

University of Maine System
Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting
April 20, 2022

Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning Meeting

Present: **Committee Members:** James Erwin, Chair; Mark Gardner, Trish Riley, Emily Cain, Lisa Eames and Roger Katz. **Chancellor:** Dannel Malloy. **Staff:** Robert Placido, Ryan Low, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, James Thelen and Ellen Doughty. **Guests:** Huron Consulting Team – Peter Stokes, Brenna Casey, Cathy Dove and Kate Gerbode-Grant.

Absent: James Donnelly.

Trustee Erwin, Ad Hoc Committee Chair, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. The Clerk performed a roll call of the Committee members present.

Peter Stokes from Huron reviewed the agenda for the meeting and summarized the themes from the March 21, 2022 meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning as listed below.

- Maine Community College System: Improve pathways to increase transfer students into the System. Understand the potential impact that free community college may have on the state ecosystem of higher education given excess capacity in the marketplace.
- Workforce: Need a strategy for overall employer engagement that serves as way to engage and reach the adult market which builds relevancy into programs.
- Online/Remote Learning: Need to be present in the online market as part of a holistic plan to be relevant and remain competitive. Determine the right balance for the System and its contemporary delivery of higher education over the next decade.
- Homogenization: Need to articulate the strengths of each campus while also determining where campuses can partner to establish the right mix of specialization and collaboration.
- Hypothesize a New System Model: Consider different models for the System that might include the differentiation of the R1, USM, and the small campuses to operate cohesively and maximize value of teaching component.
- External Engagement: External audiences, like out of state students or corporate relations partners, need a consistent message and communication from the System. Important to remove structural barriers around information sharing while having a clear, consistent message to key stakeholders

Next Steps

Brenna Casey from Huron outlined the next steps. The Chancellor's Spring campus visits occur from March 30th to April 26th. Huron is facilitating focus groups for staff, faculty and students at each university. The May Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning meeting has been changed to May 20th, so the Committee can meet prior to the May Board of Trustees meeting. Huron will plan to preview with the Committee the document that will be shared during the May 22-23, 2022 Board of Trustees meeting.

During the May Board meeting, Huron will share with the Board the themes to date and will present early alignment between the unified accreditation process and the strategic planning process. During the month of July, Huron will plan to synthesize the information from the campus visits and the Board feedback prior to a prioritization meeting with the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning workshop in July.

Emerging Stakeholder Engagement Themes and Strategic Priorities

Ms. Casey explained the themes from stakeholder engagement are focused on qualitative information. Several virtual interviews and focus groups have been completed. The campus visits have started and will be finalized by the end of April.

Representative Strategic Planning Taxonomy

Strategic plans are commonly structured around the following elements, and the content of a plan can be populated by addressing the key questions associated with each element.

- Mission: What is our broad mission or purpose?
- Values: What are the values that inform our mission?
- Vision: To what end should we direct our efforts and resources?
- Vertical Strategic Priorities: What discrete and distinct lanes of activity will primarily help us realize our vision?
- Horizontal Strategic Priorities: What cross-cutting areas of action will infuse multiple verticals and help us realize our vision?
- Initiatives: What are the key initiatives to realize our vision for this period?
- Measures: How will we know we are successful?
- Critical Enablers: What capabilities and resources will be required to support implementation?

As the strategic planning process continues, Huron will begin to categorize and expand themes to fit these core taxonomy elements.

Themes to Date

Kate Gerbode-Grant from Huron explained the follow themes that have emerged so far.

Strengths: How can the System leverage its strengths for future success? What is the right balance of scaling some strengths across the System versus preserving strengths for a specific university?

State of Maine Assets

Composed of distinct geography, resources, and industries, Maine is an ideal location for scholarship, teaching, and research. UMS universities are embedded in local communities and economies across the state provide access to diverse and unparalleled educational experiences.

Connectedness

The familiar nature of an interconnected state and student-centric communities allows for direct and relatively easy access to state leaders and small businesses, allowing students and faculty to enhance experiential learning and research opportunities.

Signature Attributes

The University of Maine System has distinct offerings including Maine Law, (the only law school in Maine), a degree in aviation, and research in areas like offshore wind that are competitive advantages.

Affordability

When asked about strengths of the System, stakeholders consistently pointed to the affordability of an education from a University of Maine institution as a key strength.

