March 25, 2010

Susan Campbell  
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs  
University of Southern Maine  
96 Falmouth Street  
Portland, ME 04104-9300

Dear Susan:

Enclosed please find the final my report of the Noel-Levitz Enrollment Management Assessment at the University of Southern Maine on February 18-19, 2010.

Many thanks to all members of the USM community for their hospitality and openness as they assisted me in learning about the enrollment, marketing and retention efforts and organizational structures in place at USM. I especially appreciated the chance to hear from faculty, staff, and students about the strengths and opportunities, as well as some of the challenges that you are facing.

Please convey my appreciation to President Botman, the members of her staff, as well as the members of the Admissions and Financial Aid staffs, and the participants in our focus groups for their enthusiasm and candor during our meetings. I hope you will find this report helpful to USM in achieving its full enrollment potential.

Again, please do not hesitate to call upon me if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely

Sheila A. Mahan  
Senior Associate Consultant

SM/mcs

c: Rosa Redonnett, executive director, student affairs, University of Maine System Office  
Kevin Crockett, president and CEO, Noel-Levitz  
Sarah Coen, vice president, Noel-Levitz
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Enrollment Management Assessment

University of Southern Maine
Portland, ME
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Enrollment Management Assessment

University of Southern Maine • Portland, Maine

Introduction

Sheila A. Mahan, senior associate consultant, visited the University of Southern Maine on February 18-19, 2010, for the purpose of providing an external analysis of the college’s enrollment program. This written report is intended to offer feedback on current enrollment-related strategies and practices and includes a set of recommendations designed to assist the University of Southern Maine in achieving its short- and long-term enrollment goals. It is intended to aid and abet the University of Maine campuses’ efforts to reach stated enrollment goals.

This analysis included the following general areas of inquiry:

- An evaluation of short- and long-range enrollment goals (recruitment and retention) and the realism of those objectives given the current environment and commitment of resources;
- A review of the university’s enrollment management structure and enrollment planning process;
- A review of the university’s marketing and recruitment budget including national benchmark data on recruitment costs per student;
- An assessment of existing market research and ways that research is being used in formulating marketing and recruitment action plans;
- A review of current and desired prospective student markets (e.g., first-year, transfer students, adults) and ways the university segments recruits its target populations;
- Utilization of the university Web site, electronic mail, social networking and other electronic media in the recruitment communication program;
- Current utilization of human resources including admissions and financial aid staff, faculty, students, parents, and alumnus in the enrollment management process;
- Evaluation of UM’s scholarship and financial aid programs and their support of the university’s recruitment and retention goals;
- The use of data and information to support enrollment planning and decision-making; and
A review of current student success (retention and graduation rate) initiatives.

The goal of the enrollment audit was to analyze the college’s enrollment goals, the current and proposed strategies, systems, structures, and tactics being used to achieve them, and opportunities to improve enrollment results. The enrollment audit proceeded in four steps.

Step One: Pre-Visit Data Review

Prior to the initial campus visit on February 18-19, the University of Southern Maine provided an extensive set of institutional enrollment data, reports, publications, and other documentation to assist the consultant in gaining an initial understanding of the University of Southern Maine’s current enrollment strategies and tactics. Among the documents reviewed were:

- Institutional Self-Assessment
- Undergraduate admissions recruitment materials, including viewbook, postcards and transfer brochure
- Undergraduate and graduate admissions funnel reports for 2008, 2009 and 2010 YTD
- Undergraduate admissions 2009-2010 Recruitment Plan
- *Improving Persistence and Success at USM: Results of a Survey of Current and Former USM Students* (June 2009), prepared by the Maine Center for Business and Economic Research and Muskie School Survey Research Center, Charles S. Cogan, Principal Investigator
- *USM Retention Study: A Multivariate Logistic Regression Approach* (2008) prepared by Bert Smoluk, Associate Professor of Finance, and James Suleiman, Assistant Professor of Management Information Systems, School of Business, University of Southern Maine
- University of Southern Maine MELMAC Report
- Various National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2009 Reports
- Various Graduate Student Survey (GSS) 2009 reports

The following additional materials were provided during the visit:

- 2009-2010 Marketing Plan
- *Re-Branding the University of Southern Maine* (PowerPoint Presentation prepared by Critical Insights, Portland, ME (2006))
- Graduate recruitment materials
- Lewiston-Auburn Campus (LAC) recruitment materials
- *Supporting Student Success: The USM Promise* (2009)
Step Two: On Campus Meetings

The consultant met with a variety of groups and individuals during the site visit including members of the enrollment management team. The following individuals were scheduled to meet:

Selma Botman, President
Richard Campbell, Chief Financial Officer
Kate L. Forhan, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dahlia Lynn, Dean of Graduate Studies
Craig Hutchinson, Vice President for Student and University Life
William W. Wells, Chief Information Officer
Susan Campbell, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
Jim Shaffer, Chief Operating Officer
Scott Steinberg, Dean Undergraduate Admissions
Deb Daeris, Senior Associate Director of Admissions
Jon Barker, Director of Technology, Graduate and Undergraduate
Rachel Morales, Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions
Toni Passerman, Coordinator of Transfer Student Recruitment
Marge Jarry, Assistant to the Dean of Admissions
Keith Dubois, Director of Financial Aid
Norma Catalano, Assistant Director of Financial Aid
Helen Parker, Director of Financial Aid Systems
Joyce Lapping, Director of Prior Learning Assessment
Kim Warren, Coordinator of Student Affairs, College of Education and Human Development
Steve Rand, Registrar, Registrar’s Office
Joyce Branaman, Director, Support for Students with Disabilities
Susan King, Director, Academic Assessment
Kim Jenkins, Coordinator, Student Success Center, Lewiston-Auburn College
Paul Dexter, Coordinator, Student Success Center, Gorham Campus
Bob Hansen, Associate Provost for University Outreach, Provost’s Office
Pamela Edwards, Director of Student Academic Affairs and CAS Advising
Andrea Thompson McCall, Director, Interfaith Chaplain
Tom Parchman, Associate Professor, School of Music
Charles Colgan, Chair, CPD Program and Professor of Public Policy and Management
Karen Martel, School of Nursing
Mary Sloan, Director and Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, Graduate Admissions
Lisa Sweet, Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions
Mike Brady, Co-Chair and Professor, Human Resource Development
Tara Costle, Associate Professor, Leadership and Organizational Studies
Suad Alagic, Professor, Computer Science
Marjorie Lawson, Associate Professor and Graduate Nursing Coordinator
Andrew Coburn, Chair, Institute for Health Policy and Research Professor
James Curry, Chair and Associate Professor Professional Education
Mahammad El-Taha, Professor Mathematics and Statistics
Cathie Fallona, Associate Dean and Director of Teacher Education
Janet Casey, Coordinator of Graduate Student Services, Office of Graduate Studies
Andrew Anderson, Associate Dean, Professor Dept. of Technology
Gary Johnson, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Associate Professor of History
John Wright, Dean and Professor School of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology
Blake Whitaker, Associate Professor, Natural and Applied Sciences
These focus groups and individual interviews were very helpful in continuing to build an understanding of the current situation, your desired enrollment, and the strategies USM has utilized to meet its objectives.

Step Three: Preliminary Recommendations and Executive Briefing

Following the initial site visit the consultant provided a set of preliminary observations and recommendations. These were discussed during a two-hour executive briefing with the president’s cabinet on February 19, 2010.

Step Four: Written Follow-up Report

As a result of this analysis, I am able to make the following written observations regarding the University of Southern Maine’s present enrollment program, as well as to delineate some specific recommendations to assist the college in enhancing its enrollment management efforts.

