



The University of Maine / University of Maine at Machias Primary Partnership Background Document

5 April 2016

Announcing the primary partnership

On March 23rd University of Maine System (UMS) Chancellor James H. Page, University of Maine (UMaine) President Susan J. Hunter, and University of Maine at Machias (UMM) President Stuart Swain announced plans for the development of a primary partnership between the two institutions.

At the direction of Chancellor Page and Presidents Swain and Hunter, the campus communities will develop joint plans over the next eight months that advance the interests of both institutions through increased administrative integration and greater academic collaboration to expand student and community opportunities throughout the Downeast region.

Two desired outcomes are enrollment growth and increased efficiencies. The partnership will also provide UMaine with additional programmatic and research resources as well as providing improved marketing, enrollment positioning, and service and program deliveries. It will provide UMM with long-term opportunities to achieve sustainable scale and stability as well as the resources to realize its strategic vision, inviting increased investment in the campus and region.

UMM's current situation

The University of Maine at Machias – “Maine’s Coastal University” – is a regional anchor institution. It provides critical educational and career pathways, its applied research has significant statewide impact, and through its community engagement it plays an essential role in the social, economic and cultural well-being of Downeast Maine. UMM will continue to serve this region and its impact must be expanded.

On its current course, however, UMM is neither financially nor operationally viable. Despite UMM’s best efforts, it has taken University of Maine System financial reserves to maintain fiscal stability, growing from \$402,183 in FY 2012 to more than \$1 million today. [Enrollment has declined](#) in the face of challenging demographic trends, including, for example, a 31% decline in the number of students graduating from Washington County high schools since 2007. UMM’s full-time faculty and staff now number just 66. The campus has an appropriate and exciting strategic vision as Maine’s Coastal University, but despite additional investments, which include \$3.1 million in infrastructure improvements, \$1 million for energy system upgrades, and more than \$1.2 million in Maine Economic Investment Funds Research Grants, it lacks the resources to implement that vision. This partnership initiative holds the promise of giving the campus the scale and support it needs to realize its vision to serve its students and the entire Downeast region.

Building a One University partnership and a stronger Downeast Maine

The Board of Trustees, Chancellor, the two universities and their Boards of Visitors, and the businesses and communities throughout Downeast Maine share a commitment to building futures and strengthening the entire region. All agree that a strong, vibrant Machias campus is an essential part of any growth strategy.

Collaboration between UMM and UMaine has already grown significantly under the One University Initiative as part of the statewide alignment of administrative functions and the development of a unified budget. UMM is also

participating in UMaine's new [waitlist guarantee](#) that ensures enrollment at a Maine public university for college ready students, and the two institutions have launched pilot programs in financial aid management and coordinated admissions. But this unique partnership promises more.

Last year UMM successfully completed its reaccreditation process with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). In reaching its [March 2015 decision](#), NEASC commended UMM's strategic planning process and its One University commitment to achieve differentiation as a [coastal university](#). This commitment to regional positioning and leadership is embodied through more than 90 community-based partnerships as well as UMM's signature programs that tie directly to the region's industries and communities, including: Marine Biology, Psychology and Community Studies, the Book Arts, and Environmental Recreation & Tourism Management. These partnerships and programs will form the initial core of the partnership's advancement of Machias' strategic vision. But the partnership will not be limited to just the two UMS institutions. As the inventory of community-based partnerships attest, it will serve as a living laboratory for community engagement and community success.

As UMaine President Hunter notes: "Growing stronger through a strategic focus on our strengths, UMaine is attracting more attention, youthful talent, and resources to our demographically challenged state. Partnering with the University of Maine at Machias we can explore strategic opportunities that benefit both campuses".

UMM President Swain agrees: "As Maine's Coastal University, the University of Maine at Machias has a fundamentally important role in providing experiential learning opportunities, advancing the Downeast region, and preparing our students and the community for the future. Combining our excellent programs and community focus with the reach and depth of Maine's Flagship University, we can achieve the scale needed to enhance quality education on the coast of Maine for generations to come".

Next steps

- An inter-campus team will review more than 30 administrative areas or functions for collaboration/integration with a report due to the Chancellor in time for informing the Board of Trustees at their July 2016 meeting. The pilot collaborations already underway in financial aid management and coordinated admissions will be evaluated through the summer and fall.
- An inter-campus team of faculty and academic leaders will develop prioritized curriculum and program structures that support, for example, 2+2 or 4+1 student enrollments as well as shared or complementary courses. These plans will build on the UMS program integration initiative, focusing on the unique program opportunities of these two institutions and their signature programs in particular. A report of these opportunities will be presented to the two faculties and administrations by October 15, with a report to the Chancellor in time for informing the Board of Trustees at their November 2016 meeting.
- An inter-campus team with System-level and community representation will explore potential models and associated implications of broad scale organizational integration, as well as analyze potential implications for accreditation and institutional missions. A report will be submitted to the Chancellor in time for informing the Board of Trustees at their November 2016 meeting.

To learn more:

- [2015 Strategic Plan](#) for the University of Maine at Machias
- UMaine [Powerpoint](#) and Presentation [Video](#) (Start viewing at 34:35), March 23, 2016
- [Background](#) on the One University for all of Maine Initiative