

Maine Compact for Higher Education

Board of Directors Meeting

10.1.08

FAME Office, Augusta

Minutes

Board members present: Mary Cathcart, Laird Covey, Glenn Cummings, John Diamond, Joseph Foley, Joyce Hedlund, Martha Johnston, Richard Pattenaude, Susan Percy, Kent Peterson, Lynn Ploof-Davis, Colleen Quint, Rep. Christopher Rector, Henry Schmelzer, Melinda Schofner, George Spann, and John Witherspoon.

Guests and Staff present: Henry Bourgeois; Patricia Hart, Employer Initiative program director; Dianne Heino; and, Larinda Meade, College Transitions program director.

Joseph Foley, chair of the board, opened the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Higher Education Symposium. Mr. Bourgeois briefly summarized the results of the 4th annual higher education symposium, held on August 7, 2008 at USM, which was attended by 171 compared to 269 in 2007. 30% of this year's attendees were from the higher education sector, and 20% were employers and business people. Like last year, the overall ratings were good and excellent. The business/employer panel was rated 'most valuable' by the attendees, and the Congressional forum 'least valuable'. More time for networking was a frequent suggestion, as was restructuring the agenda to enable smaller workshops.

Several board members commented on the low attendance, particularly among business people, and attributed it to a range of issues: the tight economy, the overall theme which seemed to speak primarily to educators, and the title itself (i.e. "Money for College") which suggested to some business people that we were simply seeking funds from business attendees. However, one board member who attended commented that the content – particularly the employer panel and opening speaker – was directly relevant to employers, which suggests that the presentation of the agenda and its marketing contributed to the low employer attendance. Another member commented that many attendees left after lunch, before the Congressional forum.

Several board members volunteered to work with Mr. Bourgeois on next year's program, and suggested that this conversation and analysis begin soon in order to effectively frame and promote next summer's event.

Higher education advocacy. As a follow-up to the Symposium's financial aid theme, Mr. Bourgeois asked the board if the Compact should advocate at the Legislature to increase Maine State Grant Program (MSGP) scholarship funds available to students from low income families. He noted that one of the Compact's five strategies is to increase the amount of need-based scholarship aid available to students. Last year, the Compact failed to convince the Legislature to increase the MSGP because of state budget constraints. Board member reactions and suggestions:

- Several members suggested that a better approach would be to advocate for stabilization of state funding for the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Maine Community College System (MCCS), thereby stabilizing tuition rates. They went on to observe that, if we were successful in increasing the MSGP by \$1,000/student/year, but the UMS and MCCS had to increase tuition \$1,000/year, we would have accomplished very little.
- Another member noted that the high tuition/high financial aid model is Vermont's approach and leaves many low income students behind.
- It was observed that the MSGP provides scholarship aid to students attending private colleges, and is an important source of revenue for these students and institutions.
- Another member noted that the issue is financial access, and the best way to achieve access for the greatest number of students is to keep tuition down.
- One member suggested that advocating for support of STEM curricula and programs might be a good compromise, referring to Science/Technology/Engineering/Math.
- Several members commented that access to higher education is so critical, we must deal with it in the Legislative process, but we must work with MCCS and UMS and present a compelling and straight-forward case that articulates the economic imperative to Legislators.

- o One member asked if there was data to assess the effectiveness of tuition or scholarship approaches.

The board members reached consensus on four points:

1. The Compact should advocate for higher education investments at the Legislature this session. It is imperative to keep this issue in the forefront of the policy debates, even though it may not be possible to secure increased appropriations because resources are so severely constrained.
2. The Compact should constantly make the case for increasing workforce educational attainment as a long-term strategy to strengthen our economy.
3. The best advocates for higher education are business people, who are making the case for increased investments in the context of long term economic competitiveness.
4. The issue the Compact is advocating for is increased financial access, which could be expressed as stabilizing tuitions at Maine's public colleges and universities and/or increasing scholarships.

The board decided to organize an ad hoc working committee to examine the issue in more detail and report to the board at its next meeting.

