

MAINE COMPACT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Meeting of November 15, 2004 at the University of Maine at Augusta

Notes

Compact Members Present: Wendy Ault, Henry Bourgeois, Yellow Light Breen, Mary Cathcart, Kris Doody Chabre, Sandy Ervin, Sandra Featherman, Joe Foley, Bonnie Fortini, Joyce Hedlund, Mike Higgins, Donna Loring, Ron Milliken, Susan Percy, Derek Pierce, Colleen Quint, Betty Robinson, Henry Schmelzer, and John Witherspoon.

Staff and Guests Present: Becky Dyer, Kathy Dexter, Greg Gollihur, Dianne Heino, Steve McFarland, Cathy Newell, and Bob Stuart.

Chairman Foley opened the meeting at 9:35 a.m. by welcoming new members. He thanked the University of Maine at Augusta for hosting the session, and introduced Kathy Dexter, Dean of Students, who presented a profile of the University.

Lumina Foundation Grant for Early College and College Transition programs

Mr. Bourgeois reported on a major grant secured by the Maine Community Foundation from the Lumina Foundation for Education to support the Compact's Early College and College Transition strategies. Funds will be provided the Mitchell Institute to coordinate and evaluate Early College efforts so that we can build models, experience, resources and data for programs statewide. Funds will also be provided to the State Dept. of Education to develop the infrastructure to deliver College Transitions statewide. Ms. Quint and Ms. Dyer reported on the specifics of how the funding will advance each initiative.

Mr. Foley noted that this is a significant accomplishment, and recognition by a leading national foundation of the importance of our work. He thanked Mr. Schmelzer and Meredith Jones for their leadership and persistence in securing this grant.

Higher Education Performance Measures

Mr. Bourgeois reported on a small new project that has been discussed often by the Compact, preparation of higher education performance indicators. Thanks to a small grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to the Mitchell Institute, research staff will draft the indicators for Compact review over the next six months. The intent is to identify statewide and county indicators that we can collect and report on annually to answer the question: what progress are we making in achieving our goal of 39,500 new degree holders in 15 years? The product may be similar to *Measures of Growth* or *Kids Count*, though not as lengthy. Several education researchers are working with Lisa Plimpton, the lead researcher on the project, to frame the clusters of indicators and brainstorm possible measures.

Compact members suggested additional measures. Mr. Milliken and other members noted that this is a very important project with significant opportunity for measuring our results.

Mr. Pierce suggested that we find a simpler and more memorable way to express our goal. Mr. Breen offered the idea of "40,000 by 2020" as a shorthand way of expressing our target.

Maine’s Promise Scholarship Program (MPSP)

Mr. Witherspoon reported on the two meetings of the Scholarship Committee, whose recommendations are summarized in the following chart that was distributed:

Maine's Promise Scholarship	Proposed Eligibility Criteria
Be a Maine Resident	Be a Maine resident
Have a reported family income at or below 200% of the established poverty level	Target first generation students as determined by FAFSA data
Meet campus admissions requirements	Meet campus admission requirement
Enroll in a public or private higher education institution in Maine	Enrolled in Maine or schools in reciprocal states
Attend on a full-time basis	Must attend on full time basis
File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid by March 1	Rolling deadline based on funding
Maintain a GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale	2.0 GPA minimum
Renewable	Renewable with preference to prior recipients
3,255 students awarded	TBD
\$34,309,811	TBD based on FAFSA data
Award would eliminate all unmet need	TBD
Available for 4 consecutive years	5 years in a degree program

No bachelors degree, 1st year students				
Zero EFC	First Generation Zero EFC	Before May 1st	Before March 1st	After May 1st
4,747	3,149	1,880	976	1,269

All generation students		
2,860	1,506	1,887

Maine’s Promise Scholarship Program award formula options

Unmet need

Advantages: fulfills goal of compact of guaranteed access. Based on student choice and need.
 Disadvantages: Difficult to determine to financial commitment of program. Very expensive. Amount varies by institution and can be manipulated.

