

At the UMF Board meeting I spoke on the power of story and the responsibility to move beyond story to facts.

It was encouraging, for a short time, to see a quality discussion develop driven by Trustee Johnson's question. Unfortunately, the discussion too quickly devolved into giving slogans; "Good for the students", and left facts far behind.

Given the large amount of time the Board has spent on transfer issues I find the lack of knowledge on this issue exceptionally concerning, even verging into malfeasance.

If single accreditation, with its risks to program accreditation and program quality, should be entered into, the Board should be able to defend that decision with facts, not made up stories. When I spoke I mentioned that many of the "advantages" of single accreditation vanish when examined.

Single accreditation does virtually nothing about the transfer issue, that is because there is not really a transfer issue. Let's look at the facts:

It is, and has been, straightforward to transfer classes between schools, including UMS schools.

For instance, look at the UM Catalog (similar language is in previous catalogs)

<http://catalog.umaine.edu/content.php?catoid=77&navoid=2796&hl=transfer&returnto=search>

Courses within the University of Maine System:

- *Students who take courses from any other University of Maine System institution will have any credit earned with a grade of C- or better automatically applied as transfer credit to their academic record at the institution where they are matriculated. [One exception is ENG 101-College Composition which requires an equivalent with a minimum grade of C.]*
- *Students should complete a Domestic Study Away form to insure that the transfer credit will apply toward completion of their degree. Students who are applying for financial aid must complete a Domestic Study Away form available on the Office of Student Records website: <http://studentrecords.umaine.edu/forms/>*
- *Courses taken at other UMS institutions will be identified 35 days after the last day of finals. It will be the responsibility of the student to notify the Office of Student Records if subsequent grade changes require the original credit to be reevaluated.*
- *Students who are not receiving federal financial aid or VA benefits may opt out of this automated transfer credit processing by completing the [Internal Transfer Credit Opt Out](#) form and filing it with the Office of Student Records before the last day of classes.*

Lest the official language be too official, consider the language in the Advising and Academic Service Center

<https://umaine.edu/clasadvisingcenter/faqs-procedures-tips/campus-procedures/>

Taking Classes at Other Colleges or Universities

It happens now and again that a student may need a class that, for some reason or another, isn't offered here at the University of Maine at a convenient time. Perhaps it's a class that the student needs to graduate or is a necessary prerequisite for an important class. Perhaps there's only one section of this class and it filled up quickly. Perhaps the class is just not offered. Or perhaps the student wants to take a summer class, but doesn't live near enough to Orono to take one here on campus. In such cases or other similar situations, many students will do a Study Away.

Studying away is where you stay enrolled as a degree-seeking student here at the University of Maine, but take one or more courses at another institution. Generally speaking, there are two types of Study Away: you either enroll concurrently at UMaine and the other institution or you enroll only at the other institution. An example of concurrent registration would be a student who is taking courses on campus in Orono but also taking an online course through another institution, typically because the online class wasn't offered at UMaine that semester. Conversely, if a student lives far from campus, perhaps near Portland, but wanted to take a course over the summer, they could take a course at USM or SMCC and have the credit transferred to UMaine.

How do you go about enrolling elsewhere? Relatively easily, in actuality. First thing you want to do is verify that you are in good academic standing (not on academic probation) and financial standing (not owing any money to any UMaine System Institution). Then, check with your advisor, to see whether he/she agrees that this would be a good course of action (you're going to need their signature later, so it's good to get this out of the way early). Next you need to find the appropriate class(es) at another institution. To do that, first go to UMaine's [Transfer Equivalency](#) page. On that page, you can either search for equivalent courses at other institutions (if you know the specific class you are

looking for) or you can look at another institution's courses and find out what their equivalent course would be at UMaine. One thing to keep in mind about the Transfer Equivalency page, though, is that not every class from every other institution is included in the course matrix; only courses that have been transferred to UMaine at one time or another. If you know of a course at another institution that is not on the Transfer Equivalency matrix, check with your college's dean's office to find out whether it will work for your needs. After you've narrowed down the institution you want to attend and figured out what class you are looking for, so go to that institutions website and search if that class is offered.

