Report to the

Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

University of Maine at Augusta

by

An Evaluation Team representing the

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

of the

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's

focused report and a site visit

 2018

**The members of the team:**

*Chairperson*: Dr. Patricia Maguire Meservey, President Emerita, Salem State University

Dr. Scott Stanley, Provost and Academic Vice President, Granite State College

This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee’s evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission’s criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution’s accreditation status.

**COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**New England Association of Schools and College**

**Preface Page to the Team Report**

Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

**Date form completed:** \_4/10/2018\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Institution:** University of Maine at Augusta

**1.** **History:** Year chartered or authorized \_1965\_\_ Year first degrees awarded \_1969\_\_

**2. Type of control:** [x]  State [ ]  City [ ]  Religious Group; specify:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 [ ]  Private, not-for-profit [ ]  Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 [ ]  Proprietary

**3.** **Degree level:**

 [x]  Associate [x]  Baccalaureate [x]  Certificate [ ]  Masters [ ]  Professional [ ]  Doctorate

**4. Enrollment in Degree Programs:** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Full-time****Fall 2017** | **Part-time****Fall 2017** | **FTE****Fall 2017** | **Retentiona****Fall 16- Fall 17** | **Graduationb****Fall 2011** | **# Degreesc****2016-17** |
| **Associate** | 132 | 278 | 225.87 | 63% | 18% | 152 |
| **Baccalaureate** | 1106 | 1655 | 1649.73 | 54% | 15% | 417 |
| **Certificate** | 11 | 49 | 25.73 | NA | NA | 59 |
| **Non-Degree** | 62 | 702 | 258.00 | NA | NA | NA |

 (a) First-time, full-time students, 1st to 2nd year (b) First-time, full-time students, 3 or 6 year graduation rate
 (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year (Summer 2016, Fall 2016, and Spring 2017)

**5. Student debt:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Most Recent Year** | **One Year Prior** | **Two Years Prior** |
| **Three-year Cohort Default Rate** | 18.6% | 18.7% | 19.0% |
| **Three-year Loan Repayment Rate** | 39.3% | 38.3% | 39.8% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Associate** | **Baccalaureate** | **Certificate** |
| **Average % of graduates leaving with debt** | 74.3% | 74.8% | 82.1% |
| **Average amount of debt for graduates** | $21,846.08 | $27,146.90 | $20,196.56 |

 Note: The average of 2014-15 through 2016-17 for Title IV debt (only including debt accrued at UMA

**6. Number of current faculty (Fall 2017):** Full-time \_82\_ Part-time \_189\_\_ FTE \_145\_

**7. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: \_FY 2017\_\_ )

 (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Revenues** |  |  | **Expenditures** |  |
| Tuition & Fees |  $14.038  |  | Instruction |  $14.448  |
| Gov't Appropriations |  $18.258  |  | Research |  $0.137  |
| Gifts/Grants/Endowment |  $12.611  |  | General (2) |  $31.724  |
| Auxiliary Enterprises (1) |  $1.161  |  | Auxiliary Enterprises |  $1.175  |
| Other |  $2.818  |  | Other | - |
| Total |  $48.886  |  | Total |  $47.484  |

Notes:

1. The revenues and expenditures do not match because they need to net to the overall change in net position; $1,402.
2. The NEASC data and the IPEDS data do not match exactly because the NEASC data is based on GASB standards. As a general rule, the University System uses GASB, whereas IPEDS is based on the FASB accounting standards.

**8. Number of off-campus locations:**

 In-state Total \_31\_ (1 Campus, 8 Centers, & 22 Sites) Other U.S. \_0\_ International \_0\_ Total \_31\_\_

**9. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**

 Programs offered entirely on-line \_51\_ Programs offered 50-99% on-line \_9\_

Note: The 51 programs are available both online and onsite.

