Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
Portland, Maine
by
An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit to the Campus
April 10 – 13, 2011

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Introduction

Throughout the Evaluation Team's visit, all members of the University of Southern Maine (the University) were candid in their comments and offered full assistance to the team. All of the individuals with whom the team met were well aware of the Self-Study Report and purpose of the team's visit. Extensive meetings were conducted on a one-on-one basis, in small groups, and open meetings that included representatives from all areas of the University including faculty, students, trustees, staff, alumni, and the external community. Meetings were held on three campuses: Portland, Gorham, and Lewiston-Auburn. A meeting was held for trustees only, with two trustees in attendance including the Chair of the Board of Trustees (BOT). The BOT is a system board.

The team members met with numerous members of the administrative staff and faculty and student leadership including the President and all senior administrators except the Vice President for Advancement, all academic deans, several department chairs, members of the faculty senate, graduate and undergraduate students. Three open faculty meetings were held, one on each of the campuses (total N~50). An open meeting for administrators (N~6) and an open meeting for students (N~8) were held on the Gorham Campus. Open meetings for staff (N~20) and for students, were also held on the Lewiston-Auburn campus. A meeting with external community members was also held on the Portland Campus and on the Lewiston-Auburn campus with approximately 10 and 20 individuals in attendance, respectively.

The Evaluation Team found the Self-Study Report (including numerous electronic links) and the other materials provided, such as the audited financial statements, to be sufficiently comprehensive and an accurate description of the state of the University. The team reviewed the University's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the President to document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations governing Title IV. The team appreciates the preparation of the self-study to include electronic links to the most important exhibits. A review of these documents before and during the team's visit to the University, the Chair's preliminary visit to the University in November of 2010, and the teams visit on April 10 – 13, 2011 together have provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the 11 sections of this report which address the standards for accreditation of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

This evaluation of the University is a comprehensive evaluation following the Five-Year Interim Report, 2006, and a Report from fall 2004.

1. Mission and Purposes

The University of Southern Maine (the University) is an urban, public, comprehensive institution that is part of the University of Maine System (the System). Originally established in 1878 as a regional normal school, the University has undergone several transitions with the most recent the establishment of the University of Maine and Portland-Gorham in 1970 (renamed the University of Southern Maine in 1978) through the merger of Gorham State College, the University of Maine at Portland, and the independent University of Maine School of Law based in Portland. A third campus, home to the University's Lewiston-Auburn College (LAC), was established in 1988. Its

current Mission Statement was approved by the University Faculty Senate in 2008 and by the System BOT in 2010 following a comprehensive review of the complete system.

The institution experienced significant growth during the 1990s and early 2000s, with additional programs across all levels and major investments in the physical campus. In 2007, however, the rapid growth was ending and a changing student population and an economic downturn were key challenges and are now facing the institution.

In 2008, Dr. Selma Botman became the 10th President of the University. At the same time, her predecessor, Dr. Richard Pattenaude became Chancellor of the System. Shortly after Dr. Botman's arrival on campus, a debt of $4.4 million to the System was identified, coupled with a state budget reduction of $2.7 million.   Credit hours were declining and operating costs continued to climb.

The University Mission Statement reads:

> "The University of Southern Maine. . . is dedicated to providing students with a
> high quality, accessible, affordable education. . . . 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."

Early in her administration, Dr. Botman led the development of a new Strategic Plan – "Preparing USM for the Future 2009 - 2014" – and the institution has undertaken a major academic reorganization.   At the time of the self-study and of the site visit, the debt to the System has been repaid and the budget for the university is balanced. The re-organization of eight colleges into five is completed. Work to consolidate departments and to increase efficiency of course offerings continues.

The Strategic Plan flows from the Mission Statement and has provided direction for the major changes the institution has undertaken. It is aligned with the System's strategic priorities identified in "New Challenges, New Directions Initiative".

Institutional Effectiveness

There is ample evidence that the University is mission driven. The University Strategic Plan and the administrative and academic actions are underway to help financially stabilize the institution support in the Mission and have been developed to preserve the primary aim of the University.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Planning

Based on the Self-Study Report and confirmed by our meetings with the campus community and review of available documents and reports, the team finds that strategic planning has evolved at the University over the past decade. The detailed description of the planning processes and the described development process for the new strategic plan during the 2008-2009 timeframe included input from a broad base of the campus community across the university's three

campuses. The planning process was systematic and appropriate to the institution. The leadership team of the institution is committed to the successful implementation of the plan and the plan has received the support of the System Board of Trustees (BOT), the governing body of the university. The strategic plan, entitled "Preparing USM for the Future 2009 – 2014" has been widely presented in open meetings throughout the campus community. The goals of the strategic plan are used by the constituent units of the institution to guide individual units' strategic planning efforts.

The evidence presented both in the self-study and during the site visit highlights a lack of complete analysis of internal and external constraints during the planning process which may impede the implementation of the goals of the plan. The institution has pockets of data collected across varied administrative units and provides little evidence of how they use data in any systematic way to guide the planning process. While the many initiatives which have begun as a result of the plan seem to have merit, no indication was found that data or assessment guides the planning process. The institution does not have a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning as evidenced by the number of strategic plans which have been created over the course of the past decade. As described in the self-study and confirmed during meetings on campus, the implementation efforts for the new strategic plan are being guided by a broad-based, 23 member Strategic Planning Steering Committee together with the president's administrative cabinet.

However, the institution has recognized the need for improvement in the use of data in the planning process for several years and conducted three national searches for a Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. The third search, completed early this year, was successful and the new director is now in place. An Institutional Research Task Force comprised of key leadership in the university has plans in place to move four current employees in the area of student assessment, three current employees in the areas of student data and human resources and a new administrative assistant into the institutional research area to support the new director's data and assessment efforts.

Evaluation

Evidence from the self-study and the discussions with members of the campus community highlight a lack of implementation of evaluation in its planning processes. The team's review of the Data First forms and the E-series data forms revealed a lack of systematic presentation of data. Questions were raised regarding the match between information provided in the narrative of the self-study and data provided on the forms. Discussions with key academic personnel indicate that program review processes have recently been revised to provide for systematic program review procedures. These actions center on the presentation of student learning outcomes at the program level and the later assessment of those outcomes. This new program review procedure is intended to fulfill the requirement of the System office that institutions within the System review their academic programs every seven years. As reported in meetings with community members, the new program review process has been initiated with one program during the current academic year and plans are underway to schedule the remaining program reviews in the coming few years.

The quality of data reported by the institution is uneven. With no centralized data repository, data presented in the self-study came from varied sources and were not well defined or consistent. The University should benefit from current efforts at the System level to define data standards for institutions to use when reporting data into the System office, a new effort in Maine. According to the Institutional Research Task Force and the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, the institution's new institutional research function will use the System data standards and new data warehouse to improve the quality of the data available for decision making.

While the University is committed to academic program review, during conversations with members of the campus community, the System BOT initiative to eliminate courses enrolling fewer than 12 students and programs graduating fewer than five students as a cost saving measure was revealed. While the BOT would like to build more robust academic programs rather than have multiple instances of the same program with low enrollments, it was suggested that it could be better to begin the review with an assessment of academic quality rather than of course and major size. These competing program review processes could prove challenging to the institution. Also, the BOT members indicate that the current funding formula used by the System (which provides the University a lower per student allocation than smaller state universities) does not align well for the University and slows the progress of the University and other campuses.

Institutional Effectiveness

The lack of consistent and reliable data hampers the institution's ability to plan, to implement, and to assess the work of the University. While it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the institution beyond the evidence provided in the self-study, the team notes progress in the institution's planning process, its review processes for administrative units in its fiscal recovery efforts, and its stated commitment to improving its abilities in the area of evaluation for improvement of its academic programs.

   3. *Organization and Governance*

The University is one of seven campuses in the System. The System, established in 1968, is governed by a single BOT appointed by the governor and ratified by the Maine Legislature. The 16-member BOT broadly represents Maine's population. BOT members have fixed and limited terms. A member of the faculty currently sits on the Academic Affairs Committee of the BOT.

The BOT is the final authority in all matters for the System, including educational, public service, and research policies; financial policies; and the relationship of the System to the state and federal government. The BOT operates under Bylaws, the Constitution of the Maine System, and a Policy Manual. It has a typical board structure with committees to address the various responsibilities of the BOT. Because it is small, board members have multiple committee assignments.

The BOT appoints and evaluates the Chancellor of the System. In consultation with the BOT, the Chancellor administers the System. The President of the University is nominated by the Chancellor and appointed by the BOT. A key function of the BOT is to review the Chancellor and, through the Chancellor, the presidents of the campuses. These senior leaders are evaluated on a three-year cycle that includes an external reviewer.

The BOT has faced a number of challenges in the past decade, including the unexpected $10 million deficit at the University and substantial budget cuts for the System due to reduced state support. In light of these obstacles, the BOT has reexamined its policies and procedures and focuses its efforts on chancellor and presidential reviews, strategic planning and goals setting, and accountability.

Under the current chair, the BOT has initiated an orientation program and mentoring for new board members to help them understand their fiduciary and oversight responsibilities. New BOT members are also immediately given committee assignments so that they become engaged in the activities of the BOT. While there is no specific succession plan, the chair is looking to the Nominating Committee to identify a strong successor. The BOT does not systematically review its own effectiveness on a periodic basis.

In discussions with BOT members, it was clear that they understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the University. They have approved the University's strategic plan and they support the President's efforts to revitalize the campus in the aftermath of substantial deficits.

At the campus level, an administrative staff supports the President. The five academic deans report to the President through the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Several academic councils advise the President and her staff. These include the University Council, the Dean's Council, the Academic Council, and the Graduate Council. There are multiple opportunities for senior academic leadership to participate in the management and governance of the University. Generally, Portland and Gorham function as one entity, while the Lewiston-Auburn College has some additional latitude to address the unique needs of its students, programs, and community.

In addition, each institution within the System has a Board of Visitors, which, according to state statute, is authorized to advise the president, advocate for the university, and review new programs and other proposals prior to their submission to the BOT. These are strictly advisory boards with no fiduciary responsibilities. In addition, each college at the University of Southern Maine, and a number of schools, also has boards that advise the deans on programmatic issues. The Lewiston-Auburn College Community Advisory Council also effectively serves to more closely connect that campus to its distinct local and regional communities.

The faculty enjoy academic freedom under the System Charter. The University System bylaws clearly articulate the importance of shared governance and the role played by the boards, the

administration, and faculty in the academic governance of the institution. The BOT has expressed the role of the faculty to:

- Be critical in the areas of curriculum, instruction, research, and student life
- Participate in the selection and review of their peers
- Participate in the selection process for academic administrators
- Participate in discussions of university mission, strategic plans and budgets

The Faculty Senate was established under the University Constitution. It is the faculty's primary advisory body to the President and the Provost. The Faculty Senate operates under bylaws that are being amended to reflect the new organizational structure of the University.

Students have a voice in the governance of the institution through the Portland-Gorham and LAC student government associations, the Student Senate, and through representation on the Faculty Senate and rotating representation on the BOT.

Staff is represented through the Classified Staff Senate and the Professional Staff Senate.

A total deficit of $8.2 million was reported from fiscal year 2005 through fiscal year 2008. The BOT commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers to prepare a report on financial responsibility after USM reported deficits in excess of $3 million in fiscal year 2006 and again in fiscal year 2007. With the deficit and subsequent recession, the University was engaged in substantial cost-cutting so that it could repay the deficit and balance the budget.

