**Report to the**

**Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students**

**Of**

**University of Maine at Augusta**

**Augusta, Maine**

**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**

**Self-evaluation report and a visit to the campus**

**April 12-15, 2015**

**The members of the team:**

*Chairperson*: Barbara E. Murphy, President, Johnson State College, Johnson, VT.

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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:** \_\_April 13, 2015\_\_\_\_

**Name of Institution** \_\_University of Maine at Augusta\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

**2. Type of control:**  State  City  Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Private, not-for-profit  Religious Group; specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proprietary  Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Degree level:**

Associate  Baccalaureate  Masters  Professional  Doctorate

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Full-time | Part-time | FTE | Retentiona | Graduationb | # Degreesc |
|  | Fall 2014 | Fall 2014 | Fall 2014 | F13 to F14 | 150% | 2013-14 |
| Associate | 321 | 596 | 694 | 52% | 8% | 209 |
| Baccalaureate | 1403 | 1782 | 2435 | 54% | 23% | 401 |
| Certificate | 10 | 34 | 29 | 43% | - | 41 |
| Non-Degree/Non Title IV Certs | 16 | 581 | 215 | - | - | - |
| Graduate | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |

(a) ALL admits 1st to 2nd year (b) ALL admits 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) no. of degrees awarded most recent year

**5. Number of current faculty (Fall 2014):** Full time \_89\_\_\_ Part-time \_193\_\_\_ FTE: \_153\_\_\_

**6. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: \_FY 2014\_\_\_)

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



**7. Number of off-campus locations: (Bangor Campus; 8 UC Centers; 23 Sites – ALL In-state)**

In-state \_32 \_\_ Other U.S. \_\_0\_\_ International \_\_0\_\_ Total \_32\_\_

**8. Number of Bachelor degrees offered electronically:**

Programs offered entirely on-line \_\_1 \_\_ Programs available on-line or delayed view \_\_9\_\_\_

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

No  Yes; specify program(s): \_\_BS - Aviation\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Other characteristics:**

**Introduction**

The Evaluation Team assigned by NEASC to visit the University of Maine Augusta was comprised of interested, willing, and well-prepared individuals up to the task of carrying out this comprehensive visit. The Team was at the main Augusta campus from April 12-15, 2015, with some team members visiting Bangor and Bath-Brunswick. The team had met as a group by phone on April 7th the week before. The Chair had met by telephone with President Cummings during March of this year and was in regular contact with available and informed university officials as questions arose in the pre-visit phase. All questions were promptly and thoroughly addressed; schedules were flexibly managed and altered so the team arrived ready to go to work.

From the opening dinner on Sunday evening, team members were received warmly and introduced to a range of University faculty, staff, administrators, Trustees, and members of the Board of Visitors. All knew the importance of the visit and the accreditation process of which it is a significant part. This attitude of openness, pride in the work of the university, and availability to team members persisted through our four days in Augusta.

The Self-Study report was sent in a timely manner and met the requirements of NEASC’s guidelines for self-study. Team members appreciated being assigned log-in IDs and passwords to gain access to the University’s online materials. There were a few technological glitches along the way—nothing we have not experienced at our own institutions—and these were promptly and courteously addressed.

This evaluation is a comprehensive evaluation. It follows the Commission’s acceptance of a fifth-year interim report (approved, November, 2011). The Commission’s acceptance letter notes that the self-study to be prepared for the comprehensive visit in Spring 2015 give particular attention to program review to inform curricular planning and improvements, institutional research and planning to support assessment and continuous improvement, and assessment and review of general education.

In the team’s estimation, the self-study complied with diligent attention to those areas as well as attention to standards 1-11 as expected of all institutional self-studies**.**

**Standard One**  MISSION AND PURPOSE

**Mission**

The current mission statement of the University of Maine Augusta (UMA) was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2006. It reads:

*The University of Maine at Augusta, a regional state university, provides baccalaureate and select associate degrees to meet the educational, economic and cultural needs of Central Maine. Based on a common liberal arts core for all degree programs, UMA delivers professional programs to non-traditional and place-bound students*.

Because the statement was approved by the Board of Trustees, it meets the Commission’s requirement that it be consistent with its operating authority, and, by extension, that the activities it embodies have the approval of the Board.

The mission statement has key words that amplify its commitments and purposes. It is “regional”, specifically, of “Central Maine.” Its intention is to “meet the …needs…” of its region. It holds a “common liberal arts core” for its programs and is ambitious in its aims to meet the needs of “non-traditional, traditional, and place-bound students”.

It seems that UMA has long been assigned as chief provider of online and distance education courses and degrees. UMA takes understandable pride in being recognized as one of the best providers of online degree programs in the country.

As the landscape in public higher education in New England is changing—and, most significantly that of, the Maine system-- so is the mission of the University of Maine Augusta.

UMA is taking advantage of several trends to review and adopt a new mission statement. These trends and factors include: the increase in online and distance education by all the members of the University of Maine system, demographics that are not producing the traditional age cohort of 18-22 year olds, growth of part time learners, and consolidation of some services and functions in the University of Maine system, including IT services.

Closer to home, UMA has drafted a new strategic plan for 2016-2020 which will be led by a new president. The sense of optimism and enthusiasm of new leadership is palpable in documents and interviews on campus.

The proposed mission statement which will be before the Board of Trustees at its May 2015 meeting is:

*The University of Maine at Augusta transforms the lives of students of every age and background across the State of Maine and beyond through access to high-quality and distance and on-site education, excellence in student support, civic engagement, and professional and liberal arts programs.*

While this statement is not yet confirmed, perhaps, not quite in its final form as of the NEASC team visit, UMA senior staff and executives believe it is “close”.

Its evolution from the earlier (extant) statement shows a commitment to education as “transformation”, establishes itself as striving for “excellence in student support”, and encompasses “civic engagement”. These changes seem right and fitting to the UMA’s sense of itself. The focus on student support aligns with its recognition that service to students—prospective and ongoing—likely figures significantly in the dynamics of student success factors. First-generation, adult and part-time students can be “vulnerable” students, as President Cummings says. A renewed pledge to create and deliver deeper and more robust student services may help the University move towards its enrollment and retention goals.

**Purposes**

The purposes of the University—its primary reasons for ‘being’—are embodied in its mission statement, values, and planning documents. UMA strives to be a regional university in a broad sense and to deliver its courses, programs, and degrees through face-to-face teaching and learning, site-based learning, and technologically mediated modalities. It also has a strong commitment to meeting the needs of its transfer students—especially those from Maine’s community colleges—as seamlessly as possible. Assisting Maine’s citizens in furthering their educations is, then, chief among its purposes.

As other public universities in Maine, too, reach out more intentionally to the adult market via alternative delivery modes, UMA will need to stay true to its ‘roots’ as Maine’s first distance-learning provider and the system expert in this area. The University’s articulated values which include staying responsive, nimble, adaptable, collaborative, and accessible should help UMA stay true to and able to do this work. So, too, UMA will likely be assisted by its commitments to serving students in community-based settings, investments in technology and online course design, and remaining current in online pedagogy; these investments as well as a long-standing reputation for reaching out to adult part time learners will help ensure alignment of mission and purposes.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

University of Maine Augusta ensures its effectiveness with regard to mission and purposes through periodically reviewing and updating its mission, vision, and values and aligning them with a newly created strategic plan. These documents still need the approval of the Chancellor and Board of Trustees so that the responsibility of ensuring effectiveness is widespread across the UM enterprise. Involvement of the Board of Visitors will strengthen even further the likelihood of carrying out the mission and essential purposes and widen the circle of advocates and champions for UMA.

**Standard Two** PLANNING AND EVALUATION

**Planning**

Based on the self-study report and confirmed by our meetings with the campus community and review of available documents and reports, the team finds that strategic planning has evolved at the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) over the past decade. The description of the planning processes and the described development process for the 2011 - 2016 strategic plan included input from a broad base of the campus community across the university. The planning process was collaborative and appropriate to the institution. The leadership team of the institution has been committed to the successful implementation of the 2011 - 2016 strategic plan. A new strategic plan for 2016 – 2020 was recently drafted. This new strategic plan was formed by a working group led by the Chief Financial Officer through outreach across the Augusta and Bangor campuses and the University College Centers. The draft strategic plan has been presented at the President’s Cabinet and Faculty Senate and was transmitted to the University of Maine System (UMS) chancellor for consideration during the site visit. Subsequent approval of the strategic plan by the UMS Board of Trustees, the governing body of the university, will follow the chancellor’s approval. The goals of the strategic plan will be used by the constituent units of the institution to guide individual units’ strategic planning efforts.

The evidence presented both in the self-study and during the site visit highlights the use of a variety of planning models over the past five years including the review of all administrative functions via the Baldrige process and data analytics using the Student Learning Progress Model. With a change in leadership and other priorities at the system level, the Baldrige process review appears to have stalled. Based on information gained during meetings on campus, the utilization of data from the Student Learning Progress Model is limited. The unique student population served by UMA – open access, non-traditional, adult, part-time students who are place bound – represents a challenge when using traditional retention and graduation rate metrics. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning has done a laudable job of creating metrics that match the more nuanced progress of adult students—such as steady if not swift progression toward graduation.

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning as evidenced by the number of action items identified in its various reviews which have been implemented. As described in the self-study and confirmed during meetings on campus, the establishment of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, development of academic program productivity matrices, and strengthening of transparency and communication of continuous improvement initiatives are among key outcomes of recent planning efforts. Establishing the Bachelor of Architecture and B.S. in Aviation represent a focused effort to develop differentiated academic programming that targets a more traditional, full-time student population. These academic programs were a direct result of targets identified in response to the 2011 – 2016 strategic plan.

