that are sustainable, and align with UMS strategic initiatives in the unified accreditation structure.

The shared governance structure should be viewed as a faculty-to-faculty process that includes an active faculty governance body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of program and curricular development consistent with the missions of the System as a whole and the participating universities.

Charge of the Council

The Council shall concern itself with System-wide faculty governance and shall provide guidance on matters of new multi-university program proposals or initiatives that relate to the support of System-wide academic programming. In a facilitative, rather than directive, nature, the Council's primary functions are to:
- Advise faculty and universities regarding policies, process and criteria for multi-university program proposals
- Review multi-university program proposals, answer questions, and provide clarification and feedback to program stakeholders
- Recommend proposal approval/disapproval to VCAA and notify stakeholders regarding recommendations
- Formulate, recommend, and monitor policies and standards concerning multi-university programming and initiatives before System or Board approval
- Identify and work toward resolving barriers to multi-university efforts

- Receive communication regarding activities and plans of System/VCAA/NECHE/university and assure university faculty are informed about significant developments
- Consider and respond to questions and issues which may be referred to it by the UMS, universities, or individual faculty
- Maintain liaison with home universities
- Establish specialized subcommittees to address specific needs
- Establish the criteria for and characteristics of multi-university programs (see criteria below)

In addition, the Council will be responsible for considering the broader issues of internal academic governance, and proactively identifying ways to enable the shared governance process to move forward productively.

Multi-University Program Criteria and Characteristics

Multi-university programming is characterized by, but not limited to, the following:

- Pertains to new collaborative programs initially
- Each multi-university program has a single set of learning outcomes and a single set of core requirements
- Universities can also continue to partner via memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for collaborations involving less than a full program or credential
- Complements current MOUs, but could take precedence over revising those MOUs depending on agreement among current university partners (e.g. adding a new partner or significantly changing the curriculum may require moving through the multi-university program approval process; renewing the MOU without major changes may not)
- Student residency requirement must be met, and students will matriculate at and be identified as having graduated from one university
- Must be fully accessible to students in the collaborating universities
- The multi-university credential may be considered a program offering by one or more universities collaborating
- Participation in multi-university programs may require NECHE authorization for some universities and based on the scope and current mission of the institution(s), it may require a substantive change proposal

Process

The process for new or modified multi-university academic programs normally (but not exclusively) initiates with the participating programs from the collaborating universities. Individual university level processes will be followed for individual university approval. Participating universities will then work together to complete the required multi-university proposal documents. One collaborative proposal will be submitted to the UMS Faculty Governance Council for review. The Council will offer feedback on program proposals to cooperating departments within 30 days and continue to work with proposal sponsors to clarify any questions and consider potential impacts of the proposal. Upon completion of the proposal review, the Council will forward a recommendation of action to the VCAA.

The quality of curricular components of multi-university programs has been, and will continue to be, reviewed by the university-level curriculum committees and the faculty senate/assembly of the home universities for the cooperating departments. To ensure institutional-level consistency in the review of the quality of multi-university programs, the Faculty Governance Council will provide a final overall curricular review of new multi-university program proposals. Procedures and guidelines for the review and approval of new multi-university program

proposals that are aligned with the Board of Trustees program approval policies and the AFUM Collective Bargaining Agreement are currently being developed. For review of on-going program quality, the Council will act as the receiving and reviewing body for assessment reports from multi-university programs. The Faculty Governance Council also recognizes the need for a multi-university assessment committee which may assume the responsibility of reviewing the multi-university assessment reports in the future.

Additionally, the VCAA will inform the Faculty Governance Council of proposed new or revised academic policies with institutional impact. In turn, the members of the Council will, in consultation with each other and their respective faculties, contribute constructive critiques of these policy proposals. The System leadership will notify the Council of all decisions subsequently reached regarding the proposed policy changes. System leadership is responsive to concerns raised by members of the Council, evidencing its commitment to the principles of shared governance.

Composition of the Council and Meeting Schedule

Elected faculty representatives should comprise a majority of the UMS Faculty Governance Council which includes:

- A minimum of seven members comprised of Faculty Senate/Assembly presidents, or their designees (voting member)
- A representative of the Faculty Representatives to the Board (non-voting member)
- Ex-Officio System representation (non-voting)

Council member term structure will align with individual university senate/assembly terms, which will allow for staggered exit from the Council. Faculty representatives shall report to their constituencies as required by those constituencies.

Current Council membership includes:

> David Townsend - University of Maine
> Gillian Jordan - University of Maine at Augusta
> Robert Kuech - University of Southern Maine
> Blake Whitaker - University of Southern Maine
> James Moreira - University of Maine at Machias/AFUM, MEA/NEA
> Sarah Hardy - University of Maine at Farmington
> Carolyn Dorsey - University of Maine at Presque Isle
> Joseph Becker – University of Maine at Fort Kent
> Robert Placido – UMS Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (ex officio)

The Faculty Governance Council shall meet as often as it determines based on proposal submissions, but not less frequently than three times per year.

The Council has had four formal meetings to date (from January through May) and numerous other communications to discuss the general Council framework. Minutes of these meetings are kept.

The System shared governance structure also includes the roles of faculty and student representatives to the Board. Board Policy 205: Faculty and Student Representation to the Board provides for one faculty member and one undergraduate student from each of the seven universities, as well as two graduate students representing the two

universities that house expanded graduate programs. Faculty and student representation as non-voting members is also included on the Academic and Student Affairs Committee and the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee.

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

Since their first convening, the faculty leaders, working with the VCAA still in an ex-officio capacity, have prepared initial processes and structures to ensure faculty-led academic governance for multi-university programs. The faculty leaders will continue to meet to develop and maintain an appropriate UMS faculty governance model.

Additional opportunities to improve planning and evaluation efforts include creating a "policy on policies" so that the institution can continue to develop and systematize appropriate Board policies and administrative practices. Finally, UMS will need to develop a plan for collecting student feedback at the System level. ■

Standard Four
The Academic Program

The institution's academic programs continue to reflect our mission and our purposes globally (institution-wide) and locally (fulfilling the distinct mission of each university). To date, all multi-university programs developed in the University of Maine System (UMS) have amplified existing academic strengths, or met the demonstrable needs of learner populations in new programmatic areas. Examples include the M.S. in Cybersecurity, the M.Ed. in Instructional Technology, and undergraduate and graduate certificates in Geographic Information Systems. Multi-university programs entail shared governance structures; written agreements about academic processes, course delivery, and resources; appropriate assessments; and course transfer mechanisms for students.

In July 2019, the UMS Board of Trustees revised its policies addressing program review and approval to ensure greater consistency of planning, preliminary evaluation, and formal approval across all programs, at all locations and in all modalities. Requirements for proposed programs now include an empirical market analysis, assessment of state workforce and economic needs, and evidence of employer demand for graduates. UMS will work with all faculty to continue streamlining university-level processes for reviewing new programs and shortening the time needed to complete those reviews. Such revisions provide the groundwork for accurate and productive planning and development of multi-university programming by ensuring consistent policies and processes not only toward the determination of market need and student interest in programming, but also in identifying resources (in terms of faculty, support staff, and fiscal resources) across multiple universities during the program development process, as well as within a formal approval process.

In 2017, the institution launched a Programs for Examination (PFE) process to evaluate the health of academic programs at the seven universities against a shared set of criteria, including numbers of majors (three-year average), degrees conferred (three-year average), university-level retention, and institution-wide retention. Related considerations include a program's trend line of enrollment growth/loss, costs uniquely associated with the program, and qualitative input from the program's Dean and the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), respectively.

The individual universities report on PFE to the Board annually following discussion among the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) and the universities' chief academic officers. Actions taken in response to PFE reporting include elimination, suspension, curricular revision or redirection, or no change. Each university is developing a template modeled on the PFE process that would extend the annual review to all of its academic offerings.

Following the initial two rounds of PFE, the office of the VCAA, in discussion with CAOs, began the development of an expanded set of empirical measures and criteria for the process. The expanded dashboard allows for a more extensive examination of individual programs. More detail about the PFE process can be found in Standard Two.

It is too early to predict in what ways or by how much, but the standards for student achievement in extant academic programs will likely be affected by unified accreditation. At first, Board standards and requirements for new programs, whether single- or multi-university, will mirror those in force for existing academic offerings. Unified accreditation, however, will open the door to improving program quality and increasing student achievement.

Each university employs formative and summative assessments in individual courses. Student learning outcomes (program goals) are posted and are publicly available on unit and/or college websites. Programs reviews, including

those for units responding to a professional accrediting body, are conducted on a scheduled cycle, and feedback from those reviews is fed into curricula for the continuous improvement of student learning. The institution is considering a uniform cycle and process for program reviews across all UMS universities. Indirect measures, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and exit (or graduation) surveys, are employed by all universities as well.

Consistent with its established governance practices, the institution ensures that all programs leading to degrees and other awards follow explicit procedures for program initiation, discussion, and evaluation prior to Board approval. Section 305 of the Administrative Procedures Manual, as approved by the Board, provides detailed steps for the development of an academic program (including degrees, advanced, certificates of study, concentrations, minors, or credit-bearing certificates). Universal criteria for any programs include information indicating the manner in which programs meet the mission and goals of the institution in aggregate, the state-wide or national need for the program, resources available for programmatic support, and appropriate delivery modalities in support of meeting demographic interest and need.

Formal requests for new programs must be submitted by individual provosts to the VCAA for review and consideration by the collective Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC). All new programs are reviewed by the CAOC for recommendations about the most effective organizational structure and delivery of the programs. This process applies to all multi-university programming as well with respect to resources and faculty and support staff. In addition, the institution retains a specific policy on substantive changes to academic programs (Section 305.2), requiring formal documentation for CAOC review and discussion of proposals involving additional universities within the approved structure of an academic program or unit, or significant departures from an existing program's modality or content (should additional universities be incorporated within it).