Review of Recent Enrollment Results and Stated Goals

Overall Enrollment and Enrollment Trends

The enrollment picture at the University of Southern Maine over the last decade is decidedly mixed as the following table shows. On the one hand USM has experienced 9 percent decline in fall headcount enrollment since 1999. On the other hand, there has been a 7 percent increase in FTE. A closer look at enrollment reveals:

- Fall undergraduate headcount grew 4 percent
- Graduate headcount increased 6 percent
- Non-degree enrollment declined 51 percent
These trends may be partly explained by the expansion of the community college system during the same period, which is thought to be drawing the non-degree student, as well as by an intentional effort to increase credit-hour enrollment.

However, it should be noted that both headcount and FTE have declined in the last five years. Between 2005 and 2009:

- Headcount has declined by 12 percent
- FTE has declined by 5 percent

The mix of students has also changed slightly during the decade, as the following table shows, as priority attention has been given to the recruitment of out-of-state students, resulting in increases both in overall and first-time, full time enrollment of non-Maine residents. While this is an important strategic gain, there have been concurrent decreases in in-state enrollment:

- Out-of-state headcount increased 24 percent
- In-state headcount declined 12 percent during the decade

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**SM Enrollment 1999-2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UG</td>
<td>6,306</td>
<td>6,353</td>
<td>6,494</td>
<td>6,687</td>
<td>6,698</td>
<td>6,797</td>
<td>6,847</td>
<td>6,718</td>
<td>6,583</td>
<td>6,483</td>
<td>6,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
<td>1,676</td>
<td>1,843</td>
<td>1,891</td>
<td>2,104</td>
<td>2,113</td>
<td>2,072</td>
<td>2,093</td>
<td>1,927</td>
<td>2,066</td>
<td>1,861</td>
<td>1,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-degree</td>
<td>2,179</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>2,189</td>
<td>2,219</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>1,894</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>1,396</td>
<td>1,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Headcount</td>
<td>10,645</td>
<td>10,820</td>
<td>10,966</td>
<td>11,382</td>
<td>11,007</td>
<td>11,089</td>
<td>10,974</td>
<td>10,478</td>
<td>10,453</td>
<td>10,009</td>
<td>9,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>6,496</td>
<td>6,658</td>
<td>6,844</td>
<td>7,296</td>
<td>7,223</td>
<td>7,305</td>
<td>7,348</td>
<td>7,180</td>
<td>7,157</td>
<td>7,035</td>
<td>6,971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UMS Summary of Fall Enrollments

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**USM Enrollment 1999-2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-state</td>
<td>9,910</td>
<td>10,054</td>
<td>10,142</td>
<td>10,489</td>
<td>10,069</td>
<td>10,109</td>
<td>10,050</td>
<td>9,537</td>
<td>9,507</td>
<td>9,032</td>
<td>8,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-state</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UMS Summary of Fall Enrollments
New Student Enrollment Trends

First-Year Student Enrollment

First-time, full-time student enrollment at the University of Southern Maine has also been rising and falling during the last decade. As the table below shows, fall 2009 enrollment was the lowest point of the decade.

Within this overall FTFT enrollment, in-state headcount has declined 9 percent during the decade while out-of-state increased 7 percent. For the last five years, USM has consistently enrolled 17-20 percent of its freshman classes from out-of-state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USM FTFT Enrollment 1999-2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total FTFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UMS Summary of Fall Enrollments

The following table contains the University of Southern Maine’s first-year student enrollment funnel results for fall 2006 through fall 2009 with projections (working targets) for fall 2010. All admissions funnels have been relatively flat during this period – applications and admits increased each year between 2005 and 2008, but declined in 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Southern Maine: First-Year Student Enrollment Funnel Results and Fall 2010 Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment
The following table provides comparison data on funnel progress for four-year public colleges and universities from the most recent Noel-Levitz benchmark poll.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Universities – Overall First-Year Student Funnel Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median funnel rates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2008</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry to application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to admit (all applications)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to admit (completed applications only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit to enroll (yield)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Noel-Levitz

By comparison to the national median inquiry to application conversion rate of 33 percent, USM’s rate of 35 percent in 2009 appears to be strong. But a review of USM inquiry sources provided after the visit suggests that there are weaknesses in USM’s inquiry-to-application conversion.

- Twenty-one percent or 2,480 of the 11,789 inquiries were applications as first contact, which inflates the conversion rate.
- The conversion rate of non-applicant inquiries was 17.8 percent. Further analysis of the non-applying inquiries is needed, as this may reflect a high number of out-of-state inquiries in USM’s pool or point to weak conversion for other reasons.
- Fifty-nine percent of the applicants were not in the inquiry pool. Certainly, “secret shoppers” and prospect-to-applicant tracks are changing the top of the funnel, and further analysis of “prospect survival rates” is needed to fully understand USM’s picture.

Secondly, the university admitted more than 83 percent of its freshman applicants last fall compared to the national average of 66 percent. As we discussed at the exit briefing, the admit rate has been rising in recent years, and creates a vulnerability for USM to be admitting almost all candidates who complete the application. Any dip in the applicant pool will likely have an immediate effect on the enrolled pool, since there is no cushion. In addition, with a goal to grow enrollment, this points to the need to increase the applicant pool.

It should be noted, however, that even with an admit rate above 80 percent, USM is not “dipping deeper” into the applicant pool, as reflected in the academic profile for fall 2009:

- Freshmen Mean SAT-V (all enrolls): 509 (+11 from 2008)
- Freshmen Mean SAT-M (all enrolls): 501 (+2 from 2008)
- Freshmen Mean GPA (all admits): 3.04 (-.03 from 2007)
- Freshmen Mean GPA (all enrolls): 3.04 (+.09 from 2007)

Finally, USM’s yield rate (from offer of admission to enrollment) was 27 percent for fall 2009 versus a national average of 38 percent for fall 2008, and lower than USM’s yield rates in the
most recent prior years. Late processing of financial aid awards in 2009 probably contributed to this drop in yield rate, but this final stage of the funnel also represents opportunity area to increase enrollment.

**In-State and Out-of-State Freshman Admissions**

USM has enrolled between 17 and 20 percent of its freshman class from out-of-state in recent years. The following funnels show USM’s application activity by state for the last two years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Southern Maine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-time, First-Year Student Admissions In-State</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **First-time, First-Year Student Admissions Out-of-State** |
| | 2008 | 2009 |
| Inquiries | na | na |
| Applications | 1,471 | 1,458 |
| Admitted | 1,230 | 1,253 |
| AR | 83.6% | 85.9% |
| Enrolled | 203 | 167 |
| YR | 16.5% | 13.3% |

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment

While admits rates are similar for in-state and out-of-state students, yield rates are significantly different. This is certainly to be expected as both cost and distance from home can be greater considerations for an out-of-state student than for an in-state student. It should be noted that USM admissions and financial aid staff devote a considerable portion of their recruitment and financial aid resources to the recruitment of out-of-state freshmen.

**Transfer Students**

The following table contains USM’s transfer student enrollment funnel results for fall 2006 through fall 2009 with working targets for fall 2010.
University of Southern Maine: Transfer Student Enrollment Funnel Results and Fall 2010 Projections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010 Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>1,639</td>
<td>1,707</td>
<td>1,567</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>1,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance %</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>1,216</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>1,227</td>
<td>1,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield %</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment

USM’s inquiry report for 2009 reported an inquiry number smaller than the application number, which indicates that transfer inquiries are not captured and counted accurately. The national average of conversion of transfer inquiries to applicants is 72 percent.

