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CURRENTS

University of Southern Maine

Special Edition From Office of the President

September 20, 1995

The Comprehensive Public University USM in the 21st Century

— A PROPOSAL —

Richard L. Pattenau, President

Statement to the university community based on remarks to faculty and staff on September 1, 1995.

In my inauguration speech four years ago, I said that USM was a good university on the road to becoming a great university. We are still on that journey, and we are making progress despite the challenges of the past several years. What we need to do now is focus our vision, accelerate our rate of progress, and turn talk into action. This document proposes how we will take action.

In Maine and across the United States, the environment of higher education, especially public higher education, is undergoing fundamental change. Modern American universities must reshape themselves to succeed in this changing world. We must use our strengths and employ our collective wisdom to integrate new perspectives and actions to meet the challenges and opportunities that we face.

Complacency, assuming that the future will be like the past, will guarantee that our aspirations will not be realized. If USM is to continue on the path of progress, we must be committed to shaping our future rather than letting events do it for us. We must do so in ways that are both responsive to, and provide leadership for the realities facing our campus, our region, and the State of Maine. This will take hard work and some sacrifice.

I. Setting the Stage for Shaping USM's Future

When considering the background for our work, there are three thoughts I want to share with you.

First, throughout this university community, I sense a strong belief in teamwork and a commitment to our educational mission and to our students. We are all part of a team working together to make this university stronger.

Second, it is necessary to remind ourselves that we are building on a strong foundation. About 18 months ago we conducted focus groups and surveys of various USM constituencies. The most positive responses came from our students. The more involved a person is in USM as a student, as an alum, or as someone in the community, the more positive their views. Sometimes we are much too hard on ourselves. There certainly is much work to do, but we are building from strength.

Third, this leads to my primary message. USM needs a clearer sense of direction, a stronger sense of purpose. Shaping our future requires that we have broad consensus on an overarching conception of this university to bring us together and energize us.

II. Working Context

What is the context in which we will shape our future, i.e., the external and internal realities that we must understand and address?

Growing need for a well-educated workforce and citizenry and rising public expectations. It is clear that our work becomes more important every year. The Information Age makes tremendous demands upon citizens. Undergraduate and graduate education have increasing value. Because these needs are greater at the same time that resources are more scarce, there will be more scrutiny and

attention upon us as we proceed to shape our future. In addition, we are increasingly expected to become partners with our communities, improving the quality of life in the country, the state and this region.

Recently you may have read in the newspapers that USM was one of the major partners in the effort led by the Governor's office that resulted in the decision by National Semiconductor to greatly expand their semiconductor fabrication facility in South Portland. Our faculty and staff in the School of Applied Sciences and the College of Education and Human Development will be working very closely with National to train new staff to support a \$600 million investment at that plant which will bring 600 high paid jobs to Maine. In fulfilling our responsibilities to this partnership, we will retain our intellectual independence and our objectivity as a university.

Accountability to Trustees and Legislature. The Trustees of the University of Maine System and the Legislature are also important parts of the environment in which we must plan and act. Both groups are concerned about accountability, but at the bottom line there is just one simple question, "Are we doing the job that is expected of us?"

Increased dependence on tuition. Another reality is that we are increasingly dependent on tuition income. In 1989-90, the last year that we received a real increase in our appropriation, 35 percent of our E & G operating budget came from tuition, very typical of public higher education. Now in 1995-96, 55 percent of our E & G budget comes from tuition. While we lost \$4.6 million, or 18 percent, in state appropriation, tuition revenues increased by 86 percent, \$11.9 million. The reality of greater self reliance stresses the importance of recruiting and retaining able students and using our money wisely. We should not count on significant new support from the Legislature.

Educational resources. Five years

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of reductions in state appropriations, increases in tuition, and budget cuts have left many in the university community with the belief that we have reduced our commitments to educational programs and to teaching. The facts are not consistent with that belief.

Here are the facts about changes in our educational resources between 1989-90 and 1994-95:

- **Enrollment has declined** from 10,545 in 1989-90 to 9,500 (est.) in 1995-96.

- **Total student credit hours have declined** by 9.8 percent from 91,276 in Fall 1990 to 82,377 in Fall 1994.

- **Total E & G budget has increased** from \$39.2 million to \$46.4 million in 1994.