Part of the cost-cutting effort was the merger of eight schools and colleges into five colleges. Lewiston-Auburn College and the University of Maine School of Law were unchanged. The remaining six schools and colleges were then merged into three: The College of Science, Technology, and Health; the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; and the College of Management and Human Service. This college-level reorganization was designed to provide a more efficient administrative structure and generate more opportunities for collaboration among a range of disciplines.

Faculty have been and continue to be part of the discussion on reorganization, in part through the Faculty Senate and in part through committees that were formed as a way to build a collaborative working environment and to generate input into the process. After the creation and report of the "Design Team," the Faculty Senate voted in the spring of 2010 to accept its recommendations for the merger of the colleges. The merger into three new colleges has been accomplished. A voluntary process recently has been instituted to guide the University through the next step of merging small departments. The System mandated program review, and possible elimination of programs with low numbers of majors, is causing concern among the faculty. The Faculty Senate noted that there is a clearly articulated process for program elimination that they believe will be followed.

As the System struggles with a projected $50 million deficit between 2009 and 2014, the expectation is that there will be further consolidation, reduction, and elimination of programs, along with other cost cutting moves. There is some concern that the BOT will mandate changes

that will impact the quality and delivery of the academic programs. For example, the announcement that campuses would no longer be allowed to run courses with fewer than 12 students was met with concern by faculty. Additionally, the traditional formula used to allocate funds across the campuses in the System is perceived as penalizing the University. While the University generates 29.2% of credit hours for the System, the University receives only 25.4% of the state allocation. The BOT members acknowledged this problem, but could not commit to addressing it.

Systems are in place to assure faculty that they have some responsibility in academic decision making and faculty believe that, through the Faculty Senate, they will play a role in steering the direction of the University. At the same time, there is some uncertainty among both faculty and staff. There is concern expressed by some that there will be further consolidation, elimination of positions (if not faculty positions, then positions that provide support to the academic enterprise), and elimination of programs. Much of the academic leadership members are in acting positions, and the current Provost is interim and will be leaving in another year. There have been two years of change and it will take some time for the full reorganization to settle. It is important to note that the senior administrators express a firm commit to continued engagement with the faculty in the shared governance of the academic enterprise as these next phases occur and as the hiring begins for leadership positions.

Institutional Effectiveness

The System and the University have well-articulated shared governance policies and procedures. Today, the BOT provides fiscal and educational oversight of the campuses in the System. While the BOT has clear procedures, it does not yet engage in periodic assessment of its effectiveness. At the campus level, the University has shared governance, with the Faculty Senate playing an active role in academic decision-making for its three campuses. There have been communication challenges during the rapid implementation of cost-cutting measures and the merger of the colleges. As a result, there have been points of strain in the shared governance process though not beyond that which would be expected during significant change.

4. The Academic Program

The Undergraduate Program

The University identifies an array of academic majors across its primary academic units: the College of Science, Technology, and Health (housing the lab sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics, the School of Nursing and Health Professions); the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; the College of Management and Human Service (housing the Muskie School of Public Service, the School of Business, the School of Education and Human Development, the School of Social Work) and Lewiston-Auburn College, which offers an interdisciplinary–based curriculum of four majors leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. Each college also offers certificate programs and graduate degrees, although the College of Management and Human Service, which focuses on the professional preparation of students, serves 74 percent of the University's graduate students.

In general the baccalaureate degree programs require between 120 and 155 semester hours of credit. The general education curriculum core requirements range from 36 to 39 semester hours of credit. Majors range from 39 to 67 semester hours of credit or approximately one-third to one-half of the degree program. The remainder of the degree requirements may be filled by major prerequisites, electives, or by selection of a minor. Students may minor in many of the academic areas in which majors are offered. The Arts and Social Sciences offers thirty-five minors; the STEM Education and Health Sciences offers three minors in nursing and health professions; the Professional Education in Business, Public Service, and Education has five minors in business, and twelve minors in applied science, engineering, and technology; and the Lewiston-Auburn College offers six minors.

Lewiston-Auburn College programs are offered to students registered on the Lewiston-Auburn campus. Students enrolled in all other University degree programs attend classes on both the Portland and Gorham campuses.

The Data First report on student headcount by academic major suggests a decreased total enrollment from 7,615 in fall 2009 to 7,546 in fall 2010 with a projected goal of 7,261 in fall 2011. A number of majors have enrollment below 12 students – the reason for the low enrollments is currently being examined. FTEs dropped slightly from 5,489.50 in 2009 to 5,488.27 in 2010 with a projected FTE of 5,568.09 in 2011. However, the data in the report are not consistent with the data reported in the Self Study, p. 21.

General Education

The University has had a set of traditional general education requirements for its undergraduate students until recently when it approved an extensively redesigned the USM Core Curriculum for the Portland/Gorham campus. The USM Core evolved from an extended series of discussions and deliberations involving faculty and academic administrators and culminating in the approval of the USM Core. The USM Core curriculum has three tiers, each tier with specific course requirements. The first tier contains College Writing (3-4 credits), Entry Year Experience (3 credits), and Quantitative Reasoning (3-4 credits), which are prerequisites to courses in the second tier: Creative Expression (3 credits), Socio-Cultural Analysis (3 credits), Cultural Interpretation (3 credits), and Science Exploration (4 credits). Students must complete three of the four second-tier courses before they can take the Ethical Inquiry, Social Responsibility, & Citizenship course (3 credits), although they may already begin their third tier of thematic cluster coursework at the same time as they are taking the Ethical Inquiry, Social Responsibility, & Citizenship course. The thematic course clusters consists of three courses and may be completed at the same time as the capstone. However, the students have an option to take either thematic course clusters or a minor. There is a clear vertical articulation between tiers.

Prior to the development of the USM Core Curriculum for the Portland-Gorham Campuses, the Lewiston-Auburn campus had developed the LAC Core Curriculum (LCC) and began its implementation in 2007 along with the provisionally approved Honors Pathway. Since its work

was already completed, and the degree programs at Lewiston-Auburn are offered in their entirety at that campus, two core curricula were allowed to be implemented.

Both the USM Core Curriculum and the LCC were developed under the new guidelines established by the General Education Council. These guidelines are consistent with and serve to fulfill the University mission and objectives. In fact, the LCC was the first curriculum program developed and implemented under the new guidelines. LAC's Common Core is an interdisciplinary curriculum that sets academic disciplines in dialogue with one another in order to adequately address the complex questions, issues and problems of the world. Using an interdisciplinary approach to themes of *justice, sustainability, democracy* and *difference* promises to enhance students' abilities to address and respond to complex real-world questions.

The Self Study describes a transitioning between the traditional "Old Core" curriculum and the USM Core Curriculum, which is scheduled for full implementation in fall 2011. It also points out that the three University Core Curriculum pathways are in various stages of implementation: Lewiston-Auburn Common Core (LCC), the Honors Pathway, and the USM Core. At the point of the site visit, the Honors Program had made the decision to forego its status as a separate general education pathway, and to offer its courses within the USM Core. As it did under the old Core, Honors offers numerous courses which meet specified Core requirements. The academic program chairs and some faculty have indicated that the transition from the "Old Core" to the USM Core will not harm students who started with the "Old Core" curriculum. The requirements articulated at the time these students enter the program will be maintained and the courses in their program of study will still be made available. Hence, even as the USM Core replaces the "Old Core" curriculum, the former requirements remain in force for students who entered a program under the "Old Core" curriculum.

Currently, the "Old Core" curriculum is still very much in place. It constitutes 34 to 39 credits of a student's bachelor's degree program. Under this traditional curriculum all students are required to meet the same set of general education requirements. They are expected to take College Writing, Quantitative Reasoning, Natural Science with lab, Skills of Analysis, Social Sciences, Humanities, Fine Arts, and Entry Year Experience (EYE). Then the student completes the degree requirements for his/her specific major, consisting of preparatory work, and then advanced course work in the major.

All programs require a coherent and extensive body of coursework in the major and related disciplines through learning outcomes, structure and content. A student can further enrich the required components in his/her program by choosing electives to make up the total number of credits required for the degree. The degree of coherence and developmental sequencing of courses within majors varies across programs. The opportunities for individualized academic experiences, for example, through capstone requirements, undergraduate research, or study abroad, also vary across programs. As all students should be able to benefit from these types of opportunities, the University should consider making them available in all programs.

Overall, the "Old Core," the USM Core, and the LCC have a coherent design characterized by sequential progression and continuity.

The University communicates the learning goals and requirement for each program in electronic catalogs and in some departments, through advising documents. Description of courses in programs can be found in the undergraduate catalog. The description includes an articulation of the learning goals, admissions and program course requirements. Departments have also articulated the learning objectives for their majors and mapped out the achievement of these objectives across their curriculum. *Option E1: Part A. Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators* specifies whether programs have developed formal learning outcomes and where these learning outcomes are published. Most of the programs base their learning outcomes on their accreditation standards; a number of programs have not identified their learning outcomes and a few indicated that their learning outcomes are broad and need more work. A few program chairs have acknowledged that they are still in the process of developing their learning outcomes. The "The USM Core" has been recognized by the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) for its innovative curriculum design. The new USM Core is being implemented in the fall of 2011 and takes effect for all students matriculating in the fall of 2011. Courses will be completely converted to the new learning outcomes by 2014. Ongoing assessment of the EYE requirement has been in place since its implementation in 2009. However, a systematic assessment plan for the rest of the curriculum is still in development by the Core Curriculum Committee. This is critical for assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and therefore needs to be a priority.

The Graduate Programs

The University offers 27 graduate programs, 24 certificates of graduate study, and 11 certificates of advanced study. Admission to the graduate program is based upon academic qualifications and scholarly aptitude. The admissions process is especially rigorous at the doctoral level. All applications are submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Admissions receives all applications, screens them for minimum requirements, and then submits applications to programs for decisions on admittance. Some graduate programs require the scores of standardized tests such as the GRE, GMAT, or MAT; international students are required to provide evidence of English language proficiency through their TOEFL test scores. Several programs such as Adult Education, Counseling, and School Psychology require a formal interview process. The academic department makes the decision to admit an applicant to the graduate program based primarily on the academic qualifications of the applicant and the ability of the program to accommodate additional students in the program.

Graduate education is supervised by the Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies and the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, with support of the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and Director of Graduate Admissions. The Graduate Faculty consists of faculty members who are teaching in graduate programs, are active scholars, and have been appointed by the Graduate Dean. The faculty teaching graduate programs are appropriately qualified and the Office of Graduate Studies assures program quality and oversight.

Description, rationale, learning outcomes and requirements for graduate and certificate programs are clearly specified in the online Graduate Catalog. The graduate degree and certificate program requirements vary by discipline. Professional programs usually require practicum, internship, or performance; academic programs, such as a Ph.D. in public policy, require doctoral

research. Other programs require research-based and research informed capstone experiences such as theses, portfolios documenting professional practices and competencies. The master's and certificate programs require between 30 and 39 semester credit hours. In the doctoral program in public policy, students pursue their studies in four stages: 18 credit hours of core courses in the field of public policy, 15 credit hours of core courses in research methods, 12 credit hours of specialized study, and 12 credit hours of doctoral research – a total of 57 credit hours.