As with freshmen, USM also admits a higher percentage of its transfer applicants than the national average – 70-76 percent in recent years versus a national average of 61 percent. This high admission rate does represent a positive sign of commitment to USM among qualified applicants. The number of admitted transfer students has remained flat despite increases in the applicant pool, when one might expect to see admits increase as well. There may be an opportunity to “work” the transfer applicant pool to increase the number of completed applications.

Meanwhile, USM’s yield on offers of transfer admission was 69 percent for fall 2008 compared to a national average of 63 percent, another positive sign of commitment of applicants to USM.

Adult students

USM also sees itself as an institution of choice for adult students. The following admissions data for adult students was provided following the campus visit.

University of Southern Maine: Adult Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshmen</th>
<th>&gt;19 years old</th>
<th>19-23 years old</th>
<th>&gt;23 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>3,027</td>
<td>3,011</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted</td>
<td>2,465</td>
<td>2,536</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit rate</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield rate</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
University of Southern Maine: Adult Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfers</th>
<th>&lt; 24 years old</th>
<th>&gt; 24 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit Rate</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield Rate</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Report

Noel-Levitz does not have separate benchmarks for the behavior of adult students. In its adult population, USM is seeing freshman admit rates that are significantly lower than the traditional-age population, but is also seeing stronger yield rates. This may reflect the fact that recruiting and admitting adult students involves more labor at the front end – perhaps in terms of working with them to complete the application process. However, it may also suggest that USM should carefully review its admissions criteria to ensure that adult students are being evaluated in ways that fairly acknowledge differences in their academic background and also consider factors that have the potential to contribute to their success. USM does have a separate application for adults.

Cost to Recruit a New Undergraduate Student

The University of Southern Maine spends $563 per enrolled undergraduate student. In comparison to large four-year public institutions in the Noel-Levitz national survey, this places USM between the national median amount of $423 and the 75th percentile amount of $682.

USM is at the national average with 142 new undergraduates per employee (16 FTE employees), but lower than the average of 484 new undergraduates per recruiter with 346 (6.5 FTE recruiters). This latter difference may be explainable in part by the significant investment of recruitment time in out-of-state activity, which yields a much smaller number of enrolled students. (Many public institutions enroll a smaller percentage of out-of-state students than USM.) Another contributing factor is the staffing requirements associated with the need to run campus visit programs at two campuses.

Graduate Admissions

The University of Southern Maine is one of only three public institutions in the state offering graduate programs (until recently, it was one of only two). The following is the overall graduate admissions funnel, which includes both degree programs and a small number of certificate programs.
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University of Southern Maine: Graduate Student Enrollment Funnel Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010 Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>Na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion %</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>1,310</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance %</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>Na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment

Noel-Levitz does not have benchmark data for graduate admissions, as there is wide variation among graduate programs in terms of funnel progress rates. The following table shows the detail for degree admissions by school and college.

USM Graduate Degree Admissions 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAS</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>ASET</th>
<th>CONHP</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>Muskie</th>
<th>COEHD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit rate</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield Rate</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment

Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rate Trends

According to the American College Testing Program (ACT), USM is classified as a “traditional” institution based on average SAT ranging from 990 to 1010 (V+M) in recent years. In the past five years USM’s freshman-to-sophomore retention rate has ranged from 64.5 to 66.8 percent. This compares to a national average of 70 percent for similar institutions.

USM Freshman-to-Sophomore Retention Rates: Fall 2004 through Fall 2008 Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment
National Retention Rates for FTIC Students at Four-Year Public Universities by Highest Degree Offered and Admissions Selectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree/Selectivity</th>
<th>Highly Selective</th>
<th>Selective</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Open</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 2009. ©2009. ACT, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

As the following table shows, USM has seen a five-year graduation rate of between 25 and 29 percent in recent years. This compares to a five-year rate of 37 percent for similar institutions, according to the American College Testing Program (ACT).

USM Five-Year Graduation Rates: 2001-2004 Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grad. Rate</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Self-Assessment

USM’s six-year graduation rate has been approximately 34 percent in recent years.

Stated Enrollment Goals

The University of Southern Maine is pursuing the following working goals for achieving enrollment objectives.

- To increase first-year students from 924 in fall 2009 to 995 (+7.6%) in fall 2010
- To increase transfer enrollment by 2 percent over fall 2009 to 865 in fall 2010
- To increase first-to-second year retention by 2 percent in 2010 to 67 percent (and 2% per year thereafter to 75% in 5 years)
- To maintain graduate enrollment
The consultant believes the fall 2010 working goals are reasonable and achievable given the activities and strategies that have been implemented. This effort follows a successful spring 2010 enrollment, equaling headcount enrollment of spring 2009 (and thus reversing a trend of declining enrollment) and slightly increasing credit-hours, a major institutional objective.

In addition, the undergraduate admissions office has been enhancing its recruitment efforts throughout the fall 2010 and has seen an increase in freshman applications of 5.8 percent above the same point in the fall 2009 cycle, and a 9.8 percent increase in transfer applications. With additional attention to yield initiatives and timely financial aid awarding, USM should be able to carry an increase through the funnel to final enrollment.

In the area of retention USM has launched an ambitious, comprehensive retention program designed to improve student persistence and success and is cultivating a campus culture focused on retention. The creation of the new Student Success Centers on all three campuses is designed to provide integrated academic and career advising to undeclared and conditionally admitted students, a service that will also be paired up with advisement efforts provided by the academic units. In addition, implementation of a core curriculum built around student progress began in the fall 2009 with the mandatory Entry-Year Experience course for freshmen, which will be paired with a mid-career course at the end of the sophomore year, and a capstone course in the senior year, all of which are aimed at improving student engagement and persistence.

Finally, graduate recruitment activity continues, though both the central graduate admissions office and the departmentally based faculty report impact of recent budget reductions on their ability to effectively recruit and advise graduate students. Currently, graduate applications are running 8.6 percent ahead of last year. A word of caution about graduate admissions: while it is generally believed that graduate enrollment runs counter-cyclically with the economy (i.e., graduate enrollment rises when the economy weakens), it is not at all clear that this pattern is holding in the current economic environment.

With all other factors remaining equal, these efforts should produce a net increase of 100+ students over fall 2009 enrollment.

**Driving Forces and Restraining Forces**

The University of Southern Maine has both rich opportunities and some challenge in its enrollment management efforts. In order to assist USM to capitalize on the opportunities and to recognize and address, or at least manage, the weaknesses or threats, the following major areas are offered as a starting point. These comprise both the consultant’s observations and the comments of many USM faculty and staff in the focus groups who responded to the questions “What are USM’s strengths?” and “What are USM’s vulnerabilities or challenges?”

**Driving Forces (Strength and opportunities)**

- Location in Portland: USM’s location in the major population center in Maine presents it with rich social, cultural and economic resources that are attractive to traditional undergraduate students and a source of adult and graduate student markets.
- USM’s multiple campuses also allow the university to reach an even broader population base.
USM is already serving the growing adult student market.

In particular, the non-traditional programs offered at the Lewiston-Auburn Campus serve the non-traditional market in a second major metropolitan area of Maine.

There is a strong Prior Learning Assessment program in place to ease the transition for adults reentering higher education.

Students and faculty cite the age diversity of students as a strength of the academic experience.

USM’s 45+ undergraduate programs and concentrations include several signature programs and in-demand areas including music, sports management, athletic training, nursing and biosciences.

