

University of Maine System
Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting
November 2, 2022

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Present: **Committee Members:** Emily Cain, Chair; Donna Loring, Barbara Alexander, Roger Katz and Lisa Eames. **Non-Voting Committee Members:** Michael Scott, William Otto, Jeremy Chubbuck, and Ray Rice. **Chancellor:** Dannel Malloy. **Presidents:** Joseph McDonnell and Joseph Szakas. **Staff:** Ryan Low, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Jeffrey St. John, Carolyn Dorsey and Ellen Doughty. **Guests:** Huron Consulting Team – Peter Stokes and Brenna Casey.

Absent: James Donnelly and Trish Riley.

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

Discussion with Huron Consulting Regarding Strategic Planning

The Managing Director of Huron Consulting Group Peter Stokes reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which included three topics: review the project timeline and the strategic plan guiding principles; themes from the fall visits/discuss the core; adjacent and new growth opportunities; and review the unified accreditation guiding principles and the NECHE visit outcomes.

Review Project Timeline and Strategic Plan Guiding Principles

Brenna Casey from Huron summarized the strategic planning timeline for the fall 2022 activities. The strategic plan will begin to be drafted this Fall through the Winter of 2023 and will target to socialize the strategic plan in the Spring and Fall of 2023. Huron has completed most of the campus visits to continue the dialogue on the strategic priorities and engage more deeply with stakeholders. The visits were very productive with a great deal of candor.

As the emerging priority areas for the strategic plan are beginning to be conceptualized, it is important to keep in mind the Guiding Principles for the Strategic Planning Process, as listed below:

1. Be student-centric and further the System's missions of teaching, learning, service, and research
2. Express values of sustainability, quality, affordability, relevancy, and diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do
3. Align with the State of Maine's needs and priorities in system opportunity identification, prioritization, and implementation. Base decisions on facts and projections of the higher education market
4. Be bold and willing to make tough decisions in order to invest in initiatives that will ensure long term success while also phasing out or stopping efforts that no longer serve the needs of our students and our State
5. Declare a System vision that heightens each university's strengths while maximizing opportunities for collaboration toward a cohesive whole
6. Leverage unified accreditation as a tool for achieving systemwide benefits and adhere to the UA guiding principles
7. Address aging facilities and infrastructure through a lens of efficiency, modernization, and accessibility
8. Seek input from a diverse and broad set of UMS stakeholders and communicate transparently

- about the strategic planning process
9. Foster a culture of innovation and collaboration

Themes From Fall Visits and Discuss Core, Adjacent and New Growth Opportunities

Ms. Casey explained that a common theme from the fall campus visits was the importance for the strategic plan to be student-centric; focus on alignment with the State's needs and priorities with an aging workforce and the rural health access; and leveraging unified accreditation as a tool for achieving System-wide benefits. One suggestion from the fall visits was to update the unified accreditation guiding principles as a result of the feedback from the NECHE visit and exit report.

The strategic priorities as well as goals and initiatives were provided to stakeholders in advance of the fall visits to assess the validity of the appropriateness of the eight priorities listed below.

Academic Innovation & Collaboration
Access, Affordability & Learner Success
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Environmental Sustainability
Financial Sustainability
Interdisciplinary Research
Operational Excellence & Infrastructure
Workforce & Economic Development

She explained that the strategic plan is comprised of three components - vertical, horizontal and enablers. Vertical means: What discrete and distinct lanes of activity will primarily help UMS realize its vision? Horizontal means: What cross-cutting areas of action will infuse multiple verticals and help UMS realize its vision? Enablers means: What capabilities and resources will be required to support implementation?

Five of the eight fall visits were completed at the time the Strategic Planning Committee meeting materials were released. The remaining campuses were: UMM, UMPI and UMFK. As of the Committee meeting date only UMFK remained. Themes and feedback related to the emerging strategic priorities from the fall visits are summarized below.

Vertical Pillars

- **Affordability, value and access:** These areas were refined through the visits to UMA, UMM and UMPI by adding access. Affordability has been an important theme for all of the visits. Value is an important element and could UMS articulate more appropriately the value of a public, four-year degree in Maine.
- **Economic & workforce development:** UMS can support the State's economic development objectives by attracting new industry to Maine or creating an innovative solution to address Maine's transportation challenges. Equally workforce development, especially with Maine's aging population, is a critical issue. UMS can create a System-wide approach to understand needs of employers and align academic programs accordingly.
- **Student success across all learner segments:** Some express that improving retention and graduation rates of all learners should be UMS' top priority. Students voiced the possibility of leveraging some of the campuses best practices, i.e., mental health services System-wide.
- **Academic and research collaboration:** As enabled by Unified Accreditation, can be a differentiator if faculty incentives are in place and if student outcomes remain at center.

Tensions around the value proposition and workforce development needs as well as the role of the UMS versus the role of the Maine Community College System (MCCS) were raised by the Committee and Huron confirmed that these issues were raised during the fall visits. There is a need for both UMS and MCCS and the different levels of education.