**Evaluation**

Evidence from the self-study and the discussions with members of the campus community highlight the underpinnings of a maturing use of evaluation in its planning processes. The team’s review of the Data First forms and the E-series data forms revealed a systematic presentation of data. The calculation of key retention and graduation data presented in the self-study report raised questions that were able to be explained during the site visit. Given the unique characteristics of the UMA student population, each semester’s new students are considered independent cohorts resulting in data appropriate for institutional decision-making. Discussions with key academic personnel indicate that program reviews have been completed for all academic programs that are not externally accredited, and annual program reports provide academic leadership with information they need to make important budget decisions and to inform the continuous improvement of programs. This five-year program review procedure fulfills the requirement of the UMS office that institutions within the system review their academic programs every seven years.

UMA has clearly benefitted from an increased sophistication in data analytics. The quality of data reported by the institution in the self-study is consistent and thorough. Current efforts at the system level to define data standards for institutions to use when reporting data into the system office will likely continue to assist UMA in its evaluation of student progress. Discussions with academic leadership and the Executive Director of Institutional Research and Planning revealed that the Office of Institutional Research and Planning is constantly tapped to fill information needs from a varied constituency on an ad hoc basis and issues multiple analytic reports which can be used for academic planning, enrollment management, and UMA senior leadership.

Based on the self-study report and confirmed in our meetings, UMA is heavily focused on continuous improvement of online instruction. Using criteria set by *U.S. News and World Report*, the university has made strides in implementing best practice for the evaluation of its online offerings. Given UMA’s long history in distance education and its statewide educational focus, quality improvement in online delivery is a critical competitive advantage for the university. Discussions in our meetings highlight the commitment of UMA to maintaining and improving access to quality educational programming for its student population. Alignment of academic programming with workforce development needs and the individual needs of its students is evident.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Evidence from the self-study and the discussions during the site visit clearly indicate that planning and evaluation efforts are scrutinized on a regular basis to ensure that they are providing information needed for decision-makers. As evidenced by the improvement of administrative functions, alignment of academic programs, enrollment management efforts, all focused on improving academic success, retention, and graduation of students, planning and evaluation efforts are helping the university enhance the affordability, accessibility, quality and relevance of its programs.

**Standard Three** ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishments of its mission and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, and where appropriate research and creative activity. It assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component.

The University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) is one of seven public universities comprising the University of Maine System (UMS). The System includes eight University College outreach Centers, a law school, an additional 31 course sites, and Cooperative Extension. The seven System institutions are distinctly different in size, mission, number of campuses and students served. UMA is the third largest University in the System with campuses in Augusta and Bangor. It provides both bachelor and associate degrees state-wide to a non-residential student body through both traditional and non-traditional modalities.

The University College (UC) is an Administrative Unit of the University of Maine at Augusta with a system-wide mission to provide centralized services to students and faculty engaged in online and distance programs offered by the campuses of the University of Maine System. The UC reports to the President of UMAand to the System. Organizationally UC has oversight of both outreach and online services carried-out by:

* Outreach Centers, (eight centers, six reporting directly to UC)
* Instructional design/development and media services
* Off-Campus Library Services
* Marketing

The Board of Trustees oversees the System in areas such as academic programs, faculty tenure, tuition rates and operating budgets. The Board consists of 16 members, 15 of which are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Maine Legislature. The Board is chaired by one of its members. The Chair of the Board is evaluated annually. The Maine Commissioner of Education serves as a member, ex officio. Members are appointed for a five-year term and may be reappointed once. A student member of the Board is appointed for a single two-year term. The composition of the board includes representation of the public interest and reflects the areas of competence needed to fulfill its responsibilities. The Board’s code of ethics specifically states that a Board member shall not vote on a matter in which he or she has a financial interest and each Trustee shall be bound by an appropriate code of ethics, as adopted by the Board of Trustees. The Board has a clear understanding of the differentiated mission and purposes of the UM System institutions.

The bylaws, membership, committee structure, and duties of the Board of Trustees are clearly stated and easily accessed on the Board website. The Board’s charge is appropriate and has final authority over all areas of the System: education, finances, public service, relations with the State of Maine and federal government, searches for University presidents, and a strategic plan for the UM System.

The Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Chancellor, is the governing and planning body of the University and in addition has responsibility for preparing and approving the operating and capital budgets of the University and presenting them in accordance with the direction in the Maine Revised Statutes. The Board’s mission is to establish “policies that enable the System institutions to provide higher education of excellent quality to Maine and its citizens.”

The Chancellor is the chief administrator and education office of the System selected by the Board. The Chancellor’s performance is evaluated by the Board every year, with a comprehensive review occurring during the third year and every fourth year thereafter. Dr. James Page was appointed in March 2012 as the new Chancellor for the UM System. Under his leadership, the System is undergoing significant changes. Outcome-based funding for the seven campuses, the limitation of the number of credit hours for a bachelor’s degree, the centralization of administrative services in Information Technology, Human Resources, Finance and Procurement have been implemented or are in the process of implementation. Under discussion is the concept of “One University” for the entire University of Maine System.

The Board of Trustees requires each university to have a Board of Visitors. UMA’s Board of Visitors is advisory. The BOV consists of up to 20 members recommended by campus presidents and confirmed by the Board of Trustees. Membership is intended to reflect the mission of the university and the region it serves. The BOV membership is compose overwhelmingly of members from Augusta. The BOV advocates for the university, raises private funds for the university, advises the President on community and regional needs; and reviews for final recommendation to the Board of Trustees tuition increases, new academic programs and the 5-year plan of the university. An annual report of its activities is submitted to the Board of Trustees. Up until recently, the BOV was underutilized, but under the new President he BOV has been revitalized.

The President of the University of Maine at Augusta is the chief administrative and educational officer and is responsible for the day-to-day operation and development of its academic program within the limits defined by the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor. Dr. Glen Cummings was appointed by the Board of Trustees and Chancellor as interim president in 2014 to lead the University of Maine Augusta. The President reports directly to the Chancellor. The President is responsible for implementation of plans, policies, and directives from the Board and the Chancellor, strategic leadership of UMA, and operational and auxiliary budgets and planning to accomplish the University and System missions. The President exercises active leadership through regular communication with UMA’s internal governance structure, for example the Moose News monthly e-Newsletter. The President meets with Senior Staff, Executive Committee, the Cabinet, the President’s Advisory Council (PAC), and the Board of Visitors. The PAC has broad representation including faculty, students, and community members. The President also meets with Academic Program Coordinators (the UMA equivalent of department heads) at least once per semester. The Executive Committee of the Senate meets with the President prior to the monthly meeting of the Senate and the President attends all Senate meetings. The President represents the campus at the Board of Trustees. The President is positively viewed across all campus constituencies.

Within UMA, the Faculty Senate and its attendant standing committees operate to provide an effective system of shared governance involving administration, faculty, staff, and students. Senate committees oversee academic policies, peer review, academic administrative selection processes, assessment, curriculum, distance learning, budget and strategic planning. Faculty are involved in institutional governance by virtue of their participation in the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate is broadly representative of the college community. Senators are elected by the two Colleges based on a proportional representation model. 3 senators are elected from the Bangor campus, 6 from the Augusta campus, and two are elected At-Large. Meetings of the Faculty Senate are open to all members of the community, including the Bangor Assembly and students, and are attended by the President, Provost and other administrators. The location of Senate meetings alternates between the Augusta and Bangor campus.

The Bangor Faculty Assembly meets twice per semester to discuss issues that are unique to the Bangor Campus.  All personnel on the Bangor campus are invited to participate in the Bangor Faculty Assembly and may submit agenda items and address the Assembly, but not vote. Upon a vote of the majority of the faculty present, the issues raised at an Assembly meeting are referred to the appropriate administrator.

The Student Government Association (SGA) elects a representative to the UM System Board of Trustees who serves on the Student and Academic Affairs Committee. The student voice is expressed primarily through the Student Government Association. The Augusta, Bangor, and Distance Education Student Associations represent the student body collectively, each with delegates on the UMA SGA General Assembly. Though the internal shared governance of the institution includes the participation of college constituencies in the decision-making process, . concerns were expressed by faculty and staff about the lack of communication in the final stage of the Strategic Plan submitted to the System Office on April 14, 2015.

An appropriate administrative structure exists by which the President can lead the institution. The institution has sufficient independence from any sponsoring entity.

The academic division reports to the Vice President/Provost, who reports to the President. The Vice President/Provost meets bi-weekly with direct reports and other unit leaders at UMA for operational purposes related to all aspects of academic matters. The Vice President/Provost also meets with Program Coordinators at least once per semester, and Coordinators meet monthly with their program/department faculty. In addition, each college meets at least twice per semester. The reporting lines within Academic Affairs promote decision-making in the interests of the academic mission. Within the academic division, the two schools, the College of Professional Studies and the College of Arts and Sciences, are led by Deans and house all of the academic departments, academic programs, and faculty. The Bangor Campus Dean has no academic responsibility and oversees the day- to- day operation of the campus and interacts with functional counterparts in Augusta.

Institutional bylaws are thorough, readily accessible, understandable and comprehensive. All policies and committees of relevance to faculty are compiled in the Faculty Handbook, while the relevant collective bargaining agreements for faculty and other personnel are available online. While there is currently no regularly scheduled formal process for reviewing the University’s organizational structure and system of governance, the Baldrige Improvement Reports implemented in 2009, 2011 and 2013 to assess stakeholder perceptions of UMA’s performance led to a number of recommendations that have been implemented. The overall concept of expanding institutional assessment beyond academic functions is underway. The Committee on Academic Reorganization and the President streamlined administrative functions and reorganized the academic units from three colleges to two eliminating one dean’s position and appointing one of the two college deans as Associate Provost.

Institutional Effectiveness: The shared governance system within the institution is structured, comprehensive, and actively used, and the internal governance process has credibility. The Board of Trustees has established consistent procedure and guidelines for institutional effectiveness. The System is undergoing significant changes in the way it operates due to recent economic trends in the State. The reduction in state funding exacerbated by growing expenses and consolidation of services within the UM System add to the uncertainty about the future for the University of Maine system.

