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NEASC/ CIHE Focused Evaluation Visit

Cover Page

University of Maine at Augusta
46 University Drive
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Report Summary

This institutional focused visit report includes a brief overview of the University of Maine at Augusta and three areas of focus: 1) student success initiatives implemented and planned, and assessment of this work, 2) a discussion of initiatives being taken to reduce our student default rate, and 3) an update on the implementation of our Second Chance Pell program.

1. Introductory Statement

The purpose of this interim institutional report is to respond to the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education's (CIHE) letters of February 9, 2016 and January 23, 2017. The former letter included a request to provide updated information on our efforts to improve the success rates of our associate and baccalaureate students as reflected in both traditional retention and graduation rates as well as our own institutional measures of success. Additionally, CIHE requested updated information regarding the efforts we have undertaken to decrease our student loan default rate. In the letter of January 23, CIHE requested an update on the implementation of our Second Chance Pell program in the Maine State Prison and the Maine Correctional Center.

A university-wide committee worked over the fall semester of 2017 and into the spring of 2018 to develop this report. Representatives from faculty, advising staff, admissions, enrollment, academic administration, and our institutional research team all contributed. In early January, the committee circulated a draft report to the entire University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) community. We received detailed feedback from more than two dozen respondents, which has strengthened and clarified our document.

The report consists an institutional overview and then addresses each of the three CIHE requested topics. As UMA provided information to CIHE last year on our student success initiatives through a report to the Commission on Regional Accrediting Councils, we update some of that information in this document. We conclude with a brief summary appraisal and plans for our interim five year report. The appendix of this report consists of two Data First Forms for standards five and eight, Internal Supplemental Tables (A-E) to the Data First Forms, and more specific programmatic data sets in order of appearance in the document. All of the appendices are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this report.

2. Institutional Overview

The mission of the University of Maine at Augusta is to transform the lives of students of every age and background across the State of Maine and beyond through access to high-quality distance and on-site education, excellence in student support, civic engagement, and professional and liberal arts programs. It does so by delivering its programs wherever students are: on two campuses in Augusta and Bangor; through University College (UC), comprised of eight centers throughout the state, where students can take classes live or via compressed video, interactive television (ITV) and online.

Because of this outreach to wherever students are, UMA serves approximately 6,200 students annually (FTE of 2,976), and nearly half of them complete the majority of their coursework online. Nearly half of our students are first-generation college students; 77% receive some type of financial aid, and 73% receive a Pell Grant to support their education. Nearly seven in ten enroll part time, and our average credit load for fall 2017 was 8.1 credits, according to our [enrollment report](#). The average age of our students is 33, with 32% of our student body in the 18 to 24 age range. Nearly 80% of our students are financing their education without parental support, and our students' average income is $21,542. These figures reflect economic struggles that can occur in the lower socioeconomic segments of the population of Maine. As part of our commitment to making higher education accessible, UMA offers admission to 99% of our applicants. Approximately 40% of our students do not meet placement testing benchmarks for college-level writing, reading, or mathematics. Approximately 50% of our students are transfers and 20% readmits.

As a result of our access-based mission, UMA's student population falls into a number of high-risk groups, which makes student success and retention a challenge. First, students who do not meet placement testing benchmarks take a longer time to complete their educational goals and struggle more with success and retention than students who are prepared for college-level work. Second, UMA also struggles to retain our adult students, who are the majority of our population. These students include those who did not continue education directly after high school graduation, attend college part time, work full time, have children or dependents other than a spouse, are single parents, and/or have a GED or other high school equivalency rather than a diploma. For these students, a car repair, a child's illness, or an eviction notice can interrupt their studies at a moment's notice. Our adult students are balancing full-time work, family responsibilities, and school work. They are often time and place-bound, coming to UMA with little time to study after struggling to meet daily survival needs. Finally, the part-time nature of our student body also detrimentally affects their success rates, with many students taking eight to ten years to complete a bachelor's degree. This represents a significant challenge as first-generation and low-income students are four times more likely to leave college after their first year than peers who do not have the same risk factors. That being said, UMA provides a way for students to earn an education in hopes of becoming economically independent in a state with a persistent poverty problem that challenges many Maine citizens.

By way of example, one UMA student began her educational journey with us in 1988, and then transferred to Thomas College (in Waterville, Maine) where she earned an associate's degree in 1992. She returned to UMA in the fall of 2013 after spending time in the workforce. She

identified herself as a "lifelong learner" and wanted to teach in the public schools. We were able to use eleven American Council on Education (ACE) approved finance credits to help her quickly progress in her chosen field. While being a working mother, she earned her bachelors of liberal studies degree with a minor in elementary education in the spring of 2016. Currently she is teaching in a local elementary school.

Even though we have many such success stories, barriers related to learning challenges, lack of financial resources, mental health issues, and daily life struggles are common explanations for why students (especially non-traditional students) drop out of college. UMA has identified three areas that represent barriers to student success and degree completion:

- low first to second-year retention rates (57% retention rate)
- low course completion rates (75%)
- low utilization of existing institutional resources and services to support success. Students may not always recognize the importance of campus involvement in preparing them for success as students and success in careers after graduation, or they may be choosing between the immediate demands and rewards of work and family rather than investing in campus involvement.

We identified these areas in our most recent strategic plan, and on our Title III grant application awarded in 2016. The rationale for our focus on these areas was based not only on the low completion and retention rates we found, but also on the structure of UMA and how we interact with our students. As a completely commuter campus with a large percentage of online and distance students, we determined that the most effective locus for effective intervention with our students is either within the classes themselves or through online interventions.

UMA in the University of Maine System (UMS)

It is important to note that UMA is also part of the larger, seven-campus UMS. Recently, the UMS has adopted a "One University" model, which has centralized many back-office services including IT, HR and procurement. The advantages of this centralization include system-wide support and resources for the work that we do, but the disadvantages involve reduced influence over those resources and the timing of our initiatives.