Horizontal Pillars

- **Environmental sustainability and eco-tourism and hospitality:** These could be a System focus that best leverages Maine's strengths.
- **Aging and preventative health:** Given Maine's standing as the nation's oldest state with a high proportion of adults over 65, UMS is uniquely positioned to support research, life-long learning opportunities, and community health initiatives for all ages.
- **Rural empowerment:** The majority of the State's population resides in a rural community. UMS can drive economic and community development, research and innovative student success initiatives in rural populations.
- **People, campus climate and inclusion:** Stakeholders desire appropriate market compensation and a welcoming, cohesive community; faculty want release time to focus on collaboration; staff voice frustration in intangible burdens of poorly implemented shared services. Desire for greater inclusion of communities on campus and new populations of Mainers entering the state.

It was suggested that the Trustees could benefit from understanding where the tension is between the campuses and where there is a need to resolve or respond to those tensions. These themes from the Huron fall visits relate to many UMS policies that will need to be reviewed and possibly modified. Huron is still compiling a synthesis of the information gathered during the visits. The information presented at the Committee meeting is preliminary and not the final summary. Mr. Stokes explained that the challenging work is getting all of the stakeholders to understand that they have a share in the whole. This work is to develop a System level plan that will provide useful, functional, aspirational guardrails or paths for future success to function as an incentive and guide for each university as they develop their own mission, visions, values and strategic plans. An important role and critical element for the Committee to play is to adopt thinking from the System totality perspective.

It was also discussed that through the strategic plan, the definition of the System's role for each campus will be critical for the success of all of the campuses. Defining the role of the System was also raised in the NECHE exit report. The Committee asked to receive a master list of the individuals or groups as well as elected and public officials, research and business partners and other educational institution leaders that the Huron Team has spoken with during the spring and fall visits. It was asked if the Wabanaki Center, cultural centers and other minority communities were included in the discussions with Huron.

Enablers

- **System-wide branding and marketing:** An articulation of the pathways among the universities and the strengths and value proposition of each university is consistently referenced as an area for improvement.
- **Financial sustainability:** Stakeholders desire a re-aligned and equitable funding allocation model that supports collaboration and drives strategic priorities.
- **Operational Excellence:** Including more service-oriented administrative shared services. Stakeholders are pleased with IT, improvements are needed with HR and procurement, and they could imagine institutional research, advancement, and library shared services as areas of opportunity.

- **Governance structure and decision authority:** Stakeholders see a need for improved clarity in roles and responsibilities (e.g. role of the System office, role of Board of Visitors) to support an effective system governance structure. The role of the Board of Trustees was not a discussion topic. Instead, the discussion focused on the role of the Faculty Governance Council but there was no consensus on the autonomy of the Council.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Stakeholders desire baseline physical plant and athletic improvements to support student recruitment, retention, and accessibility.

It was raised that the System-wide marketing and branding has been a topic of the Trustees for many years and the implementation of this will be a challenge. The Committee welcomes Huron thoughts on how to successfully navigate this issue. There was a brief discussion about the role of the System Office because there is confusion about the role. The feedback received focused on the need for more institutional authority and less System, top-down decision making and for the System to convene and facilitate.

The Committee also discussed affordability. Historically the System addressed affordability with tuition freezes. There is tension around being affordable but there have not been conversations about what is the appropriate tuition level to build new buildings, maintain current facilities, develop System-wide marketing, increase salaries, and create incentives for collaboration. If enrollment continues to decline, tuition remains the same and approved raises that the State Appropriation only covers 70% of those salary increases, there is an imbalance, and the System would be in a cutting mode every year. The role of financial aid also needs to be part of the conversation to define what is the appropriate affordable tuition level. Through the strategic plan, the System is creating a vision for the areas for investment, but what happens when there is no funding for those investments? Chancellor Malloy commented that when the campuses request assistance from the System, it is often to provide additional funding for campus initiatives.

Creating a Differential and Unique Strategic Plan

Mr. Stokes explained that while it is important to align the pillars of the strategic plan, the goals and initiatives underneath each pillar, and all three will constitute the substance that drives transformation and differentiation. Using the Core, Adjacent and Transformative framework, the Board's perspective will be gathered on the UMS desired outcomes in the short, mid and long term.

An innovation and growth portfolio are grouped into three categories: Core (short term), Adjacent (medium term) and Transformation or New Growth (long term). Core is defined as fortifying or modernizing existing programs and competencies and stop or sunset what no longer drives stakeholder value. Adjacent is defined as branching out to adjacent disciplines and competency areas and expanding to new (interdisciplinary) areas at the spaces between existing disciplines. Transformation or New Growth is defined as transformational change that represents expansion based on acquired or developed programs and competencies that did not historically exist.

