

University of Maine System
Board of Trustees Meeting

Zoom Meeting
January 18, 2023

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Present: **Committee Members:** Emily Cain, Chair; Barbara Alexander and Trish Riley. **Other Trustees:** Beth Dobson. **Non-Voting Committee Members:** Michael Scott, William Otto, Jeremy Chubbuck, and Ray Rice. **Chancellor:** Dannel Malloy. **Presidents:** Joseph McDonnell and Jacqueline Edmonson. **Staff:** Ryan Low, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Jeffrey St. John, Carolyn Dorsey, Paul Chan and Ellen Doughty. **Guests:** Huron Consulting Team – Peter Stokes and Brenna Casey.

Absent: Donna Loring, Roger Katz and Lisa Eames.

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 December survey reflection questions and timeline for Committee meetings for the remainder of the year, discuss and align on a revised vision statement and review proposed values, and review emerging strategic priorities and rationale.

Committee members commented that the strategic plan is the Chancellor’s overall responsibility and the Board’s role is to guide the process. There was also a comment that the strategic plan may not need “Ecotourism” as a separate pillar.

December Survey Reflection Questions and Timeline for Committee Meetings

Brenna Casey from Huron reviewed the summary of the December survey results. This survey was distributed to Trustees, Presidents and System Leadership. The survey consisted of the following two questions.

What was the most important thing you learned during December leadership discussions?

The responses were organized by opportunities, challenges and other. Several of the key items raised in the responses will also be reflected in the proposed values and strategic priorities. For example: collaboration, marketing and communications, the need to address the governance issues and the idea that the strategic plan means different things to different people.

What questions remain to be answered that should drive the Board Strategic Planning Committee’s future work?

These responses were organized by planning process, unified accreditation and the role of the System Office, budget/finance and external focus. Huron will work with the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and UMS leadership to determine how best to structure these items in future meetings. One issue that was raised was how to create a strategic plan that empowers all institutions in the UMS, which will be a focus of discussions with the Presidents and System leadership. Other key elements include how unified accreditation and the role of the System Office fit into the strategic plan and how to link the NECHE report to the strategic plan.

Strategic Planning Timeline

Ms. Casey reviewed the strategic planning timeline for future Strategic Planning Committee meetings. The March 9, 2023 Committee meeting will include a discussion of alignment of the strategic priorities with unified accreditation and review the initial draft of the plan from the writing team. The May 11, 2023 Committee meeting will include review of final draft of the strategic plan prior to the May Board of Trustees meeting and begin the initial implementation planning. The strategic plan will be presented for Board approval at the May 21-22, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting. The June 29, 2023 Committee meeting will discuss the strategic plan socialization process and building institutional buy-in. . The August 23, 2023 Committee meeting will include discussions for the continued implementation planning and the October 29, 2023 Committee meeting will be the finalization of the implementation plan.

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Jeffrey St. John discussed the members and role of strategic plan writing team. The writing team will have three Trustees, System staff members, three faculty members, a President, and three campus level administrators. Writing team meetings have been scheduled for every other week from now until the end of April. The Plan will comprise of four parts: introduction outlining the challenges and opportunities; body of the plan which includes core commitments/priorities as well as actions and goals, implementation of the plan and an executive summary. The writing team members will be assigned to one of three subgroups which are introduction, implementation and executive summary with the entire writing team participating in the writing of the body of the plan. The writing team is using guidance from the Chancellor, Presidents, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Board of Trustees, and feedback that Huron as collected over two rounds of campus visits. There is an ambitious timeline for the spring for a first public draft of the plan by the end of February and a second public draft of the plan by the first week of April. There will be a specific time frame after each draft for seeking and incorporating feedback for the plan. The final version of the plan will be shared publicly at the May 21-22, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting for Board approval. Vice Chancellor St. John and Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives Carolyn Dorsey are the leads for the writing team. Likely the Chancellor will share three or four community messages during the process.

Committee members expressed concern that the Board needs to sign off on a draft plan before it is presented for approval at the May 2023 Board meeting. Trustee Cain explained that the drafts will be shared with the full Board and the Trustees will be encouraged to provide feedback within the feedback timeline. She also commented that there could be areas within the plan that the Academic & Student Affairs Committee, the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee, or the Human Resources and Labor Relations Committee will need to review and submit feedback. Vice Chancellor St. John explained that the timeline has been developed backwards with a deadline of May 1 for the final version of the Plan, which will have prior approval from the Board, Chancellor, and many other groups. The Board will have two opportunities to review and provide feedback on the drafts. The first opportunity will be in February and the second in early April. Vice Chancellor St. John shared that he envisions the plan being 25 pages or less, unlike the NECHE final report.