In the academic arena, individual institutions have been encouraged to partner with each other to offer degrees and certificates that build on the expertise that exists across the seven campuses, and to reduce redundant offerings. UMA has built successful collaborations: our education pathways with the University of Maine at Machias, our Medical Laboratory Technology program with the University of Maine at Presque Isle, and our PINE nursing program with the University of Maine at Fort Kent.

One such effort during AY 2016-2017 involved UMA and the University of Maine's flagship campus in Orono (UMaine). UMaine proposed that students matriculate at UMA and take courses at UMA's Bangor campus, but reside on UMaine's campus. The discussions were difficult because when the students transfer to UMaine once their year and a half at UMA is complete, this transfer would have a serious negative impact on UMA's IPEDS retention and

graduation metrics, in particular because IPEDS only represents a small percentage of the total UMA student population. We have recently concluded an MOU that uses reverse transfer to allow these students to complete an associate's degree with UMA on their way to completing a baccalaureate degree with UMaine. We expect to enroll fifty students in this program in the fall of 2018. Despite working through this challenge, collaboration can be difficult because of the impact of these collaborations on our student success reporting numbers.

UMA has its statewide reach through University College (UC), an administrative unit of UMA with a mission to provide access, centralized services, and support to students and faculty engaged in all forms of distance education. Organizationally, UC has oversight of both outreach and online services carried out by four departments: eight off-campus Centers; instructional design, marketing, and media services; off-campus library services; and UC learning services that support academic logistics. Centers are designed around a model of one-stop, high-touch services and retention efforts known to appeal to adult students. Instructional Design and Media Services support professional development to those teaching in all modalities. In UMA's Vision 2.0 strategic planning activity completed in fall 2017, a key strategy is to fully reintegrate University College into UMA (it is currently branded as a separate entity administratively housed at UMA). This reintegration will reinforce UMA's expertise in distance education, a reputation that is well recognized within the UMS.

Data Collection and Analysis

Despite the challenges outlined in this introduction, UMA recognizes its responsibility to engage with students in a variety of ways in order to improve their retention and graduation as well as to decrease the cost of their UMA education. Before detailing some of these practices, we want to present our process of institutional data collection and analysis. The critical element is that our traditional IPEDS cohort is disproportionately small (14% of our total fall 2017 student population), which potentially misrepresents our student retention and graduation rates. In order to resolve this issue, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) has been adopting external reporting tools and developing internal reports.

Retention and Persistence
Each year, UMA reports retention and persistence rates by academic program as well as by various student cohorts of interest such as transfer students, student age, and veterans/active military students. Retention is a one year measure and persistence is a multi-year measurement. The following two retention/persistence tables: Table A: By Entering Cohort and Table B: By Academic Program are examples of the range of students and success rates by various student populations that UMA serves.

Graduation and Continuing Enrollment
An internal report addresses graduation rates by Entering Cohort: Table C. For both Associate and Bachelor's degrees, transfer students have higher graduation rates than new students; part-time students have lower graduation rates than full-time students. Furthermore, in order to effectively report on our adult and transfer student population, OIRA has been participating in external reporting tools. Each tool has its own focus, and none of them has captured the entire picture of our student graduation rates. There are four different measures that below provide very

different pictures of our graduation rates. This summary table of the external report structures may serve as a reference.

1. IPEDS 150% Graduation Report
This report tracks first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates who complete their degrees, still enrolled at UMA, or transfer-out in 150% time. This data definition captures only a small group of our students.
- For the fall 2011 entry cohort of the overall first-time, full-time, Certificate, Associate, and Bachelor's students (N=387), 17% graduated from UMA including interim awards, 10% are still enrolled at UMA, and 18% transferred out.
- For the same entry cohort of students pursuing Bachelor's degrees (N=218), 15% graduated excluding interim awards, 6% are still enrolled, and 23% transferred out.

2. Student Learning Progress Model (SLPM)
In 2012 OIRA adopted SLPM, which monitors student success over a 10-year period. SLPM does not identify students who transferred out and then graduated. We are no longer updating SLPM data because the following two external tools are improved alternative measures to SLPM.

3. IPEDS Outcome Measures (Data First Form Standard 8)
This report captures large student cohorts beyond the conventional first-time, full-time IPEDS cohort including transfer admits as well as part-time students who enter in any three terms during an academic year to seek a Certificate, Associate, and Bachelor's degree. The IPEDS Outcome Measures tracks the highest academic credential earned in each time period including interim awards at 4, 6, and 8 year periods and their continuing enrollment status at 8 years at UMA. Subsequent enrollment but not graduation is included at transferred-out institutions.
- For the Academic Year 2009-2010 entry cohort of the first-time, full-time students (N=469), 20% graduated from UMA at 8 years, 2% are still enrolled at UMA after 8 years, and 24% did not receive an award and subsequently enrolled at another institutions.
- For the same entry cohort of transfer part-time students (N=494), 34% graduated from UMA at 8 years, 3% are still enrolled at UMA after 8 years, and 19% did not receive an award and subsequently enrolled at another institutions.

4. Student Achievement Measure (SAM)
OIRA is currently reporting baccalaureate-seeking students. This report monitors student success in 6, 8, and 10-year periods. The advantage of SAM is capturing not only transfer-out but also continuing enrollment as well as graduation including interim awards at both UMA and other institutions. However, SAM tracks only the fall entry student cohorts.
- For the fall 2011 entry cohort of first-time, full-time students (N=218), 21% graduated from UMA, 7% graduated from other institutions, 7% are still enrolled at UMA, and 7% transferred and still enrolled at other institutions at 6 years.
- For the fall 2007 entry cohort of transfer part-time students (N=133), 41% graduated from UMA, 5% graduated from other institutions, 2% are still enrolled at UMA, and 3% transferred and still enrolled at other institutions at 10 years.