**10. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**

 [ ]  No [x]  Yes Specify program(s): \_B.S. Aviation with Maine Instrument Flight, Inc. as well as Dual Enrollment contracts with Bridge Year Educational Services, Inc. Cony High School, Monmouth Academy and Maranacook Community High School\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction**

The purpose for this focused site visit was twofold:

1. to validate the University’s progress in a) improving the success rates of both its associate and baccalaureate students as measured by traditional retention and graduation rates and other institutional measures of success and b) decreasing the institution’s student default rate; and

2) to evaluate the Maine State Prison and the Maine State Correctional Center instructional locations and implementation of the Second Chance Pell program with emphasis on its success in assuring students are provided with access to sufficient academic and support services.

Throughout the Evaluation Team’s visit, all members of the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) community were candid in their comments and offered full assistance to the team. All of the individuals with whom the team met were aware of the focused evaluation report and the purpose of the team’s visit.

The President hosted an opening dinner meeting on Sunday. The Chancellor and Chair of the Board of the University of Maine System, the Chair and three members of the UMA Advisory Board, the President of the Faculty Senate, and many members of the UMA faculty and staff attended (approximately 40 participants). Overall, the team members met with approximately 33 members of the administrative staff including the president and all senior administrators, 25 members of the faculty including department chairs and the chair of the Faculty Senate, over 30 students including students from the Second Chance Pell Program, and the Associate Warden and representatives of the Maine Correctional Center programs.

The Evaluation Team found the focused evaluation report and the other materials provided to be sufficiently comprehensive and an accurate description of the state of the areas under review. The team appreciates the preparation of the focused evaluation report to include electronic links to the most important exhibits. A review of these documents before and during the team’s visit to UMA, the chair’s preliminary visit the semester before the on-site evaluation, and the team’s visit to campus together have provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the three sections of this report which address the areas of special emphasis and *Standards for Accreditation* of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

This evaluation of University of Maine at Augusta is a focused evaluation following its comprehensive report submitted and accepted in 2015 and substantive change request submitted and accepted in 2016.

**Student Success: Associate & Baccalaureate**

To fairly evaluate the traditional measures of student success – retention and graduation rates – for UMA students, it is important to appreciate the mission of the University.

Our **mission**. UMA transforms 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.

UMA serves approximately 6,200 students annually (FTE of 2,976). The average age of the students is 33 years old. Nearly half of the students complete most of their coursework online. Nearly half of the students are first-generation college students; 73% are Pell-eligible, and roughly 70% are part-time students. Roughly half of the students are transfer students and 20% are readmits. In the effort to make higher education accessible, 99% of the applicants are accepted, however approximately 40% do not meet placement testing benchmarks for college-level writing, reading, or mathematics.

IPEDS 150% Graduation Outcomes for UMA captures 6% of the entering student enrollment. To document student success for all students at UMA, the University presents retention and graduation data segmented by first-year students, transfer students, full-time students, and part-time students – in addition to the standard IPEDS 150% Graduation Outcomes. In the data provided to the site visitors, it is not clear how this traditional group (first-time, full-time students) is imbedded into the four separate categories and there is overlap among the different cohorts. The university is also analyzing other cohorts of students such as Veterans and Active Military and First Generation students. This segmented approach to presenting the data is helpful and further refinement would be beneficial to understanding how to best use the data to achieve student success for the different groups.

To provide an overview of the Graduation Rates with the reported traditional

and the additional cohorts of interest defined by UMA please refer to the following charts. The data was provided while the team was on site except as noted.

**Associate Degree Students: 150% Time to Degree**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cohort | Entering Fall 2009 | Entering Fall 2010 | Entering Fall 2011 |
| Traditional First-time, Full-time (from Standard 8 Data Form)\*  | 14% | 9% | 18% |
| First Year (approximately 60% of entering students) | 9.2% | 6.4% | 7.9% |
| Transfer (approximately 40% of entering students) | 20.5% | 22.5% | 22.8% |
| Full-Time (approximately 50% of entering students) | 16.9% | 16.3% | 15.4% |
| Part-Time (approximately 50% of entering students) | 11.4% | 10.5% | 12.8% |

\* includes certificate students although the number of these students is low – 22 in 2009; 12 in 2010; and 6 in 2011.