Revised Vision Statement and Proposed Values

Ms. Casey reviewed the proposed vision statement, which is outlined below:

The University of Maine system develops critical thinkers who can adapt to a changing world to solve problems with new solutions- locally, nationally and globally. As the first-in-nation system to achieve a single system accreditation, University of Maine System faculty, staff, and students set a standard for academic collaboration and innovation that produces exemplary outcomes that benefit the great state of Maine and beyond. Dynamic partnerships in scholarship and research drive the State's economic and workforce development objectives and increase economic

opportunity. By fostering independent, civic-minded people, the University of Maine System improves the quality of life for all Mainers.

The draft vision statement was composed based on feedback provided after Trustees and UMS leaders reviewed sample draft vision statements. The Committee provided the following additional feedback:

- Vision statement was nicely done and reflects the fact that it's a System vision statement.
- Concern was raised with the "single system accreditation" is a buzzword that is not widely understood. Is there a better way to describe this? For example, the System is composed of seven unique universities and the System would help make them greater than their separate parts. The wonderful attributes of each campus need to be highlighted in this statement.
- UMS was the first to convert to unified accreditation. Changing the language to convert or accept maybe a better option. It would be beneficial to explain unified accreditation a bit more along with taking pride in our universities.
- In the sentence "As the first-in-nation system to achieve a single system accreditation, University of Maine System faculty, staff, and students..." it was suggested to add the term campuses before faculty, staff etc.
- The draft vision statement sounds very institutional and could be "warmed" up a bit by adding something about the student experience.
- In the first sentence "critical thinkers who can adapt" sounds reactive and a little passive. We want critical thinkers to lead and shape a changing world.
- In the spirit of things missing, conveying access for everyone in Maine to the full range of educational experiences that's accomplished across our System institutions is an important element.
- Like the sign off in the final sentence.
- In the first sentence use the word educates instead of develops.
- Critical thinkers is a familiar buzzword and there may be a better phrase that would be more distinctive. Many vision statements use that phrase.
- Support the notion of unique universities working as a whole. Not sure we need to talk about unified accreditation in the vision statement. It may be too much in the weeds. We have already defined the concept of UA without using the phrase – it's too bureaucratic.
- Unified accreditation is too technical for a vision statement. Systemness needs to be the focus.
- The universities are more than an education and research institution – libraries and the cooperative extension are also key elements. Language should be added to include this and recognize the role in the communities.
- The System is innovative should be the key message.

Core Values Examples

Ms. Casey explained several university system examples of core values. The values shape culture and behavior and are an important element in the strategic plan from a language perspective. The Committee discussed some proposed core values from leadership discussions that are words to describe the University of Maine System strategic plan and the guiding principles for the strategic planning process. The proposed core values included:

- ❖ Student-centricity
- ❖ Collaboration & Unity
- ❖ Innovation & Adaptability
- ❖ Sustainability

- ❖ Excellence
- ❖ Accountability & Transparency

The Committee offered the following comments about the values:

- DEI should be included somewhere, not necessarily a core value.
- A priority is System-wide reforms and collaborative efforts designed to be more efficient and effective in delivering on our promises to the students.
- The word “welcoming” should be added.
- Accessibility – access to programs and the language used to define the values needs to be clear to the general public.
- Affordability – for UMS and the state
- Sustainable needs to be defined – it’s an odd component. Environmental and/or financial sustainability
- Environmental sustainability is a key priority. Should it be a core value?

Mr. Stokes explained that value statements can be useful to hold people accountable but can be optional for the strategic plan. Values will inform outcomes and need to be in alignment. He asked the Committee if they want value statements included in the Strategic Plan. There was a comment that if core values are included, there needs to be an implementation plan to achieve them. The values could be the heading for the components of the strategic plan. Huron agreed that the values need to lead to action or improvement plans.

Mr. Stokes commented that values can inform decisions about actions. Values are not necessarily the subject of implementation, but an outcome of effective implementation of the actions that have been identified and informed by the values that have been expressed in order to advance the core commitments. The values need to be aligned and not disconnected to the core commitments or actions.