Fixed amount

Advantages: Predetermined scholarship commitment. Schools and students know what can be factored into need.

Disadvantage: May not cover unmet need. Does not reflect variances of cost of student's choice of attendance.

Fixed based on formula (for example average cost of attendance at University – grants available – Stafford loan available = amount of Maine Promise Scholarship)

Advantages: Guarantees access to public school based on minimal debt load. Predetermined amount of scholarship needed. Scholarship keeps pace with education inflation.

Disadvantage: Includes debt. Does not cover unmet need for higher cost institutions (privates).

Compact members asked questions about and commented on the proposed eligibility criteria, and discussed the anticipated budget difficulties the state government will be confronting this session. The members reached several conclusions:

- a. Stand-Alone Program. They agreed with the Committee that the MPSP should be a stand-alone program, not part of or connected to the Maine State Grant Program.
- b. First Generation Students. They disagreed with the committee that the MPSP should focus exclusively on first generation students. First generation might be a screen at some point in the process, but not the initial or primary criteria. Although the first generation idea was a logical approach and one that effectively reduces the funding obligations, most members felt that using the level of poverty experienced by the student and his/her parents as the primary criteria was a more important and equitable approach.
- c. Use Fixed, based on formula, approach. There was general support, for the third formula option – “Fixed based on formula” and the example offered, i.e. the MPSP amount would not exceed the average cost of attendance at the University minus grants available and Stafford loan available. Implicit in this approach was support for the idea of a ‘cap’ on the total amount available as a scholarship.
- d. Private college participation. Members reinforced the idea that there must be a reasonable differential between public and private college support, but did not discuss the specific amount of the difference. The example referenced was the MSGP, which provides a 25% differential.
- e. Use EFC approach. Rather than use poverty guidelines to determine low income, there was consensus to use the EFC (Expected Family Contribution) derived from the FAFSA which students complete to receive financial aid.
- f. Aim for 2006 Implementation. The members decided to ask the Governor and Legislature to act on this proposal in January 2006, at the beginning of their ‘short session’, not now, for 3 reasons:
 - ~ State government is facing a very serious budget shortfall (\$750million) as well as other pressing issues (e.g. tax reform) which is not the best climate in which to propose a \$30 million +/- new initiative;
 - ~ We need time to work with the new Legislature, many of whom are newly-elected, and should use this session to make the case for college and financial aid.
 - ~ We are not ready with our proposal at this time. We still have some important issues to resolve as a Compact.

CollegeforME Campaign

Mr. Bourgeois presented the recommendations from the Campaign committee. He pointed out that the focus has changed to a ‘target population’ approach, in which the priority population would be potential students followed closely by community leaders and state legislators. A summary of Compact member reactions follows:

1. **Stakeholders Group.** Members were enthusiastic about the Compact members supporting the ad hoc Stakeholders Marketing Group and their goal of agreeing on a common central message and supporting messages.
2. **Statewide Public Relations Campaign.** Mr. Foley observed that the broad-based statewide campaign was a public relations campaign, and that, appropriately, media was an element of it. He suggested that we might engage the services of a focused public relations firm to assist the Compact. Other ideas added by members included:
 - a. Solicit the support and active engagement of faith-based institutions and employers.
 - b. The ‘speakers’ at events should be college students and alumni to bring a real world perspective to the discussion.
 - c. The Compact should prepare a template for high school presentations, involving 4-5 graduates who are now in college and experiencing success.
 - d. We need to make the case for college with high school students, and show them the short-term benefits in terms of increased wages, etc.
3. **Regional Workshops.** Members liked the idea and urged that we target areas of the state with the greatest need.

2005 Meeting Schedule.

In response to a suggestion that the Compact consider quarterly meetings next year, the members felt that more frequent meetings were necessary because of the important work that has yet to be accomplished, e.g. finalizing the scholarship program. They observed that this year’s schedule of bi-monthly meetings seems to work well.

Chairman Foley adjourned the meeting of the Compact at noon.