The University's graduate programs are rigorous and meet expectations for quality programs. Several professional programs such as Business, Education, Law, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, and Social Work are accredited by their specialized accrediting agencies, ensuring that graduates meet standards appropriate to the field. Professional programs including Biology, Creative Writing, Leadership Studies, Adult Education, and Statistics do not currently have specialized accreditation. These programs are expected to follow the University's internal program assessment guidelines to assess their student learning outcomes as part of the departmental self study. National accreditations can be used in lieu of an internal program review.

The assessment process currently in place has not provided a clear picture of graduate program quality, however, an assessment policy and process was approved in the fall of 2011, and is scheduled to be implemented in the 2011-2012 academic year. The University would benefit from having a process to regularly review its academic programs as well as establish a plan for systematically analyzing data and implementing and following up the resulting recommendations.

The Data First report on student headcount by academic major, including CAS, CGS, JD, MA, and Ph.D., suggests an increase from 2,037 in fall 2009 to 2,093 in fall 2010 with a projected enrollment of 2,113 in fall 2011. The students' FTE by academic major increased from 1,479.87 in fall 2009 to 1,559.19 in fall 2010 with a projected FTE of 1,563.91 in 2011.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

The University has the structures and organization in place to assure the rigor and integrity of the academic programs it offers. Academic departments are organized into schools and colleges, which have oversight responsibilities for their programs and all are following policies and procedures set by the University through appropriate committees or councils.

Students are awarded their academic degrees and recognition upon completion of their approved academic programs. At the undergraduate level students must have completed a core curriculum and all program requirements, and earn between 120 and 155 semester credit hours. At the graduate level, students must have completed between 30 and 39 semester credit hours in their program of study as well as program requirements, such as portfolios or internship. At the doctoral level, the students must have completed a doctoral dissertation.

Assessment of Student Learning

The Office of Academic Assessment completed a program assessment of the Pilot Entry Year Experience courses in fall 2006, 2007 and 2008. The survey included data on assessment of student achievement and learning outcomes, student engagement, course content, course organization, and faculty characteristics. The Provost's Council on Assessment (i.e., Assessment Committee) designed a Program Assessment Inventory in spring 2009 that was approved by the Dean's Council in February 2009. The purposes of this assessment are to provide documentation on program assessment at the academic departmental level, to provide information and create dialogue on various program assessment ideas by sharing each department's activities, and to examine what kinds of assistance and resources are necessary to help departments initiate or continue ongoing assessment activities. *The Program Assessment Inventory Report* presents a compilation of the summary of each undergraduate program responses but does not offer an in depth analysis of the results. Use of *Option E1: Part A. Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators Assessment* of student learning outcomes is in the early stages.

In some cases, programs are still conceptualizing these assessments in hopes that they will be ready for implementation in fall 2011. Evaluation tools need to be designed or evaluated to measure the extent to which the student learning outcomes are being met.

In most programs the development of learning outcomes and the criteria for evaluation of student learning is primarily the responsibility of the individual faculty member teaching the course and thus depends heavily on the professional integrity of the particular instructor. Common assessments across programs include capstone courses and program portfolios and are designed to integrate learning across the major. Other programs link academic learning in the classroom with practical experience such as internships and field experience. However, the use of well-defined rubrics or measures to assess student learning is not evident.

Institutional Effectiveness

The University relies on its faculty for evaluating the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its programs. In line with its mission, vision, and goals the University has supported the development of an appropriate range and quality of undergraduate and graduate programs. The University is commended for the thoughtful and creative design and content of the USM Core and the LAC Core Curriculum. A number of undergraduate and graduate programs have been accredited by their respective specialized accrediting agencies. The University has created a university program review for those programs that do not have specialized accreditation. Where specialized accreditation is available, programs are encouraged to go through the accreditation process.

There is a need to establish a "culture of assessment" or a "culture of evidence" at the University with respect to program effectiveness and student outcomes, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. There is no evidence of a systematic or standard approach to evaluating, analyzing, and using the results to make strategic and programmatic decisions regarding teaching and learning. The success of these assessment efforts depends on the continued involvement and support of faculty and administration and the provision of sufficient resources.

5. Faculty

Central to the University's identity and mission, faculty are expected to be "effective teachers, active scholars, and engaged community members" (p. 34). The student-to-faculty ratio is 15:1. The University's faculty consists of 396 full-time and 340 part-time faculty (p. 125). Of the full-time faculty, 296 hold a doctorate degree; 76 hold a master's degree; six hold a bachelor's degree, and for 18, the highest degree is not known. The faculty appear rewarded by their work at the University due to the nature of the student body; they describe the students as intellectually curious and persistent in obtaining their degrees even with the external demands of family and work. Faculty also benefit from the camaraderie of their colleagues and respected the high caliber of their colleagues' research.

Faculty teach a three-course load per semester with the fourth class considered "release" from teaching in order to participate in scholarship and/or service to the community. The median Teaching Load, in terms of credit hours, for a Professor is 9.3, for an Associate 9.8, and for an Assistant 10.4.

In the past two years, faculty hiring has stagnated (p. 126), the recently hired eight faculty members this academic year indicates a possible reversal in this trend. With respect to promotion, only four faculty have been appointed to full professor since 2007 (p. 126), but the self-study notes that the proportion of full-time faculty who are tenured at the University is the second highest in Maine. Faculty equity is of concern: only 30% of full professors are female. This number may change in future years as female faculty are in line to be promoted; as it currently stands, 49% and 50% of associate and assistant professors, respectively, are female. The report indicates that the Office of Campus Diversity and Equity will monitor gender equity. Furthermore, the University has the lowest percentage of faculty from ethnic and racial minority groups in the System, yet the report does not indicate a plan to increase the diversity of their population. In conversation, a few faculty members did request additional support for the diversity of faculty and staff on the campus.

The comparison of part-time faculty (340) to full-time faculty (396) (p. 125) shows that part-time faculty deliver a significant portion of the curriculum. Certain schools also depend more heavily on part-time instruction than others. For example the Muskie School of Public Service relies upon part-time instruction for only 5% of their courses, while the College of Nursing and Health Professions hires part-time faculty for 57% of their courses. The Registrar's Office supplied the NEASC Team with information indicating the total credit hours for the 2010-2011 academic year was 212,324. Part-time faculty members teach roughly 30% of the credit hours.

Graduate students and teaching assistants (TA) are delivering the undergraduate curriculum at a University that has a strong tradition of full-time faculty teaching classes; one concern expressed is whether the TAs received adequate remuneration for their services. They are primarily involved in leading laboratory sections. No mention was made of formal university training for the TAs before they enter the classroom nor any specific methods for their evaluation was indicated.

Faculty have contractual security through their union contract established by the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine (AFUM) and part-time faculty are represented by the Part-Time Faculty Association (PATFA). Salaries are considered slightly lower than comparative colleges (Asst. [$57, 145], Assoc. [$72,915], and Full [$92,950]), but this does not appear to hamper the University's ability to attract and retain quality faculty.

The University is currently undergoing a period of reorganization which has created a feeling of anxiety among the faculty members. While faculty express optimism for the future of the University, they are concerned that the new configuration of their departments will increase their faculty assignments outside of the classroom.

To the extent that the reorganization at the University has allowed the faculty to participate in collaborative meetings, faculty believe that their voices and concerns have been heard. Some faculty expressed feeling taxed by the amount of energy devoted to these discussions, and believe the reorganization will adversely affect their workload. For example, some faculty thought the displacement of administrative positions from directors to university assistants may increase the number of tasks distributed to faculty, as will the reduction of support staff. Another concern seems to be that some administrative oversight will lose its compensation on faculty load credits for placing student interns in the field. However, the administration has committed to maintaining the existing system of departmental chairs and directors. Stipends and course releases will be granted uniformly and equitably across all disciplines, beginning with the fall semester 2011, according to the minimum compensation outlined in the current collective bargaining agreement.

Since the site visit, President Botman has informed the Site Visit Chair that she accepted a recommendation from Provost John Wright, based on months of discussions with faculty and deans, that USM will implement a system of voluntary departmental consolidations and a reconfiguration of reassigned time and faculty compensation for administrative work that respects the collective bargaining agreement.

Prior to this agreement, reorganization was defined as asking specific departments with fewer than 12 faculty to join with others in order to save on stipends, release time, and administrative costs. The particular "12-Rule" was a sticking point with the faculty who have responded with a Senate Resolution indicating that this rule disregards the prerogative of faculty governance. The faculty pushback is due, in part, to the impression that departments would have been forced together without regard to methodological distinctions between their various disciplines.

Faculty had also raised concerns that the "one-size-fits-all" model of reducing every school to the same number of deans, associate deans, administrative assistants, directors and/or chairs may be too limited of an approach and may ignore disciplinary distinctions. For example, the clinical nature of Education requires additional professional oversight of practitioners in the field that may go uncompensated if the number of administrators is limited to a particular formula. The self-study recommended that the Provost's Office should create a committee to determine equity of faculty workloads on a regular basis in consultation with the chairs and AFUM (the faculty union). The agreement announce in early May is in line with this recommendation.

The process for annual review, evaluation, promotion and tenure is clearly outlined in documentation found on the Office of the Provost's website; furthermore, the policies and procedures are clearly articulated. The Provost also offers a yearly workshop assisting faculty, and an administrator works with the faculty to verify that the Personnel Action Application has been filled out accurately. Many departments provide a mentoring program for new faculty, and some offer new faculty a course release to assist them in their transition to the University. Faculty may also request to extend the six-year probationary period if they experience extenuating circumstances. Some faculty, if lacking in sufficient research, are moved to a 4/4 teaching load (12 credits per semester) after their tenure review. The consideration of each faculty member's portfolio follows a trajectory from the department's peer review of the candidate, to the dean, to the provost, and finally to the president. There is no University-wide faculty tenure and promotion committee within this process.

Teaching and Advising

The University's dedication to providing students "a high quality, accessible, affordable education" and the University Criteria for Tenure and Ranks states that teaching is the most important criterion for obtaining tenure. To achieve these goals, the University encourages peer review among the faculty and relies upon student evaluations to determine tenure. The University has recently changed to the Student Instructional Report II (SIR-II) used to evaluate teaching. The Self-Study Report does not indicate professional development funds for training instructors in their respective fields, and the Center for Teaching has been closed.

However, training to teach in the University's newly-designed Core Curriculum is encouraged and supported financially through funds received from a Davis Foundation Grant. Of this grant, $30,000 has been allocated for faculty development and $75,000 for assessment activities. Faculty are invited to attend conferences for course development and share their knowledge with their colleagues. They are also compensated for developing course proposals within the new Core Curriculum once they have taught the class.

Faculty expressed concern that teaching in the EYE and in the newly-designed Core (general education program) will reduce their availability to teach in the major. This concern is particularly pointed for those professional schools requiring students to pass certification or board exams, as well as in departments where the number of faculty has already been reduced. In light of the reorganization, faculty are concerned that supporting the Core will not be credited in overall departmental productivity. The Provost's Office is developing a system to track faculty credits, but this process has not yet been finalized.