**Standard Four** THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

**Introduction**

The University of Maine, Augusta (UMA) consists of two campuses (Augusta and Bangor) and University College, an administrative unit of UMA offering access to courses and programs from the seven universities of the University of Maine system (UM System) at 8 Outreach Centers and 23 learning sites across Maine. UMA offers a flexible curriculum on multiple sites throughout Central Maine via multiple modalities consistent with its mission as a public comprehensive institution committed to serving a broad range of learners, many of whom are place bound. UMA uses the UM System student information system, MaineStreet, to make available all transfer course equivalencies among University of Maine institutions. UMA has a long tradition of course and program delivery using interactive television and other online modalities and is proud to be highly ranked nationally as a provider of distance education.

**Undergraduate Degree Programs**

The University offers 19 baccalaureate degree programs and 13 associate degree programs encompassing 22 majors and 39 concentrations. The University is in transition to offering primarily baccalaureate degree programs and eliminating or consolidating associate degree programs as community colleges make more associate degrees available. UMA is also moving away from 2 plus 2 transfer agreements with community colleges and toward a “just in time” individualized Transfer Equivalency Matrix. Processes are in place so that students enrolled in Associate degree programs that have been eliminated are able to complete their programs or transition into other programs. For example, students formerly in the Nursing Associate degree program at Augusta are being given individual support in completing requirements or transitioning to the Nursing BS degree. A similar process is underway for the Veterinary Technician program at Bangor, with exploration of a possible transition to a baccalaureate program with greater career opportunities.

The University has added new programs over the review period, including a B.S. in Aviation in 2013 in collaboration with Maine Instrument Flight (MIF), Augusta, a substantive change. Implementation of the new BS in Aviation was reviewed and is continuing according to plan and shows promise of becoming a program of distinction in the State of Maine, New England and beyond. Appropriate facilities and flight training resources are in place and plans are underway for additional aircraft and hangar space. The University has also added new majors over the review period, often in consultation with the community as to its needs, including the BS in Architecture which is housed in an impressive facility in downtown Augusta. Plans for a residence hall and student housing at selected sites (currently Augusta and Bath/Brunswick) are consistent with aspirations to draw students to signature programs from out of state.

Catalog and program web pages document that educational programs are coherent with introductory, intermediate and advanced level requirements and appropriate scaffolding of pre-requisites. The catalog clearly documents outcomes and requirements for each program. “Course charters” are a one page summary of course descriptions and learning outcomes. A number of programs have received national accreditation or are in the process of review for re-accreditation, like the BS in Architecture program. The current strategic plan calls for additional accredited programs, including Dental Hygiene (CODA) and Medical Laboratory Technician (NAACLS).

The college has an Honors Program with attractive facilities and programs that engage and motivate students including volunteer and community service. The University also promotes the diversity and globalization of its curriculum through a partnership with East Carolina University’s “Global Classroom” that uses UMA’s excellent technology to have live discussion with international students.

**General Education**

General education, embodying UMA’s definition of the educated person, is a coherent and substantive requirement of 40 credits for baccalaureate degrees and 20 credits for associate degrees. General education demonstrates adequate breadth and balance across arts and humanities, sciences including mathematics, social sciences and written communications, plus an embedded diversity requirement. Graduates are required to take at least two English courses for their written English competency and one course for oral English competency. Baccalaureate general education learning goals and requirements for all program are published in the university catalog and web page and are divided into Core Skills, Competencies and Abilities (15 credits) and General Education Requirements linked to the disciplines (25 credits).

In its fifth-year interim report, in 2011, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education asked that UMA, in its 2015 self-study emphasize 1) completing one cycle of program review, using the results to inform curricular planning and improvements, 2) establishing the Office of Institutional Research and Planning to support assessment and continuous improvement (see Standard 2), and 3) finalizing the process for the assessment of learning outcomes in general education and completing one cycle of assessment, all in preparation for this 2015 visit. It also asked for a progress report on “progress in implementing its plans to assess student learning outcomes” in the new B.S. in Aviation program. All of these steps have been taken and/or work is in progress.

**Assessment of Student Learning**

Since the Office of Institutional Research was established in 2011, faculty report that much better data have been provided for program review and outcomes assessment. The Associate Director of Assessment was moved from the Institutional Research Office to the Provost’s office two years ago and has been instrumental in advancing assessment of general education learning outcomes as well as beginning to support major program outcomes assessment.

Faculty report that, following an uneven start, general education assessment has made great strides in the last 2-3 years and is enhancing a developing “culture of assessment.” Faculty are engaged in selection of assessment tools and the process results in solid data that faculty report using to prompt meaningful discussions or course and curriculum improvement. For example, results from assessment of written communication using SAT rubrics are being used by English faculty in revisions to the teaching of English 101. General education skills and outcomes also are integrated into specific courses within programs and into the program capstone experience.

There are 11 General Education learning outcomes now aligned with the University definition of the Educated Person. Written communication and critical thinking were assessed in 2013-2014 and Information Literacy and Fine Arts are being assessed in 2014-2015. There is concern about whether the Information Literacy outcome is being met and the current assessment should help answer that question.

The process of Academic Program Assessment, uses the Annual Program Report Forms that include a report on learning outcomes, assessment activities and action steps. These report forms also follow enrollment and retention trends, and form the basis of external reviews. The materials and process are well developed and routinely followed. Results indicate substantive reflection within departments and across disciplines. Programs vary considerably in terms of effort and results at this time. Accreditation by external associations satisfy campus program review requirements.

In another assessment approach, UMA has focused attention on “barrier” courses, courses like General Biology I, in which student success (grades of C- or higher) is low. An action step taken by Biology was to move from a single section of 60 students to two sections of 30 students, with an increase in the success rate from 72% to 80% over 4 years.

Finally, online student course evaluations ask whether up to five course learning outcomes as published on course “charters” (one page summary statements of course title, description and learning outcomes) have been met. These results are reviewed annually and have been effective in promoting faculty discussions of course descriptions, pre-requisites, and outcomes.

UMA undertakes external evaluation of their academic effectiveness. For example, faculty at UMA offered to participate in a free, national College Educational Quality program run by an Investigator from Teachers College, Columbia University. This study is designed to determine academic rigor, teaching quality, and learning objectives at various national universities. Through a process of surveying students, analyzing syllabi and student work, and providing classroom observations, the Principal Investigator will provide UMA with useful metrics to determine measures of academic rigor that will serve the University. Seventy (70) faculty courses were observed, both on-line and in-person, and 24% of the students given survey questions responded to the request. Pilot sites will receive reports in summer 2015.

UMA has shown commendable progress on assessment, particularly in general education. The process of assessment, while multi-faceted and complex, has been successful in promoting meaningful faculty conversations about learning outcomes as well as examples of actual improvements in curriculum and pedagogy. While much work remains to be done, and academic program assessment is variable across departments, it is clear that since the 5 year NEASC review in 2011, UMA has been able to develop and strengthen a culture of assessment that will serve students well.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit**

UMA academic policies, procedures and integrity use UM System Policies and Procedures as a primary source. The UMA faculty handbook is another important source of documentation for this area. UMA has appropriate policies, procedures and governance bodies (Curriculum Committee) that develop, approve, administer and review its degree programs. All of these are documented and well understood by faculty and administrators. Credit for prior experience policies are clear and at undergraduate level only. Academic and Career Advising Center coordinates prior learning assessment. Strategies include placement testing, CLEP, DANTES, challenge exams and portfolio assessment.

The University of Maine at Augusta defines the appropriate workload for one credit hour as the equivalent of one hour of classroom or other faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work each week. Courses that convene outside of the traditional classroom may involve arrangements that differ from this particular model, but those arrangements will involve an equivalent amount of work per credit hour. Faculty in particular classes may assign a workload above this level. A review of syllabi verified these arrangements.

The faculty handbook defines academic integrity to mean that a student's work is the product of his/her own effort. Violations of academic integrity include such behaviors as cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, and are described more fully in the UMA Student Academic Integrity Code which is published in the online UMA Student Handbook.

Academic planning and evaluation are well established and are an effective part of achieving institutional mission. Annual program reports are submitted and document curricular changes, staffing and resource needs, and outcomes assessment. Programs are reviewed on a 5 year cycle and review does include external review teams. The Provost now provides an action response to those reviews and recommendations all of which are kept on file. Review of department workroom binders shows that while some programs have strong evidence of clearly defined program learning outcomes, assessment and program improvement which are documented in annual reports, other departments have yet to make progress.

UMA has developed effective partnerships, including the public/private partnership that created the B.S. in Aviation with MIF, documented with MOU agreements that clearly define authority, responsibility and financial understandings.

**Distance Education and E-Learning**

Online and blended teaching are increasing rapidly and this modality of delivery is seen as essential to the future of the University. The addition of a permanent instructional design team in 2011 provides formal and as-needed faculty assistance with online course development. Terms of appointment of new faculty include an expectation that they will be assigned online teaching as part of their workload.

There is a reported perception that rapid expansion of online learning has negatively impacted retention and student satisfaction rates. For example, iIn its annual report, the English Department attributed their sense that lower student grades and retention occurred due to launching the teaching of core major courses in online mode. However, one study (2011) comparing offerings of a single course by the same instructor across three modalities (online, blended, in-person) showed that course success rates are essentially the same across modalities, as chosen by the student.

Most students were happy with the mode they chose, but many expressed frustration with the homework management system and related technology challenges. For many students, online is the only option. There is concern that new students be given a robust introduction to Blackboard and related technology to increase both success and satisfaction. Students also report that there is some inconsistency in how online courses are developed and presented, response time by faculty, confusing Blackboard formats, and inadequate direction on how students should navigate course details. Efforts to address problems are underway, including faculty pedagogical training, technical literacy development options, and improved online student support for navigation of Blackboard, as well as a new student orientation. These efforts will be important to build on UMA’s existing strengths in distance education.