These external reporting tools aim to monitor student success with various cohorts and timeframes, and thus their approaches vary. OIRA has been developing internal reports to serve the data needs for campus stakeholders, which complement some limitations within the external reporting tools. For example, external reports are based on student entry cohorts. By contrast, an internal report analyzing exit cohorts presents an alternative success statistic. Of those graduated, 85% of the baccalaureates awarded in 2016-17 were earned within 6 years (150% of normal time). This exit cohort analysis was conducted by cohorts of interest in Table D and by degree programs in Table E.

In addition, OIRA administers the survey to graduating students, asking about their perception of the time to degree; more than half said it took the "same amount of time as expected," which reflects the fact that UMA students understand the challenges of earning a degree as a non-traditional student. The narrative below reflects UMA's cohort-based intervention strategies to improve retention and graduation rates.

As a part of the University of Maine System initiative, UMA established a new set of comparator institutions in January 2018. In this process, the OIRA has started comparative analysis of retention and graduation rates with similar institutions. From the October 2017 UMA peer report, UMA's performance based on the "traditional" IPEDS metrics was lower than our comparators. This may be attributed to our student profiles at UMA having substantially higher percentages of part-time students, adult learners age 25 or older, Pell grant recipients, and undergraduates enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. OIRA will continue to expand our comparator analysis through IPEDS Outcome Measures and SAM.

3. Student Retention and Success Practices

Student retention and student success are complicated, multifaceted issues which must be addressed by using comprehensive, informed strategies. In the previous section UMA identified three problem areas (low first- to second-year retention, low course completion rates, and low utilization of resources and services) that represent barriers to student success and degree completion. In this section we:
- introduce UMA's new conceptual framework and organizational structure for student success,
- highlight one promising new practice that addresses each problem area, and
- provide updates to ongoing efforts to improve student success.

UMA's Conceptual Framework and Organizational Structure to Support Student Success

UMA recognizes its students are commuter and/or distance learners typically working to complete coursework while also juggling family and employment responsibilities. Our students primarily experience college through classes and/or technology—that is, for our students the college experience *is* the classroom, regardless of its format—and therefore our student success initiatives need to be available through these structures. UMA also recognizes each of our academic programs has unique delivery and curriculum elements that result in unique retention challenges best addressed at the program level. UMA's new organizational structure and conceptual framework provide a structure to address all of these issues.

Organizational Structure

In 2016, UMA's Academic Advising office moved under the purview of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Division of Student Development moved to the academic unit in August 2017. This division includes:
- the Dean of Students;
- the Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant, which will continue through 2021;
- Learning Success, the office charged with tutoring and student accommodations;
- the Department of Education TRIO Student Support Services; and
- Counseling and Student Life.

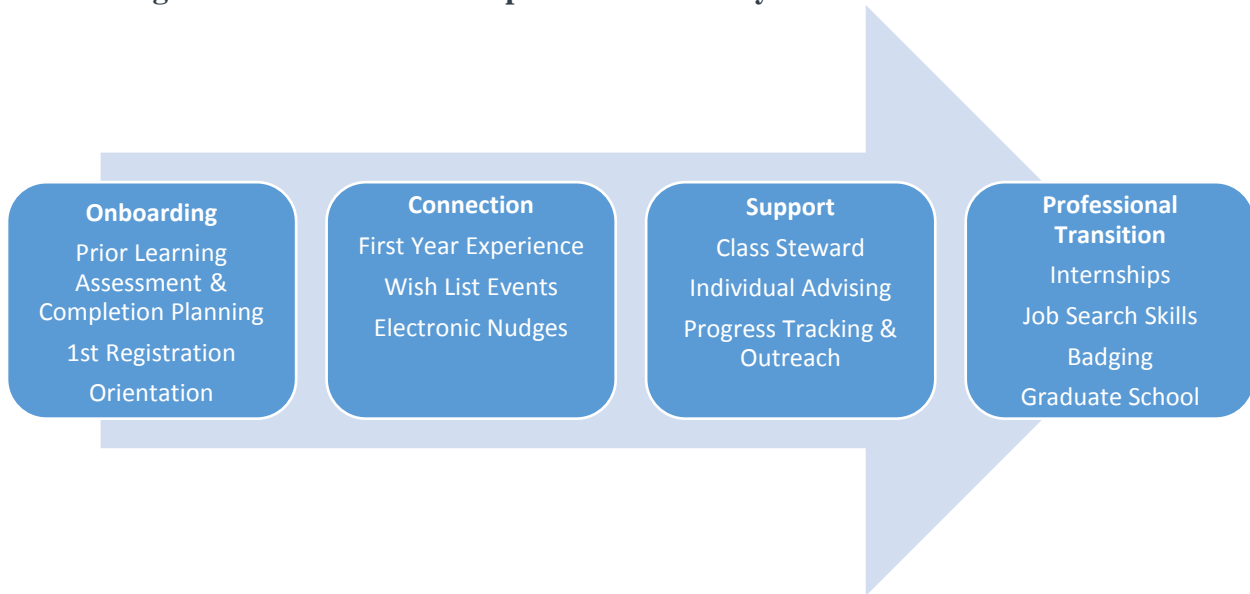This structure positions student success initiatives and services to align with Academic Programs.

UMA replaced its Vice President for Student Engagement and Enrollment Management (VP SEEM) with a Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing in August 2017. This new unit houses recruiting, admissions, marketing, student financial services, veterans' services and New Ventures Maine. UMA also recently hired a talented Dean of Admissions. Additionally, in October, UMA hired a new Executive Director of Communications and Planning, and a new Director of Enrollment and Marketing was hired in late December 2017.

Conceptual Framework: Academic Program Retention Plans

Each academic program is creating a Program Retention Plan comprised of structured interventions scheduled to occur throughout the student life cycle. The academic unit has charged programs with completing these plans in the current academic year for implementation in the 2018-2019 academic year. Interventions are tailored to meet the specific needs of each program's curriculum (including its barrier courses, its sequencing, and so on), its student profile (its percentage of transfers, its selectivity, and so on), and instructional modalities (online, cohort, and so on). Staff members from Learning Success and Academic Advising serve as Program Liaisons working with a specific academic program(s) to provide staff support for the Program Retention Plan initiatives. Program Liaisons are learning individual program nuances to better anticipate and address student needs. Program Liaisons also help their academic programs effectively deploy student success technology.