As noted above, the CAOC also annually reviews the entire academic portfolio by means of the PFE (Section 305.7) process, which serves as a proactive mechanism by which collaborative programming is investigated and proposed, as well as individual programs analyzed in the contexts of mission, quality, and sustainability. As a result of annual discussions, proposals have been made to create multi-university collaborations for the delivery of previously individual university majors (i.e. French as a recommended collaborative major between the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Fort Kent) and to reduce majors at individual institutions while recommending collaborations among faculty from different universities (i.e. the BFA at the University of Maine at Presque Isle and recommended collaboration with faculty from UMFK), as well as suspension or elimination of programs unable to meet standards of mission, quality, and sustainability.[8] (4.3)

Helping to facilitate one form of university collaboration to offer academic programs is the concept of cooperating departments, which was recently negotiated into the System's collective bargaining agreement with faculty (who are organized in a System-wide unit). The cooperating departments provision addresses the terms and conditions that apply to faculty and their appointment to a university when that university offers a degree-granting program that includes courses taught by faculty from another System university.

The institution ensures that all of its programs meet and exceed the basic quality standards per established expectations as detailed in Standard 4.3. The institution maintains a formal Academic Program Review procedure

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[8] Section 305 in its entirety may be viewed at https://www.maine.edu/students/office-of-the-vice-chancellor-of-academic-affairs/administrative-pro-cedures-manual/.

(Section 305.3) that ensures that each university conducts regular, scheduled program assessment. The assessment includes a self-study examining quality of faculty, appropriateness and quality of curriculum, evaluation of learning outcomes leading to the continuous improvement of student learning, and relation of program to institutional mission. In addition, the assessment includes a report by external reviewers and a final review endorsed by the university president (including recommendations and rationale for future action) before its submission to the VCAA. The VCAA annually reports to the Chancellor on all program reviews across the System including recommendations for appropriate actions that in turn can initiate further activity (see Standard 4.3 above).

In addition to the Academic Program Review process, the CAOC annually engages in the PFE process as noted above in Standard 4.3. The Academic Program Review process allows the institution to respond proactively to any issues, internal or external, that arise between formal program review periods, including activity regarding proposed or established collaborative majors and programming. (4.4)

As noted in the above two numbered paragraphs, the institution maintains a robust system of program quality administration while also ensuring direct faculty participation in the process as recognized by NECHE Standards and Board administrative procedures. As described above, the Academic Program Review process mandates a faculty-led Self-Study (supported by institutionally supplied data and analysis) incorporating faculty input at each reporting level, including prior to a final report provided to the president of an individual institution. In addition, the PFE process detailed above also incorporates feedback linked directly to faculty through provosts and academic deans as warranted. Further, any substantive changes to programs or units require specific communication and dialogue with full-time and part-time faculty bargaining units of the institution. (4.5)

As noted above, particularly as concerning Standard 4.3, the institution has in place a series of regular and standard policies implemented by the Board or other appropriate bodies (including the VCAA and CAOs) regulating academic programs. As noted above, Section 305.1 of the UMS Administrative Procedures delineates the process for Academic Program Approval; Section 305.2 articulates procedures for Substantive Changes to Existing Academic Programs; Section 305.3 notes consistent processes for Academic Program Review at each university; Sections 305.4 and 305.5 note the appropriate processes for Program Suspension and Elimination, respectively, in response to Program Reviews; and Section 305.7 articulates the annual process by which all programs are analyzed in terms quantitative thresholds (i.e. average of graduates per year over three years, average number of majors over three years, number of tenure-track faculty maintained over three years per program, etc.) and subjected, consequently, to appropriate processes (i.e. suspension or elimination or substantive changes).

At each decision point in these processes, shared governance, and thus faculty voice, is incorporated within the salient procedure. For example, the Program Approval processes include requirements of appropriate learning outcomes as well as demonstrated need; the Program Review process includes a self-study requiring an examination of program effectiveness via an assessment of learning outcomes for all programs in the institution's portfolio. Collaborative programs within the institution may take multiple forms, including those in which one university serves as the "lead" site from which the program is delivered at multiple locations. An example is the delivery of the UMFK nursing program at the UMPI campus. In this instance, the nursing program and review of its educational effectiveness remains situated within the general review undertaken by the program under the auspices of UMFK administration.

A slightly different example, occurring at the graduate level, is the recently approved Masters of Science in Cybersecurity between University of Southern Maine (USM) and University of Maine at Augusta (UMA), in which

the two institutions share faculty and programming pre-existing at each university. The universities will work jointly to determine appropriate review procedures following the processes noted above. Further, the establishment of an institution-wide body of faculty, with representatives from all seven universities, will ensure that principles of shared governance persist in the oversight of all collaborative programming (i.e. programs whose structure incorporates two or more universities). (4.6)

Each university in the institution undertakes planning and evaluation processes to strengthen the institutional mission and individual program objectives. The evolution to a single institution comprising seven individual, but unified, universities will foster a more uniform planning and evaluation process and a nimbler, more effective allocation of resources across universities to meet the needs of students. Currently, six of the universities retain individual NECHE accreditation incorporating an evaluation of their planning and evaluation processes (the University of Maine at Machias is accredited as a regional campus of UM). Some have received notification from site visits reviewing substantive change approvals and subsequent reports indicating concerns about the ability of those universities to continue demonstrating capacity to provide sufficient resources to its programs. UMFK and UMPI received such feedback following April 2019 substantive change site visits.

In a unified structure, the VCAA and CAOC would administer, through the development of newly established collaborative programs and through the substantive changes required of existing university-specific programs to create collaborative ones (under guidelines referenced above in relation to Standards 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6), an Academic Program Inventory for the institution (Section 305) that includes collaborative programs within a unified planning and evaluation process. That process would account for individual programs maintained, and assessed and evaluated, at individual universities, and provide oversight for collaborative programs incorporating faculty and resources from two or more universities across the institution. (4.7)

Consistent with past practice, the institution provides clear communication and resources for students whose programs have changed markedly or have been slated for elimination. For example, in 2015, UM provided a teach-out option for students in its discontinued Brunswick (Maine) Engineering Program. Five students from that program chose to relocate to the main campus in Orono to complete their course of study. In 2018, USM and UM provided a teach-out path for students in USM's MBA program following that program's integration with UM's MBA.

In 2018, UMFK suspended its Education programs; simultaneously, UMPI added UMFK as an instructional site and began offering its education programs (elementary, secondary, and physical education) at UMFK, thus providing the required teach-out options for UMFK education majors and ensuring that, through transfer programming, Fort Kent students could remain on site for the duration of their program and earn a UMPI degree via live and distance delivery modalities. UMPI and UMFK are considering additional collaborative programming agreements to allow elimination of duplicative (and lower enrolled) programs while continuing to offer lower enrolled, yet critical, programs and majors at both universities.

In 2019, the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) made significant changes to curricular content and delivery in its elementary education program. To accommodate students completing the "old" program, as well as those who entered under the new catalog, additional course sections were offered to accommodate the needs of all students. (4.9)

The System, as the institution, will continue to control a preponderance of its resources directly. Classrooms and classroom technology, information resources, non-classroom information technology, and testing sites are all

categories of resources provided and maintained by the institution. Access to, and information about, institutional resources are made available to students through a wide variety of means and in numerous platforms, including print and web/digital formats.

Some non-software resources are secured through external vendors. For example, six of the seven universities contract with the same dining services provider, and UM employs a busing service for athletics trips and other extramural functions. Students do not typically seek information about external vendors, but as a public institution we provide it upon request. (4.10)

General Education

The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn.

All universities in the institution have a clearly articulated general education program and assessments that meet NECHE Standards. This will continue under unified accreditation. The institution honors an internal block transfer agreement and will continue to do so. Students who complete general education requirements at one of the institution's universities meet general education requirements at another, with the caveat that the "receiving" institution may choose to require one or more specific courses that must be taken there. No more than ten credits can be required outside of the major. At UM, for example, students must take the following to complete general education requirements:

- A minimum of three additional course credits in any of the UM Human Values and Social Context subcategory areas
- A Writing Intensive course in the Major Degree
- A Capstone Experience course
- Any specific General Education courses required by the major.

Questions to be addressed as the governance structure for a unified institution is further developed include what we do about general education when new programs are collaboratively developed and multiple universities offer the degree; and, which general education program is to be followed where some universities have additional requirements and others do not. (4.16)

The institution offers required and elective courses as described in publicly available print and digital formats with sufficient availability to provide students opportunities to graduate in the published program time frame.

All students receive information about program, general education, and graduation requirements through a variety of print and digital materials such as course catalogs, program analysis sheets, and/or maps to graduation. All universities direct the cycling and scheduling of required and elective courses so students have the opportunity to graduate in the published program time frame. Course scheduling is managed by division chairs, coordinators, Deans, or other designees of the CAO who collaborate across divisions to ensure that required courses do not conflict with one another. In programs delivered collaboratively, such as the Masters in Instructional Technology, program coordinators develop a multi-year projection of offerings to inform prospective students about course/time commitments and guarantee progress toward the expected graduation date.

It is expected that through unified accreditation, course registration across campuses will be simplified for students, thereby increasing access to an expanded portfolio of course offerings. A course equivalency translation tool already exists and will be employed to make this transition as seamless as possible for students. (4.31)

The institution demonstrates its clear and ongoing authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses for which it awards institutional credit or credentials. These responsibilities include course content, the specification of required competencies, and the delivery of the instructional program; selection, approval, professional development, and evaluation of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; and evaluation of student progress, including the awarding and recording of credit. The institution retains, even with contractual, dual enrollment, or other arrangements, responsibility for the design, content, and delivery of courses for which academic credits or degrees are awarded. The institution awarding a joint, dual, or concurrent degree demonstrates that the program is consistent with Commission policy, and that student learning outcomes meet the institution's own standards and those of the Commission.

Systems of academic approval and oversight at individual universities and among the CAOs will continue under unified accreditation. At the university level, faculty will continue to control course content and program requirements. Each university in the institution will ensure that faculty continue to develop and submit course syllabi for new courses that include a course description, objectives, outcomes, and expectations. These syllabi will be reviewed by department and division peers and those on the respective university curriculum committees. New academic programs will be reviewed by department or division faculty, the university curriculum committee, and the university faculty senate or assembly. New programs will also require the support of the university administration, CAOC, and the VCAA.