**Associate Degree Students: 200% Time to Degree**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cohort | Entering Fall 2009 | Entering Fall 2010 | Entering Fall 2011 |
| Traditional First-time, Full-time (from Standard 8 Data Form) | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| First Year (approximately 60% of entering students) | 15.3% | 11.0% | 12.7% |
| Transfer (approximately 40% of entering students) | 30.5% | 26.9% | 28.9% |
| Full-Time (approximately 50% of entering students) | 23.9% | 22.5% | 21.3% |
| Part-Time (approximately 50% of entering students) | 19.9% | 13.4% | 17.5% |

**Baccalaureate Degree Students: 150% Time to Degree**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cohort | Entering Fall 2007 | Entering Fall 2008 | Entering Fall 2009 | Entering Fall 2010 | Entering Fall 2011 |
| Traditional First-time, Full-time (from Standard 8 Data Form) | 12% | 12% | 12% | 14% | 15% |
| First Year (approximately 45% of entering students) | 8.8% | 9.6% | 10.6% | 10.2% | 10.9% |
| Transfer (approximately 55% of entering students) | 33.1% | 30.8% | 36.2% | 29.4% | 33.1% |
| Full-Time (approximately 60% of entering students) | 20.7% | 24.4% | 27.4% | 23.2% | 27.0% |
| Part-Time (approximately 40% of entering students) | 21.1% | 16.6% | 20.3% | 17.6% | 15.4% |

**Baccalaureate Degree Students: 200% Time to Degree**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cohort | Entering Fall 2005 | Entering Fall 2006 | Entering Fall 2007 | Entering Fall 2008 | Entering Fall 2009 | Entering Fall 2010 (7 years) | Entering Fall 2011(6+ years) |
| Traditional First-time, Full-time (from Standard 8 Data Form) | 23% | 14% | 17% | 15% | 13% | Data not available as these cohorts have not reached the 200% timeline | Data not available as these cohorts have not reached the 200% timeline |
| First Year (approximately 45% of entering students) | 17.2% | 12.2% | 12.5% | 10.8% | 11.4% | 11.7% | 11.6% |
| Transfer (approximately 55% of entering students) | 35.5% | 34.4% | 37.7% | 33.4% | 41.3% | 31.0% | 34.4% |
| Full-Time (approximately 60% of entering students) | 26.3% | 26.1% | 25.3% | 25.3% | 29.7% | 25.1% | 27.5% |
| Part-Time (approximately 40% of entering students) | 27.7% | 20.5% | 24.7% | 20.1% | 24.8% | 18.7% | 17.2% |

Retention rates between full-time and part-time students differ. Full-time is defined as 12 or more credits per semester; part-time as less than 12 credits per semester. The figures include all admit types (i.e., First-year, Readmit, Transfer). Additional retention figures are available in the NEASC/CIHE Standard 8 report. Year to year retention rates are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  Degree | Students entering Fall 2014 and retained in 2015 | Students entering Fall 2015 and retained in 2016 | Students entering Fall 2016 and retained in 2017 |
| Full-time | 60% | 62% | 59% |
| Part-time | 52% | 51% | 50% |

In response to the concerns of low retention and graduations rates, many new and revitalized initiatives have been undertaken through Title III funding and the University’s Strategic Plan, Transforming Lives. As reviewed in some detail in the University’s report, the primary efforts are highlighted below.