Program Retention Plan Sample Student Life Cycle Interventions

Onboarding	Connection	Support	Professional Transition
Prior Learning Assessment & Completion Planning	First Year Experience	Class Steward	Internships
1st Registration	Wish List Events	Individual Advising	Job Search Skills
Orientation	Electronic Nudges	Progress Tracking & Outreach	Badging
			Graduate School

This framework provides the academic programs with structure and flexibility to address program specific retention. Each Academic Program Retention Plan has staff support (the Program Liaisons) and access to the new student success technologies.

Wish list events are organized by academic programs and the Advising Office staff for students to sign up for their preferred classes prior to open enrollment. Electronic nudges are reminders to students sent via various forms of technology (email, text message, and so on) to register for courses, meet with advisors, and generally guide them through their academic progress. Class stewards are tutors imbedded in online and distance courses who serve as a liaison among the students, the instructor, and the course content.

Promising New Practices

Online New Student Orientation (ONSO)

To address low first to second-year retention rates, UMA began internal work to build an easily accessed, asynchronous, self-paced, and modularized online new student orientation (ONSO). In July 2017, UMA invested Title III Strengthening Institution grant funds and contracted with the vendor COMEVO to provide the platform and film the video content. An aggressive timeline was set and the ONSO program was completed in under four months. The ONSO opened to incoming spring 2018 students on December 5, 2017. In addition to ONSO, on-site orientation activities are continuing as engagement events and an opportunity to delve deeper into issues such as student skills development.

> **Assessment:** As of February 5, 2018, 169 incoming students completed some or all of the ONSO modules. Early feedback on the ONSO is positive. One student evaluation noted, "I don't think there was anything that you missed, I got a lot out of it. I wouldn't change anything."

> **Projection:** UMA expected to double participation in orientation activities from a baseline of 12% of incoming students to over 25% in the first year of ONSO's use. Spring 2018 numbers exceeded this goal with over 30% completion. UMA will continue ramping up and move to mandatory participation in orientation with the fall 2019 incoming class. This significantly increased participation in orientation activities will positively affect first- to second-year retention rates.

Class Steward Program

To address low course completion rates, UMA created the Class Steward Program, a unique imbedded service and early alert strategy. Faculty teaching courses with lower than average completion rates are provided with an embedded assistant trained to identify struggling students and act as a first line of help. Class stewards are typically staff members (and in some cases students) already familiar with UMA policies, practices, and services. Stewards work within the Blackboard site (UMA's course learning management system) to monitor student progress and encourage completion. Typical class steward interventions include helping students become familiar with Blackboard, informing students of UMA policies such as course add/drop dates, contacting students after tests and assignments are graded, and reaching out to students who are absent and/or at risk of failing.

> **Assessment:** The program began in the summer semester of 2015 with four courses. The number of class stewards and courses has increased each semester, reaching 20 courses in spring 2017.

> The Class Steward Program is intended to increase UMA's average course completion rate, and a detailed analysis of the Course Success Rate (with grades of A through C-) and Course Completion Rate (with grades of A through D-) has been conducted for each semester of implementation. Results compare the current term to the pre-steward year with variables such as instructor and modality matched to the extent possible. And while there has been variation between courses and semesters,

almost every semester has seen a higher overall completion rate based on a [Class Steward Program Summary Trend Analysis](). In our [Spring 2017 Analysis Report](), there was a 10% statistically significant increase in the course success rate from spring 2016 to spring 2017. Spring 2017 courses also saw a decrease in F grades from 13% in spring 2016 to 4% in spring 2017.

Many non-traditional students experience what is referred to as the "imposter syndrome" in which they experience feelings of inadequacy in the college setting. Class stewards are trained to assist these students with extra resources to achieve success. In one recent case, a first-year student was frustrated and anxious about the concept of plagiarism. The steward reached out to help the student develop a better understanding of expectations around proper citations and plagiarism, while also introducing the student to the UMA Writing Center. This helped the student understand these concepts and practices, who became much more confident in his academic ability, and ultimately received an A in the class.

As an additional outcome, a number of practices have been developed through the experiences of class stewards, including:
- communicating early and often (from the steward or other teaching team member) to students to inform them of unique course information;
- finding students whose student accounts have not been activated and informing them of the need to do so;
- developing communications and documents based on university policies, procedures, and student support offerings that students may not otherwise be aware of; and
- involving more deeply academic support for students who receive incompletes.

Since this program's implementation two years ago, faculty participation and course inclusion practices have evolved. Initially, instructors who were willing to assist the program in its pilot phase were given class stewards, and both stewards and faculty were paid a stipend to participate. After the fall 2015 semester, classes that would have a class steward were chosen more intentionally, based on course completion rates. Currently, stewards are placed in mixture of classes, including classes that have been in the program from its inception, courses with low completion rates, and courses whose instructors have made a request for a class steward, and faculty now regularly request class stewards.

Projection: The class steward program is expanding. UMA's Learning Success division is working to develop a tutor-steward hybrid position that will provide embedded tutors with additional tutor training as well as the hours to conduct the typical steward interventions. A hybrid position combining faculty assistants (graders) and stewards is also under development.

A greater concentration of class stewards are being placed within developmental and barrier courses (courses that students find difficult to pass and are thus barriers to further degree progress) to focus on helping new UMA students adjust to the university, college courses, and the greater expectations of college-level work.

Student-Centered Mobile APP for Focused Positive Behavioral Nudges and Scheduling

Using existing institutional resources and services, UMA contracted with the Education Advisory Board (EAB) Student Success Collaborative to bring their mobile app product "Guide" to UMA. The app will provide students with needed information and support where they need it—on their phones. Guide will help UMA scale its success initiatives using "nudge" science to send automated reminders at appropriate times, trigger personalized outreach when appropriate, and schedule appointments with advisors and other service providers.

