As a 21st century university, USM is committed to attracting students from throughout the State and region and providing them with a high quality educational experience that engages them both in and outside the classroom. For both undergraduate and graduate students, our goal is to establish USM as a first choice institution for a greater portion of the region’s college-going population. To achieve this goal USM must be responsive to the educational needs and demands of the primary market segments in its service region. For USM these segments are framed in three broad categories: undergraduate degree students, graduate degree/certificate students, and non-degree seeking students.

Enrollment Trends

- USM has experienced an 11% decline in overall headcount since 2000.
  - The decline has primarily been in non-degree seeking students.
  - There has also been a decline in traditional-aged, in-state students.
- Credit hours have declined by 4% from the peak in Fall 2005
  - The decline has been predominantly from non-degree seeking students.
  - There is a slight trend upward in undergraduate credit hours, indicative of fewer students taking more credits per term
- There has been a shift in the age distribution of USM students, with a higher percentage of USM students falling in the traditional-age category than in the past.
  - In Fall 2010, 57% of USM students were under 25, up from 35% in Fall 2000
  - In Fall 2010, 30% of USM students were between the ages of 25 and 40; down from 47% in Fall 2000
  - In Fall 2010, 40% of graduate degree students were between 21-25 years of age

Factors Influencing Enrollment Trends

A number of factors have influenced these enrollment shifts; unless strategically addressed these factors will continue to have a negative impact on USM enrollments.

- **Marketing Focused on a Single Market Segment.** Previous strategic plans, informed by reports of external consultants, focused undergraduate marketing and recruitment efforts toward traditional-aged college students and, in particular, out-of-state traditional-aged college students. These traditional student efforts have been to the virtual exclusion of other market segments that have historically been important to USM’s enrollment profile. The market segments most directly affected have been adult students (primarily working adults) and, to a lesser extent, transfer students.
- **Economic Downturn.** The most significant enrollment decline for USM has been within the adult student market: down 17% from 2000. This market segment has the highest proportion of working students and, as a result, it is quite likely that the recent recession has had an impact on enrollments within this population. Many companies and public institutions that, in the past, have supported tuition reimbursement have limited or eliminated these programs to accrue budget savings. In addition, the increased unemployment rates have, in all likelihood, forced those who would have participated in higher education to redirect those resources toward more immediate living expenses.
• **Establishment of Maine’s Community College System.** The downward shift in non-degree seeking students has roughly paralleled the growth of Maine’s community colleges. The lower tuition rates of the community colleges are a factor in decisions to pursue education for enrichment. In addition, in this economy, more students are beginning their college careers in one of Maine’s community colleges which is indicative of the continued, if not increased, importance of transfer students to USM’s enrollment profile.

• **Change in High School Demographics.** The high school demographics in Maine will continue to decline through 2014 and then grow more incrementally than in past recoveries. Over 90% of USM’s traditional-aged, first time in college students are enrolled full-time. Hence, the significance of traditional-aged college students to USM’s enrollment profile requires strategies to maintain our market share of this declining population in the short and long run.

### Growth Opportunities

The demographic and market analysis from the Noacl-Levitz campus audit, coupled with our own demographic and market analysis, revealed the following areas of enrollment opportunity to sustain and improve USM’s enrollment portrait:

• **Recruitment of Adult Students.** The result of benign neglect, this segment has significantly eroded over the years. Efforts to attract adult students, through partnership with area businesses, through schedule redesign, and through the development of new programs delivered in formats (online, compressed, blended) to accommodate working adults are reflective of key strategies to support growth in this segment.

• **Recruitment of Transfer Students.** Transfer students account for approximately one-half of USM’s entering cohort each fall semester. The environmental scan suggests that transfer students will continue to represent a significant portion of USM’s entering student body.

• **Recruitment of Graduate Students.** Southern Maine has the highest percentage of adults who hold baccalaureate degrees; this area also boasts the highest percentage of high school graduates who go on to college, indicative of a population that embraces higher education. USM is one of the two System universities with graduate programs, suggesting there is potential for growth, particularly given the demographics and business profile of southern Maine.

• **Retention of All Students.** Work has begun in the area of undergraduate retention and strategies continue to need to be developed to optimize degree progress. The development of internships and a robust career placement function are critical elements in continuing to improve retention and graduation rates. Additionally, the development of a coordinated support and career services for graduate students is an important area for growth.

### Planning Assumptions and Principles

The growth opportunity areas represent market segments for which there is unrealized potential; however, this potential is not without caveats. Enrollment planning must account for these caveats which include the context of the Maine environment, increased competition from inside
as well as outside of Maine, and the relationship of enrollment growth to the economy. In addition, the continued importance of retention to USM’s enrollment must not be underestimated; it will remain vitally important to enrollment sustainability.

- Maine’s population, from which USM draws over 90% of its students, will not experience substantial growth over the next decade; some population segments, such as traditional-aged high school students, will, in fact, continue to decline for at least the next five years. Consequently, the competition for a declining traditional-aged population will continue to increase and strategies to maintain market share of this segment will be important to sustaining overall enrollment while building new market segments.