The University places emphasis on distance education, offering 118 online classes during the fall 2009 semester and anticipating an increase to 155 in the spring of 2010. The University developed a Center for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL) in order to support faculty delivering material online. This new emphasis on distance education is in line with the University's mission to provide an "accessible" education to its regional population. While we did not speak to representatives from CTEL, there does not appear an official policy in place regarding the implementation of distance education, the design and delivery of the courses, and the means of evaluating distance instruction. For example, SIR-II evaluations are not available

for faculty who teach online. The Technology Enhanced Learning Advisory Council does advise on e-learning issues, likely in an informal process. The self-study indicates that "technology-enhanced teaching and learning will continue to increase in the near and moderate-term future" (p. 40), therefore it would be helpful to formalize the policies and procedures in this area.

The students are encouraged in scholarly research and creative achievement, which is most evident by the annual "Thinking Matters" conference. A similar "Civic Matters" conference was initiated to acknowledge the service-learning and community-oriented projects students accomplished. Most programs and departments on campus encourage a final research project as part of the degree exit requirement.

Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity

The faculty are committed to an active research agenda and support one another in their endeavors. The University has not clearly communicated the role research plays with respect to the University's mission and the faculty concede difficulty in trying to coordinate their research within the identity of a comprehensive university. Faculty participate in applied research intended to benefit the community, theoretical research adding to knowledge in the field, and/or sponsored research that can be applied to commercial purposes.

The Associate Vice Provost for Research has plans to compile the amount of research, scholarship and creative activity the faculty engage in and will determine how the decline in budget affects the rate and degree of scholarship. One useful model for the other colleges at the University to follow might be the Business School which maintains a database that allows the School to track faculty output.

The expectation of research productivity may exceed the amount of financial support for travel ($800/faculty member) or the number of allotted sabbaticals (15 minimum per year). The rising tide of scholarship produced by new hires has created an upsurge in the caliber and quantity of research productivity, which is reflected nationally, but may require additional financial support from the University. Some anecdotes indicate senior faculty giving up their funding allocation to allow untenured junior faculty to attend conferences.

In an attempt to adjust this level of support, the Provost has indicated increasing travel funding to $1000 and increasing the number of sabbaticals (23 were offered this past year to the 33 faculty who applied). The Provost also intends to provide faculty with a new computer every four years. Of particular note is a two-week writing program offered by the Provost's Office (Provost's Writing Seminar) which assists faculty to develop both as writers for the purposes of their own scholarship as well as their ability to help students.

Faculty are provided academic freedom in their research activities as indicated by a policy inclusive of their teaching and service, which is documented in various places: AFUM Contract, PAFTA Contract and the University Governance Constitution.

The University requires that its faculty participate in some form of public service. The kind of public service accomplished can vary but is defined as "activities that are directly related to a

faculty member's academic/ professional expertise and contribute to the betterment of public welfare or common good" (p. 45). While it seems a significant percentage of the population fulfills this directive (one third), another segment of the faculty reports not engaging in public service. The University's Faculty Senate has found ways to compensate those who do public service through a monetary reward given to a faculty member within each academic unit, but the University has not yet indicated the importance of public service in the tenure, promotion, and renewal process. Currently, there isn't center for public outreach that might assist faculty with fitting public service more seamlessly into their research and teaching. However, the Office of Community Service Learning does serve as a point of contact for public and nonprofit institutions and organizations seeking partnership with the institution. Although primarily supporting student service learning projects and internships, the office also serves to identify potential connections between faculty teaching and scholarly interests and community-identified need.

Institutional Effectiveness

The institution provides appropriate and adequate support to the University faculty to enable them to fulfill their mission of teaching, scholarship and service to the community. The faculty express satisfaction with their interaction with the students, both in and out of the classroom, as well as with their research opportunities, and their recognized voice within the university. Even during a taxing period of reorganization, the faculty demonstrate strong motivation to teaching and commitment to the university and its students, which is a testament to the faculty's cohesive sense of purpose and goals.

The self-study recognizes a need to emphasize the degree to which faculty participate in research and public service at the university level, and the importance of articulating more clearly how this research and service corresponds to the University's mission. Furthermore, the Office of Campus Diversity and Equity will need to stay committed to its goals of offering support to faculty with diverse backgrounds (i.e.: gender, race, ability), specifically with regard to promoting women to the ranks of full professorship, as well as other areas of concern.

In light of effective teaching practices and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, faculty are evaluated regularly through promotion, tenure, and the renewal process, as well as peer evaluation, and support is given to faculty teaching online and in the newly revised Core. It is not apparent, however, whether graduate students serving as teaching assistants in the classroom receive similar assessment and training opportunities.

Finally, the support faculty receive in the technological delivery of instruction through the Center for Technology Enhanced Learning is in line with the University's mission to serve a wider population of students. However, a university-wide policy that directs the use, implementation, and assessment of online classes is needed to assist the University in ensuring the quality of this form of instruction and the achievement of its learning objectives.

6. Students

The University of Southern Maine's (the University) mission commits the institution "… to provid[e] students with a high-quality, accessible, affordable education…in the liberal arts and sciences, engineering and technology, health and social services, education, business, law, and public service." This breadth of academic offerings is coupled with service to "…a variety of populations with a multitude of life situations (p. 47)," and whose demographic characteristics and academic and career objectives are as varied as one might expect to find at a comprehensive regional institution situated in a resurgent metropolitan area in northern New England. It is against this backdrop of potentially competing pressures that the University noted "the need to focus investments rather than "being all things to all people" (p. 4); however, before those focused investments can be made, it is critical for the University to develop a more refined understanding of how its mission as a comprehensive public regional institution should be guided to best serve students and the state in a period marked by economic turmoil and demographic and technological changes that will significantly alter the market for and the delivery of public (and private) higher education in Maine and beyond.

While the need to understand mission in the context of an evolving and uncertain future is true of every institution, there are some characteristics of the University's recent enrollment history that suggest a potentially greater urgency for this University. In aggregate, the University's fall headcount enrollment fell by nearly eight percent between fall 2006 and fall 2010 from 10,478 to 9,655, although the full-time equivalent decline is a more moderate figure (1.8%). This is consistent with the report of the self-study that drew attention to the dramatic loss among non-degree students, falling from 2,229 in 2005 to 1,067 in 2010 (p. 51). Still, it is neither the sharp loss of non-degree students nor the more moderate loss of FTEs that should be of concern to the University's mission as these two related trends are reasonably attributed to acute economic pressures as well as to Maine's strategic investments and resulting growth in market share for community colleges. In fact, these factors also contributed to a similar loss of headcount enrollment (-6.4%) and an even larger decline in FTEs (-2.9%) for the University of Maine System (the System) during this period. Instead, the seemingly more critical issue for this institution is the ability of the University to retain and graduate degree-seeking (undergraduate) students at levels that are more consistent with the outcomes of peer institutions, consistent with the University's mission and with the region's needs.

Undergraduate Admissions

The central thesis of the University's enrollment efforts is that "Consistent with its mission, the University enrolls a student body that is broadly representative of the population that it serves" (p. 48). This is appropriate for a comprehensive public regional institution and serves as the framework for all subsequent enrollment-related initiatives that the self-study describes.

The University, through its Office of Undergraduate Admissions, subscribes to the principles and best practices of the profession as outlined by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC). To achieve the University's enrollment objectives, the office has developed recruitment strategies that provide "coverage" for their catchment area, including increased visibility outside of Maine, as well as targeted outreach and support programs for

special populations that the University seeks to serve. Recruitment efforts include an extensive program of high school visits as well as coordinated outreach to Maine's Community College System for transfer students. Additionally, in fulfilling the ethical responsibilities of this work, the Office has developed a clear outline of minimum academic requirements for candidates, augmented by a "Highly Recommended Preparatory Course" that reflects enhanced rigor and which correlates with better academic outcomes including timely graduation. This framework suggests that the University's Office of Admissions has a good understanding of the precursors for academic success and is well positioned to match candidates' qualifications with the expectations of the University.

The presence of minimum requirements for admission coupled with holistic review of candidates does not limit the Office of Admission to a simple "yes" or "no" decision. Instead, through the "GO" program, "[a]pplicants who meet some - - but not all - - of the requirements for admission to the University but who demonstrate potential for success may be admitted with conditions….Students admitted to the GO program are given a specialized and prescribed academic and support plan, monitored by an advisor through one of the University's Student Success Centers" (p.49). In 2008, the University offered admission to 592 candidates through the GO program and 246 enrolled which constituted approximately one-quarter of the newly enrolled first year students. This figure was reduced in 2009, with only 512 offers of admission which translated to 191 enrolled GO program students (or 21.4%) of the entering first year class.

The University's Office of Academic Assessment has published reports about the performance of students in FRS 180 (a required course component of GO) that described the experience of 159 participants in fall 2009 and 205 participants in 2008. The data from those two years suggest that GO participants, in aggregate, achieve cumulative first year grade point average (GPA) that hover just above (in 2008) or just below (in 2009) the 2.00 mark which is required for good academic standing. In turn, over the past three years, these students have demonstrated lower levels of retention than their peers by margins ranging from at least six to more than 12 percent (Form S1, IPEDS "Other Undergraduate Retention Rates (1)," Appendix, p. 35). In all likelihood, individual students who participate in the GO Program demonstrate performance that covers the full spectrum of possibilities, but with a program of this nature, it is important to know whether the probability of success—rather than just the opportunity to succeed—is sufficient to be in the best interest of all of those students who are invited to participate or whether a more careful screening would be beneficial.

Retention and Graduation

As noted in the Self-Study Report, the University is already cognizant of the performance challenges that it faces for retention and graduation relative to peer institutions. Based on the fall 2008 IPEDS data cited (p. 54 & Form S1, p. 35)), the University's first-to-second year retention rate of 64% fell below that of all seven of its peer comparators by a range of two to 15 percent (with a median for the group at approximately 70.5%). To test whether this was a unique circumstance for 2008, the University's first year retention rate was reviewed against peer institutions' IPEDS data for the four year period between 2006 and 2009. This "ranking" (last among eight institutions) was consistent in 2009 and represented a slight deterioration when compared to 2006 and 2007, when the University retained first-year, full-time students at 66%

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and 67%, respectively, ranking ahead of one of its peers. Additionally, while the selection of any two data points is somewhat random—in this case, bracketed only by the most recently available IPEDS data (2009) and a point in time four years earlier—it revealed that among the eight institutions in this comparison, only the University and one other institution in the comparator group saw a decline in the persistence of first-time, full-time students while the other seven institutions all demonstrated improvement over that period.

Although comparative data for these institutions are not yet available for fall 2010 through IPEDS, it is notable that the University has demonstrated a four percent improvement in first-year, full-time student retention (to 70%) for the 2009 cohort. Assuming no change among the comparator group's performances, this would still place the University sixth among the eight schools. This is a measurable improvement which coincides with increased institutional attention including more complete implementation of the Student Success Center concept and expanded access to Entry Year Experience courses. However, there are two related factors that are worthy of exploration.

The first is the reduction of 100 students in the 2009 First Time in College (FTIC) cohort which could reflect more selectivity in the admissions process (even though the percentage of applicants admitted was 89% for each year). As noted above, this also included a reduction in "GO Program" students between 2008 and 2009, which suggests that the greater selectivity could be reflected by greater adherence to the "Highly Recommended Preparatory Course" requirements (which the institution recognizes to be correlates of academic success at the University). The second factor is the overall improvement in retention is found in a gain for female retention (~8%), with male student retention remaining virtually unchanged. To the extent that there are no readily identified programmatic changes that would account for these disparate results between men and women, this leaves the question of whether the results can be replicated and built upon in coming years unanswered. Overall, there is a great deal of fluctuation in retention rates for all FTIC students that the University will need to address to in order to stabilize continuing student enrollment.