> **Assessment:** UMA has an advantage in that we have already integrated our Student Information System (SIS), MaineStreet, with the EAB Guide, as we currently use EAB's Student Success Collaborative (SSC) foundation platform. This platform provides data analytics, predictive modeling, an advisor student view and advanced filtering. UMA uses these tools to develop and support targeted outreach campaigns for students. These campaigns will inform early use of Guide, which will help transform this outreach from email to text based communications.
>
> Academic Programs use the data available in EAB foundation to establish Program Success Markers. Success Markers are an identified course or group of required courses tracked in the platform that help Advisors or Program Liaison identify and intervene with students who are missing key milestones for progress. Some of the Success Marker interventions will move to Guide.
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> UMA is piloting two-way texting via a one-year contract with the texting tool SignalVine. The pilot program supports nudges that intervene as needed or give information, and this program will eventually roll over to Guide. UMA is also piloting texting as a way to increase communication in courses delivered via videostream. Currently, the athletics department and accounting program use this, and Admissions already beginning to use this for our January 2018 entering class.
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> **Projection:** UMA expects to rollout Guide in fall 2018.

Updates on Ongoing Efforts to Improve Student Success

The following are items that we discussed in our report to C-RAC in January 2017. They remain important components of our student success efforts and we want to update CIHE on these initiatives. Data for TRIO, Transfer students, Veteran Services, Jobs for Maine Graduates and

early college students can be found in [Table A](#) They complement our promising new practices and program retention plans.

TRIO

UMA hosts a Title IV Student Support Services grant that serves 360 baccalaureate students who meet the federal guidelines of having academic need and being low income, first generation and/or having a disability. UMA's TRIO Program services focus on a strong peer mentor program, extra tutoring, and a college success course. In the 2016-2017 project year (09/01/2016-08/31/2017) TRIO reported a 31.5% graduation rate for its 2011-2012 cohort (N=122). The rate was higher than that of the total baccalaureate students entering in fall of 2011 (22.6%). Some of the intensive wrap-around services are not replicable to UMA's broader community. Nevertheless, some classroom specific outreach strategies piloted by TRIO also have been built into UMA's Class Steward Program (see above).

> **Update:** TRIO has a new director who improved program referral and enrollment procedures using UMA's Maxient tool, a software that tracks and manages information related to student conduct.

Transfer Students

UMA makes a significant effort to recruit and retain transfer students. These efforts include transfer-specific scholarships and focused new student orientation workshops. Transfer students comprised 49% (N=370) of the incoming fall 2017 class (N=754) based on census data. UMA's transfer population has retention and graduation rates that exceed those of the general student population. According to [SAM](#), for example, full-time transfer students who started in fall 2011 graduated at rates of 36% within four years and 43% within six years. Part time transfer students starting in fall 2007 graduated at a 35% rate over six years and a 38% rate over eight years.

> **Update:** UMA's new Dean of Admissions is strengthening UMA's working relationships with the state's community colleges through a biweekly visitation program. The program liaisons are working to identify more upfront substitutions and prior learning assessment options to ensure transfer students receive the maximum available credit counting toward a degree. The Online New Student Orientation program will add a special module for transfer students in spring 2018.

Veteran Services

UMA supports veterans with a full-time Director of Military and Veteran Services as well as a School Certifying Official (who serves as a liaison to Veterans Administration services). As a veteran herself, the Director is a single point of contact who is able to develop trust and streamline student veterans' transition into higher education. The Director works with all the veterans' services on campus, including the school certifying

official and the transfer evaluator for Joint Services Transcript and Community College of the Air Force reviews (military training programs for which we grant credit). Building personal relationships between UMA and veterans is a significant factor in retention and success. There are veterans' lounges on both the Augusta and Bangor campuses, a peer mentoring/buddy program, a veterans' Facebook page, a textbook swap, and a visibly veteran-friendly campus.

As an example, one of our veterans is a 35-year-old full-time student juggling school, work, and family. He is a Combat Infantry Marine, who served from 2000-2008 in Iraq and Afghanistan. After an honorable discharge, he held five different jobs in a six-year period, and wanted some career stability for his family and himself, stating, "I want to find a job where I can be at home and put my kid on the bus every day." Using the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, he chose UMA because we are affordable, accessible and veteran friendly. "Everything was clearly explained and expedited. The dedicated veteran staff and center made all the difference in my academic success," he commented. He is currently finishing up his Bachelor of Science degree in public administration with a minor in accounting, and his future looks bright. He proudly recommends UMA to other Marines and veterans. For the fall 2011 cohort, 29.5% (N=105) of our veteran student baccalaureate population graduated within six years. Their graduation rate was higher than the rate for all UMA baccalaureate students in the 2011 cohort (22.6%).

> **Update:** As of December 2017, the Veterans Lounge on the Augusta campus is now a Veterans Academic Center housed in expanded space. The new location has doubled the physical space, features new equipment and furniture, and provides adjacent space for the Director's office so that it is now integrated within the center. The Bangor campus has a Peer Coordinator who is supported with Americorps VISTA funding.

Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG)

The JMG College Success Program, housed on the Augusta campus, works with students who participated in a JMG program while in high school, students who were at one time enrolled in the foster care system, or students who have attained their GED through adult education within the last five years. At UMA, JMG is continuing to work with these students in an academic coach capacity as they continue their education.

> **Update:** This program began in fall 2015 with 16 students identified as JMG students and receiving services from JMG's appointed College Success Specialist (CSS). Currently, the CSS is working with twenty-seven students. The total two year persistence rate for this cohort based program from fall 2015-2017 is 44%, compared with UMA's overall two year persistence rate of 40%.