Each university in the institution will retain autonomy over the selection and professional development of faculty, admission and retention of students, and evaluation of student progress toward degree completion. An institution-wide faculty labor contract specifies deadlines and expectations for faculty appointment, re-appointment, promotion, and tenure, but specific criteria for promotion and peer committee procedures will continue to be reviewed and applied at the university level.

Admissions policies for each university, including policies about prior learning assessment and transfer credit, will continue to be listed in each university's catalog and website. Information about transfer equivalencies will continue to be available on the institution's website. (4.32)

This Standard is met now and will continue to be met. The institution's Board grants all degrees awarded by the seven universities. That will not change. Some students, particularly those enrolled in multi-university programs, may experience less difficulty in satisfying the residency requirement under unified accreditation than they do now. For example, UM requires students to "earn a minimum of 30 credits originating from the University of Maine" to satisfy residency. It is possible that residency under unified accreditation will be satisfied when students earn a minimum of 30 credits originating from the institution: that is, 30 credits completed at any one or more of the seven universities. (4.36)

The institution has formal transfer agreements internally (among its universities) and externally (with the Maine Community College System and other institutions). The institution accepts AP credit, CLEP preparation, language competency credit, and credit for assessed prior learning, all within carefully delineated terms reflecting national best practices, the federal definition of the credit hour, and NECHE and professional accrediting body standards. Transfer credit is capped by category, and can be either generic or specific to a student's program of study.

Information about transfer credit is available on the web sites of each university and on a central institutional site, where detailed information about transfer equivalencies is regularly updated.

Lists of articulation agreements with other institutions are posted on the various university web pages. At UM, for example, all articulation agreements (undergraduate and graduate) are housed on the Admissions website. Criteria governing institutional acceptance of transfer credit, and its application within the institution, are governed by UMS Board Policy 311. The institution is a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), a national articulation agreement permitting UMS universities to offer distance courses and degrees in all other states except California. (4.38)

The institution's graduate programs conform to NECHE's Policy on Credits and Degrees. Transfer credit accepted for graduate programs is limited and typically constitutes no more than 25 percent of the overall credits required to earn a master's or doctoral degree. (Graduate degrees across the institution require a minimum of 30 credits, with at least an additional 30 credits required beyond the master's degree for a terminal degree.) For example, UM allows no more than six external post-baccalaureate credits for master's degree programs, and no more than 30 credits for doctoral programs. (These are usually master's credits earned at the university prior to a student's admission to a UM doctoral program.) (4.41)

The institution delivers online programs through each of its universities. Some universities also offer hybrid programs, and UMA manages eight learning centers located throughout the state. Programs delivered at all sites and in all modalities are consistent with the mission and objectives of the originating university and of the institution as a whole. UMF offers five online graduate certificates in addition to four master's degrees, and five graduate certificate programs offered through a blended delivery model.

USM's online offerings include seven undergraduate programs, 10 graduate programs (including multiple tracks in nursing and special education), three minors, three undergraduate certificates, and seven graduate certificates. Similarly, UM delivers a mix of fully online undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs. UM's master's program in Social Work is delivered partly online and partly in-person, with weekend meetings held at intervals throughout the semester (fall and spring). The multi-university M.Ed. in Instructional Technology is jointly delivered by faculty from UM, USM, and UMF.

Faculty at UM, USM and UMA are supported by instructional designers. Several of these designers are available to faculty throughout the institution. Students have access to academic advising, appropriate courseware and technology support, and ADA accommodations. The institution directly controls and is entirely responsible for the academic quality and evaluation of all elements of all single-university academic programs. (4.46)

All students have access to faculty attached to the programs in which they are enrolled. Students can interact with faculty through a variety of means. Most online courses offer chat functionality for direct interaction between the instructor and a student or students. Most also offer virtual office hours for email and/or Zoom or Skype interactions between the instructor and individual students. All competency-based coursework and programs (CBE), such as those delivered by UMPI, meet the C-RAC standards set by NECHE in regard to required substantive interaction of faculty with individual students. This includes a carefully articulated set of communication and interaction guidelines applied to each competency within the program. All programs being delivered in the CBE modality have been approved, or are currently submitted for approval, by NECHE through a formal substantive change process. (4.47)

In response to COVID-19, UMS universities advanced a number of student-centric initiatives and policies to improve success in Spring 2020 courses and strengthen spring-to-fall retention. Examples include extending the normal deadline for choosing the pass/fail option in undergraduate courses; extending the deadline for course and term withdrawals; and suspending or recasting spring academic action policies in recognition of the difficulties many students faced in completing their courses remotely. Preliminarily, these measures appear to have produced positive outcomes. At UM, for example, Spring 2020 course withdrawals dropped 40 percent compared to Spring 2019, and 94 percent of Spring 2020 students who chose the pass/fail option after the original deadline (April 8) completed the semester without withdrawing from any of their courses.

In addition, the Chancellor's office supported an effort to allow UM Nursing students who had completed all of their degree requirements to finish the Spring 2020 semester two weeks early, be certified for graduation, and move immediately to the frontlines in hospitals and other critical-need health care environments throughout Maine and the region.

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

The Academic Program Standard under unified accreditation will provide myriad opportunities to collaborate between universities, simplify processes, and expand offerings for all students. A shared process of faculty governance is currently being established to guide these efforts. Further, the institution is considering a uniform cycle and process for program reviews across all UMS universities.

Finally, the institution expects to explore all new opportunities, including one suggestion that it examines what universities are currently reporting on to NECHE to see what themes emerge that the universities might be able to solve together. ◼

Standard Five
Students

Consistent with the University of Maine System's statewide mission, which aggregates the complementary missions of each UMS university, the System enrolls a variety of student populations ranging from traditional to non-traditional, first-year to transfer, in-state to out-of-state and international, undergraduate and graduate (including law) level, as well as multicultural/diverse, online, veterans, first-generation, and other underrepresented populations. The System fosters student success, as well as the intellectual and personal development of these various populations, by tailoring programs and services at its universities to the specific needs and expectations of the distinct groups of students they respectively serve. UMS universities collaborate to share functional expertise and ensure consistent policies and procedures for service delivery across institutions. The System administers a common Student Information System, Student Conduct Code, Title IX procedures, Equal Opportunity policies, student health insurance opportunities, ID card and more through the UMS universities. Under unified accreditation, UMS universities will continue to provide the array of services appropriate to their unique student base while also advancing efforts to meet the needs of all UMS students. The System already convenes UMS university student support leadership to discuss current issues, share training and resources, and exchange ideas. As one example, UMS university practitioners who provide accommodations for students with disabilities meet several times each year and participate in a group listserv. Each UMS university has a Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO) and associated staff and there is a standing System-level CSAO Council (CSAOC), where joint problem-solving, consultation, and sharing of information and resources occurs. (5.1)

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences

The System has placed increased emphasis on improving retention at, and graduation from, its universities and offers an array of student services at the university-level to grow student engagement and provide students with needed services. In accordance with their respective missions, UMS universities are continually seeking ways to ensure that services are available to online students and to distance education students served through local centers. Center staff are particularly experienced and adept at serving multi-campus students and are helping to inform the unified accreditation process. In an effort to assist all UMS universities, the System joined the EAB (Education Advisory Board) Student Success Collaborative. This partnership provides the Navigate app for students, an early alert advising tool utilizing best practices. The UMS has a system-wide Student Success Steering Committee which shares and implements best practices and professional and faculty development connected to student support and success. Most universities host one or more TRIO grants to help provide student support services. The impact of unified accreditation on grant awards is an area for further investigation. (5.7-8)

Through its universities, the System provides advising and academic support services appropriate to the respective UMS university student body. The System's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance.

Each UMS university provides individualized academic advising through faculty and professional advisors, who focus on student success and degree attainment. The System has a robust degree audit tool in MaineStreet, the UMS enterprise management system, and a System-wide advising group that meets regularly to review and develop additional tools. Faculty, professional advisors and student life staff all interact with students to provide academic and social advising to meet the specific needs of groups, such as veterans and underrepresented populations. Unified accreditation will create more opportunities for System-wide academic themed student organizations and associations. Each UMS university has a career service focus, as well as professional staff and other resources in place to provide career guidance, support, and access to internships, career fairs, and job postings. (5.10)

All UMS universities use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and admissions application materials to award university-level and federal student aid. The UMS universities administer a System-level policy for tuition adjustment resulting from withdrawal from courses. UMS universities also collectively partner with the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) for access to the IGRAD tool, to help students develop financial literacy, and with the Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) to provide comprehensive default prevention services. There are differences between UMS universities in how institutional aid is distributed based on the student populations served. Additionally, UMS universities differ in the aid year (two universities are summer "header" schools while the rest are "trailer" schools). Unified accreditation will require the System to create policies with an appropriate balance between consistency among universities and individual flexibility to deal with the varying student populations and resource levels at each university. Specific issues under investigation include the impact on the total allotment of federal Title IV financial aid to UMS universities with federal recognition of the System, the internal definition of the aid year, the funding model for merit-based scholarships, and the impact on dedicated scholarship funding. (5.13-14)

The System provides co-curricular activities and supports opportunities for student leadership and participation through its universities' organizations and student affairs offices. Each university elects a student representative to the UMS Board of Trustees, with University of Maine (UM) and the University of Southern Maine (USM) electing an additional representative on behalf of their graduate students, respectively. These representatives meet regularly at meetings of the Board and related committees. A joint Student Government Association conference across all seven universities is held annually. Unified accreditation is expected to spark increased interest in multi-university student organizations and access to co-curricular offerings across institutions. The System has existing agreements that address these issues, such as UM/University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) Foundations Program Memorandum of Understanding that will help to guide collaborative efforts. (5.15-16)