Separately, it is also of interest that the mean SAT of the entering FTIC class declined by nearly 40 points between 2008 and 2009 (as reported in the CSRDE 2010-11 Retention Data). As with retention, this is actually a blending of two different vectors as the mean SAT score for the entering cohort of women actually increased by 11 points (from 929 to 940), while the mean figure for male students decreased by nearly 100 points (from 1005 to 909). Coupled with the dramatically improved retention for women and the relatively stable retention for men, this could suggest that test scores are not a significant predictor of first year success at the University and this could have implications for future recruitment, admissions and retention efforts; however, this point will require greater institutional analysis.

Ideally, the Student Success Center, the Entry Year Experience, the Academic Alert Program and other steps that have been taken to create a greater campus-wide focus on retention will contribute to steady, lasting and widespread improvement in persistence and graduation rates for the University undergraduates. For this to occur, it seems probable that much more analysis will be needed in order to fully understand and respond to the factors that currently hinder success. This need is acknowledged in the Self-Study Report at various points, but most notably the

report states that "The University continues to lack the capacity and culture to conduct and utilize data effectively in decision-making. As with initiatives to improve retention, data collection at the University lacks the cohesiveness necessary to act on these data in systematic and collaborative ways" (p. 55).

There is also a basic observation to share which is that the Department of Academic Assessment has compiled a significant catalog of research over the past decade including National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and Senior Surveys, reports that contrast faculty and student perceptions of the academic experience at the University (NSSE/FSSE), reports on outcomes of FRS 180 and other key courses that have been used to facilitate success, and more recently, a report on the Academic Alert program. Thus, the University has actually overcome one of the most common hurdles to understanding, which is lack of data: However, what is striking about almost all of these reports is the complete absence of an executive summary or any form of substantive narrative analysis to provide meaning to the data.

Prior to the relatively recent formation of an Enrollment Council, it does not appear that analysis of the data had been happening. In the absence of readily accessible prose to create shared understanding of the meaning of the data and to point to areas of opportunity and urgency, it seemed that the University had struggled to mobilize effectively. The formation of that Enrollment Council and the creation of the Student Success Centers are clear indications of important changes in this area, and it would seem that further progress could be made by ensuring that top line findings from each data report are distilled and circulated more widely. The arrival of a new Director of Institutional Research and the reorganization of that office to support data collection and analysis should be a valuable step for the University, moving from an era of isolated columns of descriptive data to one of broad access to meaningful and shared information.

Graduate Enrollment

The "[m]ission of graduate studies at the University is to provide programs that align with unique regional and University resources, meet regional needs and are committed to excellence. The University offers twenty-seven graduate degree programs, twenty-four certificates of graduate study, and eleven certificates of advanced study. The Graduate Catalog lists the learning objectives and rationales for all degree programs and the Graduate Studies website lists the rationales for the certificate programs" (p. 26).

As with undergraduate admissions, the University follows a traditional model of admissions processing with centralized coordination of documents that are distributed to individual graduate program (faculty) committees for review. Decisions, made by these committees, are communicated by the Office of Graduate Admission. Criteria for admission to graduate programs vary by discipline, but information about these criteria are published in the Graduate Catalog and made available on the University's website. "Admissions practices and policies…conform to…NEASC standards as well as those outlined by [the University's] regional and national associations" (pp. 50-51). Outreach efforts for graduate program recruitment include all the System institutions, employers and, more recently, the University's own undergraduate students. Collectively, these efforts have contributed to stable enrollment in the

School of Law and increased enrollment in certificate programs (notably through new programs including a certificate program for assistant principals). As with many other graduate programs in the region, the University has observed declining enrollment, in total, among its Master's degree programs (even after factoring out the sharpest decline which is among non-degree graduate enrollments).

Although the aggregate pattern of master's level program enrollment has been one of modest decline (partially offset by an increase in the current year), there are exceptions where enrollments are either stable or increasing and that suggest the University has successfully identified opportunities in the marketplace. These areas include Community Planning & Development, Creative Writing, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Public Policy & Management, Social Work and Teaching and Learning. Most recently, a doctorate in nursing practice has been created as a result of a market demand analysis process, intended to ensure that new program offerings are aligned with employment and population trends in the area. To further explore opportunities for new programs, the University has initiated an RFP for a broad market demand analysis to be completed this summer through a combination of interviews, focus groups and surveys to allow for more effective planning for the future.

At the same time that the University is exploring these new opportunities for the future, it seems important that they also evaluate current offerings against the same type of analysis to confirm that resources continue to be focused on those programs that best serve the region. An observation that arises from a review of the University's graduate enrollment data, regardless of trends for specific programs, is the sheer number of programs and particularly the number of low enrollment programs.   While it would be a mistake to "sum" all of the programs mentioned above – 27 graduate degree programs, 24 certificates of graduate study, and 11 certificates of advanced study—as if they were all equal to one another in terms of institutional effort and resources, it is still instructive to note that there are approximately 62 separate graduate opportunities available at the University. Many of these programs are likely to share resources (e.g. courses and faculty) and the count might inappropriately suggest inefficiencies that do not exist, but the fundamental principles that are guiding the University's consideration of new programs seem reasonable to apply to the existing programs as well.

Student Services

While there might be common experiences shared by many the University students, it is virtually impossible to describe a singular student experience at the University, because of the complexity of the enrollment profile and the fact that the students are spread across three physical campuses. As outlined in the self-study, "The number of minority students at the University has risen from 3.42% in 2003 to 4.96 % in 2007. Much of this increase has come from the number of African-American students, which had nearly doubled from 81 in 2003 to 135 in 2007 and more than doubled to 185 in 2009" (The University Financial Resource Analysis and Budget Report, Spring 2007; the System Enrollment Summary 2009). Although the undergraduate admissions office enrolls substantial, traditional, first-time, full-time and transfer cohorts, the average age of all students at the University is 27.52 years (Information Reporting, 2010), reflecting a more diverse population including commuter, part-time, adult, and graduate students" (p. 51). Even the distribution of "new (undergraduate) students" reflects more than 40% who arrive as transfer

students—from Maine's Community Colleges as well as an array of public and private four year institutions—which suggests that they arrive at the University at different points in personal as well as academic development and with different experiences, expectations and needs for student services.

This set of circumstances creates significant challenges for the University to deliver an appropriate array of programs and services for these students, yet there is a strong sentiment reflected in the report and evidenced in conversations with faculty, staff and most importantly with students, This sentiment is that the University is moving in the right direction to improve the student experience. As one member of the University community articulated, "We have fundamentally changed the physical and programmatic infrastructure for student services." The creation of the Student Success Centers (under the direction of a Chief Student Success Officer) and the formation of an Enrollment Council represent tangible steps toward addressing long-standing institutional concerns about undergraduate student attrition and the initiatives—particularly the Student Success Centers—appear to be emerging and welcomed on all three the University campuses.

It is important to note that the University has long offered a broad array of essential services for student development including (but not limited to) those associated with academic advising, health and wellness (including substance abuse prevention), residential life, recreation, student involvement and leadership opportunities, campus safety and community standards, diversity and inclusion, support for students with disabilities, support for veterans and support for international students and for students for whom English is not the first language. All of these services remain in place, but the University is clearly making progress in integrating these efforts to better serve students.

The Student Success Center might be the most concrete example of this type of integration, but there are a myriad of other efforts in various stages of evolution that reflect the same approach to coordinating the work of staff (and faculty) on behalf of students. One example is the Academic Alert Program that encourages faculty to share information about students at risk with the Student Success Centers. While this might appear to be an indirect means of connecting faculty and their students, it does ensure targeted outreach to those students to address issues that might be more complex than the "presenting symptoms" identified by the faculty member.

Additionally, the Academic Alert Program serves to make faculty aware of the resources of the Center and to connect faculty to this network of support services. A more established example of integration is represented by the University's Behavioral Intervention Team, which has been in place since 2005 and which brings key staff together on a regular basis to share information and to coordinate support for students who are at risk. Finally, the Russell Scholars Program, a learning community concept, represents a long-established approach to integrate students' academic and co-curricular experiences to enhance educational outcomes. Senior Surveys conducted by the Office of Academic Assessment suggests that this "proactive" approach to integration provides benefits reflected by positive outcomes for a range of academic and engagement outcomes.

With an appreciation that the University is doing a great deal to support its students and actively and creatively working to make that experience better, a critical issue remains: attrition. Despite the energy and creativity associated with the University's student service efforts, this remains a challenge for the University and is reflected by the detailed discussion in the self-assessment and in its projections. While these projections seem to be logical steps to pursue, owing to previously expressed concerns about data and analysis—and in this instance, particular concerns about whether these concepts will discourage students' propensity to leave (or not to enroll in the first place)—it is unclear whether these significant investments will produce the results that are desired. In our conversations with students on the Gorham campus as well as with staff, they shared several other issues that appear to be relevant to this discussion on retention and appear to align well with the projections. Examples of such alignment are expansion of the Student Success Centers around advising; increased attention to graduate students; and increased financial aid. The most substantial issue that does not appear to be addressed pertains to students who live on the Gorham campus have to commute to Portland for many of their courses, often beginning in the very first semester. In discussions with the students, they note that it would seem more sensible for a relatively small number of faculty members commute to Gorham (and to occupy seemingly available classroom spaces) rather than requiring hundreds of students to commute to Portland. Then, as students reach the point in their academic careers when courses are varied and the concentrations for student no longer justify faculty traveling to Gorham, students can make the decision to either living on the Gorham campus is no longer a sensible option they might choose to live at home or find off-campus housing.

Finally, a set of related issues that arose in several sessions pertains to services and the University experience for underserved populations. "Focused opportunities for support, connection and engagement are provided by the Women's Resource Center, Center for Sexualities and Gender Diversity, Multicultural Center, Office of Support for Students with Disabilities" (p. 56) and positive references were made to each of these offices and the services they provide. However, virtually all of these offices appear to be relatively thin in staffing and the ability to impact students as well as faculty and staff across the three campuses seems to be a challenge. Specific to services for students with disabilities, there are structural impediments to service resulting, primarily, from inaccessible buildings (on the Portland and Gorham campuses). The recent hiring of a staff member on the Gorham campus to work on diversity and inclusion issues is a helpful step and the fact that this same person is also working on the Sexual Violence, Stalking and Domestic Violence grant is a good example of "integration". At the same time, however, there is the risk of spreading staff too thin to fully meet the needs of the institution. More expansive integrated efforts, such as those represented by the Student Success Centers, might be a helpful strategy to consider, particularly in light of some concern that "identity competes with community". Results in less forward movement on issues of inclusion would be beneficial to all students as well as to faculty and staff.

For students who are enrolled at the Lewiston-Auburn Campus (LAC), the feedback they shared was almost uniformly positive. Students expressed appreciation for the rigor of instruction (and demand for writing), the ability to complete an entire degree program at LAC, the availability of online and hybrid courses and the responsiveness of the University to the needs of a very diverse population of students. As with Portland and Gorham, students valued the work of the Student

Success Centers, noting the benefit they offer to transfer students who arrive on campus with varied backgrounds and experiences with other institutions and varied needs from the University.