Early College/Aspirations

UMA is continuing its efforts to provide opportunities for high school students to participate in Early College courses through two major programs: High School

Aspirations and the Bridge Year program. High School Aspirations is a tuition waiver program that allows eligible juniors and seniors to enroll in up to six credits of college level coursework per semester while they are still in high school. Students are only responsible for the cost of their textbooks and some course fees, while the tuition is waived 50% by the state and 50% by UMA. The Bridge Year program is a concurrent enrollment program that combines college-level academics and career and technical education. Students are placed in cohorts as they progress through their coursework to encourage collaboration and a shared learning experience. Each course earns the students high school credit toward graduation, while simultaneously earning college credit toward their future college career. UMA participates in these programs to promote degree attainment in the State of Maine and as an additional pipeline of prospective UMA degree candidates.

> **Update:** UMA matriculated five students with Early College credit in the fall 2016 class, and four re-enrolled for their second year. The first to second year retention rate of 80% exceeds the institutional rate of 55%. It is not surprising this group has a higher retention rate, given they matriculate at the institution with knowledge of UMA software, practices and protocols, no developmental needs, and completed credits on their transcripts. UMA is continuing efforts to grow this population of students. The fall 2017 entering class included eight students from Bridge Year and eleven students with High School Aspirations credit. In addition, three students from the fall 2016 Bridge Year cohort matriculated at UMA in fall 2017 as transfer students.

Writing and Math Support

UMA continues to offer an online writing center with tutorials, live tutoring, and submit-a-draft-paper features. Math tutors now also work with students via online technology to complement on-site tutoring options.

> **Update:** UMA widened alternative paths to student success in math, following guidelines that are consistent with national best practices, and eliminated its developmental reading and writing courses. The math faculty developed MAT 015: Transition to College Math as a preparation course to help students build the skills necessary to succeed in college level statistics. In the fall of 2017, MAT 015 had a 57% success rate, according to Comparative Analysis of Success Rates in MAT 015 and MAT 030. By comparison, in fall 2016, our MAT 030 course had a 47% success rate.
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> The English faculty developed ENG 100, Introduction to Academic Reading and Writing. This three credit course replaces six credits of developmental offerings in reading (REA 008: Reading for Understanding) and writing (ENG 005: Basic Writing). This initiative reflected best practices in developmental writing to shorten the time to credit bearing English courses. ENG 100 was offered for the first time in the fall of 2017. According to our Comparative Analysis of Success Rates in ENG 005, REA 008 and ENG 100, early results show a 62% success rate

15

for this class, slightly higher than our ENG 005 success rate (57%) in the fall of 2016. The OIRA team will continue to monitor student success data for this new class.

Predictive Analytics and Early Alert Tools

UMA is using predictive modeling software by Rapid Insight and the Educational Advisory Board's Student Success Collaborative to create dynamic statistical models to assess individualized student attrition risk. Advising staff are using the scores it gives to provide early intervention to students. The Rapid Insight model is used to identify which first-time, full-time (IPEDS) students are likely to be on academic probation after their first semester. The EAB model assesses a student's likelihood of graduation in a specific major. The EAB platform also includes institutional reports that identify barrier courses and major changing patterns.

> **Update:** Both risk models are new to UMA. Pilot interventions are underway and helping to assess each model's validity. The Rapid Insight intervention includes check-in calls with identified first-time, full-time students. The EAB intervention focuses specifically on students on academic probation. UMA registered 129 students on academic probation in fall 2017. The students received weekly emails with study skill and resource information. Approximately one-third of the students engaged in positive ways with the outreach.

4. UMA's Default Rate

UMA's Default Rate

The U.S. Department of Education released the fiscal year 2014 federal Stafford student loan default rate in September 2017. UMA's official default rate has been slightly decreasing since the release of the fiscal year 2012 data, according to our [Data First Standard 5 Forms](#).

	Fiscal Year 2011	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014
Rate	22.7%	19%	18.7%	18.6%
Numerator	352	316	318	298
Denominator	1544	1661	1695	1601

The national rate based on all borrowers in repayment increased slightly from 11.3% to 11.5%. Based on our work with the nonprofit organization American Student Assistance (ASA) and the SALT program, we have been somewhat successful in decreasing the default rate by a small margin.

ASA's SALT program promotes financial literacy and debt management practices. In addition to expert counselors available to provide students with one-on-one counseling, SALT's online platform, which can be accessed at saltmoney.org, provides students with access to an abundance of tools specific to money management, scholarship searches, and student loan repayment options.

UMA provides ASA with new student data to initiate communication about the SALT program. Additionally, as a proactive measure, UMA provides ASA with a list of federal loan borrowers who within the last three years graduated or withdrew so such individuals will receive communications about SALT services. Each semester, UMA also emails all registered students information about SALT and encourages them to utilize the resources provided through this program. UMA's TRIO Program has also taken an active role in promoting SALT within its student cohort, and when students graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment and are required to complete federal student aid exit counseling, UMA includes SALT information in the exit interview notification.

Default Rate Challenges

UMA experiences a number of challenges in reducing our student loan default rates. We are aware that students who drop out of school possess lower levels of debt but have nothing to show for it, and thus they are less likely to repay the borrowed loans. Outreach from their lenders often frustrates students as this outreach is more often seen as an attempt to collect the debt rather than an attempt to help the student avoid default.

Although ASA's SALT program has been instrumental in educating students about financial literacy and debt management, SALT has discontinued the default prevention services it previously provided. The financial literacy program is still offered, however, and is accessible via the online platform.

Specific default prevention and management actions by UMA staff has been difficult to implement over the past few years due to staffing shortages in Student Financial Services. Over a two-year span, the office was consistently understaffed by at least two positions. With continued changes in federal regulations it has been difficult to retain staff who have a strong commitment to financial aid administration and management as constant regulation changes requires employees to stay abreast of these new regulations. To overcome this challenge, however, new financial services staff has received time intensive training to provide new staff with an increased depth of financial aid knowledge. Though turnover is inevitable, the training expansion should prevent any future personnel loss from leading to a disruption in services.