Student facilities across the System, from residence halls to office space to recreation space, at each university are appropriate to the System's mission and to each UMS university's local mission, and together support high-quality student experiences across the System. The student services personnel at each UMS university are highly trained and well credentialed. The typical minimum degree requirement for professional staff is the master's degree. Staff take advantage of the System's employee tuition benefit to take graduate courses from the UMS universities in related areas such as Educational Leadership and Higher Education. The System also maintains some professional memberships, such as ATIXA (Association of Title IX Administrators), and recently hired a System-level Coordinator of Title IX Services, reporting to the System's General Counsel, to ensure consistency of compliance efforts across

the System. More comprehensive memberships and training opportunities are expected under unified accreditation. (5.17)

The System's student services units use the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) to create and assess high-quality programs in each functional area. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Standards of Practice further guide staff by promoting student personnel work as a profession and defining clear expectations regarding respect for individual differences and diversity, a commitment to service, and dedication to the development of individuals and the community. The System assesses the needs of students through regular local and national surveys, such as the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement), which is administered every three years, and provides the data to its universities to inform and coordinate local services for their respective students. (5.18-20)

UMS universities generate Student Handbooks as the official student guide that contains detailed information about the System's policies, along with information and policies specific to the university where a student is matriculated. The Student Handbooks are digital, easily accessible, updated annually, and fairly administered. The System has shifted policies to the System-level, as appropriate, including recently a UMS Tobacco-Free Policy and a UMS Academic Integrity Policy. (5.19)

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

Unified accreditation is expected to increase opportunities for universities to collaborate and enhance the ways in which they support students, in person and online. Universities will continue to tailor programs to the specific needs of the populations they serve, but access to multi-university organizations and co-curricular offerings will be explored and may include a more coordinated approach. Additionally, the System will create policies to ensure an appropriate balance and consistency with regard to financial aid. ■

Standard Six
Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and academic staff members are central to achieving the mission of the institution's seven universities, all of which give focus to teaching and learning and some of which also require faculty to engage in research, scholarship, or creative activity. Faculty are hired through shared governance processes and have qualifications appropriate to the mission of the institution. A preponderance of full-time faculty have terminal degrees in their disciplines; others are qualified at the master's level.

The percentage of full-time and part-time faculty is determined by the unique mission of each university. Expectations for faculty work and evaluation are established in and described by institution's collective bargaining agreements and in individual university governance documents. Full-time faculty have responsibility for the curriculum per university governance documents and the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine (AFUM) collective bargaining agreement. Each university has a faculty governance body that attends to expectations of shared governance. Faculty workloads vary by university, with 2-2, 3-3, and 4-4 loads common depending on the research expectations of the university and the faculty position.

The institution has two faculty collective bargaining agreements: AFUM for full-time faculty and Part-Time Faculty Association (PATFA) for part-time faculty. Categories (part-time, lecturer, research, adjunct, tenure-track, and clinical) and ranks (assistant, associate, professor) are defined by two agreements respectively. The agreements enumerate the requisite ranks that full- and part-time faculty members may achieve, minimum salaries, and the review processes for each rank. Each faculty member is hired into and thereby assigned to one or more appropriate academic (degree granting) or research units via a letter of appointment. The participation of various categories of faculty in unit governance is determined by unit governance documents and is detailed in the AFUM and PATFA contracts.

Occasionally, professional staff from the Universities of Maine Professional Staff Association (UMPSA) bargaining unit or non-represented staff members teach or mentor students. Academic units determine the qualifications necessary for their teaching staff.

Review processes for each category of faculty are described in the two faculty bargaining agreements. Criteria for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and post-tenure review are held at the unit level and expressed in unit governance documents. The AFUM collective bargaining agreement defines the full time faculty workload, and that definition is broad enough that it can be interpreted according to disparate university, college, school, or department needs. The six-year probationary period of permanent faculty is contractual per AFUM. The seven universities of the institution make decisions about instructional staff based on their distinct missions. Professional development funds are apportioned in accordance with the requirements of the faculty position. These vary across University of Maine System (UMS) universities according to mission. University Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) share plans for the hiring of permanent (tenure-track or just-cause-eligible) faculty yearly at the CAO Council (CAOC). At UM, the only university currently employing teaching assistants as instructors of record, graduate teaching assistants are overseen by the units in which they teach; they receive targeted training in the academic unit. (6.1)

The institution's universities have similar missions in advancing learning through excellence in undergraduate programs (and at some universities, graduate academic programs). Research is also incorporated into several universities' missions and is represented to some degree at all of them. The institution serves the residents of Maine and students from outside the state through its diverse portfolio of academic programs, partnerships, research, and outreach.

As noted above, faculty appointments and tenure and promotion guidelines for the seven universities are identified in the AFUM agreement. The criteria used in the tenure and promotion process are developed at the appropriate unit, and include teaching (instruction, student advising, course and curricular development, etc.), research and scholarship (including creative works in the discipline, publications and presentations, research, and scholarly writing), and service (to the department, college, and university, as well as professional activities and public service related to the discipline). Per UMS Board of Trustees Policy 310, the Board grants tenure to the institution's faculty. Board Policy 312 provides for the appointment of university professors by the Chancellor with Board approval.

Under a unified accreditation, this all would remain in force. The change would be using the existing institutional office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs (VCAA) as a repository of data and assessment tools and procedures to support broader institutional research and assessment. Additionally, the office of the VCAA already provides valuable professional development for faculty and academic staff, which could be expanded or further formalized. Professional development resources would range from best practices in advising and teaching to institutional data and assessment supports. (6.7)

At each university, there are systems in place based on the AFUM agreement to evaluate tenure track, post-tenure, and adjunct faculty at each university. Faculty appointments, tenure and promotion processes and decisions at each university are reflective of those of many higher education institutions in the United States. The evaluation criteria applied in these decisions are developed at each university, but all include, as noted above, teaching (in person or online instruction, student advising, curricular development, etc.), research and scholarship (creative works in their discipline, publications and presentations, research, and scholarly writing), and service (to the department, college, university, and community). Board Policy 313, each university in the institution has established procedures by which students evaluate faculty.

The tenure and promotion process at each campus is ultimately superintended by the institution, in that the Board exercises final approval over tenure decisions (see Board Policy 310).

Unified accreditation will not change the basic process and purpose of faculty assignment. Areas that will need to be addressed in relation to Standard 6.10 include (for example) faculty holding joint appointments at multiple universities. (6.10)

Across the institution, instruction, advising, and student support are carried out by a variety of faculty and professional staff members. The collective bargaining agreements, letters of appointment, and official job descriptions define the roles and responsibilities of each faculty and staff member. Continuity in teaching and learning is determined in part by reporting lines, with university Academic Affairs and degree granting academic units holding primary responsibility for instruction and the delivery of student credit hours. Search committees for staff members engaged in teaching, learning, advising, and other student support roles are populated by faculty and staff immersed in similar roles and aware of institutional missions and needs. Often students themselves sit on

search committees for faculty and student-focused staff positions. As support for all of the above, the seven universities receive centralized data and related assistance from the institution.

Each university engages in its own institutional assessment through systems of reports, surveys, program reviews, and program-specific accreditation processes intended to support continuous improvement. For example, the University of Southern Maine's Office of Academic Advising, a unit reporting to Academic Affairs and the CAO, engaged last year in a NACADA/Gardner Institute assessment process resulting in a gap analysis and the development of a strategic plan for academic advising. Relatedly, five universities in the institution use the same online student course evaluation software (UM, UMFK, UMM, UMPI, and USM). (6.13)

Instructional techniques and delivery systems are compatible with and serve to further the mission and purpose of the institution as well as the learning goals of academic programs and objectives of individual courses. Methods of instruction are appropriate to the students' capabilities and learning needs.

The institution endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning wherever and however courses and programs are offered. It also encourages experimentation to improve instruction. The effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using valid procedures (direct and indirect measures); results are used to improve instruction. Faculty and academic staff accept their responsibility to improve instructional effectiveness. Adequate support is provided to accomplish this task.

Students in each major are taught by a variety of faculty to ensure exposure to different academic strengths and viewpoints. The institution offering multiple sections of the same course ensures an appropriate balance between consistency in learning outcomes and flexibility, allowing students to benefit from individual faculty members' expertise and teaching style.

Standards 6.17, 6.18, and 6.19 speak to the key aspects of teaching and learning provided by the institution: compatibility with mission, the appropriateness of methods to learners' aptitudes and needs, experimentation and continuous improvement through assessment, and opportunity to learn from a variety of faculty styles and experiences.

As the state's public university system, one which includes a land grant university, a metropolitan university, and other universities critically important to their regions and specialized clientele, its program offerings collectively align with its multifaceted mission. Courses in fundamental areas essential for students as prerequisites to major programs are offered across the institution. For example, mathematics, English, and biology courses are offered at all seven universities. In addition, to serve special areas of student interest that align with components of the institution's mission, including the need to provide programs of regional relevance, every university provides offerings unique within the institution. Examples include the University of Maine at Fort Kent's rural public safety administration courses, and the University of Maine at Machias's book arts courses.

Meeting our learners where they are is one of the institution's greatest strengths, and indeed is essential in serving all of our students, especially the high percentage who come from Maine's secondary schools, which range from well-resourced urban and suburban schools to small, rural schools with extreme need. The availability of early college, competency-based education, placement exams, advanced placement credits, tutoring and academic support centers, TRIO programs, Foundations programs, online opportunities, and the Navigate advising system demonstrates the institution's commitment to assessing learner's strengths and challenges while ensuring that their education builds on the strengths and addresses the challenges. Institutional research capability (centrally and at several of the universities) allows access to Burning Glass Technologies analyses that are leading us to mount new

and relevant programs, and sunset others, to best meet state employment needs. Similarly, institution-wide analyses of courses producing high DFWL rates are shaping focused retention efforts across the institution, including faculty professional development and provision of extra student support services.