Institutional Effectiveness

Retention remains a significant challenge to the institution and so has appropriately become a focal point for the University. Arguably, for an institution with the complex student profile described earlier, the six-year graduation rate of first time, full time students is not the appropriate measure for institutional efficiency. The University does play a facilitative role for many transfer students as part of an academic path that involves more than one institution, but ultimately results in degree attainment.

At present, the University is actively working to improve data quality and data analysis in order to refine its understanding of the correlates of student success. It has restructured the organization to remove barriers to coordination of services and to make those services more visible to students. Finally, through its strategic plan and careful budget management, it continues to work to improve the experience of students and to help students achieve their educational objectives. The timing of this assessment is a factor in describing efficiency because so much of the work – the initiation of a more effective institutional research culture, the implementation of the strategic plan, and continuing steps to manage financial resources in order to make strategic investments – has yet to mature, however, the University values students and is taking appropriate steps to ensure that through a period of changing demographics and changing needs, it will become increasingly effective at serving those students.

7. Library and Other Informational Resources

Both in the NEASC 2001 comprehensive evaluation as well as in response to a specially-requested 2004 report, the Commission expressed concern about the ability of the University library to assure "appropriate library resources for students and faculty in all programs, with particular consideration to support for print collections and adequate staffing" (2001 NEASC letter). In 2004, the Commission explicitly encouraged the University library to document "continued progress in the assessment of library resources and in assuring appropriate library resources for students and faculty." By the 2006 fifth-year interim report, the library had addressed the Commission's concerns through documentation of "new leadership, additional staff, enhanced electronic databases and resources, expanded state-wide collection development, and physical expansions and renovations at the Portland, Lewiston, and Gorham campuses." In 2009, due to private funds and a state bond, the University opened the newly expanded Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education. With the expanded storage facilities and a digital imaging center, the library's collection of 300,000 rare maps, globes and atlases can be used by a wider range of university disciplines and with the public through greater outreach services.

Since 2006, the library has continued to draw on several state-wide and regional networks for shared online resources as well as the physical delivery of print materials (University of Maine System, Maine InfoNet, Lyrasis, NERL). In fact, the university librarian has taken a leadership

role in developing these networks for the benefit of the University and the State. As a strategic decision, the University print collections and subscriptions have declined significantly since FY2008; however, access to electronic resources in support of teaching and research has increased significantly, for example, access to full-text electronic journals jumped from 21,210 in FY2008 to 33,000 journals in FY11, with continued anticipated expansion.

At the same time, actual expenditures for materials grew erratically with both significant annual one-time reductions (of $170,000 in FY2009) and increases (of $250,000 in FY2010), including some unanticipated one-time mid-year rescissions. Consequently, it has been difficult for library leadership to do accurate resource planning and allocation on a year-by-year basis. That said, base funding for the library has remained level during recent years and, in spite of inflation rates upward of 6% for library materials, the library has been able to end each fiscal year in balance. The University library employs a variety of mechanisms to assess and develop collections, including its librarian liaison program with academic disciplines, a collection development council, consultation with faculty, as well as coordination with the System campus libraries.

The University library has had a formal library instruction program since 2000 and has identified broader information literacy instruction as a priority since 2004. Information literacy is one of eight learning outcomes specified for the EYE: "6. develop and employ skills to locate and critically evaluate information relevant to course questions (i.e., information literacy)." The head of reference also serves as head of the Information Literacy Program, and there is an Information Literacy Plan guided by the Information Literacy Council. The University librarians work with faculty and Student Success staff to incorporate information literacy instruction in the EYE and other programs through a variety of mechanisms: an information literacy website and tutorial; an online Faculty Toolbox; a one-credit library class (FRS197); course-integrated sessions; and integration with the Blackboard course management system (particularly for Lewiston-based courses). Instruction programs include modules on copyright and plagiarism, with support from the System offices.

Although the information literacy website and organization is comprehensive, recent staffing reductions have affected the extent of direct librarian instruction and assistance for faculty and students. In addition, the program would benefit from more formalized assessment of the impact of its information literacy initiatives which, in turn, would inform future staffing decisions. Library facilities in all three locations have undergone extensive renovation and expansion during recent years. In particular, each library is moving ahead aggressively to institute an learning commons model of integrated academic support service delivery. Architect plans for the Glickman and Gorham Learning Commons include the Writing Center, tutoring services (from the Student Success program), information and research support, technology assistance, faculty online support (through the CTEL), multimedia development, and a variety of individual and small group study spaces.

Instructional Technology

Instructional technology is supported through three major units at the University (in addition to the library): the Center for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL), Instructional Technology and Media Services (ITMS), and the Division of Information Technology (DoIT). The Library

offers extensive computing and information resource facilities as well as information literacy instruction. Multimedia support facilities are currently under development. As a unit within the Library, ITMS is responsible for classroom media and support. CTEL focuses its efforts on course development and support of online and blended courses offered through the Division of Outreach as well as for the University colleges and schools. DoIT, in addition to supporting the University's technological infrastructure (as described in Standard 8), provides students and faculty with Help Desk support, maintains general and specialized application labs, and supports dedicated computer classrooms.

While each technology unit reports through different organizational threads (Provost, Outreach, and Chief Operating Officer), the three units collaborate closely through sharing staff lines, co-location of functional offices, and joint participation in planning and policy-making bodies for direct instruction and support to faculty and students enrolled in the University campus-based and online courses. The Library and DoIT have each experienced significant cuts or reallocation of technology-focused staffing; CTEL, on the other hand, is supported by a student online course fee and thus has a dedicated income stream from which to support staff and programming. CTEL, however, does not provide faculty development beyond support for online courses.

Institutional Effectiveness

The University's library and instructional technology (IT) services, resources, and infrastructure are adequate to support the University's teaching, research, and public service mission—as well as contribute to its stated position as "a center for discovery, scholarship and creativity." Equivalent services and resources are provided to students and faculty on each of the three campus sites, as well as to distance and online learners.

A consistent portrait of the library and IT units has emerged, characterized by rapid change in services, information resource delivery, facility design, and organizational structure; a strong academic support and student success orientation; a dynamic responsiveness to faculty and student needs and a commitment to bringing national best practices and policies to the attention of the University community.

Despite significant reductions in operating budgets and staffing levels, the University has been able to leverage participation in state-wide library networks and the System centrally-provided technological resources to maintain access and services, and to mitigate the negative impact of its economic challenges.

Library and IT units do not yet have their own overall strategic plans or assessment plans for evaluating the impact of resources and services other than plans or guidelines for individual initiatives (such as information literacy or collection development). In addition, significant reductions in staffing across the library and information technology units appear to have resulted in constraints on desired service levels.

8. Physical and Technological Resources

The University consists of three physical campuses: Portland ("the urban campus"), Gorham ("the residential campus"), and Lewiston-Auburn ("the small liberal arts campus"). The University encompasses 89 buildings totaling over 1.86 million square feet of assignable space on 146 acres in aggregate. The University has 120,000 square feet of space in the 84 classrooms that are regularly available for use and 142,000 square feet assigned to laboratories. Utilization rates vary significantly by campus, day of the week, and type of space but in aggregate there appears sufficient capacity.

Since the 2000 NEASC review, the University has made a number of capital asset portfolio additions and improvements; the University Self-Study Report notes that ten significant new facilities have been constructed as well as 16 major renovation projects. Data taken from another analysis indicates that a total of 223,000 GSF have been added over the past five years while 215,000K GSF have been removed (including a significant portion represented by a Portland residence hall that was recently sold) so there has been little net growth. Enrollment over this five year period has decreased by 4%. Going forward, no new construction on the University campuses is projected "for several years – unless private money is raised for this purpose."

Funding for capital adaptation and renewal is not sufficient and has generally been decreasing. The Self Study notes the "dire need certain buildings have for significant deferred maintenance to correct problems or to update them to current standards; there is a several decades long history of a shortage of resources to accomplish such projects." Further, the Self Study explains:

> The many references to limited resources and the lack of adequate funding through this document seem in contrast to the number of new buildings constructed in the past 10 years. The reason for this dissonance arises from the way these projects were funded.

There have been funding improvements over the past two years. In the spring of 2009, the budget for deferred maintenance was $250,000. It is now more than $1.5 million and is scheduled to be more than $2 million in fiscal year 2013.

It was further communicated that the institutional strategy over the past decade predominantly focused on state bond funding requests for new construction. Looking to the immediate future, this policy approach has changed, as demonstrated by a bond issue that was passed by Maine voters in June 2010 that will provide approximately $1.7 million in funds (of $30 million originally requested) for energy conservation and utilities improvements that will also address deferred maintenance, with a focus on projects that will lower operating costs.

A review of facilities operations and stewardship has been undertaken through Sightlines, Inc.; this is an informative analysis that guides facilities programs and claims on funding. Some observations from the most recent external analysis (October 2010) include the following:

- Despite recent new construction, 56% of campus space is over 25 years old, reflecting a campus profile where major life cycles are now due. Further, 37% of space is over 50 years old.
- A five year review of existing space capital investment ("stewardship" and "reinvestment") notes average annual spending below $1/GSF.
  - To achieve peer institutions average stewardship/reinvestment rates, the University would have to spend an additional $10 million annually as peers spend around $4.60/GSF
  - While "existing space" during this analysis period represented 89% of the total space (with 11% representing new construction) at the end of the review period, only 15% of total capital expenditures over this period were invested in existing facilities.
- Lack of historical capital re-investment has caused the campus deferred maintenance backlog to accumulate to over $78/GSF.
  - This equates to a reinvestment backlog estimate of $77 million using a base deferred maintenance identification approach; alternatively, based on adjustments and different methodologies that could be employed to identify expected costs to address deferred maintenance, backlog estimates range from $112 million to just below $200 million in aggregate.
  - Net Asset Value (accounting for maintenance needs) of the University building stock has been estimated around 60% (identified peer figures were closer to 75%)

Modest recurring capital only funds a very small portion of the annual capital investment need.
  - Facilities have lean operating costs and a diminutive maintenance program although it should be noted that performance is good.
  - Planned maintenance spending (i.e.: funding built into annual operating budgets) is three times lower than the peer average.
- Trades and maintenance staffing levels are low thus indicating a likely "reactive work force."
- Energy costs and performance is positive as compared to peer institutions.

Facilities are constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements with conspicuous consideration for environmental and ecological concerns. The University facilities department oversees the maintenance, repair and custodial care of most education and general facilities as well as some auxiliary buildings. The University Department of Residential Life, with support from facilities, provides custodial care and maintenance for the student residential buildings while a third group provides support for athletics facilities. The auxiliary buildings appear to be more significantly staffed than the E&G facilities. The facilities are clean and functional.

The University is restructuring a number of operations in response to current economic and education demands. Included in this restructuring review was an evaluation of facilities management by the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers that made several recommendations on restructuring the facilities organization as well as changes in operating procedures. That process continues to evolve.

Facilities and infrastructure was one of the "Essential Levers of Change" in the previous the University strategic plan, Transforming USM: 2004-2009; 'Regional Excellence, National Recognition." It is also one of the eight "pillars" of Preparing The University for the Future, 2009-2014, the new University Strategic Plan. Ongoing specific facilities planning efforts include a utility master plan and then an anticipated Master Planning process for all three campuses, which will integrate with the Strategic Plan.