Previously, federal regulations allowed UMA to only package subsidized loan eligibility in original packages since this loan has better terms to financially assist students with need. When students would request additional funding, thus requiring the need for unsubsidized allotments, counseling staff had the opportunity to engage with the students before utilizing these higher interest rate loans. These communications allowed financial services staff to proactively ensure students understood their outstanding loan debt, the differences between subsidized and unsubsidized loans, and what a long-term repayment plan might look like. In some instances, staff were able to completely discourage or at least decrease additional borrowing.

Federally regulated packaging policies changed in 2011 after further guidance was provided by the Department of Education. This guidance clarified the requirement that schools must ensure students have access to all federal Direct Loan eligibility up to the financial aid cost of attendance budget. To comply with these clarified guidelines, UMA began packaging full loan eligibility, which included both subsidized and unsubsidized allotments. This provided students with access to upfront larger loan funds, but did not provide Financial Aid staff with the opportunity to proactively counsel students about the magnitude, differences, or terms of these loans. This regulation change thus contributed to the student increase in total debt and loan default.

Initiatives & Solutions

UMA is committed to providing affordable access to a university education and helping students manage the growing cost of a college education. Beginning with the spring 2018 semester, UMA implemented the Pine Tree State Pledge. Under this program, eligible full-time and part-time students who transferred to UMA and who have earned at least 30 transferrable credits will not pay any out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and mandatory fees. For the spring 2018 semester, 18 students were awarded funding through the Pine Tree State Pledge. Though many more were eligible for funding, UMA was not required to provide funding as their need was covered through Pell and other grants. In academic year 2018-19, this opportunity will also be available to eligible entering full-time first-year students. This opportunity is for students who are Pell eligible, which is approximately 73% of our student body.

Beginning in 2016, UMA began offering Success Scholarships, which were designed to encourage full-time enrollment, thus assisting students in persisting towards a baccalaureate degree. These awards are renewable for students who maintain a minimum GPA and maintain full-time enrollment. Additionally, these awards are available to new, first-time students and transfer students, and are awarded to admitted students each fall and spring semester. For the spring 2018 semester, 120 Success Scholarships ranging in funding from $1,000 - 3,000/annually were awarded to newly admitted students. It is through the Success Scholarships and Pine Tree State Pledge that UMA is decreasing and in some instances, eliminating the need for student loans.

UMA recently received a $15,000 grant from the Libra Foundation to fund a part-time position dedicated to managing the Pine Tree State Pledge initiative and proactively, provide students with default management counseling and default prevention tools. This position will be titled the Pine Tree State Pledge Navigator and will be in place during fiscal year 2018-19. Also, UMA is currently consulting with two local, community-based non-profit organizations to provide students with financial literacy/capability and loan default management information and tools. UMA plans to have the Pine Tree State Pledge Navigator be responsible for the coordination of all student default prevention efforts and resources should these partnerships come into fruition.

One organization UMA is exploring a partnership with is Penquis, a private, nonprofit organization that has serviced the citizens of Maine for over 50 years with financial literacy information, tools, and training. Another organization, University Credit Union (UCU), has also approached UMA about a possible collaboration in providing students with default prevention information. UCU is also a local private, non-profit organization that services the employees and students of the University of Maine System. Currently, both collaborations are being explored as possibilities for UMA to strengthen our student default prevention initiatives.

5. Implementation of Second Chance Pell Programming

In 2006, UMA began offering a college program to a select group of men at the Maine State Prison (MSP) in Warren, Maine through the generosity of Doris Buffett and the Sunshine Lady Foundation. Until recently, private philanthropy was the only source of funding to support UMA's delivery of higher education to a cohort at MSP. Since the program began, 67 degrees have been awarded to Maine State Prison students, and the recidivism rate among this group is less than 1%.

For those enrolled in the college program, retention and graduation rates are high. Because MSP students recognize that enrolling in college is a privileged opportunity, withdrawals from the program are typically the result of circumstances unrelated to the program, such as an administrative transfer to another facility or release.

In July of 2015, the Obama Administration announced the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program to support college opportunities in prison. UMA competed against 200 schools from 46 states to be a part of this experiment. Working as partners, UMA and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) were chosen as one of 67 programs nationally to receive Second Chance Pell funding.

UMA is fulfilling the terms of its Second Chance Pell grant proposal, which called for the delivery of UMA's associate of arts degree in liberal studies to up to 25 men at the Maine State Prison (MSP) through face-to-face instruction beginning in fall 2016. In addition, the delivery of the associate of science degrees in business and/or mental health and human services began in fall 2017 via a combination of onsite and distance technologies for up to 15 women plus 15 men at the Maine Correctional Center (MCC) in Windham. Beginning with the implementation of Second Chance Pell at both correctional facilities, the DOC purchased laptop computers for each student. Although students do not have internet access, this improved access to technology allows for increased time spent on academic studies, and it has eliminated competition within the cohort for computer access.

Promotion of the Second Chance Pell opportunity at the MSP began internally in the summer of 2016 and at MCC in spring 2017. Working in partnership with the correctional facilities' warden offices and prison unit managers, new students were recruited to apply for admission. At each facility, information sessions were held to explain the academic program and its requirements, the necessary time commitment, the rigor of the programs, and the expectation that a college degree earned in prison would improve employment opportunities upon re-entry to civilian life.

One of our MSP students exemplifies the opportunities that our prison program provides to transform lives. This student completed his associate's degree while in prison. After completion and re-entry, he began work at the University Center at Rockland's front desk and continued on with his baccalaureate studies in our mental health and human services program. He found work at the Belfast Re-entry Center, running support groups and facilitating restorative justice circles. Returning to the MSP as a mentor for current UMA students, he was greeted by security guards who congratulated him on transforming his life. He attributes his successful life after re-entry to

UMA. He now has hope and aspirations, a stable job, a home, and he can mentor others in the program as previous students did for him.