The experience of our universities in the COVID-19 pandemic provides current evidence of the institution's extraordinary ability to be nimble, to be responsive to student needs, and to execute new instructional approaches with a firm commitment to quality. Between March 9 and March 25, 2020, faculty in the institution managed to ensure that several thousand course sections would be available to all of our students remotely or via online approaches. The collaboration across the institution was remarkable. Central IT resources were deployed, centers for teaching and learning at the various universities partnered to support hundreds of faculty, and administrators problem-solved together to implement a massive shift of instructional approach to best serve students. Going forward it will be critical to build in documentation and monitoring of the innovations being implemented in the spring semester of 2020, collecting information institution-wide, and having syntheses and accounts available for us to use in moving ahead with unity in the institution.

What we are experiencing is undoubtedly the largest instance of instructional experimentation the institution has ever faced, but across the universities such experimentation and evaluation are ongoing. Faculty learn to use new technological tools, supported by the institution, such as Brightspace, Navigate, Labster, Zoom, PhET, and others for improving and innovating in their teaching. Such tools often enable faculty to develop new ideas about assessment and to find more effective ways to track student learning that go beyond traditional exams. Across all campuses of the institution, procedures and commitments are in place to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is paramount. Consistency in quality is addressed in the institution-wide peer evaluation and promotion and tenure processes, the Programs for Examination (PFE) process led by the VCAA, and the AFUM-required student evaluations of teaching.

There are 1,201 full-time faculty across the institution, with expertise that spans all of the programmatic areas of our universities. Faculty assignments and emphases range from full-time research to full-time teaching, with many carrying substantial responsibilities for outreach, engagement, and public service. Thus our students have the opportunity to learn from professionals who can offer them everything from the most theoretical and classical educational opportunities, to very applied, clinical, and problem-based learning that is focused on challenges facing Maine and beyond. Faculty appointments reflect a range of emphases and a diversity of expertise.

We have 49 majors currently available to students at more than one university within the institution. We are working to more clearly understand and document the full suite of majors across the institution, look for commonalities and important distinctions in clusters of majors and programs that are similar, and then more systematically optimize access to broad faculty expertise. This effort may entail an expansion of the current PFE process, and an expectation by the Chancellor and Presidents that all CAOs conduct and report on annual reviews of all programs. Within the unified accreditation framework, we can more systematically ensure that majors at universities that are being managed by small faculties can be connected intentionally to counterpart programs at sister universities so students have the option to take courses from a broader array of faculty. The balance between consistent learning outcomes and flexibility may be struck through a movement toward a coordinated system of general education, or through an array of enriched learning experiences offered to students at all instructional locations, to be led by the CAOs. (6.16-6.18)

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

It will be important to examine teaching, learning, and scholarship with an eye toward attaining utmost quality while improving access and technology for students and faculty. Immediately, UMS should explore documenting and monitoring the move to remote learning in the spring of 2020 in order to learn from the experience and make appropriate improvements. Under unified accreditation UMS can more systematically ensure that majors at universities that are being managed by small faculties can be connected intentionally to counterpart programs at sister universities so students have the option to take courses from a broader array of faculty. ■

Standard Seven
Institutional Resources

The University of Maine System (UMS) is well positioned to comply with Standard Seven. Since 2012, the System has developed collaborative financial and administrative initiatives and strategies to meet the human, financial, informational, physical, and technological expectations of its students, faculty, and staff. Existing ongoing operations statewide demonstrate the sufficiency of these financial and administrative resources to meet the standard, and further demonstrate that the System is able to maximize and optimally apply those resources across the enterprise in order to support the System's future state.

Human Resources

The System has 4,795 FTE employees, including: 1,201 full-time faculty; 329 part-time faculty; 1,839 salaried staff; 1,327 hourly staff; and 99 administrators. The System employs a centralized human resources and labor relations function under the direction of a Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration (VCFA). Centralized services include benefits and payroll administration, compensation, equal opportunity, ADA compliance, labor relations, talent acquisition, and learning and organizational development. Common policies, practices and procedures apply across the System. The UMS universities are each assigned a Human Resources Partner with dual reporting lines to the CHRO and the respective university President. Collective bargaining is conducted at the System level with participation from each UMS university and all collective bargaining contracts apply across the System. (7.1, 7.2, 7.3)

Financial Resources

The System's Charter (P&SL 1985, chapter 532 as amended, Section 4-B.1.; Bylaws of the Board of Trustees Section 1.3) states that the UMS Board of Trustees is the governing and planning body of the System, and charges it with responsibility for preparing and approving the operating and capital budgets. Further, it states that the Board shall provide sound financial management and exercise prudent stewardship of the assets of the System, as well as plan strategies for programs and allocation of resources that most effectively serve the educational needs of the citizens of Maine. (7.7, 7.8, 7.10, 7.16)

The Charter (Section 4-A, 4-B2) also states that the Board will appoint a Chancellor who will serve at its pleasure as chief administrative and education officer. Among other duties, the Chancellor is charged with promoting planning for financial operations, capital plans and resource allocations; preparing all operating and capital budgets, appropriation requests and bond issues; and providing a centralized management oversight of services. (7.11)

Section two of the Charter states that the Board will appoint a Treasurer to receive and have custody of all money received for the System; make all expenditures upon authentication; exercise revenue bonding authority with the approval of the Board; and prepare the annual financial report for the System. Board Policy 207 rests all signatory authority to draw funds and to sign contracts, grant applications, research proposals, purchase orders and similar instruments with the treasurer. The Treasurer is authorized to delegate this authority for specific purposes

and within specific limits to designated officers and employees of the System. In current practice the Vice Chancellor with jurisdiction over finance and administration (VCFA) also serves as the appointed treasurer of the Board and exercises the powers reserved to the treasurer under Maine law. In addition, the VCFA fulfills the other financial and administrative duties assigned by the Board and delegated to that position by the Chancellor in his/her role as the chief administrative officer of the System. (7.11)

The VCFA is the chief financial officer of the System. Pursuant to a directive of the Board in November 2013, the VCFA developed a unified financial structure for the System. The unified financial structure includes centralized services for budget, financial analysis, finance/controller, and student accounts. The Chief Business Officers (CBOs) of each UMS university has a dual reporting line to the VCFA and the respective university President and it is expected this will continue. (7.11)

All Board and administrative fiscal policies are promulgated on the System's website and kept current. A System administrative policy on the Use of University Funds was adopted in 2013 to ensure that all System funds are expended for business purposes that support and advance the System's mission. A new Board policy on the development and management of operating and capital budgets was adopted in 2014 to provide an engaged and iterative process for developing the System's budget that ensures the fiduciary responsibilities of multiple stakeholders (Board, Chancellor, VCFA, and university Presidents) are met, and that the Chancellor and Presidents have the opportunity to engage campus and community constituencies in the process. Additionally, the new policy provides centrally managed proper controls and approval requirements to actively manage the budget when approved. (7.9, 7.13, 7.18, 7.19)

The System uses best practices to monitor and report on its financial health to the Board and the public, including multi-year financial analysis to project five-year revenues and expenditures; current fiscal year forecasting to project year-end results at intervals during the fiscal year; and financial ratio analyses to monitor the financial health of each UMS university and the System over time. The System maintains a Budget Stabilization Fund to supplement revenues and stabilize the budget during enrollment declines and economic downturns (currently $13 million), and a Strategic Investment Fund for critical non-recurring investments (currently $4.2 million annually). The System is in its second year of implementation of an appropriation allocation funding model to link the allocation of new State appropriation to the funding levels of UMS university peers. (7.12, 7.14, 7.20)

The System's finances are regularly reviewed by three standing committees of the Board: the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee has general responsibility for financial oversight; the Investment Committee is responsible for the conservation and prudent management of the managed investment pool including the endowment, the defined benefit pension fund, and the operating cash fund; and the Audit Committee monitors the adequacy and integrity of the System's internal controls, financial reporting, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, risk assessment, and ethics reporting. Each committee reports regularly to the full Board for approval of key decisions. The System's finances are subject to annual independent financial statement audits, as well as the Uniform Guidance audit of federal funds. (7.7, 7.16, 7.17)

Despite ongoing economic and demographic challenges, the System has been able to set aside resources for strategic investments and unforeseen events. As a result, the collective financial condition is relatively stable. In each of the past four fiscal years, the System's net position has increased from the net of revenues over expenses. Like all other public higher education institutions, the System was required to adopt Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement No. 75, Accounting and Financial Reporting for Postemployment Benefits Other Than

Pensions. The System adopted this statement in FY17, reducing its beginning of year net position by a one-time amount of $102 million as it recorded the full liability for its post-employment health plan. Since that time, net position has increased 7 percent or $53 million, to a total of $818 million as of June 30, 2019.

The System's unrestricted net position of $94 million includes a Budget Stabilization Fund of $13 million to smooth the financial impact of adverse markets, economic conditions, and other financial challenges and a Benefit Pool Carryover reserve of $12 million to smooth the financial impact of adverse claim trends in its self-insured health plan. (7.4)

Operating revenues have increased by 8 percent from $436 million in FY15 to $470 million in FY19. Net student tuition and fee revenues are the primary source of operating revenues and have grown 11 percent from $238 million in FY15 to $264 million in FY19 despite Fall 2018 full-time equivalent enrollment of 22,033 being flat compared with Fall 2014 full-time equivalent enrollment of 22,037. In FY18, the System increased tuition for in-state undergraduate students for the first time since FY12. Continuing with its commitment to affordable educational opportunities, the System held the in-state undergraduate tuition increase to a system-wide average of 3.3 percent and the overall average comprehensive costs of education for this same category of students to an increase of 2.7 percent. The FY19 in-state undergraduate tuition increased by a system-wide average of 2.4 percent where the overall average comprehensive cost of education for this same category of students increased 2.7 percent. (7.5)

The System has a comprehensive enrollment management plan to strategically pursue enrollment growth that is updated annually. Additionally, enrollment is supported by financial aid funded by each of the UMS universities—including tuition waivers, scholarships, SEOG match, work-study match, university loans, and Perkins/Nursing match. (7.10)

Net non-operating revenues increased by 13.1 percent from $214 million in FY15 to $242 million in FY19. Non-capital state appropriation has increased by 6.5 percent from $199 million in FY15 to $212 million in FY19. Gifts currently expendable have been relatively flat over the past five years and totaled $16 million in FY19. Endowment return used for operations has been consistent at $6 million per year for the past five years.