As one of only three (only two until recently) public institutions offering graduate degrees in Maine, USM has opportunities to compete in the graduate student market.

USM’s undergraduate admissions office is a very solid operation with activities in place to build the funnel at each stage.

The admissions staff have increased recruitment activity this year on several fronts, including freshman, transfer, adult, and out-of-state strategies.

USM admissions has a freshman and transfer communication plan including in-house generated personalized e-mails to students and around high school visits.

USM is developing an alumni in admissions program to further increase recruitment presence at fairs.

Recruitment travel increased this past fall with about 600 programs covered. The majority were high schools visits, including most high schools in Maine. Travel also included out-of-state recruitment areas that have generated prospects and applicants in recent years, as well as areas suggested by EPS data in Connecticut and Western Massachusetts.

Admissions offers campus tours on both the Portland and Gorham campuses through daily visit programs, and many weekend special programs throughout the fall.

The admissions office manages about $300,000 in new scholarships funds each year, offered to students at the time of admission. Scholarships and criteria are publicized in application materials.

Application processing on campus is quick and efficient.

The office engages in some yield communications, manages a “Calling Campaign” in March using student and faculty volunteers, and holds an admitted student visit day.

There are good working relations between admissions and coaches, which supports recruitment of student athletes, many of whom are from out-of-state.

Admissions staff have increased community college visits, including multiple visits per semester to three primary feeder community colleges where counselors spend a full day several times a semester. The counselors offer unofficial credit evaluations during these visits.
• There is also a recruitment transfer brochure mailed to transfer inquiries.
• The undergraduate admissions office has developed excellent capability to extract data from the PeopleSoft system and has access to weekly admissions activity reports that provide funnel status for a variety of different sub-populations, including state residency, age, and programs.
• USM’s graduate admissions office is a solid operation that serves both a central recruitment function and admissions processing support for the graduate programs.
• College sophomore and junior programs are held by USM’s graduate admissions office to raise awareness among USM students of the graduate program opportunities.
• Visits to other Maine campuses to recruit to the graduate programs have also been made in the past.
• Graduate inquiries are captured in PeopleSoft and are available to the graduate program directors to follow up with students.
• A document imaging system is almost fully implemented to expedite graduate application processing.
• USM’s graduate program offerings are considered to be strong.
• The quality of graduate students attracted to USM is generally considered to be very strong.
• There is a strong commitment to undergraduate student success – retention and graduation – on campus. Much research and several in-house studies have been done, providing very solid data documenting the retention picture at USM.
• “Best practice” retention programs organized around the key findings of the NSSE have been initiated offering great promise to change the retention reality at USM. These include development of Student Success Centers at each of the three campuses, an implementation of a core curriculum built on student engagement principles.
• Small class size and personalized attention are cited as strengths of the university as well.
• Recent success in achieving higher enrollment and credit hour goals – ~1 percent – in spring 2010 and positive signs for new student and graduate enrollment for fall have created enrollment momentum on campus.

Restraining Forces

• Like all colleges in the Northeast, USM faces the challenge of recruiting in a declining market of traditionally aged students in its primary and second markets.
• USM does not have an integrated enrollment planning process in place to set specific institutional goals and enrollment priorities, which weakens effectiveness of recruitment and some retention efforts, and may allow opportunities to go untapped.
• Undergraduate admissions directs its energy and resources in a variety of directions, particularly toward out-of-state students, which may not be the most cost-beneficial use of its resources.
The admissions office has not made extensive use of the inquiry data it collects to analyze funnel status or to inform its recruiting efforts.

As a result, USM is not managing the top of the funnel as effectively as it might to shape the applicant pool. In 2009, 59 percent of applications were “first contact” resulting in a conversion rate for the rest of the inquiries at 17 percent.

The admissions office reports that application processing can be slowed by backlogs at the system processing center.

USM’s +80 percent admit rate for freshmen is high and represents a vulnerability.

Transfer and adult student potential are not being fully tapped.

Schools and colleges have retention staff, but no retention goals.

The recent decision to highlight Portland in recruitment materials has generated a lot of excitement but, according to the admissions staff, also creates some confusion for prospective students when they learn that there is a second major campus in Gorham.

It is an additional demand on admissions resources to staff two campus visit programs, one on the Gorham campus and a satellite on the Portland campus.

It is also challenging at times to persuade visitors to visit the Gorham campus if they arrive at Portland first, and vice versa. Some visitors are “lost” to the second part of the visit.

Currently USM is in the middle of a rebranding effort, having consolidated its identity around a single logo. However, there is still an absence of clear brand identity – and the articulation of unique selling points – which weakens USM’s competitive position. Comments from campus interviews suggest that:

− USM has not successfully differentiated from its competitors beyond its relatively low cost;
− The difference between USM and its community college competitors is not clearly understood by prospective freshmen; and
− The business community (and reportedly the state of Maine in general) does not necessarily recognize the important differences between an associate’s degree and a baccalaureate education. USM is characterized as “an undiscovered gem.”

Recruitment materials are beginning to reflect a family look, but there is concern that they are too focused on the traditionally aged student market and do not appeal to adult learners.

Recruitment and marketing materials are often prepared in a decentralized way at the school, college or administrative office level and so are not as well coordinated as they might be.

The university Web site is not effectively organized to support easy navigation by prospective students nor are the major selling points clearly and effectively presented.

Efforts to yield admitted students through contact from the academic units are unevenly implemented. Some programs do very well, while others do not understand what the expectations are, or do not engage in yield efforts for other reasons.

Publicity about the possible discontinuation of some academic programs has led to some public uncertainty, which made recruitment difficult.
• Articulation agreements are reportedly in place in many academic programs, but they are not publicized outside of “MaineStreet” and so are not available to external audiences.

• Acceptance of transfer credit toward major requirements is reportedly not always “transfer friendly.” Transfer credits are accepted toward graduation but not toward specific degree requirements, which some faculty believe is a way to differentiate their programs from those of community colleges.

• There appear to be more opportunities for collaboration with community colleges than are currently in place.

• Student services (admissions, financial aid, and student success) report that they are strained to provide high quality services at three campuses in a declining budget environment.

• Cost of attendance at USM is high, and financial aid reports that students graduate with the highest debt in the state.

• There are insufficient institutional grant funds to meet all enrollment objectives using the current strategy. Financial aid runs out of institutional funds and some federal funds in early spring for the following year, leaving many eligible transfer students without the funds.

• Student self-service transactions in financial aid (e.g., accepting aid) on PeopleSoft do not actually update PeopleSoft, and instead simply produce a paper requiring manual staff intervention. While this improves convenience for students, it does not really improve service if the actions are delayed and staff are required to do this extra work.

• Budget reductions have caused graduate recruitment efforts to be scaled back.

• Graduate program directors believe that there are many opportunities to expand enrollment and serve new cohorts and markets but that budget constraints and bureaucratic requirements hinder their ability to be responsive. For example, tuition policies for 3+2 programs (undergraduate/graduate programs) are seen as disincentive.

• Graduate program directors see the lack of a “e-tuition” rate as a hurdle to creating online programs. They believe that a rate lower than the current out-of-state rate is necessary to be competitive.

• Funding for graduate students is not released until April, which is later than most other institutions make offers, and may be resulting in loss of good students.

• Funding for out-of-state graduate students is reportedly not competitive to attract the best students in some high-profile programs.

• USM attracts very few international students, and the campus offers no services for international students.

• Academic advisement is unevenly delivered on campus. Students report a wide variety of experiences with advisors.