- The identification of new or expanded markets as well as new or updated programs will be essential to increase enrollment over the long term. The competition for Maine students from institutions both inside and outside of Maine will continue to increase. Our ability to capture a significant share of new or expanded market segments (including out-of-state and international students) will depend upon current product redesign to incorporate additional online, compressed, and blended programs, schedule redesign to accommodate the needs of working students (particularly adults), and the development of new programs and certificates responsive to 21st century workforce needs.

- The rapid increase in graduate degree enrollments USM is experiencing may be short term and associated with the state of Maine’s economy. Planning should incorporate this probability and assume modest increases per year beyond Fall 2011. New or updated programs and grounded needs assessments may influence this planning assumption.

- Enrollments from non-degree seeking students at the undergraduate and graduate levels will further decline over the next two cycles, reducing institutional reliance on this transient population. There may be differences at the undergraduate and graduate levels because of professional licensing/continuing education requirements at the graduate level; however, an annual decline of 11% should be expected.

- Retention for undergraduates and to a lesser extent, graduate students, will continue to be important to sustain USM’s reputation as an institution focused on student success. The goal to reach the national norm for comprehensive universities (74%) may not be aggressive enough and should be revised each year to accommodate aspirations. The same holds true for the graduation rate goal of achieving the national level of 45%; a more aggressive goal of 55% would put USM at the forefront of its comprehensive peers.

The Necessity for Change

The goals outlined in this initial plan are aggressive, well-considered, and necessary. The higher education environment of the southern Maine region is increasingly competitive. While much work has begun, many of our programs and services continue to need review and revitalization to be responsive to the educational and workforce needs of 21st Century Maine. This first Enrollment Plan is a campus call to action to capitalize on the opportunities present in this region known for its support for higher education; to make the strategic decisions necessary to invest in new markets and new educational modalities; and, to redesign or revamp policies, programs, and practices not responsive to the educational needs of a 21st century citizenry. The call is to embrace the urgency—and the necessity—for change. Effective change can only be
accomplished with supportive campus leadership willing to ‘stay the course’ as well as support redirection when indicated through careful analysis of the internal and external environment.


The analysis of the environmental scanning suggests that, within the current configuration of USM’s programs and services, modest enrollment growth can be achieved through recruitment efforts focused on specific market segments, i.e., transfer students, adult students, and graduate degree students, in addition to continued retention work for all USM students. The re-focused recruitment efforts should not be to the exclusion of the traditional-aged undergraduate student market; in fact, sustaining and expanding visibility within Maine in this market segment will support the maintenance of USM’s share of this declining demographic. The 6 Goals of this Plan follow the Growth Opportunities revealed in the environmental scan and incorporate the Planning Assumptions and Principles. These goals reinforce USM’s commitment to educating an already diverse student body in service to the workforce needs of 21st century Maine and the surrounding region. Realistically framed for the current context of the environment and USM’s programs, it is expected that, as strategies and actions are implemented, goals and metrics will be annually revised upward.

GOAL #1: RECRUITMENT OF ADULT STUDENTS.
Increase adult participation in Undergraduate USM degrees and certificate programs by 5% per year over the next 5 years. (2010-11 as baseline)
(This goal includes adult transfer students as well as first-time in college adult students)

GOAL #2: RECRUITMENT OF TRADITIONAL AGE TRANSFER STUDENTS.
Increase traditional-age undergraduate transfer student recruitment by 1% per year over the next 5 years. (2010-11 as baseline)

GOAL #3: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS.
  a. Increase new graduate degree student enrollment by 3% by 2011-12 and 1% each year, 2012-2015. (2010-11 as the baseline)
  b. Maintain or exceed national graduate student persistence rate average of 70% over the next 5 years.
  c. Maintain or exceed Fall continuing graduate degree and certificate enrollment at the F2010 levels for the next 5 years.

GOAL #4: RECRUITMENT OF TRADITIONAL AGE FTIC STUDENTS.
Increase recruitment of new traditional age FTIC students (full- and part-time) by 1.7% for Fall 2011 and then 1% each year 2012-2015. (2010-11 as the baseline)

GOAL #5: RETENTION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.
  a. Maintain or exceed Fall overall continuing undergraduate student enrollment at the F2010 levels for the next 5 years.
  b. Increase first-to-second year cohort retention rates of USM full-time FTIC undergraduate students by 2% per year to 75%. (Fall 2009 as baseline)
  c. Increase the 2nd to 3rd year cohort retention rates of USM full-time FTIC undergraduate students by 2% per year. Maintain 3rd to 4th year cohort attrition rates of 5%.
GOAL #6: GRADUATION RATES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.

a. Achieve a 6-year graduation rate for full-time FTIC undergraduate students equal to or exceeding 55% beginning with the Fall 2009 cohort.

b. Increase the 6-year cohort graduation rate for currently enrolled USM full-time FTIC undergraduate students by 1% for each entering cohort year, Fall 2005-Fall 2008.