1. There has been an organizational structure change to move the Academic Advising Office and the Division of Student Development to Academic Affairs. A revision of structure accompanied by the hiring of new leadership has resulted in the new Division of Enrollment Management and Marketing. The new leadership includes a vice president of the division, a dean of admissions, and a director of enrollment and marketing, all within the past eight months.
2. Academic Program Retention Plans, initially developed about five years ago, are being revised for implementation in the 2018-2019 academic year. Information provided during the site visit from faculty indicated the original implementation of this initiative was not consistent across academic departments.
3. A new Online New Student Orientation program was piloted, non-mandatory, in Spring 2018. Prior to its implementation, orientation was only offered on-site and had a 12% participation rate. The Spring 2018 participation was 30%.
4. A Class Steward Program was initiated in the summer of 2015 and now includes 19 courses as of the Spring 2018. Fall 2017 outcomes show an increase of average student success from 60% to 66% (relatively steady each semester) and overall improvement in student grades. This program received generally positive reviews from faculty advisors and students. The number of courses in the program remains small and the ability to scale the program still needs to be reviewed.
5. A Student-Centered Mobile App to provide positive behavioral nudges to students is being developed through a contract with the Education Advisory Board (EAB) Student Success Collaborative. This effort will be launched in the fall of 2018.  Additionally, UMA is piloting a texting program (Signalvine) this spring, 2018. A positive outcome of the pilot was the ability of the institution to capture a significant number of student mobile phone numbers, now at approximately 92%.
6. An Early College program is underway with the aim of helping students aspire to attend and complete college. High school juniors and seniors can complete up to six credits of college coursework per semester. Costs are covered through a state tuition waiver and UMA (50/50). The numbers of student transitioning to UMA remain small (about 20 this past year) however the efforts are still in early stages of implementation.
7. Ongoing efforts include the TRIO Program, increased attention to the recruitment and retention of transfer students, Veterans Services, Jobs for Maine’s Graduates, modifications to writing and math support, and the use of predicative analytics and early alert tools.

It is too early to be able to provide evidence that these various initiatives are improving student success for UMA. It will be several years before the full impact can be evaluated. It will be helpful to identify the formative or effort indicators and targets to see progress over time. (See the comment below about the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment.)

The funding for these efforts is largely dependent on the Title III grant received in 2015 and has a five-year funding cycle. The University is already planning to stretch the grant to a sixth-year through a no-cost extension. While alert to the time line for this funding, the leadership will need to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and institutionalize (with funding) the most successful efforts in a short period of time.

Information gathered during the site visit provided the visitors with insight to President Wyke’s plans. Through Vision 2.0 (the current process to review the existing Strategic Plan), the Plan has been reviewed and changes are being developed to maximize effectiveness. In addition metrics are being established to evaluate achievement of stated goals. President Wyke described the effort as a “re-grounding” after several years of leadership change – four presidents in five years.

Through the Academic Programs of the Future effort, the faculty and administrators are re-examining their distance education programs to insure they are pedagogically sound and incorporate impactful practices. A complementary component of this work is to develop a cyberspace master plan – a plan to define the needs for distance/online education. The plan is expected to be completed this summer (2018) and will be a three to five-year plan.

Civic Engagement is a cornerstone of the University’s mission yet, by self-assessment, efforts have been scattered and somewhat fragmented thereby limiting the effectiveness and efficiency of the efforts. By engaging an existing resource of New Ventures Maine, a community-based program that is funded through a separate state appropriation, civic engagement efforts will be coordinated across the University. This high-impact practice and community engagement benefits both the students and increases the connection of the University to the greater community.

University College is the outreach arm of the University which operates through eight centers across Maine. University College coordinates educational offerings and provides support to faculty in the form of instructional design. While originally part of UMA, many years ago University College was transitioned to the System Office and then back to UMA about ten years ago while continuing to operate as a resource for the whole system. In essence, it was providing parallel services to UMA resulting in some duplication and less efficiency in the combined efforts. As of this summer, University College will again be fully integrated into UMA and the eight centers will be re-branded under the UMA name. It is anticipated that better use of resources in instructional design, marketing, advising, and administrative and student support will be the result. This change will have the new division focused primarily on UMA while continuing to refer students to other University of Maine campuses as their educational needs require.

The University of Maine System has launched an initiative aimed at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the collective campuses. Named “One University,” this effort largely has been addressing administrative needs such as finance and information services. More recently, some efforts have been undertaken to match educational offerings, such as having students begin their education at one location and then transferring to another for the upper-division courses. These educational collaborations have not been as beneficial as originally expected and UMA is not anticipating a significant expansion in this area.

Input from students indicates a satisfied, engaged community. Very positive comments were offered about the support of faculty and administrators and their understanding of the unique challenges of the UMA student population. The availability of jobs on campus, the ability to earn tuition waivers through volunteer work, centers such as the Veterans and TRIO centers, academic supports provided by the math and writing centers, as well as the availability of tutors and class stewards were highlights. Online courses and Internet TV (ITV) courses were viewed by students as particularly helpful in providing flexibility as well as the ability to “rewind” and review course content. This said in-seat classes were preferred by most students for the immediate support and sense of community they offer and these in-seat courses are often supplemented with the ITV and on-line technology.