Through conversations with students at UC Bath/Brunswick, team members learned that students in the Outreach Centers like University College Bath/Brunswick and University College Rockland were passionate about their learning experience and their sense of community. These centers have been successful in creating a personal high touch community environment and student loyalty, while optimizing use of distance learning technology across the system to get class sizes large enough so that they are feasible financially.

In large online programs like Mental Health and Human Services (MHHS), faculty can have advisee numbers exceeding 100 students, which limits effectiveness. New students report confusion about how to get advising and the majority report that they “self-advise”.

**Dual Enrollment**

Since 2012 UMA had some dual enrollment programs mostly local high schools and mostly for sections English 101 or College Writing. There were no Math dual enrollment courses. In spring 2014, the Bridge Year program affiliated with United Technology Center in Bangor led to additional dual enrollment courses being offered. Bridge Year encourages career and technical focused traditional-aged students to continue their college education immediately after high school. The Faculty Senate developed an ad hoc committee to provide academic oversight and the Senate reviewed feedback from current dual enrollment instructors and developed an MOU with Bridge Year to offer 100 courses per year. This arrangement does not require a substantive change filing since UMA faculty select and oversee the high school instructors and because students take 24 credits at maximum, less than 50% of any college degree program.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

The university has committed new resources and organization structure in support of Institutional Research and Assessment and the benefits are already apparent. The Associate Director of Assessment is clearly the hub around which all assessment revolves but broader and deeper engagement across the faculty and programs is also evident. UMA’s institutional effectiveness would be furthered by broader disclosure of assessment results, like those now taking place at Coordinators meetings, and discussions that will further the culture of assessment and maintain the momentum that has been established.

**Standard Five** FACULTY

University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) has 89 full-time faculty and 187 part-time faculty members as of Fall of 2014. Of the tenured and tenure-track members, 53% hold a recognized terminal degree, while the remaining 47% hold MA degrees or credentials in the field. The faculty on both campuses, Augusta and Bangor, are an enthusiastic, committed, and flexible group who juggle many different responsibilities. They are dedicated to their non-traditional-age, commuter students and responsive to the particular needs of this population. Repeatedly they mention how they make an impact on the lives of students who have little opportunity to go to college due to geographical isolation or financial limitations. Faculty demonstrate a unified understanding of the University’s Mission and Statement of Purpose, particularly the definition of an “Educated Person.”

Faculty exhibit collegial relationships and demonstrate a strong awareness about each others’ work, showing interconnectedness among both campuses. By holding faculty retreats, using their teleconference system, and meeting during the semester (the College of Professional Studies meets twice a semester, while Arts and Sciences meets once a month), they maintain collegial integration.

Full-time faculty make up 32% of the professoriate on the campus, and teach 48% of the classes. Part-time faculty carry 52% of the courses taught. According to the comparative data provided in the self-study, the Student-to-Faculty Ratios of other benchmark universities show that this percentage of 32% is the lowest (Ohio State, Lima at 40.4% at the low end and Clayton State, GA at 62.8%). Due to financial limitations, recruitment of additional faculty has been cancelled or delayed.

The procedures for the recruitment and appointment of new faculty, as well as the requirements and procedure for tenure and promotion, are conducted in accordance with University of Maine System and EO requirements and follows the “Agreement between University of Maine System and Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine, MEA/NEA”. The criteria for appointment, evaluation and promotion to tenure are clearly laid out in the “Agreement.” Each new faculty hire is required by their letter of appointment to teach online and must be willing to travel to an off-campus site. Year-end evaluations occur with a faculty member’s “peer group,” a group of faculty selected from within the program who meet with the faculty member. Faculty are required to collect nine letters of recommendation from colleagues internal and external to the university, requiring them to have larger professional connections in their field. Decisions regarding tenure and promotion are approved by the Dean, the Provost, the President and finally the Board of Trustees, which has recently questioned some decisions based on position costs.

Definitions are provided in the Faculty Handbook regarding the responsibilities of the faculty, 1) teaching (including what is considered effective teaching, grading, and course development practices); 2) advising and mentoring; 3) creative scholarly research; and 4) university and public service. The letter of appointment serves as a contract indicating faculty responsibilities. According to the Faculty Handbook, faculty are expected to submit a work plan to the Dean at the beginning of the year and to document their work at the academic year’s end. While this is a laudable practice, it is not being followed consistently among the faculty or across disciplines. The self-study indicates that tenured faculty are reviewed every four years, with a merit-based pay increase dependent on whether the faculty has provided a “satisfactory” performance (3.5% increase) or “stellar performance” (up to 3.5% on top of that). Faculty teaching assignments are consistent with the institution’s mission. Faculty teach classes totaling 12-credits per semester, and the student-faculty ratio (including part-time instructors) is 18:1.

As documented in the Data First Forms, there is a steady increase in faculty salaries among the three-year window shown, showing a 6% increase for the mean Professor salary from 2014 to current year. However, in the comparative cohort group of 12 universities that UMA has selected, they rank 8th on the list (Ohio State, Lima shows $99,765 as the highest institution, Bluefield State College, WV is the lowest at $57,681).

It is unclear whether there is an adequate number of faculty to accomplish class and out-of-class responsibilities. According to the report, teaching loads may differ based on class size. Class sizes can range from 5 students in a dental hygiene lab to an ITV course of 163 students. Faculty are responsible for much oversight in addition to teaching. Faculty are involved in committees such as the Academic Program Discontinuance Committee, the Curriculum Committee, or the newly-formed Assessment Committee. They also evaluate Portfolios of Prior Learning in order for students to gain credit of experiential knowledge in a particular field. They are responsible for the General Education Curriculum, and are actively engaged in measuring outcomes and designing assessment tools.

The number of advisees assigned to any one faculty member ranges from 8 to 268 students; thus, faculty in departments without majors assist in sharing these advising loads. The average number of advisees assigned to a faculty member is 92.5. In addition to the Professional Advising Center, faculty use multiple modalities for reaching students for advising, such as Google hang-out.

Regarding the effectiveness of instruction, full-time faculty invite one another to evaluate their courses, though this peer review is not mandatory. Faculty are positive about the new format of semester evaluations that provide formative feedback regarding whether students have achieved core skills as identified by the course “charter” or learning objectives. While the student response rate of 30% does not appear to provide enough feedback, this can be attributed to the distribution of course evaluations online, as mandated by the University of Maine System contract.

The primary responsibilities of adjunct faculty are teaching and grading, as indicated by the Faculty Handbook. While the significant number of part-time faculty may reflect the University’s mission with respect to the large number of professional studies programs being taught (e.g. Mental Health or Architecture), part-time faculty have not yet been consistently integrated within the respective departments and the University. Some programs alluded to a year-end party (e.g. Library Science) to create a sense of community. A Part-Time Faculty Handbook is in a final draft phase, providing helpful, detailed information regarding teaching, grading, and resources on campus for both students and instructors. Efforts to retain part-time faculty consist of hiring practices that reward credits for teaching experience by giving priority to these adjuncts for choosing classes and being offered full-year contracts. Faculty acknowledged that the university should implement a mentoring program for part-time instructors.

Adjuncts are re-hired based on the evaluations of the students, which are reviewed by the Dean or the appropriate program director. The new contract requires that adjuncts be evaluated regularly, every four years. The “Agreement between University of Maine System and The Maine Part-Time Faculty Association” states “evaluations will normally be conducted in the fourth semester a unit member teaches at a campus and every fourth subsequent semester of teaching at that campus” (p.7). Evaluating part-time faculty is a recent development. In spring 2014 Academic Program Coordinators reviewed 24 part-time instructors, and completed reviews of 33 additional instructors by December 2014. The report includes in its appendix two thorough Adjunct Faculty Evaluation forms, based on in-person, traditional course teaching, but it is not clear how faculty teaching on-line courses are evaluated.

The part-time faculty are valued by the University for their professional expertise and their community connections. These connections may translate into curricular choices in the classroom and UMA appreciates faculty with specialty credentials for the work-force preparedness they bring to their students. As noted above, the means by which the part-time faculty are integrated into the departments varies among the departments; it is not clear whether they attend department meetings or assist with curricular design.

**Teaching and Advising**

Faculty members speak favorably about how the culture of assessment has enhanced their own teaching. The feedback from program assessment has led to Writing and Math labs for the students, as well as online support for editing essays (Virtual Academic Writing Lab and Tutoring project, VAWLT). However, they acknowledge that this population of “fragile” students needs more support to retain them.

UMA considers itself a leader in distance education. Of growing importance to the University is the use of Blackboard as a platform for teaching online or hybrid courses or in support of on-site, video conferencing and ITV classes. Courses at UMA are offered in a variety of modalities including teaching online classes with Blackboard, Interactive TV classes where students can telephone into classroom, the use of Polycom teleconference capabilities, smart classrooms, and Panopto – a live lecture capture platform.

UMA places considerable emphasis on ensuring that all faculty are capable of implementing technology in their courses. The report notes that in 2014, almost all full-time and part-time faculty used technology in their courses. Professional Development funds appear to be directed towards training in technology, either basic information literacy, or enhanced training for the delivery of Distance Education material, or adapting classes to smart classrooms and technology. The Faculty Handbook mentions a source of “e-Teaching Funds”: Faculty who want to develop their course or courses for teaching online or at a distance can apply for release time or stipends to do this.

The University has clearly taken the lead on on-line education. Training for the design of on-line technologies is well-supported, with Instructional Designers available for faculty. Currently, the Provost offers a stipend for faculty to take a “short course,” a six-week on-line class on instructional technology and to work with an instructional designer personally to set up a course; a specific template for Blackboard courses exists, with guided instructions that offers both clear delivery of instruction and consistency among course. Each year, a system-wide Technology Institute (a day-long conference) is offered at UMA.