• In addition, mandatory advisement expires on the first day of class, so students are able to register without advisement.

• The degree audit is still a work in progress with the PeopleSoft implementation.
Many initiatives in support of retention have taken place in recent years, but feedback to faculty and staff participants has not always happened.

There is an early warning system in place to support early intervention, but participation is very low (though it is reported to have increased in spring 2010).

The PeopleSoft implementation on campus did not involve a business process redesign and procedures are still perceived by many students and faculty as bureaucratic.

Morale is holding on campus, but many individuals are showing signs of being “budget battered.” They note losses in support staff in particular as causing faculty and professional staff attention to be drawn away from student services to complete routine transactional work.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to assist the University of Southern Maine in improving its approaches to enrollment management. The recommendations are organized into the following categories:

- Enrollment Planning and Organizational Issues
- New Student Recruitment (Freshman, Transfer and Graduate)
- Marketing and Web Strategies
- Pricing, Financial Aid, and Scholarships
- Student Success Strategies (Retention)
- Graduate Recruitment and Enrollment

Enrollment Planning and Organizational Issues

1. Develop annual institutional enrollment goals. Currently, the University of Southern Maine operates with a set of working targets for various components of its overall enrollment. However, these targets are not “rolled up” into an overall institutional enrollment plan, nor are goals set throughout the institution. As a result, enrollment at USM is not as predictable as it could be. In addition, without specific goals, units such as admissions and financial aid are on their own to determine the appropriate focus for their human and financial resources.

Most effective enrollment management efforts articulate overall enrollment goals that have been constructed by careful identification of sub-goals generated through the key organizational units. Although the particular components can differ by institution, enrollment goals typically include the following:

- Overall goals, as well as goals for undergraduate and graduate enrollment.
- New student enrollment goals for both freshman and transfer students. (These usually include sub-goals by target population such as out-of-state students, adult students, students of color, etc.)
Continuing student enrollment goals (projections) usually by program, school or college, or other organizational unit. Goals for student retention can be incorporated into these individual unit goals or separated.

Goals for student retention – there should be separate goals by school and college or program.

Graduate program goals, including new and returning enrollment.

Other goals as appropriate to the institution.

2. Establish a formal Enrollment Management Committee to develop and monitor achievement of enrollment goals. USM has no individual or group overseeing the development of enrollment goals, monitoring progress in the achievement of goals, or developing policies and initiatives to improve or enhance enrollment success. While USM has many pieces of successful recruitment and retention programs in place, there is no institutional overview to determine what the “sum of the parts” will achieve in terms of overall enrollment. This is consistent with USM’s self-described “decentralized” organizational culture, but leaves the university vulnerable to unanticipated enrollment changes that could negatively impact the financial or academic picture on the campus. Indeed, enrollment declines in recent years both in headcount and FTE would indicate this vulnerability.

An Enrollment Management Committee would provide the means for the systematic establishment of both annual and long-term enrollment goals, and the documentation of those goals for the campus. It would also serve as the point of connection for the various initiatives and efforts underway across the campus.

Committee representation should include the major enrollment management units on the campus – admissions, financial aid, retention, graduate studies – as well as the major academic units (Provost, schools/colleges), and finance and business, institutional research, and student affairs. The committee could be responsible to:

- Establish overall and program-specific annual enrollment goals;
- Develop a written enrollment plan that includes specific targets for all major enrollment units;
- Review all major strategies to achieve enrollment objectives via the work of subcommittees focused on undergraduate recruitment, undergraduate retention, and graduate enrollment;
- Assist in the identification of institutional problems or barriers to student enrollment and in the development of solutions to address those problems;
- Develop appropriate data reports and review key enrollment performance indicators such as admissions funnel data, student persistence by program;
- Champion enrollment matters on the campus, including communication about goals, issues, and successes; and
− Undertake strategic enrollment issues (pricing/aid strategy, positioning, image/reputation, product, etc.), as well as long-term direction and program development.

The committee’s work should be organized under such subcommittees as recruitment, retention, graduate enrollment, financial aid/pricing/incentive funding.

3. The Enrollment Management Committee should be responsible for the development of an annual written enrollment plan, including both recruitment and retention objectives. The purpose of enrollment planning is to help institutions gain more control over their enrollment future by developing the capacity to achieve enrollment goals through improved marketing, recruiting, and retention efforts. Planning provides disciplined appraisal, goal-setting, and strategizing that can minimize failure. A well-conceived enrollment plan is simply an organized thought process and communication tool that describes what the institution wants to achieve and how it will accomplish it. More importantly, the enrollment plan makes explicit the expectations and responsibility for the achievement of enrollment goals. Noel-Levitz strongly recommends that institutions develop enrollment plans because they benefit institutions by:

− Providing the opportunity for systematic assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and current marketing, recruiting, and retention strategies;
− Establishing consensual institutional goals and priorities;
− Encouraging innovative thinking and problem-solving;
− Creating awareness of obstacles that may need to be overcome;
− Coordinating and unifying staff effort;
− Ensuring more effective use of existing resources and identifying the need for additional resources;
− Assigning responsibility and accountability, and scheduling work;
− Facilitating control and evaluation of activities;
− Communicating and documenting the enrollment “game plan”; and
− Providing a basis for future planning.

While enrollment plans can differ somewhat in their content, they typically include the components included in the following outline:
Sample Outline for an Annual Enrollment Plan

Section Description

Institutional Mission and Goals
A statement reflecting the institution’s basic mission, philosophy, and goal: What distinguishes the institution from other postsecondary institutions? Whom is the institution attempting to serve? Where does the institution wish to go?

Situation Analysis
Facts on which the plan is based:
- Demographic trends in traditional college cohorts
- Environmental factors impacting enrollments
- Competition
- Institutional strengths and weaknesses
- Institutional resources
- Enrollment projections
- Current market share
- Quantitative and qualitative information on target markets
- Institutional image with key publics
- Student wants, needs, and attitudes (e.g., student satisfaction studies)
- Admissions trend data (applied, admitted, yields)
- Retention trend data
- Other pertinent data

Planning Assumptions
A list of assumptions or givens which supported the development of the plan.

Organizational Structure for Enrollment Management
A description of the organizational structure for enrollment management including roles and responsibilities for implementing the plan.

Enrollment Goals
An expression of the results to be achieved in the enrollment program. Goals should be specific and measurable and include overall and individual program enrollment goals.

Key Enrollment Strategies (Enabling Objectives)
The broad and measurable statements that, if implemented successfully, will lead to the accomplishment of the goals.

Action Plans
Specific tactics/activities to accomplish the key strategies. Include a description, timetable, responsibility, resources needed, and procedures for measuring, controlling, and evaluating the planned actions.

Summary of Goals, Strategies, and Activities
This final section should summarize what is contained in the plan by listing each goal with the strategies and activities designed to accomplish the specific goal. Provides a quick and concise overview of the total enrollment plan.

4. The committee should give a high priority to clarifying the “working” goals or priorities for the next 1-3 years. Currently the undergraduate admissions office and the financial aid office are implementing strategies that may or may not reflect the current priorities of USM and expending significant resources in the process. USM would benefit if these offices had guidance regarding the highest institutional priorities for enrollment so that funds and staff time could be devoted to achieving the highest priorities. In particular, the relative cost-benefit of recruiting and enrolling out-of-state students should be reviewed as quickly as possible to determine if the mix of efforts is maximizing USM’s enrollment potential. (More on this below.)