If you find an appropriate course at another institution, you then have to register for it. To do that, contact that institution and let them know that you are currently a degree student at the University of Maine, but that you wanted to take a class (or classes) as a non-degree student at their institution. You generally don't need to go through the full admissions process in that case, though it can vary by institution. If all went well, you're now registered at another institution. However, that isn't the end of the process, at least not for the conscientious student.

The point of finding a class through the Transfer Equivalency page was to verify that the course would be accepted here at the University of Maine and if it will fulfill the needed requirements (ie, general education category and such). The worst nightmare for a student doing a Study Away is to finish the course, only to have UMaine not accept it. To prevent that from happening and to facilitate the acceptance of credit, you should fill out a [Domestic Study Away Registration](#) form. This same form is filled out regardless of whether or not you are going to be concurrently enrolled at UMaine. Once you have filled out the form (which needs to be signed by your advisor or the department Chairperson), you will submit it to your college's academic dean. For instance, students with majors in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences would turn in their form to Stevens Hall, Room 100, and students in the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture would turn in their form to the dean's office in Winslow Hall, Room 2. At the end of the semester, once your final grades are

in, be sure to have the other institution send an official transcript to Student Records. As long as you have passed the course with a C- or better (C or better for ENG 101), you'll be all set and you'll have another class under your belt and on your transcript.

Studying away isn't for everyone, but it can be useful to help you get the credits you need in a timely fashion. If you have further questions, check with Student Records or your college's academic dean's office.

Now you may want some aspects of the process streamlined. That can be done without single accreditation. Some of the steps are for academic integrity and you should not interfere in those steps.

I understand that many are swayed by superficially examined stories from students and others in which it is claimed that some ill-defined problem with transfer. Instead of examining the facts to lead to a better process, the existence of unexamined complaints is illogically used to justify a largely unconnected decision. I expect the Board and System to make important decisions based on facts, not hearsay. If there are places in which the transfer process can be streamlined, these should be examined. Perhaps the University should do a better job informing students and advisors, although the information is just a keystroke away. The fact is that single accreditation does little to nothing related to course transfer. If UMS intends to retain any academic integrity, it will still require that potential transfer classes for majors will be approval by the degree granting department. Such a judgment should not be superficial.

Surely the Board is aware of recently enacted Board Policy 3.11. This policy already calls for elimination of some barriers (single accreditation is not required) for students to take classes on other campuses. {While the policy is general, I am concerned that the Board fails to understand the academic and quality issues around joint listing classes. The Cooperating Department structure in the AFUM contract provides a responsible methodology for joint listing classes while preserving core academic control. It is more sophisticated than the broad cross listing without serious vetting and review. }

As I have said, every claim that is made in favor of single accreditation should be examined skeptically, without sloganeering. The nature of the issue and alternate ways to resolve the issue need to be examined, minor issues should not drive such a change. The risks of single accreditation on quality, such as lack of program accrediting need to be examined as well. If, after such an honest review the Board deems going forward, then so be it. There is no way the Board can meet this level of quality review prior to the January meeting.

Before bringing a motion to proceed to the Board, the System should fully articulate the issues, how the issues cannot be resolved under current structure and how, explicitly, a single accreditation resolves the issue. As seen from the evidence I provided above, the so called "transfer issue" is not resolved by single accreditation. From conversations with the NECHE

President, the AFUM Cooperating Departments process is acceptable and allows campuses to more directly contribute to the success at degree programs across multiple campuses. The Cooperating Departments was developed to preserve academic quality and faculty control of the curriculum and who teaches their curriculum while providing degree programs a robust way to collaborate to make the whole more than the sum of the parts. There is no evidence a similar level of thought has gone into single accreditation discussion so far.

Jim McClymer, PhD

AFUM President

I do apologize for emailing you. I recognize the amount of work you put into UMS. Given the level of discourse at the last meeting and with no opportunity to talk to you before the January meeting, I felt I had no choice.