Historically, the University has not had an adequate annual funding mechanism for capital asset reinvestment. A review of major capital projects funding sources reveals that the University has significantly relied on periodic one-time infusions, generally through the sale of bonds and state funding, to address capital needs. The System has attempted to address this issue by requiring, over a 10 year phase-in (50% by FY2011; 100% by FY2016), full funding of depreciation as reflected through expenditure support for capital maintenance. The University of Maine System Annual Financial Report (Management Discussion and Analysis) notes that campus budgets do not fully fund depreciation with facilities capital maintenance needs primarily financed by operating funds; this has resulted in a depreciation "gap" that is increasing annually. Financial constraints will likely make achieving these capital renewal investment targets *from operations* difficult. To achieve this ultimate level of capital renewal support from operations would require approximately $4 million per year of capital support. Per institutional representatives, the University has essentially met current year capital renewal investment targets *from all funds* for its auxiliary services facilities and to a significant extent for its "E&G" facilities.

The Division of Information and Technology is comprised of several service areas including Telecom, Database Applications and Support, HelpDesk, Student Computing, and Networking. The University funds IT through its operating (E&G) budget and revenue from services provided (charge backs).

The underlying technology infrastructure meets the needs of the University. Key enterprise-wide systems are administered by the System – Information Technology Services (the System-ITS) including PeopleSoft administrative and student system and Blackboard Learning Management System. The University System has been deploying, over a number of years, the PeopleSoft administrative system which includes a multi-university student record and enrollment software module as well as financial modules. The implementation of this system has improved many administrative web-based functions. Additional training would support further utilization of the capacity of this robust system. Other the System-IT administered systems includes development support and a planned facilities support system in addition to data warehousing and enhanced analysis/reporting capability. The System-ITS is also currently undertaking a comprehensive assessment of information security across the System. Orono's data center is the System's primary business and academic data processing center, as well as the networking hub.

Periodic surveys have been undertaken to rate various the University information technology staffing and services in order to inform decision making and operations. Specific, very extensive surveys were undertaken to address physical and technological resources accreditation review. Responses did note selected areas of inadequate environmental (HVAC) control as well as instances of inadequacy of audio-visual/ technological equipment and furniture; accessibility in older facilities also was noted as a significant concern. New facilities conditions and functional

efficacy were rated very high. Generally, responses noted that classrooms and other facilities are appropriately equipped and adequate in capacity. Classrooms and other teaching spaces support teaching methods appropriate to the discipline. Students and faculty have access to appropriate physical, technological, and educational resources to support teaching and learning.

Currently, there is neither an active institutional IT committee nor an operational IT plan. The IT department does assign departmental liaisons to provide constituent support. While it was articulated that the current focus is on "assuring that IT works," the goal is to expand that vision to address "what the institution wants to do with technology."

Institutional Effectiveness

The addition of new buildings on campus has supported the expansion of highly visible programs and services. These are impressive facilities that the University is justifiably proud and that have enhanced the profile of the University. The University's Self-Study notes, however, that "despite successful implementation of creative funding streams to finance new construction, the University is falling further behind in its effort to maintain modern, comfortable classrooms, laboratories, and offices" as well as auxiliary services space. This is an accurate assessment of the result of a continuing under-investment in facilities renewal. The inability to manage and maintain these physical resources threatens to negatively impact the University's ability to sustain and enhance the realization of its institutional purposes.

9. Financial Resources

In a January 11, 2009 the System communication entitled, "New Challenges, New Directions: Achieving Long-Term Financial Sustainability," the following was described:

> The University of Maine System is at a crucial turning point in its history.
> External and internal forces have created a substantial long-term financial
> gap that necessitates transformative change to assure sustainability. …
> Costs continue to rise; driven by health care, energy, and personnel costs.
> … Meanwhile, the University System faces constrained (if not reduced)
> state appropriations, and a student body that is increasingly challenged by
> tuition increases despite added university funded financial aid. These
> trends, combined with declining demographics and a prolonged recession
> ignited by a global financial crisis have created a non-sustainable financial
> condition for the University System.

The System's proposed response has been described as two-fold: additional administrative, service delivery, and academic efficiencies will be implemented to slow the growth rate of cost increases; and, "fundamental changes in structure and operations" will be considered. As the University President summarized the situation at the opening of the AY2010 year; "The facts are straightforward. We have decreasing revenues at a time of steadily rising expenses. The course that we are on, without radical and comprehensive change, is not sustainable."

As noted in the University Self Study, the University is in the midst of a substantial transformation, undertaken to permit the institution to effectively meet significant financial challenges. As noted in their current strategic plan, Preparing The University for the Future, 2009-2014, "public higher education in Maine faces a significant, sustained fiscal challenge during what is projected to be a long period of reduced tax revenues and investment income." The University is in the process of "striving to design and implement a sound financial model that will ensure the university's financial sustainability." As noted in this plan, "By the conclusion of this plan in FY2014, the University will have become a leaner, more strategically focused institution."

Major factors that have impacted the University in the recent past include decreasing state appropriations leading to increasing tuition dependence, financial changes instituted by the University of Maine System (the System), implementation of the PeopleSoft Financial electronic accounting system, increasing costs such as for health care, and a lack of adequate financial processes and controls compounded in some instances by management deficiencies.

The major areas of need identified in the University's previous interim Self-Study Report submitted in 2006 included: "focus, *alignment for fiscal sustainability* (italics added), and substantive planning." The University's NEASC Five Year Interim Report (2006) noted that, "The University is financially stable… and has control of its financial resources and budgetary process." Unfortunately, this did not prove to be an accurate assessment at that time as FY2006 was the first of four fiscal years of realized deficits.

During the five years since the NEASC interim report, the University has encountered and resolved significant financial difficulties. In FY2005, the institution incurred a $0.5 million end-of-year deficit that was offset by existing campus reserves. During FY2006 and FY2007, campus units did not have budget information until halfway through the fiscal year; largely attributed to continued conversion into the PeopleSoft accounting system. This led to some overspending that, coupled with revenues not meeting projections, resulted in a $3.9 million deficit in FY2006; this exhausted the University's cash reserves and necessitated a $1.5 million cash advance from the System. A financial recovery plan was developed at that time that aimed to result in a balanced budget for FY2007 along with repayment of the System cash advance. During spring 2007, a new University chief financial officer determined that the financial plan was not going to achieve these objectives despite spending controls that had been put into effect. The University ended FY2007 with a $3.5 million deficit and did not repay the System cash advance. This prompted the System central office to undertake an external review of the University financial management by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) to "provide guidance to the University on priorities for improving its budgeting and reporting practices" that, subsequently, led to changes to budgeting processes, oversight and control, integration with System financial practices, and creation of a process for providing periodic financial forecasts to the BOT. The University presented a multi-year financial recovery plan to the BOT in November 2007. A deficit of $2.6 million for FY2008 was projected at this time; the FY2008 fiscal year ended with a $0.3 million deficit, significantly improving upon prior forecasts. During this period, the System also developed a "Financial Oversight Plan" to "augment prudent financial management and procedures" system-wide that included specific recommendations regarding the University finance functions. In FY2009, the University begin repayment of the internal system loan and

ended the year with a $1.5 million surplus. At the end of FY2010, the University finished repaying the internal loan and established a small cash reserve and realized a solid surplus of $5.1 million (a portion of which resulted from the impact of ARRA funding as well as one-time energy and compensation savings along with structural cost reductions from programs/services reductions) that has helped to begin to restore reserves and provide opportunity for investment.

The System has engaged in multi-year financial planning since 2008. The most recent System financial plan developed under this common budget planning template has identified the need to reduce expenditures by $42.5 million system-wide over a five year period (FY2012-FY2016), with the University portion of that total being $4.6 million by FY2016. It should be noted that annual updates of this multi-year financial forecast have resulted in significant reductions in projected deficits over time.

In response to the challenges identified in the original multi-year system financial plan, the System appointed a "New Challenges, New Directions" task force in 2009 to "review and recommend operational and structural changes to the Maine's state university system." Included in the final report was a work plan establishing priorities, milestones, and timeframes for action items as well as a description of the process. Concurrent with this system level planning effort, the University engaged in a strategic planning effort that resulted in the Preparing The University for the Future, 2009-2014 plan with a key aspect being the goal of "building a sustainable university."

Stemming from this review, an emphasis has been placed on reviewing existing and proposed programs and activities in terms of their financial sustainability and potential for revenue enhancement. The University's efforts since 2007 have sought to develop a financial model that can better address existing as well as anticipated financial needs. Examples of action taken in consideration of these review parameters include the elimination of three major non-academic activities (child care, Lifeline, and the non-credit Center for Real Estate Education) in FY2009. Other actions include institution of both mid-year and year-end budget reviews and realigning budgets to match allocations to functional spending. Sale of underutilized physical assets has also occurred to provide investment support and reduce annual operations costs. Personnel reductions have also occurred.   Further, a comprehensive financial framework, "Principles for the University Budget Development and Management," has been instituted identifying six guiding principles to inform budget decision-making.

The University Self Study noted that it "will continue to refine its financial management and control practices to assure fiscally (sic) sustainability"… and "strive to align budgets with the strategic priorities of the institution." The University share of the System's state appropriation is not expected to change in the near future and overall state funding for the System is not anticipated to be strong in the near future (anticipated level funding over the biennium). With the anticipated increase in operating expenditures exceeding anticipated increases in revenue, the University will continue to be faced with the challenge of increasing enrollment (in a decreasing high school graduates market), finding operating efficiencies, and making reductions to meet the anticipated structural deficit identified in the University financial model.

It is apparent that the University is committed to building a financial model that can be more effective in creating a sustainable university. Supporting evidence includes:

- Enhanced financial controls and procedures for improving budgeting including annual and mid-year financial reporting
- Reorganization of academic units with anticipated savings in administrative costs
- Review of academic departmental (based on faculty FTE and majors thresholds) as well as majors (based on annual graduates minimums) and class size (based on student enrollment minimum) efficiency criteria
- Building its institutional research capacity
- More effectively utilize the business practices supported by the PeopleSoft administrative accounting system including implementation of a position management system
- Full funding of capital projects with appropriate contingencies
- Plans for reinstituting the Budget Advisory Committee upon reorganization completion.

The System undertakes financial ratio analyses for each of the System's campuses. Overall financial ratio analysis review notes the following:

- The University Primary Reserve Ratio (0.12 for FY2010) is significantly below the benchmark target (0.40)
  - At the lowest point (0.02 in FY2008) in the last five years, the University's expendable net assets covered less than a quarter of a month of expenses. At the highest point (FY2010), expendable net assets did not quite cover two months.
- The University Net Operating Revenue Ratio increased significantly in FY2010 to 4.67%; benchmark performance targets are 2.0% to 4.0%
  - As noted in the analysis, "In FY2009, the University was able to generate a positive ratio for the first time in four years."
  - FY2011 performance is anticipated to be again near the high benchmark; this is critical to efforts to restore reserves as this is the source of liquidity and resources for reinvestment in institutional initiatives.
- The University Return on Net Assets FY2010 performance (7.56%) was above the benchmark (6.0%)
  - In two of the past five years real return rates had been negative.
  - This performance reveals results of the University's efforts to rebuild necessary reserves.
- The University Viability Ratio of 0.33 for FY2010 is below the identified benchmark of 1.25
  - This is a significant increase from FY2008 when the viability ratio was 0.04 (reflecting essentially little available expendable net assets)
  - As noted in the analysis, "as the viability ratio falls below 1:1, institution's ability to respond... to adverse conditions from internal resources diminishes, as does its ability to attract capital from external sources and its flexibility to fund new objectives.
- A standard "Composite Financial Ratio" analysis that attempts to provide a "balanced view of the state of an institution's finances," indicates a value of 2.1 that is below the low benchmark of 3 and the high benchmark of 10
  - This again, represents significant progress from a low performance mark in FY2008 of 0.4.