5. Another high priority for the Enrollment Management Committee is to position USM to maximize its potential for adult students. While the USM community sees the presence of adult students as a strong positive force on campus, it is not organized to fully serve this population. With the predicted decline in traditionally aged students, USM could capitalize on its existing strength to grow in the adult student market.
But adult students have many options, including offerings from the for-profit sector, so USM should work to ensure that offerings and services to meet adult students’ needs. In particular, adult students are interested in programs that will help them advance in their job/career. Their course preferences are for early/late, weekend, accelerated, off-campus, online, client-centered offerings, and they will enroll, or not, based on finding the right courses, at the right times in the right locations. Adult students often need more personalized attention at the recruitment stage (the Prior Learning Assessment initiative at USM is a strong advantage in recruiting adult students). They also need advisement and student services that are accessible at off-hours when they are taking classes or online or via e-mail. And, of course, cost matters to them as well. USM should identify a focus for the three campuses with responsibility for monitoring the needs of adult students, for developing options to address these needs, and for championing their cause within the university. Admission and retention data of adult students should also be closely monitored.

6. **The Enrollment Management Committee should also explore ways for USM to address the “split campus” situation to maximize the recruitment benefits and minimize the confusion and inconvenience.** Based on reports from admissions, prospective students and families sometimes find the split campuses to be difficult to understand and an obstacle to their enrollment. In addition, the Student Focus Group comments suggest that there is not an intentional division of offerings between the Portland and Gorham campuses. Students report taking courses that meet their program requirements at either campus, but that location often drives their choice of courses. (One student reported that he had classes at Gorham-Portland-Gorham-Portland in a single day.) There are many benefits to the two campuses, but there may be a long-term strategic advantage to creating more clearly defined purposes or niches for the two campuses that is easily explained and easier for students to navigate (e.g., offering all general education courses in a single place, offering upper division courses in certain majors on one campus).

**New Student Recruitment**

**Funnel Development and Management**

7. **In order to increase freshman applications, and lower the admission rate, USM needs to increase recruitment efforts at the top of the funnel – increasing inquiries and converting them to applications.** USM does focus some attention on inquiry and application-building strategies. But it should do more to shape the applicant pool with students with the highest likelihood of enrolling. In the highly competitive New England college recruitment environment, USM should do more to create and sustain student interest in its programs. Focusing on the top of funnel will allow USM to exert more control over the size and shape of its applicant pool.

USM would be a good candidate for predictive modeling to allow it to hone in on those prospects and inquiries with the highest likelihood to enroll.

8. **As a first step in this effort, USM should be utilizing inquiry reports that track the sources of its inquiries and the “progress” of inquiries by source through the admissions funnel.** In a report prepared after my visit, USM provided an excellent first pass at an inquiry report, which detailed inquiries by source: one comparing 2010 to 2009, and another showing
final 2008 and 2009 inquiries by source. Two additional steps should be taken with these reports.

First, the inquiry data should be integrated with application, admit and enroll data as a way to understand how each inquiry source contributes to the final composition of the enrolled class. This is a complex undertaking but will provide exceedingly valuable information that allows USM to understand its best sources of enrolled students. This information will allow for informed decision-making about which inquiry-generating activities produce the most “bang for the buck” and, thus, which inquiries in the current pool are most likely to be influenced to apply and enroll. Following is a sample of such a report.

### Sample enrollment funnel report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Inqs</th>
<th>Apps</th>
<th>Conv. %</th>
<th>Deps</th>
<th>Yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Visit</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>2,842</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Fair</td>
<td>19,436</td>
<td>1,257</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Call</td>
<td>1,773</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail Inq</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Ref.</td>
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Second, the individual sources of inquiries can be rolled up into the larger groupings to allow for easier review and analysis, as follows:

- Solicited (all search responses, responses to advertising, etc.);
- Student initiated: Web inquiry, phone or e-mail contact, SAT score sent;
- Travel initiated: high school visit, college fair, etc.; and
- Referrals: names received from coaches, faculty, trustees, alumni, etc.

This analysis will allow USM to better monitor its status during the early phases of a recruitment cycle. For example, if the data reveals the inquiries are down from SAT score submissions (a student-initiated source that indicates a strong interest in the institution), USM can act to develop alternative methods of generating inquiries, such as purchasing additional search names or increasing visits to strong feeder schools.

9. **USM’s should add a telecounseling component at the inquiry stage targeted to those inquiries as identified above who are most likely to be influenced to apply.** This effort
can be undertaken by volunteers, as the spring initiative is, but would be more effectively managed within the admissions office by paid student workers and admissions counselors.

10. Another important element of strong funnel management is to establish a full territory management model, in which admissions counselors “own” the territory from prospect through enrollment. USM admissions staff members have territory assignments for travel purposes, but do not have full territory management responsibilities. In a territory management model, the counselor becomes the manager of the territory with responsibility for planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the recruitment efforts of the territory and accountable for achieving the goals set for the territory. There are many benefits to a territory management model including:

- Ensures that all prioritized geographical regions are covered;
- Establishes clear and measurable goals for each territory based on historical patterns, demographics, and targeted efforts;
- Enables a more personalized experience for prospective students and their families as well as for guidance counselors in the territory’s schools;
- Empowers the counselors to organize, prioritize, and be creative in customizing USM’s recruitment efforts to meet the particular needs and appeal to the specific students in the territory. It also allows them to develop strength and expertise in a particular area;
- Allows for more individualized recruitment of high-priority students who might get lost in the bigger group; and
- Provides accountability for results by individual counselors.

11. USM should establish priority territories in Maine and assign professional staff members to these priority territories. Currently, most of USM’s professional recruiters are in out-of-state territories, and most of the Maine high school visits are conducted by a retired superintendent. Since Maine is USM’s primary market, priority attention should be paid to those territories that yield the most students, or that have students who meet the institution’s priority enrollment goals. While retirees can provide very valuable coverage in many areas that admissions counselors cannot reach, the primary markets should be covered by professional recruiters. This will require shifting some counselor attention from out-of-state markets to in-state high priority areas. But given that yield of Maine students is at 35 percent and out-of-state students yield at 13 percent, USM may be able to realize enrollment growth by strategically increasing its in-state recruitment efforts.

12. USM should analyze data sources to help it increase inquiries and applicants from Maine. USM received 2,547 applicants from approximately 12,000 Maine high school graduates and about 6,000 purchased names from Maine. This share of the market seems small for one of Maine’s larger public universities. USM should review its name purchases for 2011 to ensure that it has all eligible Maine high school graduates in its prospect database and that these students receive a contact from USM. Applications by high school should also be analyzed, compared to the graduating classes of those high schools to inform the territory targets and strategies and reveal “opportunity schools.”
13. **In particular, USM needs to work to shape its image with guidance counselors in the local Portland area.** During the student focus group, two students reported being actively discouraged from attending USM by their guidance counselors. (Students from elsewhere in Maine reported the opposite attitude from their counselors.) Both students were high-academic achievers and the clear message from the counselors was that top students don’t choose USM. Certainly it is not uncommon that students are encouraged to “go away from home” to attend college, but it is also the case that USM should be regarded appropriately in the local guidance community. This will require a multi-year effort and should involve faculty and students from the local high schools, as well as the admissions staff, making the case to local counselors about the quality of the USM experience.

14. **Expanding efforts in Maine will likely require enhancement of admissions staff, especially if it is determined that out-of-state recruitment should be continued at current levels.** While equal to or slightly above the national averages, USM’s admissions staff is spread thin, due to high out-of-state activity and multiple campus sites. Investing in recruitment staffing and resources to enhance inquiry and application pool development and yield—especially in primary markets of Maine—will almost produce a return that is worth the investment.