Based on Mr. Stokes comments, a Committee member stressed the importance of affordability (for our students and the state) and the efficiency and effectiveness that drives our public institution. There was a question about sustainability as a core value. Ms. Casey explained that sustainability can mean different things but the definition as it relates to the environment is an area that was raised through stakeholder feedback as a key priority for UMS going forward. Sustainable has also been used in reference to efficiency and effectiveness. When using sustainable it needs to be clearly defined. Mr. Stokes encouraged everyone to avoid the use of ambiguous language in the strategic plan and use as plain English as possible.

Emerging Strategic Priorities and Rationale

Mr. Stokes commented that the strategic plan taxonomy included in the meeting materials is general terms and will need to be aligned with the terminology reference by Vice Chancellor St. John. For example, instead of initiatives using the term actions and using goals instead of measures.

The Strategic Planning Working group met in May 2022 to achieve consensus on proposed criteria to evaluate strategic priorities. There was a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the criteria for evaluating priorities. Examples of advantages are the financial impact; alignment with existing strengths; impact on students, faculty, staff and stakeholders; and responsiveness to higher education trends. Disadvantages have been identified as the competitive landscape; internal barriers; required investment; required operational transformation; and risk potential. These disadvantages could

be roadblocks or risks to achieving goals or initiatives and need to be considered before final decisions are made.

The emerging priorities and rationale that have been captured so far in the process include the following:

- Access and affordability
- Environmental sustainability and climate change
- Student success across all learner segments
- Workforce & economic development
- Research impact
- Academic collaboration
- People, campus climate, & culture of excellence
- Partnerships & external relations

Huron has used a mockup Parthenon structure as a paradigm to visually display the intersection of vertical pillars as the core commitments and horizontal pillars representing the priorities. There others ways of displaying the priorities and commitments, but below are the high-level areas:

Strategic Priorities (virtual pillars)

Access & Affordability
Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change
Student Success Across all Learner Segments
Workforce & Economic Development
Research Impact

Keys to Realizing Priorities (horizontal pillars)

Academic Collaboration
People, Campus Climate, & Culture of Education
Partnership and External Relations

System Office Commitments

Re-aligned funding allocation and budget models
Operational excellence & administrative shared services
Physical and IT infrastructure investment
Governance role definition
Communications, marketing and branding

This Committee and the strategic plan writing team can decide the best way to assemble and visually display these concepts.

Discussion Questions

The Huron Team presented the following three discussion questions to solicit feedback from the Committee.

1. The Strategic Plan writing team will begin to outline the plan in the next month. What revisions does the Board Strategic Plan Committee recommend be made to the Strategic Priorities slide before sharing with the writing team?

Committee feedback:

- **Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change** – Was this a suggestion on what should drive the development of the educational experience, the courses, the overall majors, the institutes or is this the footprint of the UMS on the environment?
 - Mr. Stokes explained that all of the priorities have surfaced through extensive dialog with internal and external stakeholders and informed by the Huron campus visits in the fall

and spring in 2022. The intension for this area of academic and research activity is an area that UMS can be distinctive. This could be a high value contribution that UMS can make drawing on its natural resources, intellectual assets and university resources to continue to be unique from other university systems.

- If that is the case, then this plan's action would be to develop programs in a different way or provide more opportunities for System-wide implementation. Therefore, will the strategic plan be able to accomplish this?
 - **Academic Collaboration** – This can be a good and a bad thing. Academic Collaborations can drive people to a certain outcome which doesn't mean that there are academic strengths. Are academic collaborations needed for efficiency across the System or are academic collaborations strengthening academic programs to improve excellence? Clarification on the intent would be beneficial because it could strengthen or weaken UMS.
 - Additional Keys to Realizing Priorities: **Prioritizing Existing Resources and Assets** (physical and human) – This could be a short-term goal, but for the next few months with our fiscal challenges, we also need to maintain and investment in our current facilities. This should be part of the strategic decisions.
 - An important priority that we don't want to lose sight of is the vision of the role of higher education and educating an informed citizenry to improve the quality of life.
2. How might UMS generate external support for the evolving priority areas across legislative, community, alumni, and business community partners? How can UMS prioritize both investments and efficiencies needed across the strategic priority areas?
 3. How do we show that we do not expect all campuses to be the same and that they can commit to the UMS vision in a distinct way?

The Committee did not have time to respond to all of the discussion questions. Therefore, the questions will be distributed to Committee members to respond and provide feedback by Friday, January 20th.

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