Areas of critique were centered around student advising and consistency of course structure for distance education courses. There seemed to be a lack of clarity regarding when students should be approaching the professional advisors in the Academic Advising Center as opposed to their faculty advisor. As a result, several students expressed the need to “go it alone” or gain direction through the support of other students. The Academic Advisors and Faculty expressed similar concerns about the lack of clarity for students, while stating that they saw clear differentiation between the roles of each: Academic Advisors are to provide information regarding administrative procedures for students including the range of courses available to meet general requirements; Faculty provide more career specific guidance and unique perspectives on upper-level course offerings. Further discussion revealed the lack of a repository of advising notes accessible to both the Academic Advisors and Faculty thereby preventing coordination of efforts. UMA’s formalizing of Academic Liaisons between the Academic Advising Center and academic programs is intended to help ease this concern.

Regarding consistency in course structure for distance education courses, defining expectations in the use and functionality of technology and then requiring faculty and student adherence in the online environment were considered important for navigation and consistency of the “classroom” experience. Students find the process of learning the expectations for different courses, which vary among faculty, challenging.

Faculty expressed support for the student success initiatives underway. Finding methods to capture some of the unique pathways and choices of students was a concern, such as those of a student who sporadically pursued her education beginning in 1994 and will be graduating this May and, likewise, those of students who enroll in the biology major for the sole purpose of completing courses for medical school requirements. At the same time, the part-time pathway of eight to ten years was viewed as a necessary timeline as students have job and family responsibilities that require part-time study. Why students stop or drop out remains anecdotal rather than evidenced-based and clarity about the actual causes might aid in developing effective response strategies.

Most faculty were supportive of the Class Steward program and believe it was benefiting students. Building consistency in the roles and responsibilities of the stewards and their relationship with the faculty members of record will need continued work. The Academic Program Retention Efforts and the Academic Liaisons between Academic Advising and the academic programs are works in process. There appears to be variability among departments and faculty seek greater guidance from Academic Affairs to define expectations.

For most of these initiatives, the University’s current metrics capture the summative or result indicators rather than the formative or effort indicators. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) recognized the need to move in this direction and, in collaboration with and under the guidance of administrative and faculty leadership, the metrics for the Strategic Plan are being redefined. In addition to the campus-based work, OIRA provides data to the System office upon request (Delaware Study as an example), yet often the applicability of the information collected for the System is not always useful to UMA due to the different composition of its, UMA’s, student population. The flagship campus, Orono, has a more traditional student population and system efforts frequently focus more on the needs of this population.

Data collection and analysis would benefit from a clarification of responsibilities of the various departments including OIRA, enrollment management, and finance, as well as coordination of these efforts. As the metrics of revised Strategic Plan are developed, it would be helpful to assign responsibility to specific departments along with defined success markers. Further, the involvement of OIRA in the early stages of initiative development, to help frame the expected evaluation, could be helpful. Having the director of OIRA on the President’s Cabinet is a step in the right direction.

**Strengths**

* Dedicated faculty, administration, and staff who are well aware of the concerns regarding student success.
* Multiple initiatives to address a variety of identified concerns are underway to improve student success.
* Resources (staff lines and tools) are being provided for the student success initiatives.
* Collaboration with the University of Maine System is providing access to additional resources such as EAB and Target X.
* Collaboration with community organizations/agencies is expanding to address areas of need.

**Concerns**

* Consistency of the numerous initiatives underway varies. Having greater guidance and structure from the responsible departments (e.g., Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, etc.) would be beneficial.
* With the number and range of initiatives underway, the University may find they are not all sustainable. A cost analysis of the collective programs may be useful.
* As resources from the Title III grant are drawn down, the University will need to identify which initiatives have the greatest return on investment (ROI) and therefore should be continued. Current data collection and analysis do not appear to be prepared to provide the evidence needed to make these decisions. The “effort indicators” will be essential to guide future planning.
* Declining enrollments limit resources. The strategy of Early College to increase high school to college enrollments is of value but the numbers remain small. Retention of current students is essential for the financial well-being of the institution.