**Yield Strategies**

15. **USM should ensure that every admitted freshman and transfer receives a communication from the academic department.** USM’s admissions office currently provides rosters to academic departments of the students who have been admitted, but the follow-up by departments is reportedly very uneven. Every admitted student should receive a communication from the academic program after admission. It may be necessary for the admissions office to manage these communications directly, working with the departments to craft these communications. Deans should also be involved in this yield work to ensure full accountability. In addition, departments with enrollment capacity should develop additional follow up with admitted students, working with admissions.

16. **USM should explore upgrading its volunteer phone campaign to a more formal telecounseling effort.** Using paid student workers would allow phone contacts to admitted students to begin earlier than the current March campaign and improve the chances for influencing admitted students. Utilizing faculty volunteers for phone calling could focus on select populations of students (e.g., Honors) as well, but a student phone team can have a strong impact on yield efforts.

**Transfer**

17. **Vigorously promote articulation agreements development for major feeders and high demand programs.** Given the expanding community college enrollment in Maine, USM should position itself as a “transfer-friendly” institution. The most important element of being transfer-friendly is a rational and transparent 2+2 (or 60+60 credits) agreement that allows transfer students to move seamlessly from an associate’s program to a baccalaureate program and complete the bachelor’s degree without having to repeat courses or lose credits taken at the feeder institution. Ideally, USM should have articulation agreements in place at the
primary feeder institutions for all the bachelor’s degree programs that accept transfer students and at as many institutions as possible for more specialized and popular majors such as business and engineering. These agreements require faculty-to-faculty collaboration to ensure that courses cover the same materials and that standards of student performance are in line.

USM should also develop a clear institutional policy about accepting transfer credit toward major requirements. There is reportedly resistance to this idea on campus as a “watering down” of the distinction between two- and four-year education. It is essential that academic standards be maintained, but it is also true that many very selective universities accept community college courses toward degree requirements. USM will sacrifice a share of the community college graduate market if it does not work with its community college partners to create no penalty agreements for transfer students.

18. **Existing articulation agreements should be made highly visible.** USM reportedly has articulation agreements with local community colleges but these are not publicized on the university’s Web site. (They are available on MaineStreet). They should be promoted and available on the transfer Web site and a reference to them included in the transfer brochure.

19. **Credit evaluations and audits should be available to admitted students prior to deposit or enrollment.** Currently the admissions office provides individual students with “unofficial audits” during community college visits; and admitted students receive credit evaluations within two weeks of being admitted. But degree audits, through which students learn how their transfer coursework will be applied to the degree, are not provided until after students deposit. This is driven by the PeopleSoft system – i.e., students can’t get audits until they move from the admissions module to the student records portion of PeopleSoft. Admissions should explore with IT ways that it can provide admitted transfer students with audits before they deposit as a recruitment strategy.

**Marketing and Web Strategies**

20. **Continue rolling out the common look and feel of the new branding campaign to all recruitment publications, including graduate publications, but be sensitive to the varied student markets that USM is recruiting.** However, marketing messages and “unique selling points” must be developed to appeal not only to the traditional age, residential student market but also to the important adult and graduate student markets that represent a rich potential for USM. In particular, graduate recruitment publications should be revamped for universitywide and program-specific uses. (More on this below.)

21. **Web page redesign should be undertaken to improve the navigation for prospective students.** Currently, USM divides its prospective student information between the “Discover USM” and “Admissions” menus on the Web site. This may have been done as an interim measure, but the two should be integrated into a single “Future Students” choice as soon as possible. This menu option should include all the key information that prospective students seek. Noel-Levitz “E-Expectations” research of prospective college students has shown that student seek the following information when they visit a college Web site (ranking on a score of 1-5):
USM should strive to meet these expectations from a single, easy-to-navigate point on its Web. In addition, the current Web pages are also very text-heavy and thus do not effectively highlight the major selling points of the institution.

Pricing, Financial Aid, and Scholarships

22. Review institutional aid allocation to ensure that it is being maximized to support enrollment goals. The Noel-Levitz financial aid analysis that is scheduled as part of this review will be very helpful to USM in setting priorities for its use of institutional aid. Currently, USM devotes virtually all of its institutional grant funds to enroll out-of-state students. It should be determined if this resource allocation reflects current priorities (it dates back to the last pricing study done five years ago) or if those funds could be more effectively distributed to generate more enrollment impact.

23. Ensure that the packaging strategy preserves institutional funds for transfer students, who are typically late to apply and be admitted. The financial aid office reported that all institutional funds as well as some federal grant funds are exhausted after the first run of
financial aid awards. This packaging strategy could negatively impact transfer students who may not apply or file the FAFSA until later in the cycle. The last pricing study noted that the transfer yield rates are high and thus not dependent on funding, but the cost of attendance at USM and the 2010 economy may have changed the picture.

24. **Monitor new student access to the financial aid online package to determine if they are reviewing their aid packages. If necessary consider sending aid packages by mail to new students.** USM is not mailing paper financial aid awards to admitted students. Instead it is sending them a postcard with directions to access their awards on the MaineStreet system. Many institutions now communicate new student award packages in this way, but many others still print and send a paper award to increase the likelihood that the families will review the institution’s package as they compare their college options. USM should monitor new student access to these online awards and intervene with an additional contact (phone call or follow-up letter, or printed award) to avoid losing prospect students who don’t take this last step.

25. **Staffing in the financial aid office should be increased.** The financial aid office operates on a “caseload” model; and current staffing means a caseload of students to professionals of 1,500 to 1. NASFAA benchmark data indicate that 18 staff rather than current 12 would be a more appropriate level. Even if USM cannot reach this benchmark level, efforts should be made to address staffing in this office, which is serving three campuses. Plans are underway to increase staff in the “backroom” operations, which should improve services and free current staff to assist students. As an alternative, USM might consider utilizing a dedicated “customer service” staff separate from the financial aid and billing processing staff.

26. **IT should develop a method to load student self-service transactions into PeopleSoft.** The financial aid staff is additionally taxed by the necessity of inputting student transactions that are ostensibly done online. This is both a waste of staff time and detrimental to the timely processing of student financial aid. It is possible for programming to be written to move the data from the self-service utility directly to the database, and this should be pursued.

**Student Success Strategies (Retention)**

27. **USM’s vision for retention and the newly launched retention initiatives should be widely communicated, as well as being built into a institutional enrollment plan document to ensure coordination, assessment, and continued effort.** USM’s new Student Success Centers and Core Curriculum hold great promise to transform the institution’s student persistence and graduation picture. It will be essential that the performance of these efforts be assessed, and feedback provided to all participants on a regular basis. (The Retention Subcommittee of the recommended Enrollment Management Committee would be the appropriate group.)

28. **Efforts to develop a culture of retention must extend beyond these efforts, however.** While every school and college has an assistant dean or other staff member with responsibility for retention, student success is the job of more than one person or designated officer. Faculty and other staff must also be educated “retention is everyone’s responsibility” not just that of the “retention officer.”
29. **Especially important is communicating clear expectations for quality Academic Advisement to all faculty members who are in the role.** Effective academic advisement is a linchpin of student success and progress. Yet the student focus group members reported widely divergent experiences with academic advisement at USM. Students reported being “stood up” by advisors, being given too much direction, too little direction, etc. Certainly student reports can be prone to exaggeration, but these are “red flags.” Having a knowledgeable academic advisor typically ranks at or near the top of a list of most important services to students in national surveys of student satisfaction. Decentralized academic advisement services are especially challenging models within which build quality assurance, but USM should create structures to ensure the quality of this critical service including formal training for faculty as academic advisors, and methods to assess and monitor student opinion of academic advisement.

