"Dancing into our future" is one way that a member of our community described the collaborative planning process that resulted in our USM LAC Strategic Plan, a living document which describes our evolution over the next 3 years. That dancing image conjures up the memory of over 65 people – students, alumni, community leaders, staff, and faculty – working together for over a year to create the music that will sustain us as we prepare for the 21st century that lies ahead. We bring to that future 25 years of experience, filled with successes and lessons learned, a grounding that leaves us confident in our creativity and ingenuity to offer opportunities for an even more adventurous journey into the future.

Reflected in all our work together is our commitment to providing a transformative educational experience, grounded in the liberal arts and our rich community. Our community extends to those of you across the world who identify with our college’s founders, people spanning a wide spectrum of interests who shared a belief that ours was a university to fight for. They recognized that LAC would fuel the social and economic lives of people all across and now increasingly beyond south-central Maine. You will also see in what follows our commitment to preparing global citizens who grapple with questions of justice, sustainability, democracy and difference.

Join us now as we share some of the details about our dance into the future. Herein you will find how we are progressing on some of the six goals designed to sustain us as your university.

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Introduction to the LAC Strategic Plan

During the fall of 2011, more than 65 members of the Lewiston-Auburn College community participated in our Strategic Planning process, making it a unique conversation between faculty, staff, students, Community Advisory Board members, alums, and others. Over the course of three sessions, we reminded ourselves of our institution’s history and values, generated ideas about what LAC could and should be, and prioritized our vision into 6 goals of overarching importance to our next five years:

- Sustain, expand and revitalize academic programs
- Create and implement a comprehensive development plan
- Incorporate cutting-edge technology across the campus
- Improve getting, keeping and supporting students
- Increase LAC’s community visibility and outreach
- Develop a continuous improvement (LEAN) culture

In the spring of 2012, both continuing and new participants met in three more community sessions to consider steps that could help us implement these goals. At the same time, some important work we were already committed to became interwoven into LAC’s planning goals.

The result is an organic process whose importance is twofold: First, this plan, together with our mission statement, point us all to what must be the essential endeavors for LAC’s future success and, second, the shared thinking of the planning process itself unites and strengthens us all. Creating and now carrying out this plan are important not just for what we do but who we are at LAC.
Sustain, expand and revitalize academic programs

Whether they are new programs or existing programs that need to be sustained, our academic programs must be engaging, useful, and lead to future success if they are to have meaning. Aligning them with what students and the region need makes us responsive to the community and helps prepare students for citizenship. Ensuring that our programs are strong keeps us competitive, plus strong academic programs revitalize and support the faculty and staff who ensure student success.

Goals & Actions

- Assess, streamline, energize, and broadcast the value of the Lewiston Common Core curriculum
- Revitalize the Arts & Humanities Program curriculum
- Create leaders for the region by promoting leadership skills across programs, in minors and certificates, and in student organizations
- Develop and promote through area secondary guidance counselors a 3-Year College Degree for traditional students
- Develop and deliver an initial menu of Continuing Education courses needed in the greater Lewiston-Auburn region
- Pilot a USM LAC - CMCC Dual Admission cohort, enhancing this cohort's persistence and success at both colleges
Create and implement a comprehensive development plan

We must achieve this goal for all our initiatives to succeed. That is because tuition and the state no longer truly sustain us. As a result, if we are to grow and improve, we must find additional financial resources for the College to enhance what we do. We must increase scholarships to help reduce the need for loans. We must support faculty and students in research and with fellowships. We must achieve college stability and sustainability, build an endowment, and achieve our financial future.