**Default Rate**

The UMA’s U. S. Department of Education default rate analysis demonstrates a downward trend in the rate over the past four cycles. It was reported to the visiting team that the Fiscal Year 2015 rate, reported in January of 2018, was 17.1%, down from 18.6% in 2014 and 22.7% in 2011.

UMA has utilized SALT as its primary financial literacy and debt management program however the team was informed during the visit that SALT is discontinuing all its services as of December 2018. (While the report stated SALT was discontinuing only the default prevention program, this full closure was just recently announced.) The initiatives being implemented by UMA to address this pending gap in service are to provide training for the current Financial Aid staff to increase their ability to work with students, and to explore partnering with the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) to secure a new vender to replace SALT. Additional potential partners are Penquis, a private nonprofit organization that provides financial literacy training, and the University Credit Union which would provide default prevention information.

UMA’s defaults rate challenges are multiple and the Financial Aid team offered insights from their perspective. The first challenge was limited staffing. They have had one to two open positions over the past two years and are just now back up to a full staff level pending the hiring of a bursar. A second challenge is that UMA’s students, most of which are adult learners, are hesitant to talk about their finances with staff. Ironically, students undertaking loans had expressed concern about a passive approach by the financial aid office and requested a more active approach to financial literacy and management of their education. Contextually it is important to note UMA’s student population is heavily low-income and therefore come with many life pressures making them vulnerable to financial challenges.

Federal guidelines may also affect the ability of the team to provide stronger guidance to students. In the past, initial awards to students did not include the unsubsidized funds available to them, but rather required the student to contact the financial aid office to learn this information. This afforded the financial aid team the opportunity to talk to students before they maximized their loan level. The visiting team was told that the financial aid team learned at a conference that this practice violated federal regulations. Validating the details of this regulation and exploring the potential of reinstating a modified approach to increase student’s awareness of the loan debt concern will be important.

It is generally thought that reducing the cost of attendance for UMA students will improve the default rate and accordingly the Pine Tree State Pledge is seen as a key effort. Through this program, Pell-eligible students who transfer to the institution with at least 30 transferrable credits do not pay any out-of-pocket expenses for tuition and mandatory fees offering a “last dollar” grant opportunity to minimize debt for students. To maximize the effectiveness of this program, UMA received a $15,000 grant from the Libra Foundation to fund a part-time position dedicated to managing its Pine Tree State Pledge program and monitoring the student default rate. The “Navigator”, the funded position, will be in place during the next academic year, 2018-2019. However, it is not clear that the funding for the Navigator will be available for subsequent years.

There is currently limited data, beyond the default rate itself, available to the financial aid team to provide guidance for intervention to include an analysis of the amount of debt students have upon entry to UMA and the difference between the recommended amount of loans and the actual loans taken by students. This additional data would help them identify students at risk for intervention. As noted, students have expressed a desire for more intrusive advising in the financial aid arena rather than less, e.g., preemptive messaging and alerts about the effect of a dropped course or withdrawal on their financial aid package. Similarly, as expressed by the academic advisors, mapping out a student’s curriculum and financial plan would provide a longer view of the financial responsibility being assumed.

**Strengths**

* The 2018 three-year rolling default rate has dropped to 17.1% -- a marked improvement.
* The Financial Aid team is committed to providing support for the students.
* Community-based resources are being explored to assist students with their financial literacy needs.

**Concerns**

* Limited data hampers the ability of the financial aid team to develop effective strategies.
* The apparent requirement for students to reach out to financial aid, versus financial aid reaching out to students, could increase missteps by students. An aggressive, intrusive approach to financial aid counseling would be more beneficial.
* Financial literacy educational needs will be at risk once SALT ends its support in December.

**Second Chance Pell Program – Maine State Prison & Maine State Correctional Center**

University of Maine, Augusta (UMA) offers college courses to students at three correctional facilities in Maine: the Maine State Prison (MSP) in Warren, the Maine Correctional Center (MCC) in Windham, and the Southern Maine Re-entry Center also in Windham.