Research and Development

UMS has a high volume of research in partnership with the state. UM's R1 designation allows for new and wide-ranging research opportunities while supporting the universities acting like local think tanks

Economic and Cultural Engines

Universities are economic and cultural drivers in their local communities. They enable deep partnerships for economic development, workforce pipelines and community building.

Administrative Integration

UMS has integrated administrative services (e.g., IT, HR, Enrollment). Unified Catalog will expand this integration to academic and student spheres.

Existing Collaborations

Current collaborative efforts in academic disciplines including cybersecurity, nursing, and education, or in endeavors like the Maine Geospatial Institute or the Rural Practice Clinic, act as scalable blueprints for comprehensive, future collaboration across the System.

Challenges: Stakeholders alluded to various structural impediments that prevent collaboration at UMS. What are these structural or cultural roadblocks that hinder collaboration?

Scale and Scope

UMS evolved over time to serve a geographically large state and is now composed of institutions that are strikingly disproportionate in size, type, and location/distance. As a result, institutions fall to one extreme leading to tensions over division and allocation of resources.

Financial Sustainability

UMS universities rely on System stabilization fund to subsidize operating deficits facing declining enrollments which are a key source of revenue. Many stakeholders desire a system that is financially sustainable.

UMS Brand

External stakeholders lack clarity about the composition of the System, how to access it, its distinct value, and its impact on the state. Internally, the structure and benefits derived from the System are unclear to some.

Demographic Declines

UMS faces a demographic cliff of traditional aged students which is exacerbated by marketplace competition and declining interest in rural education. A shrinking demography also poses negative implications for state funding as the number of taxpayers decreases.

Internal & External Competition

UMS faces external competition in the marketplace from the Maine Community College System (MCCS) and private in-state peers. Internal competition exists as a result of current budget model and funding structures which drives competition for revenue and resources.

Campus Autonomy

Several universities envision a structure where they have an equal voice and individual autonomy balanced with system-level support. Others indicate that a fully integrated, centralized structure where everyone focuses on the effective whole will promote future success.

Communication & Trust

Opportunity exists to improve the flow, frequency, and transparency of communications. Stakeholders indicated the removal of silos would enable candid decision-making processes and alleviate ill feelings that exist between campuses.

Culture & Collaboration

Interviewees noted few incentives to collaborate among universities and that a collective “we” approach is not universal, but rather is concentrated in programs or initiatives across the System due to structural

disincentives like the current budget model. Related, stakeholders identified competition for resources between universities leading to mistrust.

Strategic Priorities: What initiatives or specific tactics might the System implement under each of the broad focus areas?

Research & Economic Development

Leverage the recent R1 designation of UM to deploy greater resources within the System to support R&D that will elevate research across the System with direct impact on the future of Maine's economic and workforce development priorities.

Retention, Persistence, Completion

Build a blueprint at the System-level that universities deploy locally to support the specific needs of their students in retention, persistence, and completion. Make strategic investments in areas like student affairs that improve the student experience.

Cost-Efficiency

As UMS flexes to align with supply and demand, the System must develop cost efficiencies across the system to support future financial sustainability and deliver on its mission.

Adult Market

Many believe that UMS is missing an opportunity to tap more deeply into the adult market. This can be done by scaling existing assets and programs (e.g., UMA and 8 Centers that exist across the state and the UMPI YourPace program).

Workforce Development

Scale existing assets or build new models to meet workforce needs with new partnerships or customizable education for businesses and organizations. Attract and retain new talent and residents to the state.

Cross-Collaboration

Formalize and incentivize channels to collaborate that enable building academic capacity, connection to the research infrastructure, academic portfolio growth, and resource sharing among faculty. UA, including the Unified Catalog, sets the System up for broader collaboration among universities and supports students accessing resources and opportunities seamlessly based on their needs and interests.

Leverage Unique Assets of Maine

With cross-campus collaboration as the vehicle, develop System-wide traveling degree, academic, or experiential learning opportunities for students to benefit from the unique strengths of UMS universities and their distinct geographic locations with programs in tourism, education, nursing, environmental sustainability, and/or rural education.

Aging Infrastructure

Capital investments to modernize aging plant at smaller universities and develop strategic investments to support fiscal sustainability.