Investment income has fluctuated with changes in the investment market. Such revenue totaled $12 million in FY19 and averaged $10 million for the past three years and $6 million for the past five years. The System engages a consultant to provide guidance related to its investments and has written investment guidelines and objectives that are approved by the Investment Committee of the Board.

The System's operating expenses increased by 8 percent, from $669 million in FY15 to $724 million in FY19. The combined total operating expenses for instruction, academic support, and student services was $315 million for FY19 and represented 44 percent of total operating expenses. This percentage has been relatively consistent over the past five years.

Consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, the System is committed to including depreciation costs in its capital and operating budgets so that it can address ongoing facility renewal and replacement and its backlog of repair and modernization needs.

Twelve affiliated fundraising organizations (e.g., foundations, alumni associations, etc.) provide support to the System's missions and initiatives. University foundations alone provided an annual average of $10 million in gifts to the System over the past five years. Total endowment market values for all affiliated fundraising organizations totaled $286 million at the end of FY19, up 23 percent from the FY15 total of $232 million. (7.18)

The Charter *(Section 4-B3)* designates the head of campus (President) of each UMS university as the chief administrative and educational officer thereof, responsible for the development of its academic program, among other duties. New program development to meet market demand and/or state need, and to generate new revenue, undergoes review by the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) of the UMS universities, meeting jointly and led by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA), as well as the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, and requires the approval of the Board. (7.15)

The System has developed a long-range financial planning process—the Multi-Year Financial Analysis (MYFA)—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. The MYFA is supported by a comprehensive financial modeling tool for multi-scenario, all funds revenue and expense forecasting, including demographic, program, and facilities analysis. The MYFA is reviewed with the Board annually as part of the budget review process to inform and guide decision-making and resource allocation. (7.6)

Information, Physical, and Technological Resources

In 1988 a shared library consortium was created, University Resources Serving Users Statewide (URSUS), to provide a union catalog of library materials held at the eight libraries across the System. Within four years, the Maine State Library, the Maine State Law and Legislative Research Library, and Bangor Public Library joined. The overarching vision of the 11 URSUS libraries is one shared collection, shared technology, and cooperative collection development, which works toward minimizing duplication of purchases and collection overlap while featuring the strengths of each individual library. Today, the URSUS libraries designate the bulk of their holdings as one collection and seek efficiencies through collaboration and cooperation in many areas among the 11 libraries. This consortium with the shared integrated library system and a robust physical materials delivery system has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars for the System and each UMS university. (7.21-22)

The URSUS consortium cooperates with other library consortia in the state, Minerva and Maine InfoNet Library System (MILS), as well as Colby, Bates, Bowdoin, the University of New England, and the Portland Public Library. These libraries all share training and resources for information literacy instruction, technical services, and various workshops to help libraries run more efficiently. The System libraries participated in the Maine Shared Collections Cooperative (MSCC); a collaborative of more than 40 academic and public libraries in the state of Maine who have collectively agreed to retain more than 1.5 million print books for a minimum of 15 years. Participation in MSCC enabled the System Libraries to develop a shared collections management approach.

The System libraries use the URSUS consortium to organize and make available resources and services to support the students, faculty, staff, and researchers of all of the UMS universities. This collaborative supports various System workgroups and committees that collectively work on cataloging standards, collection development, interlibrary loan, reference services (tutorials, discovery layers, copyright), information literacy, special collections, and circulation. These groups work together to create policies and procedures that are mutually beneficial and also address the evaluation and effectiveness of the work that is done. The System's libraries currently work together as one entity cooperatively, collaboratively, and cost-effectively. (7.21, 7.22)

The System's libraries shared collections support the needs of students, faculty, staff, and researchers. Including all resources acquired in print, e-journals, e-books, databases, various media, and special collections. The libraries provide the resources needed to support the curriculum, programs, and research through owned or accessible collections, inter-library lending, and course reserves. (7.22)

Access and discovery of the resources available include discovery and content management tools, focused web pages for subject areas, programs and classes, as well as local web pages and other tools created or mediated by librarians. Under a unified accreditation, the libraries will move to further expand unified tools and shared discovery to help users find and access resources across the System. (7.22)

Professional reference librarians and library staff provide the expertise for the research needs of students, faculty, and staff. Librarians support access via reference desks, online methods, and in the classroom, as well as through one-on-one research assistance. Reference librarians use the collections and assist with access to discovery tools, but also bring discipline-specific knowledge to the work with the user. Professional librarians also assist faculty in their research needs for publication. (7.22)

The System provides for the work of the librarians and others to teach information literacy based on the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) framework and other research techniques, to help users identify what information is needed, to understand how information is organized, to identify the best sources of information, and to evaluate the sources critically. Information literacy is seen as a core value of our students' education. Reference staff partner with teaching faculty in the classroom to ensure that students have the knowledge to assess resources and apply critical thinking. (7.22)

Professional librarians assist faculty and staff with the research they need for successful grants and other opportunities. The libraries provide access to subject databases and subject expert librarians. They present workshops on the resources for funding opportunities and provide a mechanism for promoting and preserving the papers resulting from the research. The System Library Reference Committee meets four times a year. The System supports this work and provides resources to help with supporting and preserving the research of the university communities, including the work of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, staff, and researchers to help promote the intellectual work of the universities. (7.22)

The System supports the services and information resources to provide rapid turn-around of access to resources after purchase and ensures that access to online resources are available for qualified users. Interlibrary loan services are centralized for some libraries in the System, and this will be expanded. (7.22)

The System operates a singular wide area network, providing a single high speed network to connect all locations, students, faculties, and support. Online and hybrid services are designed to be supported by IT and instructional design staff at all locations. The UMS university libraries receive efficient and effective technology services from Maine InfoNet, a centralized library technology and system support service sponsor. (7.21, 7.22)

The System has developed a centrally led capital planning and project management function, as well as centralized risk management, strategic procurement, safety management, and a unified work control center. These operations are led by the Chief Facilities and General Services Officer, which reports to the VCFA. UMS universities manage the day-to-day operations of facilities and grounds, with their respective facilities directors reporting to the Chief Business Officers (CBOs). The System owns and operates a physical infrastructure of about nine million square feet of space, hundreds of buildings and thousands of acres of land at seven UMS university campuses and numerous additional physical locations.[9] (7.21, 7.23)

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[9] The System contracts with Sightlines, a Gordian company, to help monitor and manage its physical infrastructure. Sightlines provides Systemwide facility condition data and benchmarking across higher education (and additional sectors) to help the System monitor the competitiveness and efficiency of its facilities and allocate and invest scarce capital and maintenance resources as effectively as possible.

The System has developed a centralized information technology (US:IT) function to meet the expectations and purposes of its students, faculty and staff. These operations are led by the Chief Information Officer (CIO), which reports to the VCFA. US:IT delivers technology infrastructure, solutions and services to the UMS universities and other System units. This team was unified in 2013, streamlining governance, assets and delivery systems, while maintaining direct response capability at each UMS university. The resources assigned to the UMS universities operate within a common set of standards and principles to achieve the outcomes developed by the System. Investments and support mechanisms are designed to serve the System and its universities. (7.21, 7.26)

Regular investments are made to maintain technical capacity at each location of the System. Specific emphasis is placed on learning technologies, including video, smart board, wireless capacity and other infrastructure to support and enhance learning. Physical space is generally appropriate and adequate, but disparities exist. The System engages in ongoing planning and investment to improve the design and condition of its facilities, and to keep current with teaching methodologies and the ever-changing needs of students, faculty and others. In addition to existing facilities, the System at any given time will manage between an estimated $45 and $70 million in major capital improvement projects, often multi-year projects. (7.22, 7.24)

The System's IT capital investment plan demonstrates recent and future planned expenditures. The Education Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) —consisting of faculty, instructional design professionals, and IT staff— perform data collection processes to link faculty and students to identify the important and emerging instructional technologies, evaluate new products and services, and provide investment and service design advice. Core systems such as the enterprise management system, MaineStreet, are being integrated to streamline student records and other functions.

The System engages periodically in physical resource planning, including annual assessment of the condition and needs of its physical infrastructure. The System employs a three-tiered planning process that includes master planning approximately every decade; five-year capital planning exercises; and annual work planning to be integrated into the System's annual budget process. Key to master planning is the participation and input of the UMS universities in guiding investment choices. (7.23, 7.24, 7.26)

The System has a single Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), reporting to the CIO. The CISO is specifically responsible for all systems integrity and privacy of data. The CISO serves as the System's HIPPA designee and manages unified policy, actions, and security incidents. Training of all staff through a variety of means and proactive audits and log management fall within the CISO's area of responsibility. The governing board over information security includes faculty, academic leadership, and administrative management. (7.25)

Learning and collaborative spaces of the System are designed to be inviting and highly functional for students and other users. Environments have been upgraded to support bring-your-own-device strategies and mobility, for example. The System operates a regional optical network at all UMS universities to provide the necessary bandwidth and capacity to support research and advanced needs. (7.21, 7.24)

The System completed its first Information Technology Strategic Plan in 2018, identifying strengths, as well as gaps, in information resources, services, and capacity across the System. This analysis is being updated annually. The System also has substantial, annually updated data available to inform its decision-making on physical resources and continues to address identified needs. Moreover, the implementation of the three-tiered capital planning process–including community-engaged master planning and more detailed annual planning tied directly to the budget process of each UMS university – is intended to advance compliance with this standard. (7.26)

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

The System will need to ensure that planning and allocation of financial resources occurs to support equitable access to library resources by students, faculty, staff, and researchers at UMS universities and will also need to identify consistent assessment tools and metrics across the UMS universities. Project Outcome is being piloted currently by the Maine State Library and a work group that includes the university library directors, will look at best practices and develop and implement additional plans for assessing institutional effectiveness in the libraries. The UMS university library directors have also identified several areas to focus initial efforts: 1) develop a strategic plan, with shared mission and vision statements, by-laws, and a formalized committee structure that will strengthen the UMS university libraries' ability to work collectively to ensure students, faculty, staff, and researchers have access to the resources and library services to support their academic and research endeavors; 2) provide access to library resources across the System. Currently students enrolled in courses at different UMS universities may easily gain access to shared resources, however, faculty, staff, and researchers do not have similar access. A plan and process will need to be created to ensure all UMS universities' constituencies have equitable access to library resources across the System; and 3) continued research into a shared acquisitions model with a single budget. This approach would promote ease in sharing resources and ensure access across the System.