The MSP program has been in operation for 12 years with the support of philanthropist Doris Buffett and the Sunshine Lady Foundation. To date, 67 degrees (a combination of associate and baccalaureate, with the majority associate) have been awarded and the recidivism rate is near zero for participants.

In the fall of 2017, through the Second Chance Pell program, a second site was opened at the MCC which includes a program for men at MCC and one for women at the Re-Entry Center. The Second Chance Pell Program was a national, Department of Education, competitive grant program with over 200 institutional applicants and 67 awardees. At UMA, thirty men and women total are eligible to participate in the program. While still early in its operation, the program is at capacity with only one individual withdrawing due to relocation.

The Second Change Pell Program is a federal pilot program scheduled to run through September of 2019 (fiscal year). It is not known whether this program will be continued and the federal Department of Education has not provided any guidance to the grant recipients. As a result, there is hesitancy to enroll a new cohort in January of 2019 as there would not be a guarantee of funding. President Wyke, however, assured the site visitors that any student beginning a course of study would be provided the opportunity to complete that program through UMA support. This commitment protects currently enrolled students but does not alleviate the concern for the ongoing viability of the program.

The program includes on-site classes coupled with online and ITV offerings for the students. UMA faculty provide the on-site instruction and offerings are focused on the core courses of three majors – Health & Human Services, Business Administration, and Liberal Arts. Higher level and elective courses are offered through the online and ITV classes. Generally, students at the correctional facilities have limited access to the internet making the delivery of the courses and access to reference materials challenging. However, with variation among the different facilities based on the Division of Correction’s policy, there has been easing of restrictions allowing for increased access to supervised use of the internet.

The visiting team had the opportunity to tour both the Re-entry Facility and the Maine State Prison. The areas dedicated to the educational programs are sufficient to meet the needs of the on-site courses and the availability of computers/laptops/iPads, while limited, is working. Staff and faculty are very enthusiastic about the program and express a high level of commitment to their students. The Associate Warden of the Maine State Prison personally provided a tour and voiced his strong support for the program. The Warden, a UMA graduate, is also committed to the program and to overall education for inmates.

The visitors met with students at both the Re-Entry Center and MSP. The students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to pursue their education while incarcerated and felt it was providing them with new options for success upon their release. There was clear support for the program among the students and they describe their group as a learning community. In addition, they expressed great appreciation for the support they were receiving from UMA faculty, staff, and University College personnel. One student, who will be receiving her degree in May, had earned college credits some thirty years ago. She will be released in the next several months and plans to continue her education post-incarceration.

Student at the correctional facilities have access to reference materials, thanks in great part to the creativity of the library staff. For example, databases have been made available offline which can be accessed through flash drives or hard-drives thereby eliminating the need for internet access. In addition, over one million books are available to students through inter-library loan.

Most of the support services available to students on campus are available at a reduced level to students in the Centers/Prison. Wherever advising through the campus is not possible or practical, the education coordinators (both from the University and Correctional Institution) fill this need. Faculty understand the unique circumstances of the students and adapt to their situations such as necessary extensions for papers and working around class discussion concerns.

UMA staff believe the program could expand if more funding were available, and they offered some recommendations for improvements to include streamlining the offerings to one general major which would reduce the demands on the education staff for support. Additional access to the internet, as prison policy can allow, would also be beneficial. Simple improvements, such as a common printer for class work, have already been well received.

**Strengths**

* Very engaged team of staff and faculty across the partners of the correctional system, UMA, and the faculty. All are committed to offering high quality programming for the students.
* Appreciative students who are working very hard in difficult circumstances to pursue their college education.
* Supportive correctional officials who have demonstrated flexibility as the programs have taken hold and positive outcomes are identified.
* Strong outcomes with 67 degrees awarded in 12 years. Virtually no recidivism.

**Concerns**

* The Second Chance Pell Program is a pilot and the renewal of the program is not a certainty. If Pell is not available, the MCC and Re-entry program will not have the financial support necessary to continue. Additional funding will be needed.
* Scalability is questionable as it is a labor-intensive offering.