The University will need to continue technological support for on-line learning. As faculty members themselves often need to explain to students how to use the on-line features, a student training program may be warranted. Also, the recent system consolidation of Informational Technology (IT) departments has negatively impacted faculty capability to deliver on-line instruction, as reported by both faculty and students.

Any UMA full or part-time faculty with forty or more students enrolled in a single class, or 100 or more students in total for one semester, is entitled to a faculty assistant, although not all faculty members seem aware of this potential benefit. Designated as Faculty Assistants (FA) and Media Service Technicians (MST), they assist faculty in larger lecture courses (for example, ITV classes at multiple sites that may have as many as 60 – 175 students). Faculty Assistants, who include undergraduate students and community members, are responsible for grading assignments, conducting on-line discussions, and interacting with students about exams, but do not submit grades to the Registrar.

**Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity**

The University supports research and scholarship through specific pools of money. An amount of $51,400, divided between the two Colleges, is dedicated to scholarly and creative research, that seemed insufficient to the needs of some programs. According to the faculty handbook, the Presidential Research Grants and mini-grants that are available to faculty play an important role. From 2010 to 2014, UMA provided 244 professional development awards totaling $834,115, which approximates to $208,528 a year. Grants may be used to buy up to six credits of release time for each semester.

It is not clear, however, how UMA is actively supporting and encouraging faculty to engage in research and creative activities that enhance their own professional knowledge as UMA does not appear to collect data on the scholarship or creative activity of its faculty in a very systematic way. The list of faculty conferences attended and published articles found in the self-study comes from a faculty survey of both full and part-time faculty who were asked to indicate any discipline-specific training, professional practice, publication or presentations they had pursued or presented since 2011. Out of the 89 full-time faculty, 42% responded. Out of 180 part-time faculty, 21% responded. Of these groups, approximately 64% had either attended a conference, presented at the conference, or published. Thus while some faculty are undertaking research projects that may certainly add to their knowledge core or their classes and curriculum, the University does not provide a way of tracking and thus acknowledging such scholarly endeavors as worthwhile. Faculty also hope to increase the number of sabbatical leaves sufficient for the number of faculty proposing significant research projects.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

The concerns over the number of full-time faculty were raised in the 2007 self-study and continue to be of issue. Particularly given limited financial resources, it is not clear what the University’s plan is for hiring more full-time faculty or the number of faculty necessary for balancing teaching loads and program requirements. Some programs speak favorably of the need to incorporate on a part-time basis professionals in the field who bring applied knowledge to the students, such as the 5-year Architecture program. UMA, though, offers a significant number of courses taught by part-time faculty, a dependence upon a contingent instructional force that is compounded by the number of classes taught on-line by part-time faculty. In order to maintain the integrity of the academic mission, some mechanism to evaluate systematically and periodically the effectiveness of instruction, both part-time and full-time faculty, as well as in-person and on-line mode of instruction, could be helpful.

**Standard Six** STUDENTS

Consistent with its mission, the institution defines the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve and provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their program as specified in institutional publications. The institution’s interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by respect for their enrollment patterns, program needs, and aspirations.

**Admissions**

The University of Maine Augusta, with a broad access mission as a regional state university, takes great pride in serving a wide range of students. UMA students attend the institution through a wide range of locations and modalities. Of the 4768students attending UMA as of Fall 2014, 36% of students were enrolled in online courses, 27% of students were at the Augusta campus, 23% were taking courses through University College Outreach centers and sites, and 14% were at the Bangor campus. Nearly two-thirds of students were part-time with an average credit load of 8.5 credits. 97% of students were in-state residents, over 80% were white, and over 70% were female. The average age of students is just over 30 years old, with many of them being first generation students.

The University of Maine system and the New England region as a whole are being impacted by changing student demographics, including a shrinking pool of traditional age students, increased competition for the adult learner population that UMA traditionally serves, and declining state funding. Although UMA enrollments are declining, the university has maintained the lowest tuition in the state, sustained by relying on the populations it has historically served: non-traditional age, adult learners, community college transfer students and veterans. In addition, the institution has been able to rely on its strengths as a pioneer in distance education utilizing an extensive network of outreach centers and sites. These enrollment factors position UMA as having the sturdiest enrollment picture and budget of the universities in the UM system.

Admissions policies and standards are ethical, equitable, and well-ordered in concert with institutional objectives to ensure open access to higher education. The admission and academic progress policies and procedures are accessible, clear, and consistent with the university’s mission. UMA uses Accuplacer Exams to assess student academic skills for placement purposes. The university uses these instruments to identify students in need of additional support in math, writing, and reading. 37% of students admitted in 2013-2014 were in need of developmental support; the university provides an array of services and resources to support students through tutoring, disability services accommodations and instructional support.

The University has developed recruitment and enrollment plans to address the challenges facing higher education in the state as UMA student enrollment is counter-cyclical.to the economic situation in Maine. From 2006-2010, numbers of applications and entering students grew, however, since then as the employment situation has improved, enrollments have been declining., A yield rate of over 60% from the admissions funnel is encouraging evidence of the success of the conversion process. The highly anticipated customer relationship management (CRM) system will provide even greater ability to target and assess admission efforts in the future.

Additionally, a number of administrative changes have been implemented in recent years to facilitate the admissions process. The investment in the concierge model approach, consolidating admissions recruitment, placement testing, prior learning assessment, transfer services, and generalist advising in the division of enrollment services has been initiated to streamline the enrollment process. Enrollment services staff are also located at the many University College centers and sites. In addition, the recent consolidation of financial aid functions and business office functions is another effort to streamline processes and minimize any potential administrative barriers for students.

In order to diversify enrollment prospects, the university is actively engaged in exploring entrepreneurial efforts to broaden the student population served. For example, the university is investigating partnerships to create quality, affordable student housing on the Augusta campus and near the Bath/Brunswick Center through possible public/private partnerships or alliances with other institutions. These opportunities offer the potential for housing modest numbers of students from multiple populations, including out-of-state students, international students, athletes, and/or students in targeted majors. However, UMA is also gauging the challenges inherent in housing students on or near campus. As the university weighs the potential concerns (e.g., increased liability and campus security needs) against the possible benefits (e.g., increased recruitment and retention, reaching new populations, community development, increased sense of student community), strong support for student housing was articulated by several campus constituencies.

Furthermore, another initiative actively discussed with the visiting team was the possibility of creating graduate degree programs in the context of the university system. Through assessments conducted with graduating seniors, there is initial evidence both of graduates going elsewhere (18% over the last 5 years) to pursue graduate degrees, and evidence of student interest in continuing their education at UMA beyond a baccalaureate degree (88% in 2014 expressed interest in a potential UMA MBA). In addition to an MBA program, other programs discussed include advanced degrees in Education. These programs might be offered in partnership with a Maine sister institution or as a UMA offering.

In addition, other efforts to continuously improve include the possibility of modified calendars to better meet the needs of the adult learner population. Specifically, the university is exploring offering courses for a 10 week semester to accommodate students who decide to attend at the start of the semester. Another prospect for modifying the calendar is making the more intensive 6 or 7 week course offerings offered during the summer session also available to students during the fall or spring semester. Seeking additional ways to attract students through offering new programs for undergraduates, housing, graduate programs or modified calendars may also offer benefits by diversifying UMA’s current largely homogenous population.

**Retention and Graduation**

Information about students’ academic standing and academic progress are readily available and the policies are clearly stated and administered in a fair and equitable manner.

The university orientation program is consistently offered and evaluated; yet it only reaches 10% of the student population. There was a lack of evidence of ways in which students learn about services, such as library resources, advising and other campus resources in a systematic way. Despite the extensive caring and commitment demonstrated by the staff and faculty, which is recognized by the students, there appears to be the need for more systematic triggers and levers to ensure students are aware of and can access the many campus resources available. To some degree, the competing demands and fragility of this student population will always be a challenge. The work on creating an online orientation program, however, holds promise for creating an accessible, scalable and flexible means to make students aware of resources and get them connected earlier.

First-time, full-time students as reported to IPEDS, typically represent only about 6% of the total UMA enrolment. The retention rate for 2013-2014 first-time, full-time cohort that numbered 175students Fall to Fall was 49% Reflective of the student body, these students also graduate at a very low rate, 13% within 6 years from the 2006-2007 cohort that numbered 216 students.

Since these measures reflect only a fraction of the student population, UMA uses the Student Learning Progress Model (SLPM) to measure student retention and academic progress, a model that offers several benefits. While IPEDS is used for official reporting purposes as and when required, the SLPM serves the University by providing measures for all students over a ten-year period. Those measures include a summary statistic, the Student Learning Rate, and tracking student academic standing in six different categories. In 2013-2014, the average course completion rate (passing or with a grade or C- or better) was 75% for all enrolled students. The Successful Learning Rate in this 2013-2014 cohort was 72% of total courses attempted in year 1 and 79% in year 2 were completed. This approach provides richer, more contextualized data that is both more descriptive and more comprehensive in capturing the academic progress of UMA students. In addition, when following successful students back from graduation, 85% earned their degree in 6 years and 93% earned their degree in 8 years.

**Student Services**

The Student Development mission statement-- to mentor self-directed students to succeed-- is focused and echoes the university’s distinctive goal to transform students’ lives. Departmental mission statements complement the university mission while providing a foundation for assessing outcome achievement for the respective departments and the institution. The Student Development office provides an impressive range of programs and services to support student success and to foster student engagement.

Under the leadership of the Dean of Students Office and with a relatively small staff, much is accomplished, provided and made available to the students. Ensuring a safe and productive learning environment, the office manages student conduct, the campus crisis intervention team, Title IX outreach and education, as well as maintaining the student handbook as a resource for students. In addition, the Orientation program provides a successful introduction for students to the institution. Yet, as noted above, the challenge the institution faces is how to engage students to take advantage of this opportunity and become more aware of the resources on campus particularly in the critical period of early student status.