While many facilities are in excellent condition, the overall condition of the System's facilities is estimated at a net asset value of 54 percent, and half of all space has a renovation age of 50 years or older. The Board has set a goal of achieving a net asset value of 63 percent by 2022. To address these concerns, the System has continued its focus on removing space and constraining the growth of space as part of the solution to improving the net asset value of its facilities, reducing space by 285,000 gross square feet since FY12. The System also has been seeking new and novel sources of investment. Revenue bonds, public-private partnerships, potential new State support, energy services company agreements, and other revenue sources are all being pursued or are in progress above and beyond more traditional appropriation funds, grant, or general obligation bond resources.

Prior to 2012, information technology investments and decisions were made by UMS universities, frequently resulting in technologies that are not standard from one location to another. Lack of consistency for data coding conventions and standards also present challenges in delivering consistent functionality and user experiences for core systems. Resources to enable sufficient high-level IT capacity at all locations will be an area that requires continued investment. Several facilities already require communications and infrastructure upgrades. Keeping pace with evolving pedagogy and technologies is a significant challenge. To address these issues, integrated governance and planning for IT, including significant collaboration and flexibility with UMS universities, will be used to set policies, achieve support and establish a cycle of continuous feedback and improvements. Deeper integration of the information technology systems serving UMS universities is occurring and will result in greater efficiency and interoperability while enhancing student success. Operationalizing the UMS Data Governance structure will promote and ensure greater consistency with data coding conventions and standards. Continuation of the effort to adopt a cloud-first enterprise strategy will ensure long-term scalability, sustainability and cost efficiency. ◾

Standard Eight
Educational Effectiveness

With the exception of multi-university programs, the process for evaluating the educational effectiveness of programs and overall success of students will be managed at the institution level, although the introduction of additional central reporting will be necessary.

The institution recognizes that most assessment of student learning occurs at the level of the program or the individual course, and this work is overseen by faculty and institutional assessment offices at the campus level. The development and publication of program-level learning outcomes for single-university programs will continue to be managed at the university level. Likewise, general education outcomes for single-university programs will continue to be managed as they are now. As an example of learning assessment, the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) is currently assessing its early college chemistry courses through a common quiz for on-campus and dual enrollment courses – only collecting relevant data to determine whether the student was in a dual enrollment or regular course at UMA. The purpose of this is to inform a discussion between high school faculty and university faculty who are acting as liaisons about pedagogy and curriculum. Because the goal is to inform pedagogy, there is no further reporting for this work save that the discussions have been completed and await another cycle of assessment. At the University of Maine (UM), the assessment process includes three-year program-level assessment plans and comprehensive reflection reports submitted to an Assessment Advisory Board every three years. In 2020, the university added a yearly reporting obligation to the process. At the University of Southern Maine (USM), every program completes an annual "Assessment of Student Learning Plan" designed to guide continuous curricular improvement, and specialized assessment protocols are in place for general education and Honors courses.

Effective program assessment of student learning objectives also often gets reported out to a broader academic affairs body to demonstrate quality control. Common reports include student success rates in classes, end-of-year program reports, and five-year program reviews, among others. These are currently collected and reviewed broadly under the university Chief Academic Officers (CAOS) and Deans in Academic Affairs. Programs that remain independent offerings of a single university will continue to follow their own academically led processes and then submit their final reports to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs (VCAA) as a clearinghouse for evidence of program effectiveness and student success. Ultimately, the VCAA will retain responsibility for ensuring academic integrity and quality of offerings throughout the institution.

The VCCA's office will develop a standard assessment reporting form modeled after the E-series (E1) form, collecting information on the learning outcomes assessed, methods used for assessment, overall results of the assessments, process for interpretation, and changes that have been made based on the results. Programs that are or become multi-university will follow the assessment framework developed in coordination with each participating university. The framework will allow for flexibility to meet unique program requirements; however, the essential elements of multi-institutional assessment plans will be as follows.

Multi-university programs will submit an assessment plan as a part of their program approval. The assessment plan will define the methods for determining course learning outcomes, program-level outcomes, and mapping these outcomes to the University of Maine System (UMS) mission. The assessment plan will also include the

methods for measuring those outcomes, time frame for assessment, and process for implementing changes. The outcome documents will be shared with the VCAA's office to track impact and continuous improvement.

As assessment plans are a part of curriculum development, multi-university programs will specify the details of their academic governance as it relates to establishing an assessment committee (i.e., identify a coordinator, name other members, describe how chairs are elected, and provide general outlines for communication and approvals). The development of multi-university academic governance is discussed in more detail in Standards Three and Four. The VCAA's office will maintain a Google team drive to manage all multi-university assessment documents. The Chief Academic Officers Council (CAOC) will collaborate to create multi-university program assessment plans and outcomes documents in standard forms. The VCAA's office will establish a multi-university program assessment committee to provide training and support structures for multi-university program assessment processes.

In 2016, the institution created a central institutional research (IR) department. Most universities have their own IR departments, whereas UMS IR provides research for all programs at all universities, and crosses the boundaries of each university to glean insights at a System-wide level. UMS IR will provide assessment and IR services to the multi-university programs, and will continue to provide assessment services to programs that remain independent (individual university) programs.

The institution recognizes the basic principle of subsidiarity in its development and use of assessment and student data practices – namely, that assessment processes will be governed and managed at a level as close to the education of students as is feasible. The institution currently comprises six individually accredited universities (the University of Maine at Machias (UMM) is accredited under UM's accreditation). Because most of the assessment and data practices have been developed at the university and program levels, these practices of data collection and use have been assessed over time and are appropriate to the diversity of student populations. For example, UM is research-focused and a traditional student serving university where assessment can be done in person and over multiple class sections. UMA, however, offers the majority of its classes online or at a distance. Here, the expertise developed in UMA's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will be critical to enable assessment efforts for this student population, and is something the other universities will be able to learn from. In addition, while UM and USM have substantial graduate-level programming, other campuses do not. Assessment of this work should be done at the campus level. Assessment of success for students in multi-university programs will be addressed as indicated above. (8.1)

As with the assessment of student learning outcomes, the tracking of student success measures is typically coordinated by the staff responsible for the institutional research function. This tracking includes IPEDS reporting, participation in the Student Achievement Measure, participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement, membership in the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, post-graduate surveys, and customized internal reports. Student retention is also a measure included in the Programs for Examination (PFE) process highlighted in Standards Two and Four. The responsibility for identifying and tracking the appropriate measures for each university will remain at the campus level to ensure alignment with its mission. However, one change will be introduced: the development of a process for reporting institution-level student success measures (e.g. student progress, retention, and graduation) in the VCAA clearinghouse. For reporting purposes, students in multi-university programs will be included in two sets of metrics: the success measures for the host university, and a separate set of metrics relevant to multi-university programs. The appropriate metrics of success for multi-university programs will be defined by the multi-university assessment committee. (8.6)

There have been numerous examples where our universities have used assessment and quantitative measures of student success to improve student learning and student success. They range from the many ways in which individual faculty change course delivery and assignments based on student evaluations they receive at the end of the semester to developing new degree programs based upon assessment of state need, market trends, and student interest in those programs. For example, UMA is developing a Master's of Science in Cybersecurity, in collaboration with USM, based on surveys of student interest in graduate degree programs and partly due to the strong enrollments in their post-baccalaureate certificate programs in the field.

Initial actions that have emerged from UM's general education assessment process are another example. In 2017, UM launched a cycle of review for its general education areas. Findings from their first two assessments revealed a need for better course alignment with learning outcomes. Consequently, the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs and General Education Committee moved forward with recommendations for improving communication and training and modifying the general education course approval process. Further, in Spring 2020, the committee formed two working groups charged with exploring general education reform. (8.8)

Program review occurs on a regular basis: at UMA, every five years, and at USM, every seven. As noted above, the PFE process includes fewer variables and occurs annually. Each process involves a review of enrollments, student success, and resources used to support programs. The program review process also includes external review, and assessments of student learning and success after graduation. Each of these processes has budgetary and planning implications for individual universities.

In 2017, the UMS launched a Data Governance Program comprising a Data Governance Council and a Data Advisory Committee. Roughly 100 faculty, staff, and administrators representing all of our universities have participated in this collaboration. The process, which identifies issues and operationalizes solutions, has sought to serve the missions of all seven universities. Maintaining a similar sense of collaboration, and as noted above, the UMS recommends development of a system-wide assessment and institutional effectiveness committee with representation from all its universities. Among the objectives of this committee would be to foster a common language with respect to assessment and student success measures, identify collaborative ways to assist programs in measuring student learning, and provide input to the VCAA and chief academic officers regarding the development of reporting procedures. (8.10)

Collaborating with university leadership, UM and UMM faculty elected to proceed, under special conditions, with Spring 2020 student evaluations of teaching. (Results will be treated as formative; they will not be placed in a faculty member's personnel file or be applied toward promotion and tenure.) Faculty were able to craft personalized questions to elicit specific feedback about student experiences and student learning in remote instructional formats. In a related initiative, UM's Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning is now (May 2020) recruiting faculty who reported — of their own volition — strong student learning outcomes in their Spring 2020 courses to serve as summer guides or mentors for peers seeking to improve the quality of their own remote and/or online courses.