Academic Innovation built for future students

Reinvent the semester model with shorter academic terms, deliver programs in parallel with the seasonality of the state's economies, or explore different delivery models to meet needs of the "post-traditional" student. Build academic pathways that increase the flow of undergraduates to graduate programs

Role of the System Office: What is the role of the System Office? Who is responsible for what and how does the governing body of the System work with the universities? How does the role of the System Office change with Unified Accreditation?

Governance and Shared Resources

System supports universities through transparent governance and prioritization of aggregate resources and management of universal and cost-effective shared services, policies, and procedures that are consistent across all institutions

State Advocacy for Higher Education

The System should advocate with a unified voice for equitable state investment in higher education for financial sustainability and affordable postsecondary education by demonstrating the ROI of the university System for the state by meeting workforce needs.

Statewide Objectives achieved with Local Solutions

System should focus on statewide objectives by incentivizing collaboration while enabling universities to deploy local, tailored strategies that connect to the overarching System goals.

In a future Committee meeting, Huron will dedicate time to discussing the “Potential Roles of the System Office” in context of these themes in more detail. The Committee will be asked to reflect on the current role and structure of the System Office and the potential future role that it could play in advancing the System’s objectives.

The Committee discussed themes that surprised them and issues that were not raised as part of the stakeholder engagement. The Huron Team is working with Chancellor Malloy and Vice Chancellor Thelen on the external stakeholder engagement. It was suggested that members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee as well as several legislators should be included in the external stakeholder group.

With scarce State resources, an issue was raised that UMS should focus more on coordination with the MCCS and less about competition. A concern was raised that the Data Book does not include anything about the strength of our programs, how they are driving the State’s economy and preparing students for the workforce. There should be a component in the Data Book that tells the UMS story to add value.

Cathy Dove from Huron asked the Committee if they were surprised that DEI was not a clear theme. The Committee was not surprised. Mr. Stokes commented that during the student sessions at UM, 25 students attended, and USM, 2 student attended, DEI was raised as a priority.

System-level CEO Advisory Group

The Committee discussed the potential for a System-level CEO advisory group for the Chancellor. The role of this group would be to support and guide UMS in setting and achieving priority outcomes and ensuring the need of Maine’s employers are continuously brought to the table. Trustee Erwin explained that there is a need for institutionalized flow of information back and forth with the business community that drives the Maine economy. The business leaders need to be partners with UMS in a formal System-level process to accomplish a shared vision of the future needs of the State. The campuses have a process for business engagement but there is not a holistic, System-level approach. The Committee discussed various aspects of this advisory group include the role of the System.

Data Book Implications and Finalization

Ms. Casey explained that the Data Book has been updated to incorporate the feedback from the March Ad Hoc Committee meeting. Upon receipt of the feedback from the meeting today, the Data Book will be finalized and published.

One new data point added to the Data Book relates to the Maine Community College System (MCCS). The National Benchmark for first-time, full-time degree or certificate-seeking community college students who transfer to a 4-year institution is 31%. The average transfer rate for the MCCS is 21%. In Fall 2020, of the MCCS graduates who continued their education, 13% enrolled at a UMS university. Data suggests that a relatively small population of MCCS students are transferring to UMS. That said, a growing number of employers are comfortable seeking employees with less than a bachelor's degree who have the right skills. UMS and MCCS should leverage their existing partnership by refining articulation agreements in parallel with the Unified Catalog effort to enhance transfer pathways and increase the number of transfer students from an MCCS institution to UMS. The Committee discussed the need to define the barriers for MCCS students transferring to UMS.

Following the public session, the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning went into Executive Session.

Executive Session

On a motion by Trustee Gardner, which was seconded by Trustee Cain, and approved by a roll call vote of all Trustees present, the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning agreed to go into Executive Session under the provisions of:

- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-C to discuss the condition, acquisition or disposition of real property or economic development if premature disclosure of the information would prejudice the competitive or bargaining position of the UMS.

On a motion by Trustee Riley, which was seconded by Trustee Eames, and approved by a roll call vote of all Trustees present, the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning concluded the Executive Session.

Additional information about the meeting can be found on the Board of Trustees website:

<https://www.maine.edu/board-of-trustees/meeting-agendas-materials/ad-hoc-committee-on-strategic-planning/>

Adjournment

Ellen N. Doughty, Clerk