The need for robust support systems for students is clear and demonstrated through Learning Support Services areas such as counseling services, disability services and tutoring. Whether leveraging resources to create workshops online, piloting innovative assessments to explore non-cognitive interventions to support students, or through collaborating with faculty to present to students in courses, the outreach is extensive. Federal and state networks, such as Cornerstone, and Women, Work and Community provide critical services and support to ensure access to underserved students. The Student Life area provides access to co-curricular activities, leadership opportunities, participation in campus organizations and governance. Athletics—while still a small area-- is a growing source of pride, enthusiasm and outlet for students, in addition to the Fitness Centers available on both the Augusta and Bangor campuses.

Adapted from a leading national professional association, a set of ethical standards guide student services personnel in their work. Staff members in student service areas are well qualified for their positions. There is a mix of seasoned, experienced and newer professionals who are talented, articulate and deeply committed to their students and the community. A positive, student-centric culture of collaboration and collegiality is evident on campus and is especially strong among the Student Development staff. The impact of recent staff layoffs and the resulting consolidation of responsibilities, as well as the prospect of continuing lean budgets and staffing in the future, were deeply felt and remain a significant challenge. Yet, there is a great deal of optimism and strength expressed as professionals seek to prioritize finding efficiencies with maintaining a sense of balance and perspective in their work.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Results from increased assessment efforts have been applied in a variety of ways to improve student success, such as modifying course scheduling to facilitate academic progress, identifying barrier courses, and designing faculty-led interventions. NSSE, ALFI, and surveys of graduating students show positive experiences for students in a wide variety of areas. The Baldrige Quality Assessment process also demonstrates UMA’s commitment to professional development The NSSE surveys document that on several dimensions engagement, and satisfaction levels for UMA students exceed those of their peer group institutions. Even given the high levels of student satisfaction, the SPLM indicates that nearly 31% of all incoming students will not return and over 26% will not make satisfactory progress over the ten-year measure.

The challenges that UMA faces, including declining state support, shrinking high school population, increased competition among Maine’s universities, and changing demographics, are likely to persist. Leveraging the strengths that UMA has demonstrated in working with non-traditional populations and delivering distance education are assets to build upon as the university explores ways to expand its pool of potential students. The strategic decisions under consideration, such as increasing recruitment of international students, expanding into offering master’s degree opportunities and/or developing a residential campus could offer transformative opportunities for the university.

**Standard Seven** LIBRARY AND OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

**Resources and Access**

A review of the website reveals that the expanded and renovated (1988) Katz Library serves the main campus in Augusta, and Nottage Library serves the Bangor branch. Just over one hour of driving separates Bangor from Augusta. Both campuses use a common website from which materials discovery begins with the OneSearch search box. OneSearch, a federated discovery system, links books, journals, journal articles, and media regardless of their origin. As a result, the catalog, database articles, journals, eBooks, and other resources may be located and often retrieved in one step. Significantly, OneSearch links to the University of Maine System’s union catalog (URSUS), which, in turn, is built upon Innovative Interface’s WebPAC PRO integrated library system.

According to their Collection Development Policy (1994, 1997), the Katz Library and the Nottage Library augment their collections with a promised two to three day delivery of any of the 3,000,000 materials available within the university system and its partners: The Maine State Library, Bangor Public Library, and the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library. Thus, in addition to the collections on both campuses, students have ready access to 158,000 online titles from EBSCO’s eBooks and ProQuest’s ebrary, another 465,515 titles from the Bangor Public, and yet another 349,948 titles at the Maine State Library in Augusta (American Library Directory, 66th ed. 2013).

The self-study expresses concern that “the current organization of the library staff is unsustainable” and “the current organizational situation is not a desirable model.” The concern stems from reduced staffing, and a personnel reorganization resulting from the system’s recent strategic planning and consolidation. Following the retirement of the library dean, the assistant director position was eliminated (2012), and the director of the Nottage library (Bangor) was made the acting director of libraries for both campuses. Subsequently, the search for a new dean was cancelled, and the current director now maintains offices on both campuses.

This concern over sustainability, specifically as it relates to IT, stems from the belief that the system’s attempt to save money by consolidating IT services at the system level may hinder UMA’s ability to “experiment with and introduce new technology.” The self-study also indicates some anxiety regarding “loss of local decision-making autonomy, job security, expanded job responsibilities, and insufficient staff to cover UMA’s extensive IT responsibilities.” At the same time, the self-study and personal interviews indicate a generally positive attitude toward making the changes work. This ambivalence is readily apparent in conversations with library and IT staff and has roots dating back to spring of 2012 with the loss of a day-to-day operations director for the Katz (Augusta) library.

The reorganization issue is complicated by the fact that significant organizational restructuring and financial reallocations caused sudden disruption to a program that had evolved over a long period of time. Most significantly, IT money and staff went to the university system, and as of July 1st there will be no local budget for IT. The current controversy comes down to two different camps: those who perceive a loss of local control, and those who have designed or have accepted the new model. Both sides have valid viewpoints; the self-study heavily reflects the opinion of the former.

It is clear, if not entirely accepted, that the new organizational structure is the surviving model. Proponents, primarily those administering at the system level, believe the new arrangement saves money and does allow for technological experimentation at the local level. Fortunately, communication is open, and both sides are willing to examine the possibilities of the new reality. After a rocky start, the IT director, the provost, and the system’s chief information officer now meet monthly in increasingly productive discussions as they address their concerns.

The self-study indicates library facilities “sufficient to house collections and provide study, group work and research spaces.” Data First Forms show a 25% materials budget increase between 2012 and 2015 with a projected increase of 28% for the period 2012 to 2016. However, the budget numbers portray a former reality and are not reflective of the current situation. That discrepancy has been resolved and current budget is correctly reflected.

The self-study places great emphasis on staffing: “The staff of the libraries has been reduced from a total 13.5 FTE staff in 2007 to 10.5 FTE now. This staff reduction has been most significant at the Katz Library [Augusta]; the Katz Library had 9 staff in 2007, 7.8 in 2011.”

During the same time, Nottage Library [Bangor] staff was reduced from 3 full-time staff in 2007 to 2.25 in 2014. These staffing data are reiterated in the Data First forms that show the FTE IT personnel dropping from 8 in 2012 to 5 in 2015—a reflection of the reorganization. Simultaneously, the institution added 4 positions to IT and provided the IT director with an administrative assistant. This explanation of the number of staff appears straightforward, but the reality is more nuanced. Initially, this seems confusing, because these staff members now work for the system although they are still located on the Augusta campus. Information technology staff are now members of a single IT department distributed throughout the system. They work under the direction of the system’s chief information officer with limited input from the local campuses.

The self-study claims library and technology resources “appropriate for its mission with a strong emphasis on its distance teaching role.” Blackboard is the organization’s course management software augmented by Panopto’s sophisticated course capture technology. An up-to-date and, according to the self-study, well-appreciated technological infrastructure is readily apparent. Information Technology encourages, supports, and maintains interactive television, smart classrooms, the UMA Portal, a voice over Internet protocol telephone system, and discipline specific technologies for its technical and professional academic programs.

Distance students can access all the online information materials available to on-campus students, and since 1988, they have received special care and attention from Off-Campus Library Services (OCLS) located on the Augusta campus.

**Information and Technological Literacy**

While the local control versus system consolidation issue mentioned above features prominently in the self-study, it is not the most pressing concern in relation to NEASC standards. The more relevant issue of information literacy instruction is a problem exacerbated by reduced library staffing.

While the technological infrastructure for online education may be robust, the content is more worrisome. Librarians do use in-class instruction, online tutorials, LibGuides, and YouTube videos to promote information literacy. However, there is neither demonstrated evidence of an increasingly sophisticated information literacy program nor evidence that students use the plethora of information resources and information technology as an integral part of their education.

Cost cutting efforts to reduce library staff and move more offices and functions into the library building lose site of the library’s instruction and study space roles—roles essential to this institution and its mission, especially its very considerable distance and commuting population. Administratively, information literacy does not appear to be on the radar. Even if it were, there are not enough library staff to develop an effective program.

First year students receive no systematic library instruction; there is no department that could claim, or model, introductory, individual course, or capstone information literacy experiences.

Finally, and closely related to the concerns above, the role of UMA is clearly focused on more online courses. While new faculty are required to take training in online teaching methods, the emphasis is on operating the classroom management software and does very little to explain or encourage use of the library’s remarkable resources and expertise. Use of library resources is up to the instructor.

This is not to say the librarians aren’t aware of student needs. In fact, through the University College, an embedded librarian, in at least one course, creates and models some of the ideal possibilities. As mentioned above, if a systematic information literacy program were to be created, the existing staff could not provide the instruction needed to realize the library system’s extraordinary potential.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Both the library and IT seemed unaware of the great starts they have made in the assessment area. These were not mentioned in the self-study. The library has purchased the nationally recognized SAILS assessment of information literacy software, and IT has produced an in-house “TechQual” survey. These both show a sophisticated awareness of assessment methods. Once these inchoate efforts become established, the results will be valuable for improving the programs.

The libraries and Information Technology operate within “year one goals,” “The UMA Technology Plan,” the “UMA Strategic Plan,” and the “UM System Consolidate IT Plan.”

**Standard Eight**  PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

UMA is a non-residential institution with campuses in Augusta and Bangor, and multiple Centers and Sites statewide. The two main campuses consist of 13 buildings totaling approximately 217,000 assignable square feet with approximately 179,000 additional assignable square feet in leased facilities at other sites. Buildings which support academic activities are equipped with classrooms and learning labs.