Goals & Actions

- Increase student scholarships, especially 4-year scholarships, as a means of greater access to LAC
- Enhance financial aid counseling to help students secure financial aid, reduce debt, and maintain affordable access to LAC
- Set new targets for individual, CAB and corporate giving, especially during LAC’s 25th Anniversary extended celebration
- Develop USM LAC Alumni Relations, including communication with alums, alum events, and alum giving
- Create new giving opportunities for academics, faculty and staff professional development, professorships and special projects
- Increase grant seeking and securing

Accomplishments to Date:

- Created a new fund to support the work of the Office of Community Engagement in honor of retiring founding faculty Marvin Druker
- With input from the Community Advisory Board’s Scholarship & Development Committee, LAC successfully requested donor’s who previously supported scholarships for CLASS, the former K-8 Teacher Education Program, that scholarship be transferred for support of Secondary Teacher Education Program
- Reaffirmed LAC’s Senior College members support for three more Dean’s Scholarships for the coming years
- Establishment of new L-A Bridge Scholarship, designed specifically for students transferring from Central Maine Community College to USM’s Lewiston-Auburn College
Incorporate cutting-edge technology across the campus

Mindful, mission-driven use of technology is necessary to attract and engage students, especially given how early in school today's students are using technology. It can make us more efficient and more accessible to students beyond our immediate area. When we ensure technology literacy, we help students overcome barriers to move ahead "tech savvy." When we do this for our larger community, we provide an essential tool to help stimulate personal, occupational, and intellectual exploration and growth.

Goals & Actions

- Equip all teaching and learning spaces with appropriate A-V and computer technology
- Establish clear expectations for minimum basic skills in and use of technology for LAC faculty, staff, and students
- Assess current levels of technology skills and use incentives to help faculty and staff achieve and maintain expected skill levels
- Provide technology training through workshops, lunch and learn, a series of "lightning talks," courses, and mentoring
- Link expected technology proficiency to performance reviews
- Offer accessible forms of technology teaching to LAC students
Improve getting, keeping and supporting students

With engaged, supported, challenged and ultimately successful students who benefit from our connection to them and the greater community, LAC can flourish. Meaningful student engagement and support must help meet student needs from start to finish (and beyond). How do we ensure that LAC remains a “student-centered” and “student-connected” institution? We do so by living our values of diversity, empowerment, democracy, justice, engagement, sustainability and relevance, which are vital LAC’s identity and mission.

Goals & Actions

- Increase enrollment through enhanced recruiting at area high schools, community colleges, and targeted employers
- Enhance student retention through existing LAC strategies and strategies from USM’s Foundation of Excellence initiative
- Capture “lapsed” (partial credit) LAC students
- Develop comprehensive career counseling and career placement for LAC students and alumni
- Capture and use robust data related to student enrollment, retention, graduation, and subsequent job placement
Increase LAC’s community visibility and outreach

LAC is not known enough for the “gem” and “rare find” that it is. Marketing, outreach, and events on campus (re)connect us to our community, our foundational roots. Successful outreach helps make the greater community more aware of the programs available at LAC. It lets potential and actual students of all ages, employers, and others know we can help meet their needs. It leads to enhanced enrollment over time and increased community involvement.

Goals & Actions

- Hold events on campus, including summer institutes for high school teens, to bring more people to the campus
- Improve USM LAC’s on- and off-campus signage
- Provide faculty, staff, student, CAB and alumni speakers to high schools and other community groups
- Engage faculty, staff, students, CAB and alumni in joint curricular development with high schools, community colleges, and businesses
- Complete employer focus groups, identifying employee training, licensure, continuing education, certificate and degree needs in order to develop educational opportunities for area employers
- Explore ways for USM LAC to have both a temporary and ongoing off-campus presence
Develop a continuous improvement (LEAN) culture

We can become a LEAN destination and raise educational awareness through our accomplishments. We will have a variety of lessons to teach. Some will underscore how LEAN enables us to avoid wasting time, paper, and human resources. Others will help us streamline or replace processes that don’t work or work as well as they should. Through LEAN we can foster a team environment and empower our workforce to be change agents. Over the longer term, we can clearly and intentionally show how LEAN serves all of LAC’s strategic objectives.

Goals & Actions

- Create a LEAN certificate program with LEAN courses offered regularly
- Include LEAN projects in Department Head job responsibilities and evaluations
- Provide LEAN training opportunities in the community such as Chamber Lunch ’n Learns, Workshops, and more
- Establish web, e-mail, poster and other communication to publicize USM LAC LEAN progress and accomplishments
- Work within USM as a whole to adopt LEAN practices and thinking