30. **Do not overlook the importance of front line customer service staff to the retention picture.** In an environment such as USM with recent budget cuts, it may be understandable if front line staff feel that their workloads have increased or that they are being asked to do more. But these attitudes should not be reflected in their activities and actions with students, and some comments in the student focus group suggested that this may not be happening. USM should ensure that staff have both training and encouragement to treat students well, no matter what the behind-the-scenes situation is.

31. **Consider special retention efforts directed to adult students.** As noted earlier USM has already begun to tap the adult student market, and should ensure that it fully understands their experiences as students. Retention by age should be closely monitored, and outlets should be available to address the special challenges and needs of adult students (course-planning, child care, etc.)

32. **Address bureaucracy.** Comments from both students and faculty suggested that administrative policies and procedures are perceived as an unnecessary hurdle to both routine transactions and important enrollment-related initiatives (e.g., registering for courses). Because the PeopleSoft implementation did not include a business process redesign (and few do!), USM should use the post-implementation period to fully understand the software’s capabilities and eliminate unnecessary steps, requirements, and inconveniences with a goal to make services easy to access and minimize bureaucracy in processing and transactions.

**Graduate Recruitment and Enrollment**

33. **As part of the overall enrollment planning process, specific enrollment targets should be identified for each graduate department (or within each school/college).** USM’s graduate recruitment responsibilities reside primarily in the academic units, and these units together with their deans should set enrollment targets for the programs. Once these are established, new student enrollment targets should be set, and each program should set funnel targets to monitor progress in meeting its enrollment goals.

34. **Graduate program directors should be provided with guidance in understanding funnel management and the important role of recruitment that is an essential component of their position.** Recruitment is often an unwritten part of the job of the graduate program
director, and the most effective institutions formalize a professional development effort for graduate program directors to help them understand and master this aspect of their positions. USM’s graduate office should develop at least an annual training workshop for faculty involved in the recruitment of graduate students. In particular, such training should include effective strategies, other than graduate funding, to attract graduate students.

35. **Institutional and program-based marketing and outreach should be developed and coordinated and shared between the graduate admissions office and the graduate programs.** As noted above, printed graduate recruitment materials are out of date and should be brought into the new brand look with appropriate images and messages aimed at graduate students. It is true that most recruitment efforts should be focused on the Web, but printed materials cannot be abandoned. Both a general recruitment piece (for travel and some inquiry fulfillment) and a template for each program or school-college should be developed. Programs should be supported in the development of at least a minimal recruitment piece.

36. **Outreach efforts to build the top of the graduate funnel should be in place for the university and for each of the graduate programs.** I was able to review the centralized outreach efforts of the graduate admissions office, but I did not have time to learn about program-based recruitment efforts. It was clear through conversation, however, that some programs do extensive outreach while others do less. The graduate admissions staff can play a role in assisting individual departments in identifying outreach targets, as appropriate to the discipline, such as businesses, schools, or agencies, feeder colleges, professional and disciplinary organizations, publications, online sites, etc.

37. **Recruitment of current USM students along with campus visits to other colleges in Maine should be continued despite staff reductions.** While budget reductions require activity reductions, the outreach efforts of the graduate admissions staff to the bachelor’s degree institutions in Maine should be maintained. Because USM is one of only a few graduate programs, it should take advantage of its potential captive market. Moreover, many have noted that aspiration to advanced education is not really part of the culture in Maine, and these recruitment trips served to increase awareness of the opportunities.

38. **Every graduate inquiry should receive a follow up from the graduate program.** USM’s graduate admissions is effectively capturing graduate inquiries into the PeopleSoft system, and sending general information. However, graduate programs are reportedly not consistently accessing this information to follow up. It is essential that this data not be wasted when it could be used to build and shape the graduate applicant pool. USM must make it an expectation that inquiries receive a communication from the program of interest – follow-up is a must.

39. **Graduate student funding must be released to the departments by February to compete for the best graduate students.** According to graduate directors, they are handicapped in their ability to compete for the best graduate students because stipend funds are not released until March or April. Nationally, graduate students generally receive their offers in late February or early March and have until April 15 to decide which offer to accept. USM has programs that compete for students on a regional or national stage, so they must be able to make offers on this cycle.
40. **In this highly competitive higher education market – with more online and distance learning options emerging every day – USM must ensure that its tuition policies and institutional procedures support “entrepreneurial” graduate program development and market responsiveness.** According to graduate program directors, they have been approached by organizations, businesses and cohorts of potential students for graduate education, but have not been able to respond in a competitive way due to institutional practices and policies. Changing policies and practices is never a simple or straightforward undertaking in a public institution, but whatever room there is for flexibility should be maximized.

A team of both graduate directors and financial administrators should be charged to create a framework for graduate program development in non-traditional formats and market-responsiveness. For example, graduate program directors suggested an “E-tuition rate” that is less than the full out-of-state tuition. They also indicated that current tuition policies for 3+2 undergraduate/graduate programs are disincentives to creating these attractive graduate feeder mechanisms. Other non-traditional delivery formats that should be modeled are employer-based programs (both online and off-site), and self-supporting course offerings with revenue-sharing.

**Conclusion and Next Steps**

I want to express my thanks to Susan Campbell and her staff for their outstanding pre-visit work and for creating a very successful agenda for this visit. I am also grateful to Scott Steinberg and the staff of the admissions office for giving up so much of their time during this busy part of the admissions cycle. Finally, I want to thank President Botman and all the participants in the focus groups, who were forth-coming and candid in their assessment of and comments about the enrollment management efforts and opportunities USM.

This report is intended to provide constructive feedback to USM based on my observations and analysis. I have tried to affirm those efforts that represent best practice and to identify opportunities for both short- and long-term enrollment impact. Almost none of these recommendations can be undertaken without resources, of course, whether new or redirected from other efforts, and are offered to provide the university with an understanding of possible directions. Once USM has had a chance to digest the contents of the report, I would be very happy to review it by phone or to address questions about particular parts of the report.

The University of Southern Maine is an institution with a strong sense of pride, with dedicated staff, and with many attractive, successful and thriving academic programs. Certainly, the recent budget reductions have caused pain, but the USM community should not lose sight of its strengths and competitive advantages at this very challenging time for higher education.
Consultant Bio

Senior Associate Consultant

Sheila Mahan consults for Noel-Levitz from her position as assistant vice president for academic affairs at the University at Albany, the State University of New York. She offers 25 years of enrollment management experience, including work with undergraduate and graduate admissions, publications and media relations, and advising.

In her current position at the University at Albany, Ms. Mahan supervises both recruitment and retention activities as well as enrollment planning. Her efforts to make recruitment efforts more data-driven helped increase class size by 10 percent, raise average SAT and GPA scores, and increase geographic and ethnic diversity at the university. Her work with Office of Graduate Admissions led to improvements in customer service and technology, while also producing greater coordination between the office and individual graduate departments. Ms. Mahan led a major reorganization of the Advisement Services Center, coordinating the advising efforts campuswide. This resulted in substantial improvements in student satisfaction and student retention. Additional areas of accomplishment have included significant improvements in course planning and management and in the application of information technology to the improvement of student services.

Prior to her current position, Ms. Mahan served as senior assistant to the president and associate director of university relations at the University at Albany. She was also an assistant professor of English at Hudson Valley Community College (NY).

Education

Ms. Mahan holds an M.A. in English from the State University of New York at Binghamton.