The team members’ visits to Augusta campus, a downtown Augusta building, Bangor, and Bath/Brunswick verify that UMA’s physical plant is well-maintained, Still, Master Plans for both the Augusta and Bangor campuses have not been updated for 15-20 years and need to be refreshed. The University has contracted with an external vendor, Sightlines, to assess any deferred maintenance needs. The Sightlines FY2014 report cites a $30.3 million backlog of deferred maintenance and identifies life cycles and modernization needs to be addressed over the next 10 years. Through renovations of existing space and removal of older buildings on campus the distribution of age of facilities is becoming more balanced. UMA fully funds depreciation, allowing for the institution to address deferred maintenance at a quicker pace than would otherwise be possible.

Classrooms are equipped with technology hardware and software necessary to support teaching and learning. IT staff are working to establish “refresh” cycles to update any technology needs in classrooms. Teaching technology is robust and forward thinking with the use of course capture software for students to view classroom lectures at a later time. Online courses utilize Blackboard as a learning management system for delivery of online courses and to augment learning for on ground courses. All buildings are wirelessly enabled for Internet.

Recently, after an Administrative Review was performed by members of the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Board of Trustees, it was determined—as mentioned above in this report-- that all Information Technology functions should be centralized in a Shared Services model at the System Office. This centralization has allowed the UMS to realize a $3.2 million net cost savings and also allows campus-based generalists to gain wider support in areas in which they do not hold expertise. In interviews with the staff and faculty it was noted, although they appreciate the efforts and service provided by IT staff on the UMA campus, they are concerned with the ability to directly access support staff who are now housed on other campuses.

Policies and procedures are developed at the UMS level based on International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 27000 series. Best practices are in place to ensure system reliability and security. A System-wide Information Security Council, which is comprised of a cross-functional membership, meets quarterly to discuss risks and ongoing concerns. All UMS institutions use Peoplesoft products for IT functions. The information security office ensures appropriate firewalls are in place to protect data stored within the system, provides vulnerability scanning on 1000+ servers across the System, and delivers annual awareness training on data vulnerability and phishing campaigns. A Standard of Acceptable Use policy is in place, including annual training and validation to spread awareness to guard against inappropriate use of technology. Compliance with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI/DSS) has been verified with a compliance checklist.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

UMA leadership has a good sense of the needs of the campus buildings and classrooms. Major IT systems are well supported through the UMS office with clear campus voices shaping additional needs. The development of a Master Plan will aid UMA in assessing the long-term needs of the campus physical plant.

**Standard Nine** FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The consolidated financial statement for UMS includes the activity of UMA and is audited annually by an external auditing firm. UMA’s net assets at the end of FY14 totaled $50.1 million with $12.9 million designated as unrestricted expendable which includes auxiliary funds.

UMA was allocated approximately $15.2 million in State of Maine appropriation support in FY14. State appropriations are allocated to UMS campuses in two ways. According to the UMA Vice President for Finance, a large portion of the appropriation is allocated by a historical formula, with the remaining allocated based on outcomes/performance measures. A sample of items that impact the performance measurement are completion rates, offering of degrees in priority fields in areas such as STEM, priority populations, low-economic status, and adult transfers. The weighting of distribution between historical and outcomes measures will change annually until the split reaches 70% historical formula / 30% performance based.

Campuses will be able to impact their own allocation of state appropriations through meeting the noted performance measures. UMA may realize an increase in its allocation under this new methodology, although there is concern regarding getting “credit” for program completion of students as they transfer among sister System institutions. Chancellor Page acknowledged this as a concern of the campuses and has committed to review the methodology of allocating the performance based funding as the initiative matures and academic joint programing grows across the system.

The UMaine System is undergoing a consolidation effort for administration. This effort is to gain efficiencies around administrative services, grouping staff to leverage their skills as experts in specific areas instead of generalists. Information Technology is the first administrative services group to have undergone this reorganization and although it has not always been smooth, they continue to focus on improvements to the new way of operating. This IT consolidation change has allowed UMS to recognize $3.2 million in net savings across the System including providing additional funds for strategic reinvestment in technology. Other areas of administrative services, such as HR, Procurement, Facilities and Finance are at various stages of the consolidation project

As reported in the Strategic Plan and data forms, within the past five years, UMA has experienced a decline in student headcount of 452 or -6.8%, a decline of student FTE of 226 or -6.2%, and a decline in credit-hour enrollment of 5,825 or –6.2%. Being a very tuition-driven institution, this trend has had a negative impact on financial resources. Even during these declines, UMA has continued to focus on fiscal conservatism, ending the past two fiscal years without needing to use internal reserves and with deferred maintenance fully funded.

UMA’s finance office, working with campus divisions and departments, has developed a balanced budget for FY16 which includes a conservative expectation of student enrollment, including fully funding depreciation. Following the trend over the past fiscal years, UMA included in the FY16 revenue budget a decline of 2.5% in student enrollment. Although UMA has implemented changes that hope to positively impact enrollments, the conservative budget approach should serve them well into the new year.

UMA has developed a new Strategic Plan that is expected to be endorsed by the Board of Trustees during their next meeting. This new Plan calls for the use of $1,600,000 of reserves over a 2 year period to support the three key strategies which are expected to stabilize and grow enrollments. These strategic investments will be in the areas of student success, academic innovation, and marketing/advertisement.

As part of UMA’s strategic plan, the administration has begun to explore adding student housing to two of its campus locations, Augusta and Brunswick. The facility in Augusta is expected to be a public/private partnership working with a developer to build and maintain a facility on the edge of campus. The other location will leverage the investment of a Maine Community College in Brunswick which converted previous military housing into dorms. Both housing facilities will be marketed to the aviation and architecture students to fill the need for affordable and safe housing for the students.

UMA annually conducts a Multi-Year Financial Analysis ("MYFA") that is a long-term financial forecast.  This forecast is consolidated with the other UMS institutions and is shared with the UMS Board of Trustees.  At the campus level, this forecast is very informative to understand what "business as usual" means in the longer-term and helps inform the goal setting and dialog for the annual budget process.  UMA maintains a high-level financial model in EXCEL to accomplish this long-term projection.

UMA recruited a new Vice President for Finance and Administration in 2014. The community has welcomed his business experience and willingness to entertain the right amount of risk with regards to managing the finances.

As part of the System, UMA’s financial statement management is performed and consolidated by the central office. The UMS Vice Chancellor oversees finance and accounting staff that provide support for financial statement presentment, budgeting and financial analysis, cash management, and sponsored-program accounting. The Vice Chancellor’s staff maintains fiscal policies for all institutions within the UMS.

Financial Aid is administered according to institutional, state and federal guidelines. Recent external audits resulted in no adverse findings. The three year default rate on student loans decreased over the past year from 22.7% to 19.1%. The Director of Financial Aid felt this decrease was due to increased communication with students to ensure they understand their financial obligations along with the implementation of financial literacy programs such as SALT administered through the University’s TRIO program.

Coinciding with their 50th anniversary, UMA launched a Capital Campaign with a goal to fundraise $5 million. To date UMA has recognized $3 million of gifts, pledges and planned giving toward the goal. The goal of $5 million is to support adult scholarships, enhance the distance learning experience, enhance veteran services and upgrade the auditorium in Jewett Hall. $1 million of the $3 million recognized is directly pledged for the auditorium update project.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Strategic and financial planning has been a focus for UMA over the past year. The institution is financially stable and financially well managed. The planned use of reserves to fund the strategic plan will allow the campus to make investments to provide for future stabilization and growth.

**Standard Ten** PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

The university website, uma.edu, provides public information, and the portal website, my.uma.edu, provides secure password-protected information for the campus and matriculated students.

The academic catalogue is available online. The catalogue and the website contain the institutional mission, admission policies, fees, degree requirements, educational outcomes for each major, financial and behavior policies, the availability of support services, descriptions of physical resources, names and positions of administrators, and names of members of the board of trustees. The governing board including email addresses, phone numbers, and their affiliations appear on a dedicated UMA Web page. In the appropriate offices, those interested will also find the student handbook, admission materials, transfer credit policies, complaint and appeals procedures, and co-curricular activities.

There is no listing of courses not currently offered in the catalog. While aggregated financial information for the University of Maine System is available on the system website, audited financial statements are not available online for the Augusta campus. Financial statements are available in print in the Finance Office.

In keeping with Title IV requirements, the cost of completing professional programs is available on the financial aid Web site. However, there are no data regarding student debt upon graduation, nor does the site disclose an average debt for graduates. The website doesn’t reveal student demographics, or rates of admission, retention, or graduation.

In keeping with the Clery Act requirement, annual crime reports are available. There is a link to these security reports on every Web page.

The institution has made plans to attend to the details of the website. Initially, this was the purview of the Office of Information Technology. However, due to a staffing change, the responsibility for portal update and development moved to the External Relations Office where it stills receives less attention than those involved would like to see. The self-study indicates a plan to unveil a new website on a new platform by May 2015.

Where appropriate, online and print formats provide the same information. Additionally, there is a planned redundancy of important information on the public and portal websites. The university mission statement and its accreditation status appear on both the portal and the public websites as well as in the academic catalogue.

The NEASC workroom, available to visiting team, had information that backed up assertions, program learning outcomes, and other claims put forth on the website and the portal. The self-study notes that these materials are also available in the Office of the Provost, the College of Professional Studies, and the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

The faculty and staff of the Web Oversight Committee meet quarterly to review the website and see if they are achieving stated goals. The self-study projects that during the summer, the Web Oversight Committee and the Office of External Relations with the admissions staff and the Dean of Enrollment Services will review Web content for accuracy.

**Standard Eleven** INTEGRITY

The institution subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, prospective students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. Through its policies and practices, the institution endeavors to exemplify the values it articulates in its mission and related statements.