Students in all cohorts were required to complete the UMA admission application, secure a high school transcript or HISET/GED certificate, submit an essay for faculty review, and take three Accuplacer tests in reading, writing, and math. (The essay was a requirement in addition to the usual UMA admission criteria and was intended to gauge the students' motivation and commitment.) Students who submitted all materials and completed all steps in this process were also reviewed by the wardens' offices for any behavioral issues that might interfere with their ability to be successful in the college program.

At both locations, our community partner, Maine Educational Opportunity Centers (MEOC), a federally funded TRIO Program, committed professional staff as trained financial aid technicians to provide financial aid services; they worked one-on-one with inmates within the prisons to prepare and file the FAFSA form online. In December 2017, representatives from MEOC joined DOC and UMA staff in a presentation, "A Second Chance: Educating Maine's Prison Population" at the Educate Maine statewide conference comprised of a consortium of public schools, institutions of higher education, and businesses, all charged with educating Maine's future citizens.

Courses that are sequenced to move students to degree completion have been scheduled at each facility. A combination of full and part-time faculty have been assigned to teach. Faculty participate in security training that is delivered by the correctional staff. Students under consideration for admission tested into college-level reading and writing so that remediation was not needed in these subjects. Math testing, however, indicated many variables in students' math ability at both facilities. Consequently, developmental math courses are a part of the planned academic schedule. Tutoring in writing and math is supported by both DOC educational staff as well as by peers. These peers are baccalaureate students and graduates of the college program at MSP, and they offer mentoring, math and writing support to the associate-level students.

Professional staff at University College at Rockland and University College at Saco provides direct student support services at both correctional institutions. Staff visits include student advising sessions, career and post-release planning, and individual student support. UC staff work in close collaboration with DOC educational staff at each facility to assure high-quality student support, clear communication, and program implementation planning. This partnership, with DOC staff "on the inside," is critical to quality program implementation.

At each correctional facility, university staff conducts New Student Orientation programming. The orientation agenda included preparation for student readiness and commitment, university add/drop and withdrawal policies, Second Chance Pell funding and how it works, guides to reading a syllabus, study habits and time management, the availability of tutoring and other support services, and the expectations of the program. Additionally, DOC staff offer guidance, support, and oversight. They report to the UC Center staff if a matter needs attention.

Twenty-four students began the first term at MSP in fall 2016. Twenty-two of those pursued classes through summer 2017. Of those, twenty continued enrollment for fall 2017. Though there

was some program attrition, none of those who withdrew did so in the middle of a semester, and all students completed courses they started. One student left the program with mental health issues, one left for personal safety reasons within the facility unrelated to the college program, one left to pursue a religious calling, and one decided that his job within the prison needed to take priority. Fourteen men and thirteen women began college courses at MCC in the fall of 2017, and to date all have persisted through the first term. This program has an extremely high success and retention rate.

University College Off-Campus Library Services (OCLC) provides significant research support to all student cohorts and has presented eight library instruction sessions at the facilities. Having negotiated with the vendor Ithaka to provide databases for research, an offline JSTOR index (a standard online database of scholarly articles) has been installed and can be accessed by the MCC cohort. The index is expected to be installed at the Maine State Prison in the spring semester of 2018. Additionally, an offline version of our UMA library catalog (which includes the holdings of all UMS libraries, the Maine State Library, and the Bangor Public Library) is expected to be installed for the spring 2018 semester. Students also have access to a research request form and library staff organizes appropriate reference materials related to the research request and makes those materials available to students.

In October 2017, four faculty, UC staff, and invited guests attended a "Rising Scholar" recognition program at MCC to honor an outstanding student scholar. In November of 2017, an Academic Symposium was held at MSP in which students presented their juried best academic work to an audience of over 100 guests. This symposium has become a biennial event. Moreover, the Director of OCLS presented at this year's National Conference on Higher Education in Prison. Her innovative use of the offline JSTOR index received national recognition. The Director of University College at Rockland also presented at the National Conference for Second Chance Pell partners, "Expanding Access to Postsecondary Education for People in Prison."

Maine has no formalized re-entry system, and for privacy protections the state prison cannot inform us when prisoners who have graduated from UMA have been released. Due to UMA's distance education programming, formerly incarcerated students have the opportunity to experience a seamless transition as UMA college students as an important part of their re-entry process. Academic programming at the correctional facilities begins with the liberal arts core curriculum because it is easily transferable to further study across the UMaine System and elsewhere. UMA campuses and UC Centers provide transitional support services to assist inmates in their successful degree completion and job search as they are released back into communities. UMA's statewide access provides a distinct advantage to this population, many of whom are released back into very rural areas of Maine.

6. Summary Appraisal and Plans

Based on the track record of success that UMA has developed in the Maine State Prison prior to the Second Chance Pell program and the continued efforts to bring student support to this population and the population of students in the Maine Correctional Center and the Southern Maine Re-Entry Center, UMA is confident that students in these facilities will continue to successfully complete their educational goals.

Based on the very early participation in our Online New Student Orientation Program, the university is cautiously optimistic that this program will prepare more of our students to succeed in their education by better informing them of support services that are available. We are heartened by national data that suggest that orientation programs are among best practices to prepare students for success and we will be moving to make ONSO a required service for new students. We are also confident that our Class Stewards program increases student success in a variety of distance and online courses at the early stages in their educational careers. We will be discussing how to expand this program in order to reach more students. Finally, we will broaden our use of a mobile APP technology to better communicate with our students, using data to craft appropriate outreach initiatives at critical junctures in their educational careers. While our efforts to decrease student default rates are less robust than these other areas, we will continue to develop efforts to partner with organizations, both national and local, to find ways to educate students about borrowing and about their options for managing debt.

We are already gearing up to prepare our fifth year interim report to CIHE in the spring of 2020 and we will be developing a robust committee of faculty, staff and administration to help constitute this report. This report will highlight our continuing efforts in these areas of interest to CIHE and to us with more detailed and longer term data about these initiatives which will be included in this report. Additionally, this is a comprehensive interim report and will include a summary of how the University of Maine at Augusta remains in compliance in all of the areas that are reflected in the standards of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.