- o As noted in the analysis, "a score of 1.0 indicates very little financial health" while "3, the low benchmark, represents a relatively stronger financial position." In FY2009, the University was able to surpass a score of 1.0 for the first time in four years. As noted, this was due to improvement of all four identified ratios and the University's documented focus on debt reduction and growth in reserves through stringent cost controls and revenue enhancements.

The System "Core Financial Ratios and Composite Financial Index" (January 2011) analysis concludes its review as follows: "the University's financial health remains weak and the University is still significantly undercapitalized despite significant progress since FY2006."

A review of the University's financial records from FY2007 through FY2010 reveals annual growth in aggregate operating revenues while operating expenditures have essentially remained steady. Net assets have also increased significantly over this period predominantly driven by an increase in capital assets net of related debt.

State funding to the System over the last 20 years has increased an average of 1.6% annually; below both annual inflation rates and overall annual growth of the state budget. The level of state support combined with inflationary pressures has resulted in increasing pressure on student charges. Additional student charges increases, in turn, (recognizing the potential for federal reductions to financial aid) may adversely impact course enrollments and residence hall occupancy that has fallen below capacity.

A major additional cost factor will be a new requirement, effective FY2008, to begin paying down the unfunded liability for Other Post-Employee Benefit (primarily post-retirement health benefits) costs. Other cost factors facing the University that will put pressure on the institution's operating budget include utilities expenses, anticipated salary cost increases, health care obligations, goods and services inflationary costs, and planned increases in funding for student financial aid and capital maintenance. Debt, and associated debt service, has decreased from $78.3 million in FY2008 to a projected $61.9 million by FY2013.

Despite the University's relatively recent financial difficulties, there is confidence in the current finance team. Some key factors contributing to this confidence includes more data-driven decision making that aligns budgeting with strategic objectives, short-term action informed by a long-term focus, and enhanced transparency. Further, the University's financial performance has significantly improved over the past couple of fiscal years.

Institutional Effectiveness

The University is to be commended for recent progress on financial performance that has improved significantly from its nadir in FY2008. This progress needs to be maintained. As stated in the University's Self Study, "The University is *striving* (italics added) to design and implement a sound financial model that will ensure the university's financial sustainability." While success towards that goal has recently been demonstrated, future projected deficits – as identified by the System – indicate that a long-term sustainability model, that supports institutional improvement, has yet to be achieved.

10. Public Disclosure

The University publishes information via its website for each of the areas specified on the Data First Public Disclosure form, except for "Programs, courses, services, and personnel not available in any given academic year." Academic catalogs and the full range of policies are available online. Support services and other student services are also listed. Admissions marketing materials are available.

While the Web addresses supplied lead to general information regarding the specified topic, the information itself is inconsistent across Web addresses and sometimes incomplete. Some links are "dead" and do not lead to any information (such as the audited financial statement and information on retention and graduation rates), although that information is available elsewhere—such as in the Self-Study Report itself.

Institutional Effectiveness

The University is currently implementing a content management system (Drupal, due to be implemented on a department-by-department basis starting May 19, 2011). However, policies and oversight for data management are not yet in place. The resulting lack and inconsistency of information and data that is publicly disclosed has been attributed to the need for greater data coordination in general at the University. For public disclosure, a dedicated webmaster may be of assistance.

11. Integrity

The legal framework under which the University operates is established in Title 20-A: Education, Part 5: Post-Secondary Education, Chapter 411: University of Maine (which is defined in § 10901.2 to mean the University of Maine System). Within this statute, the State of Maine has given careful consideration to the policies that support the appropriate objectives of the institution. Most notably, the State recognizes the "principles that each higher educational institution in the State…shall have control over its educational program and related activities, within its board of control…, that faculty shall enjoy the freedom traditionally accorded to the faculty of higher educational institutions in teaching, research and expressions of opinion… and that the faculty shall be consulted in the formulation of academic policies"(§10902.2**.**A, B,C).

The System, through the actions of its BOT, has established a set of published policies that support its responsibilities for efficient and appropriate oversight of the institutions within the System, while also ensuring that the individual institutions be able to exercise sufficient "control over [their] own operations [their] faculty enjoy academic freedoms in teaching, research, and expression of opinions" (p. 93). Building upon the scaffolding of statute and system policies as well as the University's own mission statement, appropriate University-based policies have been promulgated to ensure "[h]onest and ethical management of the University's academic mission, oversight of research activities, student life, professional lives of faculty and staff, and management and integrity of administrative operations… implemented through offices across administrative units and campuses" (p. 93). These policies are made available to faculty, staff, students and the public through publication on the University's website. "New and revised

policies are issued through a variety of means such as broadcast e-mails and supervisory chains of command. Documents describing new and revised policies are kept available on web-sites of the units or departments primarily responsible" (p. 93).

The University's intent to fulfill the expectations for institutional integrity is clear, but the University does recognize certain impediments in practice that it is working to resolve. Specifically, the University notes the absence of a centralized policy repository; a consistent uniform policy education/dissemination program, which can also support responsible units in the compliance and enforcement of policy; and a comprehensive, regular, systematic policy review and revision process. The University also recognizes a structural concern about the placement of the Office of Equity and Compliance within Human Resources because of the potential for an apparent or perceived conflict of interest when an enforcement unit is maintained within an office that it oversees (p. 96).

Under the direction of the president's office, the University is taking steps to create a centralized policy repository as well as systematic approaches to dissemination, review and "support for enforcement of policy information by 2012" (p. 96). Additionally, this effort will also serve to ensure alignment of policies across the University and between the University and the System by 2013. Separately, "strategic planning committee(s) [will] examine the leadership and placement of Equal Opportunities and Compliance to determine efficacy and implications by 2013" (p. 96).

Beyond these projections, subsequent discussion with faculty and staff identified a concern that institutional research review capacity had been compromised as a result of reduction in staff in this area. However, following review by the provost's office, it appears that the University is aware of the concern and is in the process of rebuilding that capacity. More generally, the issue of reorganization appears to have contributed to other instances where uncertainty about the accountable office or key point of contact for oversight of specific policies exists. As described under the public disclosure standard and reiterated in the projection on integrity, because of the absence of a centralized, comprehensive and readily accessible catalog of policies and accountable officers for those policies, the potential exists for an individual—whether faculty, staff, student or a member of the general public—to be uncertain about her or his right or the mechanism by which to pursue relief if the individual perceives a breach.

Institutional Effectiveness

The University operates under a rational and principled framework. Transitions in leadership over time and internal reorganizations have contributed to some ambiguities that require resolution. The absence of an effective and systematic approach to the coordination/centralization, communication and review of policies creates a period of vulnerability. However, the leadership of the institution appears cognizant of the concerns and they are working toward appropriate resolution of the issues that have been identified. Consideration might be given to the pace at which these efforts are progressing for resolution to mitigate any risk to the institution or members of the University community. Leadership will need to retain its focus on bringing these issues to closure, but there is no concern that the University is not understanding this responsibility or that it is not taking the matter seriously.

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the University's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the evaluation team reviewed the institution's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the President and CEO of the university. The University publicly discloses credit transfer policies in both its catalog and admissions materials. Public notification and opportunity for comment on the upcoming comprehensive evaluation was solicited through the University website and in the following local publications: *Portland Free Press Herald*, *Sun Journal* (Lewiston), *Gorham Times*, and the University *Free Press*. Student complaints and other grievance procedures are aggregated and available through the University Office of Community Standards (available via the website as well as through the office). The University offers a range of online courses and several degree programs through distance education; students have individual ID numbers which are effective during the time the course is being taken, and expire when a student is not registered during the subsequent semester.

Summary

In general, it is the view of the Evaluation Team that the University of Southern Maine (the University) is offering academic programs and services consistent with its mission. It is accomplishing this task under the leadership of an involved and committed University of Maine System BOT; a Chancellor who is very familiar with the campus as its prior president; a highly able President, and a well-qualified faculty and staff committed to serving the needs of the University students.

The University has experienced substantial financial challenges over the past three years, and through this collective leadership, has stabilized its budget. Many difficult decisions were made to achieve this outcome including the closing of some programs, lay-offs of personnel and merging of colleges. Over the next year or two, the University will further restructure its academic operation through a review and merging of small departments and decreasing the number of classes offered with small enrollments.

Through the challenges the University is undertaking, the commitment to a high quality experience for students remains paramount for faculty, administrators, and staff. There is strong support for the institution from its greater community and the institution continues to strive to achieve its mission.

The University is well aware that the future will not lack for challenges. With this in mind, the team offers the following summary of the most important strengths and concerns.

Strengths

- The University has achieved a tentative recovery from a financial crisis within two years. This is a very important accomplishment and a major step forward for the institution.

- The University students are enthusiastic about the experiences they are having on their campus. They spoke about committed faculty and staff that mentor, facilitate internships, and engage in career exploration and the availability of opportunities to learn in and outside the classroom. They describe a rich diversity of their own student body in the age, experiences, career trajectories, and life position. They are very positive about the University.

- The University's academic programs are strong and the introduction of new cores in Portland/Gorham and in Lewiston-Auburn is a substantial addition to the curriculum. The cores are rigorous, interdisciplinary, and innovative.

- Faculty are skilled and successful in their teaching and scholarship. It is clear they are committed to student learning, and to their own continued growth through research and scholarship.

- Administrators and staff are equally passionate about working with students. A strong example is the efforts surrounding student success and particularly the development of

centers to support these important strategies. The close collaboration among administrative departments is an essential element of its model.

- Faculty governance is engaged and represents faculty from all campuses.

- A newly articulated strategic plan, "Preparing the University for the Future," is currently being implemented.

Concerns

- The University needs to refine the data it uses for decision-making by improving the consistency of this data and analyzing the data for evidence of changes, trends, and improvements. The need for quality data affects all functions of the university including student success, finances, academic programming, student programming, and fund raising.

- The assessment of student learner outcomes is underway, but not fully implemented. The methods of assessment require refinement for consistency and accuracy. All departments/programs must participate for a comprehensive understanding of the quality of the student experience at the University. In particular, the new cores need an assessment plan that is implemented to determine the effectiveness of the new offerings and how they are advancing student learning.

- While the financial crisis has been resolved, the institution continues to strive for long-term financial stability. State appropriations and student enrollments coupled with inflationary operating costs create a volatile funding environment. The proposed new initiatives such as investing in financial aid and funding deferred maintenance require a reinvestment of available funds. Continued implementation of "New Challenges/New Directions and Transforming USM 2009 – 2014" with strategic financing are important in achieving the University's goals.

- As the University is moving forward, the sequential transition for key leadership positions will need to move from interim to permanent. Stability in the leadership team will help build confidence and commitment in the community.

- Communication is a component of an institution that is frequently a challenge and, at a time of rapid change, it is difficult to keep the full community informed of all essential information. The University needs to continue its strong effort to share information and continue its transparency and members of the community need to avail themselves of the information that is shared.