The University of Maine at Augusta is committed to demonstrating responsible stewardship of public funds and the public trust, as well as ensuring compliance with legal requirements and ethical standards. University leadership is accountable to the public through a variety of advisory and statutory structures. The State of Maine authorizes the university to grant associate and baccalaureate degrees, as accredited regionally by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges CIHE. State statute and a political appointment process by the governor and the state legislature determine the composition of the Board of Trustees that oversees the state university system. Affirmative action, educational and professional standards as well as geographical representation are among the criteria the legislation directs the governor to use for the selection of Board members to ensure “representation of the public interest” and to reflect “areas of competence.”

Supporting sister institutions in the Maine system of higher education is ingrained in the history of UMA, since it began as an outreach center. This spirit of collaboration and support within the state system is a source of pride at the institution. The university has been actively engaging in consolidation efforts across the system to streamline administrative processes, share resources and support member institutions. UMA, for example, oversees University College supporting distance education across the state.

Community input at the local campus level is provided by the Board of Visitors whose members serve in an advisory role to the university president. Within the institution, the interests of campus constituencies are represented through a shared governance structure, as well as the respective collective bargaining agreements. Participation in the university’s shared governance process is a factor in the tenure review process for faculty. Moreover, communication is facilitated by periodic President’s Open Forums and his attendance of all full meetings of the Faculty Senate.

UMA offers instruction, programs and services across two campuses, extensive distance learning, and 31 off-campus centers and sites, enabling students to ‘stay close.’ The university’s policies, procedures, and legal requirements are communicated and enforced across modalities and sites, an impressive accomplishment given the diffuse nature of where teaching and learning take place. Appropriate policies are in place to oversee ethical research practices through the Institutional Review Board.

The faculty handbook, student handbook, student conduct code, and university catalog are the primary resources for communicating expectations and maintaining accountability. These documents are made available through the webpage and are shared by email and at student orientations, respectively. However, since the vast majority of students do not attend the orientation program, efforts are underway to create an online orientation to make more students aware of the key resources, services and policies. Conflict of interest concerns are addressed by multiple policies, including the Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure, Sexual Harassment Policy, Student Academic Grievance Policy, UMS Accounting Practice Letter Section 410, and the Student Conduct Code. Together these policies, structures and systems provide checks and balances to support academic freedom, and institutional integrity, responsibility and accountability.

In addition, policy statements from the Board of Trustees on issues, such as shared governance and diversity in the 21st century, address issues of critical importance for the integrity of the campuses. Title IX compliance and advocacy is demonstrated through the establishment of a Title IX coordinator in Administrative Services, training of designated campus officials, and broad-based training of faculty and staff using a system-wide online educational program. As of 2013, all employees are required to take sensitivity/harassment training as required by the UM System to ensure a welcoming educational environment. Non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions and employment have been established to comply with state and federal statutes. Furthermore, additional training modules on equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and harassment are available to supervisors.

Student privacy rights are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which is implemented through the confidential handling of information by the Registrar and Dean of Students Office. All employees are educated about FERPA through the webpage and faculty handbook and during new employee trainings.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

The “Statement of Philosophy and Statement of Purposes” document provides evidence of the University’s commitment to integrity and quality. Accreditation reviews and ad hoc committees addressing diversity and academic policies are cited as examples of assessment efforts to support these values. A review of syllabi documents that faculty make students aware of the policies on academic integrity, accommodations for disabilities and Title IX.

**AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE**

To document the institution’s compliance with policies related to Title IV Federal regulations, the team reviewed the University’s Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO. University of Maine at Augusta publicly discloses in its print Catalog and on line its policy on transfer of credit and articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by the University one month prior to the visit in the Kennebec Journal, Bangor Daily News, and Maine Sunday Telegram, as well as on its website. Copies of the institution’s grievance procedures for students can be found in the University’s Student Handbook which is also available online. With respect to on line courses, Blackboard/Student portal authentication and proctored exams are used to verify a student’s identity. The team’s discussion of University of Maine at Augusta’s credit hour policy can be found in the Integrity of the Award of Academic Credit section in Standard 4: The Academic Program.

**SUMMARY**

It is the view of the Evaluation Team that University of Maine Augusta is successful in meeting its well-articulated and deeply felt mission in the University of Maine system. Its programs are consistent with the population it aims to –and does—serve; where opportunities exist to recalibrate or add new programs, the University shows the will and resources to do so.

This is not an easy time in public higher education in northern New England. It is accurate to say that UMaine Augusta is doing extraordinarily well in this climate, able to adjust its expenses to meet its revenues, to balance its budget, and fully fund its deferred maintenance.

In the most recent NEASC review, UMaine Augusta was tasked with increasing its institutional research (IR) capacity and making strategic use of that research, designing and carrying through one review cycle of its general education program, and –similarly—completing one cycle of general program review to inform curricular planning and improvement. It is our assessment that the University took seriously those areas of emphasis and demonstrates full understanding and adoption of the program reviews and the building of IR capacity. Indeed, the University has a highly functioning IR office that is called on regularly to provide reports and data; those data appear to be well and regularly used.

The University had recently authored a strategic plan, the adoption of which should take place during this full NEASC review cycle. A revision of the mission statement is on this same cycle; it is aligned with the goals of the plan and demonstrates forward and bold thinking.

While some members of the University community lament a reduction in staff numbers, express the need for more full-time faculty, and are watching carefully the results of system consolidation,

UMA continues to succeed.

Its leadership is solid. Relationships are collegial and respect for students abound.

Still, this is a realistic University that knows the demographic and economic waters in which it swims. With these ongoing pressures and realities in mind, the team offers this summary of important strengths and concerns.

**Strengths**

* The University has taken seriously its assignment from the Commission to design and carry out a detailed and systematic review of its General Education curriculum. The General Education curriculum is comprehensive, thorough, enjoys broad support by the faculty and is characterized by explicit and measurable outcomes; reviews are carried out on a predictable review cycle. Assessment efforts, in general, are purposeful. Faculty and the University at large have made bold strides in asking the important questions of “What are we teaching our students?” “How do we know they are learning?” and “How do we keep improving our curriculum?”
* The University has made excellent progress in staffing an office of institutional research and establishing IR as a functional area that informs broad work across the University. This newly strengthened IR function has helped establish a culture of inquiry and its work is embedded in the work of overall assessment. The Student Learning Progress Model adopted by UMA as an alternative to the more prevalent but less meaningful IPEDS metrics fits the University student profile and offers the potential to follow student progress and make service and program adjustments to assist the University in carrying out its instructional mission.
* A strength of the University of Maine Augusta is its faithfulness to its mission. The University is clear about who it serves as well as its essential role in the Maine higher education landscape. Rather than wish for a more traditional student body with more “regular” enrollment patterns, UMA celebrates its mission and range of learners and meets them with a wide variety of teaching and learning modalities, well supported by technology and creative course design. Not unrelated to this particular strength is UMA’s administration of learning centers through the University College. University of Maine Augusta seems the absolute right choice to lead and manage University College. It has the personal commitments and technological savvy to carry out this work. As one person noted “the missions align” and the fit between UMA and UC “just works.”
* We note as a significant strength the willingness and enthusiasm of UMA to exercise its entrepreneurial skills. UMA saw the need and opportunity to start, for example, a pair of new programs-- aviation and architecture—to serve future occupational openings in Maine. Through partnerships and by building on community relationships and commitments, the University went to work to make these new ideas become real. The nimbleness and responsiveness necessary to take calculated risks for perceived benefit are among the characteristics the University names as essential for guiding the way into the next decade.

**Concerns**

* The University, though it enjoys a dedicated—if reduced in number—library staff, does not have the resources to deliver a progressive program of information literacy. There appears to be a lack of systematic faculty development in the information literacy area and no expectation that new faculty members are trained in the pedagogy of critical information identification. For a university with a robust distance education mission and students who may be new to performing research, the obligation to teach and learn the skills of locating, evaluating, and communicating reliable information seems essential.
* It is our assessment that the University has opportunities to improve the student services that may well have a positive impact on student perseverance and degree completion. Students report how important is the “personal touch” and this seems no less true for part time adults than for traditional-aged campus students. In a 2011 survey of student advising, students report that “self-advising” is the most prevalent way for them to get academic information. UMA needs to continue to explore promising practices in advising and serving part time adult students and not assume that their patterns of less than full-time enrollment indicate less need for proactive advising and regular contact with staff and faculty.

Pilots such as an online student orientation are to be commended and we encourage other initiatives that will help students successfully navigate their ways through to completion. While distance education is an essential and excellent vehicle for teaching and learning, students need the contact with UMA staff and faculty to reinforce and guide them on their ways. We recognize that personal connections can be harder to build and reinforce when students are at a distance; still, a sustained study of new approaches that have helped build student communities with students with patterns of attendance similar to those of UMA’s will likely yield results.

* The 2016-2020 Strategic Plan holds much promise to guide UMA in its next phase of development. While it awaits formal approval, this seems a good time to share the Plan more widely and build greater support for it. We encourage the Faculty Senate to review this final draft, staff to know it better, and the Board of Visitors to be oriented to it and become champions. In this way, the Plan—when it achieves the expected approval by the Board of Trustees—can become a true working document.
* Even a modest decline in enrollment such as UMA is experiencing is, as leadership notes, worth vigilant planning and careful attention to revenue and expense ratios. The University’s focus needs to be on improving first to second year retention, degree completion within the four-six year window and identifying the strategies to move to higher retention through allocation of resources and ambitious yet realistic goal-setting.

In conclusion, the University of Maine Augusta enjoys energetic leadership, a staff that understands and believes in its mission, and a faculty that is committed and flexible in expanding its instructional repertoire to prepare students for academic and professional success. UMA enjoys the support of its Board of Trustees and Board of Visitors, and the Chancellor. Its greatest challenges are likely to continue to come from external factors of demography and the economy, many of which are beyond the University’s immediate control. The University’s future will be measured by the adaptability and resiliency, creativity, and sustained student-centric work that have defined it for fifty years and will likely continue to do so.