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

The VCCA's office will develop a standard assessment reporting form modeled after the E-series (E1) form, collecting information on the learning outcomes assessed, methods used for assessment, overall results of the assessments, process for interpretation, and changes that have been made based on the results. Further, the UMS recommends the development of a system-wide assessment and institutional effectiveness committee with representation from all its universities, with objectives to include fostering a common language with respect to assessment and student success measures, identifying collaborative ways to assist programs in measuring student learning, and providing input to the VCAA and CAOs regarding the development of reporting procedures. ■

Standard Nine
Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity

The University of Maine System (UMS), as the institution, will continue to fulfill its commitment to the highest ethical standards in all behaviors and communications with internal and external stakeholders. UMS manages its policies and practices with integrity, broadly at the System level and locally, throughout its universities. Current and prospective students, faculty, staff, the UMS Board of Trustees, and the seven Boards of Visitors have access to accurate and clear information, and internal organizations and external agencies are treated equitably and with respect.

Individual universities and the System office have always operated with the highest commitment to integrity, communication, and public disclosure, and with this request the institution would assume responsibility for these areas.

The seven universities of the UMS will continue to inform their communities and each other via public forums, websites, listservs, and messages from leadership. University websites are regularly updated, and when messages have the potential to affect multiple universities, UMS, or perhaps shared students, the Presidents vet the content of these messages with the Chancellor, System leadership, and each other. The institution also has a website which provides links to all campuses as well as the Office of the Chancellor and all UMS departments. Further, in collaboration with System leadership, the Office of Public Affairs regularly releases appropriate and salient messages to inform and prepare our communities as appropriate.

In recent years the meetings of the Chancellor-led Presidents' Council, the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs), Chief Business Officers (CBOs), and other System-level work groups have been redesigned to be increasingly more inclusive and encourage active participation. Matters of concern are shared and discussed, which strengthens the process of decision-making and improves the dissemination of these decisions to the necessary parties. System leaders emphasize transparency and communication with universities, including clearly communicated expectations that each university will work to ensure the integrity of its actions and personnel. (9.1)

UMS maintains and regularly reviews a slate of policies and procedures to ensure all practices and behaviors by university personnel meet the federal, State, and System standards for equal opportunity, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and retaliation, political activity, personnel actions, labor relations, grievance procedures, awards, and conflict of interest. Those Board policies can be found in Section 400 of the Board policy manual. Students across the institution adhere to the UMS Student Conduct Code which is Board Policy Section 501.

There are additional policies at the Board and institutional level that apply consistently throughout the universities, however there should be an inventory and review of university-level policies to determine whether they should be augmented, or even adopted more widely, in order to ensure integrity throughout the institution. (9.2; 9.8)

UMS Office of Human Resources oversees extensive policies related to non-discriminatory policies and ethical practices in recruiting, hiring, and advancement. UMS employs personnel dedicated to ensuring equity in hiring and

salaries, and searches that start internally are open to employees at all universities. The Office also provides training in inherent bias, diversity, and general human resources laws, policies, and processes. (9.5)

The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) leads the CAOs and Enrollment Managers in regular discussions about moving forward on academic, recruitment, and admission efforts in a coordinated way. Recently the VCAA engaged the UMS Office of Organizational Effectiveness to facilitate the mapping of the undergraduate application process at all seven universities and in the UMS Application Processing Center (aka shared processing center). The mapping effort and unanimous recommendations about how to create seamless and transparent processes for students were transformational, for both the process and the participants. The recommendations are currently being considered by the Presidents and CAOs, and overall the collaboration is celebrated as an indicator of what we can achieve together when we mitigate barriers and focus on doing what is best for students. (9.5)

The institution confers with immediacy and regularity with regard to matters of research, external partnerships, development, and all activities that create the potential for overlap, either real or perceived. The Presidents, the UMS Office of the General Counsel, and other key parties are actively involved to ensure consistency and clarity. Further, the universities are connected as sibling universities and Presidents take care to inform, involve, or confer with fellow Presidents, the Chancellor, and System leadership and General Counsel if behaviors of students, faculty, or staff could adversely impact another campus. (9.7)

The VCAA's office led a review and revision of academic program policies that began in 2017 and continues in 2020. The process for approval of academic programs was streamlined to allow universities to be more nimble in proposing programs while maintaining academic integrity and quality. The new policy reduced the amount of information needed for the initial program requests, and eliminated the need for outside experts except in certain circumstances, thus reducing the time from initial concept to approval. Additionally, to better maintain the full program portfolio, each CAO now brings forward all program changes including new minors, concentrations, and certificates for CAOC consideration and VCAA approval. The policy is linked here.

A new System-wide Academic Integrity Policy has been developed with input from each university and will be considered for approval by the Board this summer. A "policy on policies" process will be necessary to maintain this level of institutional integrity and transparency through appropriate policies and policy assessments, particularly in the context of unified accreditation, and will be developed in concert with the General Counsel's office in Fall 2020. (9.9)

The institution will work directly and with integrity with NECHE on all matters. In fulfillment of its role to provide oversight for our universities, UMS will communicate fully and immediately to ensure NECHE and our campuses have the information they need to address concerns and act in good faith. UMS has a strong record of communicating with NECHE and copies of correspondence related to unified accreditation can be found in the Historical Documentation section of the UMS Unified Accreditation website. (9.10)

Transparency

Current academic programs have clear application processes and admission criteria stated on university websites. As part of the work to address the larger governance and policy needs associated with developing and maintaining joint programs, the VCAA will be working with faculty leaders to address and publicize admission processes for students applying to these programs. (9.13)

All universities and the institution publish links to the UMS Student Conduct Code which is Board Policy Section

501. There will be a forthcoming UMS Academic Integrity Code which will also be clear and accessible on all UMS and university sites. (9.13)

Transparent and clearly communicated information is critical to ensuring students and families have the knowledge they need to make informed decisions. Providing a centralized source of student consumer information on the UMS website is one way to do this.

Public Disclosure

Universities currently publish information about the degrees earned by faculty including which institutions in their respective academic catalogs. This will continue under unified accreditation, and a unified catalog would centralize that data. The UMS will publish a full list of faculty for all multi-university programs. The list will include the department and program affiliation, degrees earned along with the granting institutions. All Board documentation along with a list of trustees and their bios are available at this link. (9.20)

In the next two years UMS will explore publishing and maintaining a system-wide course catalog that clearly describes programs, courses, and faculty at all UMS universities. Creating one central location for this information along with policies and accurate faculty information will make it easier for students, academic advisors, and guidance counselors to understand the transferability of courses. University websites list which semesters or years that faculty are on sabbatical when applicable. The VCAA will also publish this list on the UMS website. (9.22)

Dedicated UMS institutional research staff publish the rates of full-time student retention and six-year graduation rates along with a number of other student success measures in annual reports. The data are benchmarked against institutional peers. Further, the Board uses the Key Performance Information (KPI) accessible via the dashboard to discuss UMS progress toward goals.

In addition to the standard data tracking via IPEDS reporting, much of the information about educational goals, learning outcomes, and student success are published at the university level and can be found on program web pages. The UMS also launched a coordinated approach to university participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) so that each university surveys their first-year and senior students at the same time and includes a topic in common. The NSSE is deployed every three years and currently tracks advising as the common topic. The results are analyzed at the universities, but also available at the System level for comparative analysis. Licensure examination passage rates are either posted on university websites for programs that require those exams (see an example from the University of Maine at Augusta here under the Student Performance Outcomes tab, and one from the University of Southern Maine here), or are available at program accreditor, state, or national licensure sites (e.g. see here for nursing). Programs that are separately accredited are listed as such on university websites with accreditation links for each, for example, at the University of Maine, annual completion reports are compiled and housed on the UMS website. Additional information on retention, graduation, and other metrics related to student persistence and success are posted on the UMS Dashboard. (9.24)

Universities publish accurate information about the cost of attendance and information about accessing financial aid and understanding the long-term impact of student debt. Information can be found at the links here: UMS Dashboard; UM; UMA; UMF; UMFK; UMM; UMPI; USM. (9.25)

UMS maintains a unified accreditation website accessible here: https://sites.google.com/maine.edu/unified-accreditation/home (9.27)

Opportunities for and Approaches to Improvement

UMS is steadfastly committed to operating with integrity and transparency. Unified accreditation will increase the ways in which the institution can streamline processes, improve communication, and share information that will benefit our students and employees. As this section pointed out, in the next two years UMS will explore publishing and maintaining a System-wide course catalog that clearly describes programs, courses, and faculty at all UMS universities. In addition, the UMS will explore providing centralized information about the cost of attendance, financial aid, retention, and graduation rates for all universities on the System website. Doing so will provide a streamlined resource for faculty and staff, and will minimize effort and alleviate confusion for current and prospective students and their families. ■

Conclusion

In its 2017 Statement on Innovation in Higher Education, the Association of Governing Boards' Board of Directors observed that "[a] culture of innovation at a college or university begins with an understanding that the status quo is not sufficient for continued success or viability," and that, "[w]hile the institution's mission may still have value, the new environment for higher education requires fresh approaches for delivering that mission."

In the narrative above, the University of Maine System demonstrates how, by unifying its universities' separate institutional accreditations, it meets the Standards for Accreditation. But in doing so, the System also demonstrates that it is poised for new academic innovation, ready to serve the state of Maine and its students and even lead the nation with expanded academic collaborations between universities that make more efficient use of limited public resources.

Within the System, some collaborative multi-university programs are under way. More are needed, and more become possible with unified accreditation. There are some examples of faculty collaborating between universities to offer academic programs; more becomes possible with unified accreditation. System universities have launched partnerships and new initiatives together, and are exploring new degree programs, credentials, and certificates. Maine needs more, and unified accreditation makes it possible.

In this uncertain time, when higher education is challenged nationally to demonstrate its ongoing relevance in a changing world, UMS's unified accreditation model and university collaborations, as well as a strong partnership with NECHE to bring them all about, serve as a fresh reminder that innovation in academic governance and student service is still possible. To best meet its mission in service to its students and the state of Maine, now is indeed the appropriate time for Maine's public universities to unify their accreditations in the University of Maine System. ■