- **Total full-time employment from all sources has increased**, though most of the increase in professional and classified staff was with external funding.

	Jan. 1990	Fall 1995	
Administrators	63	46	(-17)
Faculty	324	320	(-4)
Professional Staff	207	283	(+76)
Classified Staff	373	380	(+7)
Total	967	1,029	(+62)

- **Faculty FTE increased** from 400 in Fall 1990 to 410 in Fall 1995.

- **The student faculty ratio has declined (FTE student/FTE faculty)** by 9.6 percent, from 15.7:1 in Fall 1990 to 14.2:1 in Fall 1994.

- **The number of sections has increased** by 2.2 percent, from 914 in the Fall of 1990 to 934 in the Fall 1994.

- **Section size has decreased.** In Fall 1990 there were 330 sections with fewer than 20 students compared to 415 sections with fewer than 20 students in Fall 1994.

We have the resources to do most of the work ahead of us.

Increased competition for students.

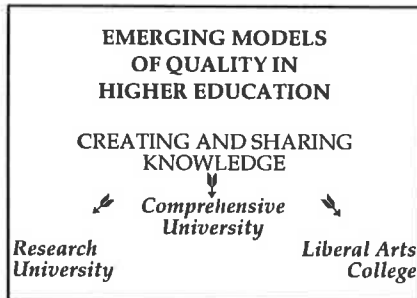
We face greater competition for students than at any time in the past. One statistic is particularly compelling. In 1975, 48 percent of Maine's college-bound high school graduates went out of state for their freshman year. By 1994 that figure had risen to 71 percent. USM's undergraduate and professional programs not only compete with those at Boston University, Boston College, Northeastern, Lesley, and Lowell, we also see a series of institutions offering programs in our backyard. Such competition will accelerate with the reality of distance learning and interactive television.

III. A New Model of Quality

For too long universities have been judged by two traditional models in higher education. Working from a common function of creating and sharing knowledge, the models of quality have been the research university and the liberal arts college.

A number of years ago David Reisman wrote about the hegemony of the research university which had come to dominate common thinking and our definition of a good university. Instead, we need to pursue a positive definition of what we are, what we are about, what is important, what are our priorities and what is our work.

There is a solid body of literature describing a third model of quality in higher education. The third model is often called the comprehensive university, a newer, more modern, more American view of the university in contemporary society. Comprehensive universities exist across the country. Approximately 35 percent of the degrees awarded every year are from comprehensive universities.



IV. Proposed: USM as a Comprehensive Public University

My proposal is that we agree to look at ourselves more consistently, define ourselves more clearly, and perform our work as a comprehensive public university. This may be familiar ground to some in the university who say, "We've been doing that for years." Yet for many other faculty and staff, there has been fuzziness and lack of consensus about our self-definition and our mission. There also is a lack of understanding in the community about who we are and what our priorities are. The first step in the process of shaping our future, then, is to recognize that USM is a comprehensive public university.

The key characteristics of a comprehensive university are:

Teaching and learning focused.

The comprehensive university is, above all else, dedicated to teaching and learning. That is the core role of

the institution. It is what is most compelling about us and reflects our deep and abiding commitment to students. As Provost Lapping often says, "We grow people." This commitment addresses the full range of human interest and growth; at the heart is liberal education, the foundation of all effective education.

National aspirations and standards. The faculty and research staff of a comprehensive university work to national aspirations and standards. The content, the rigor and the quality of everything we do is part of the national dialogue of disciplines and professions. This must be a place where scholarship, broadly defined, is alive and well and judged on a national stage.

Regional actions and responsibilities. Simultaneously, comprehensive universities recognize clear regional responsibility. We already do much of our work at the regional level, work that has high quality and credibility because of our national aspirations and standards. We are concerned about and committed to our community's social, economic, and cultural well-being and progress. We must continue to build our partnership with our community.

Thought and action are linked.

Comprehensive universities are places where thought and action are joined, pragmatic places where applied research is valued in the same way that basic research is, where the curriculum engages the world of practice, where we are involved with the issue of the day, where we build bridges instead of walls between the university and its community.

Efficient and responsive services.

Comprehensive universities are concerned about efficiency and responsiveness of services; constantly rethinking what we do and how we do it; using our resources wisely, and serving our students with good cheer and a helping hand.