Maine College Transitions program. Ms. Meade explained that College Transitions (MCT) offers a comprehensive course of study leading to college admission and completion, by providing high-quality, cost-effective and accessible pathways to post-secondary education for adults. Specifically, it helps adults who are studying to earn high school degrees to transition to college, provides preparatory support to adults who have a high school degree but are not academically prepared to take college courses, and provides career counseling, mentoring and support services to enable these adults to successfully transition to college and earn degrees.

She reported that about 1250 students participated in the MCT program between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008; this is well above our initial projections. This figure refers only to students enrolled in the comprehensive course of study, and does not include students taking one or two college preparation classes or participating in a workshop.

She also reported: 32% of the 1250 MCT participants are 16-24 years old, and 37% are 25-44 years old; two-thirds are women; 32% were employed; and, about 70% of those participants who were post-tested using Accuplacer improved their scores.

Ms. Quint reported on the College Readiness initiative and Mr. Bourgeois reported on the two leadership programs (Bangor Region Leadership Institute and Leadership Maine) which are focusing on higher education.

Alfond Scholarship Foundation (ASF). Mr. Bourgeois gave the board a brief summary of ASF priorities for the next couple of months:

- o *Launch a marketing campaign.* The ASF's Education Committee, chaired by Ms. Quint, will interview four marketing firms and engage one to design and implement a marketing campaign by January 1st. Four focus groups were conducted in Lewiston and Bangor to learn what motivates a parent to enroll/not enroll their child in the HACC. The Education Committee will review the findings and work with the marketing firm to incorporate what was learned.
- o *Monitor investment performance.* The Investment Committee, chaired by Mr. Schmelzer, reviews NextGen's portfolio investment allocation and performance, and advises the ASF board and FAME's College Savings advisory committee. The committee is also charged with *monitoring FAME's information technology (IT) system*, and engaged Berry Dunn McNeil & Parker through year-end to assess FAME's progress in building its IT capacity to launch/support the HACC program.
- o *Secure business support.* We are meeting with businesses to discuss their potential support of the HACC. Firms have several opportunities to help HACC, including: promoting the program among employees; offering payroll deduction to employees to facilitate contributions, and 'matching' the HACC gift for employees with newborns.
- o *Recruit hospitals and partners.* Twenty-seven of the 33 hospitals that deliver babies have identified champions; most hospitals have been visited by FAME staff. And, FAME staff met with 15+ 'partner' organizations (e.g. AARP, Head Start) who are willing to support HACC.

- *Prepare a 2009 Operations Plan for ASF* including detail on the Compact's responsibilities and budget for the year. This plan will become part of the ASF-Compact agreement.
- *Other priorities include:* (a) establish and fund an *evaluation process*, under the oversight of the Evaluation Committee, chaired by Mr. Spann; (b) conduct a celebration and launch event at UMA on *December 11*; (c) orient and support FAME's new *HACC program manager*, Elizabeth Vanderweide; and, manage the annual ASF *budget*, which is about \$720,000 this calendar year, and will be about \$1.6 million in 2009.

Agreement between the Compact and ASF. Mr. Bourgeois briefly reviewed the draft agreement establishing the relationship between ASF and the Compact, in which the Compact agrees to provide administrative services and related support to the ASF in order to achieve the ASF's annual operating plan and will be reimbursed for its direct expenses. After a short discussion, the board:

Voted, on a motion by Mr. Pattenaude, seconded by Ms. Quint, to authorize the chair to execute the agreement on behalf of the board. The vote was unanimous.

Financial Report for August 31, 2008. Mr. Bourgeois reported on the Compact's financial condition as of August 31st, noting that the organization is on schedule to end the year on budget. Although the organization began the calendar year with a \$44,000 budget shortfall, most of that will be made up by revenue from the ASF that reimburses the Compact for Mr. Bourgeois' support of the ASF the last six months of this year.

Minutes of the May 8, 2008 board meeting. Mr. Foley asked the members if they had any corrections to the minutes; no changes were suggested. The board:

Voted, on a motion by Ms. Percy, seconded by Mr. Spann, to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2008 Board of Directors meeting. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Foley thanked the board, and adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Henry Bourgeois, Compact Executive Director
October 10, 2008