Below are some emergent ideas for the three areas:

CORE

- Maintain affordable tuition to enable access to and demonstrate the value of a postsecondary education
- Improve retention and completion outcomes to meet both national and peer group benchmarks
- Continue academic collaborations in areas like health, nursing and education to meet Maine's labor market shortages
- Assess and align current academic portfolio to match future system-wide priorities and state economic development needs

ADJACENT

- Expand adult learner audience through online delivery of degree programs and nondegree credentials. Potential to extend YourPace System-wide or coordinate online activity to a single entity to distribute online courses to new learner segments and/or geographies
- Leverage success of existing administrative shared services (e.g., IT) to enable highly coordinated cost-efficiencies across System to sustain each university in its local community
- Expand R&D activity through diversification of research opportunities that align with State’s needs and student outcomes
- Focus on rural community development research and applied practices by leveraging relevant program assets
- Strategically expand educational opportunities to communities that border Maine to increase research, experiential learning, community-engaged scholarship, and relationships with industry
- Expand university centers and/or cooperative extension sites as access points for educational opportunities and community engagement from pre-K to lifelong learners

TRANSFORMATIVE

- Establish UMS as a leader in environmental sustainability and ecotourism in impactful sustainability-related research and scholarship
- Advance a systematic, highly coordinated effort to partner with industry to drive economic development for the State (e.g., become a collaborative “superhighway” between Canada and New England)

The issue of public, private partnerships was raised and how the System can benefit from those relationships financially. Mr. Stokes suggested that this would be a topic at a future session. Partnerships with the Tribes were suggested as an area to strengthen. Mr. Stokes asked what other areas or gaps that need to be addressed. It was raised that from a Trustee perspective, there is a need for measurements and desired outcomes for the short and medium term to help drive the development of the core mission. There was concern about the ability to say no to recommendations, ability to enforce efficiencies and the ability to determine if the System has the bandwidth to achieve not only the core mission but also to be transformative.

A concern was raised from a campus, departmental perspective that for the past 15 years, there have been 13 years of budget cuts and through the course of that time their ability to support growth, excellence and new initiatives has diminished. This has been compounded by inflation and challenges with recruitment and retention. The reality of these challenges needs to be balanced against the path for growth to make sure it is in alignment with the expectations of the strategic plan. In the short term, there is significant budgetary uncertainty about the path forward for the next 20 months.

Another issue that was raised is that centralization is motivated by efficiency, but the System doesn’t have a mechanism to measure outcomes to see how centralization has affected the campuses. This issue needs to be addressed in the strategic plan because if the System is implementing policies and shared services that are not benefiting but detracting from our ability to deliver quality education, then these decisions need to be assessed.

The balance between the System role and campus excellence was raised and how do we know the decisions from the System is in support of campus excellence.

Mr. Stokes raised the issue of given the realities expressed and the information compiled in the Data Book, should the System really focus on the core and perhaps a couple of adjacencies and defer some of the more transformative efforts or do those realities create a more urgent focus on the transformation. Are the realities

suggesting that the System needs to consider some different ways of operating and collaborating to create a more sustainable financial future. He commented that other states look to Maine as an innovator, especially with unified accreditation. The Committee was asked to consider how can the System derive the greatest possible value and opportunities from the transformative initiatives already in place as well as new innovative possibilities. The Committee briefly discussed that it will be critical for the System to be transformative, thinking outside of the box, and creative particularly with limited resources. It was suggested that more time be allocated at a future meeting to expand on this discussion.

Unified Accreditation Guiding Principles and NECHE Outcomes

Ms. Casey reviewed the Unified Accreditation Guiding Principles which create bounds for how the future System will operate. As a vision is created for the future System and System office, it is critical to keep these principles top of mind.

- Preserve academic, financial, and administrative operations of UMS universities. Relieve individual campuses of the burden of each complying with their own NECHE standards.
- Faculty will retain all rights to academic freedom and shared governance to develop academic policy, curriculum and faculty appointment, promotion and tenure standards on their campus.
- UMS will follow existing collective bargaining agreements and bargain in good faith with employees' representatives to achieve unified accreditation.
- UMS universities will remain where they are, preserving all existing multi-campus arrangements and not merging or closing campuses. UMS Presidents will preside over their respective universities.
- UMS will maintain independent IPEDS reporting and financial aid eligibility at each university. UMS will be responsible for complying with NECHE standards but will delegate substantial authority back to its universities.
- UMS will pursue unified accreditation transparently.
- UMS University Presidents will maintain and manage their current accreditations and correspondence with NECHE and work with UMS Chancellor to determine appropriate transition plans.
- UMaine will maintain its land, sea, and space grant statuses and each University will retain its Carnegie and related national classifications.

She also summarized the findings from the NECHE fall exit report which focused on two Standards:

NECHE Standard 3: Organization and Governance:

- 1) Need for greater clarity on roles, responsibilities and decision authority.
- 2) While Collaboration is encouraged, current metrics continue to foster competition.
- 3) The faculty role in governance is identified as an area of concern deterring progress. The Faculty Governance Council needs to engage faculty and develop a charter that is clear and agreed upon.

NECHE Standard 7: Institutional Resources

- 1) Unified accreditation offers significant value through the sharing of resources. Stronger System-led processes are needed to realize unified accreditation's promise.

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