V. Crafting the Comprehensive Public University: A Work Plan for USM

To reach our goals, to do what must be done to be recognized as a fine comprehensive public university, takes work. I would like to share with you the outline of a work plan. These are areas broadly defined where we have actions to take and decisions to make. Over the next few weeks and months we will determine together how these priorities can be implemented. I need your ideas on how to move ahead in each of these areas.

Make teaching and learning central to all that we do.

How should we go about making teaching and learning central to all that we do? In initiating teacher-scholar awards in the College of Arts and Sciences last spring, Dean Stebbins took a wonderful step forward in rewarding the centrality of teaching and learning. We clearly need to develop a number of other ways and apply them across all academic programs. How should we extend initiatives such as the Center for Teaching that foster collegial approaches to the improvement of instruction? What investments should be made in instructional technology that can improve the quality of the classroom experience and facilitate interaction among students and faculty? How can we take advantage of the technologies of distance learning to increase both opportunities and instructional quality for students?

Broaden our definition of scholarship.

We have to expand our definition of scholarship to include applied research, performance-based scholarship (music, art, etc.) and pedagogical research. An example this past summer was a workshop of 40 leaders in engineering education from across the country organized by Professor Julie Ellis. Another is the work Professor David Silvernail and his colleagues have been doing in educational research and evaluation as they work with school personnel and with the State Legislature. Those examples, just two of many at USM, represent the type of scholarship that makes sense in a comprehensive university. A broader definition of scholarship includes, but does not detract from, traditional scholarship and creative activity.

Enhance the role of professional service and non-credit activity.

We must enhance the role of professional service and non-credit activity in terms of what is rewarded at USM. Current examples include the School of Nursing's projects at Sagamore Village and in the Parkside neighborhood which increasingly involve other programs such as Social Work. They also include ongoing collaborations between arts and science departments and public school teachers such as the Maine Geographic Alliance and the programs in regional issues by faculty of American and New England Studies. And they

include organizational field projects such as those done by faculty and students at Lewiston/Auburn College.

Forge and strengthen external linkages.

We have to move forward building and strengthening external linkages that both guide us and gain support for what we do. Currently USM involves almost 300 community leaders in more than 20 program and campus advisory committees, such as the Southern Maine Partnership. The School of Business is revitalizing its Business Advisory Council. That effort is already paying dividends as business faculty move forward on the accreditation process. Our goal should be that every program on campus has some form of appropriate external advisory committee with which the department has a conversation once or twice a year.

Develop or refine academic and non-academic programs to assure consistency with mission.

We have to continue refining academic and non-academic programs consistent with our mission. The Provost's Writing Initiative is one example. The content and the approach to the Masters in Manufacturing Management offered by the School of Applied Sciences and the School of Business directly address the needs of Maine's manufacturing industries. The increased emphasis on nurse practitioner roles in the Masters in Nursing is in response to the needs of that professional community. We've mounted the Environmental Science and Policy program in response to considerable interest from undergraduate students. We are in the final planning stages of a new degree program in Science and Math Education that will meld an undergraduate approach to teacher education with the philosophy of the postgraduate ETEP program. These are only a few examples.

Create more applied learning opportunities for students.

We need more applied learning opportunities for our students such as co-op ed and internships — pragmatic ways that help students link thought and action. Students who are not already in the workforce expect to get a job upon graduation. We need to help them in that quest by providing learning experiences that prepare them in the most effective way possible. Potential employers expect our

graduates to have obtained core competencies such as writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. But they also value graduates who can demonstrate the ability to apply those core competencies to the challenges of the work environment.

Increase international awareness and institutional diversity.

We must increase international awareness and institutional diversity: students of color, students from other nations, out-of-state students. We need to reach out and welcome these groups. We have to build international ideas and diversity into our curriculum. This will give USM a more dynamic learning environment.

Recruit and retain able students.

We have to recruit and retain able students. The work of the Retention Committee will make retention an essential part of what we do: more focus on advising, on forming crucial connections between students and faculty, on a broad-based commitment to helping students develop the skills that enable them to succeed at USM. We need to make the work of the retention committee come alive for all of us. A specific component of our retention efforts must continue to be the Gorham Initiative which is designed to bring energy and direction back to that campus by focusing on the needs of traditional undergraduate students. Thirty percent of our students are full-time, 18-23 year olds. That is approximately 3,100 students, more than Bates and Colby combined! They produce 60 percent of our student credit hours. For over half of all of our commuting 18-23 age students, Gorham is closer or as close to their homes as Portland. A vital, success-oriented academic experience focused on the Gorham campus is an essential element of our efforts if we are to increase the proportion of those students who stay at USM to complete an undergraduate degree.

Reorganize academic and administrative functions consistent with mission.

There will be an ongoing reorganization of academic and administrative functions reflective of our mission. The Provost is preparing an academic reorganization proposal that will be shared with the university community within the next few weeks dealing with the potential to create a science and technology college and another

Proposal

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focused on the humanities, arts and social sciences. Academic reorganization should increase our ability to educate students and connect to external communities in appropriate ways, as well as reduce costs. Too often our current academic and administrative structures reflect no more than history and circumstance. Instead, we need to organize ourselves in ways that address our priorities and position USM more carefully for the future.

Seek public and private resources.

We must obtain public and private resources to support our mission. That means advocating to the Legislature that a healthy public university system is essential to a healthy state. An appropriate balance between the public and the individual investment in higher education is a principle that must be continued. But we also must be aggressive about asking for private support. We set new fund-raising and external support records each year, but we have to do more because we are increasingly dependent on our own revenues.

Increase efficiency and responsiveness of all services to students and community.

We have to increase efficiency and responsiveness of all services. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system is an excellent example. In the first two months of operation the IVR system handled 12,000 student calls, and not one student got a busy signal. That system will soon handle registration and financial aid in addition to grades. That is what it means to increase efficiency and be more responsive to student expectations.

VI. What Will Be Different?

First, teaching and professional

service will be more valued and better recognized and rewarded on this campus. People do it, are deeply committed to it, it is part of our fabric; but I do not think we reward it well enough. It must become the defining aspect of our academic culture. It will become a hallmark of USM. It will be an essential part of our public image.

Second, programs will be more closely linked to regional needs. We will provide intellectual richness, a wide range of programs, and opportunities for personal growth. We will be valued by this community. We will become partners in building a better tomorrow.

Third, we will become more aggressive vis-a-vis cost consciousness and service orientation. We will need to reallocate resources to accomplish our goals.

Fourth, our reputation for quality and rigor will rise.

VII. Conclusion

Our responsibilities to the people of Maine, to our students and to a sustained intellectual vision can only be fulfilled in a challenging and dynamic learning environment which promotes student achievement and academic excellence. Such an environment joins progressive liberal arts education with programs that respond to and anticipate a changing world.

I would like us to become and be known as a pragmatic place, a caring place, an intellectually powerful place—a university that is infused with the ethos of liberal education and attentive to the educational needs of a changing society. In the long run, my hope is that we will be recognized as one of the finest comprehensive universities in the nation. It is truly in our grasp. I think this is something that is quite possible, but there is work to do.

VIII. Discussion and Feedback Schedule

SEPTEMBER: Presentation of Concept Statement and Outline of

Workplan

SEPT. 1 - OCT. 12: Discussion and Feedback

OCT. 18: Final Draft of Concept Statement and Workplan

OCT 19 - DEC. 15: Discussion and Feedback

WINTER BREAK: Revisions

JAN. 19: Distribution of Final Report: *The Comprehensive Public University: USM in the 21st Century*

I have tried to lay out a straightforward plan so that we have clear deadlines. From now until mid-October, we will have discussions and generate feedback. Does the definition make sense? Are all the pieces there? Is the language appropriate? Does it capture who we are and what we want to become? In the work plan, what are the things that need to be done to make those work areas come alive.

I will meet with the Senates, the Planning Committee, the Committee on Common Purpose, Management Council, Deans' Group, Department Chairs and others. I would like a broad-based discussion on this at this conceptual stage.

In mid-October we will gather up all that information and prepare a final draft of the concept and the work plan, and then take it back out to the academic community for more discussion, feedback, and fine tuning.

There will then be a revision period over winter break and in early January the distribution of a finished document, *"The Comprehensive Public University—USM in the 21st Century."*

I am very confident about where we are headed and am eager to begin. I look forward to that dialogue this semester.

 University of Southern Maine

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