



AN ASSESSMENT
OF
RESEARCH, CREATIVE, AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY
AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

Executive Summary

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I. Executive Summary

In October 2000, the University of Southern Maine's (USM) Board of Visitors issued *The Southern Maine Imperative*, in which they stated their expectations and codified USM's role within the community.¹ Then, in September 2004, the University of Maine System's Board of Trustees released its *Strategic Plan* and reaffirmed USM's regional role.² The description of USM's role and its governing bodies' expectations of its future is summarized below (Figure I A).

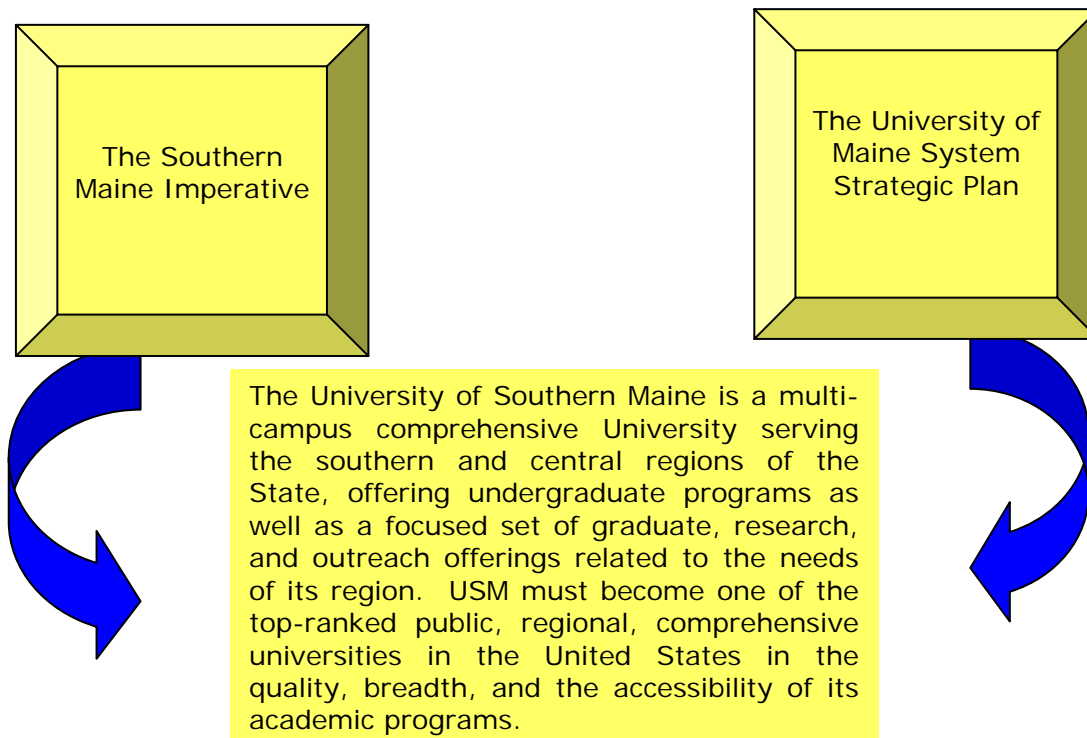


Figure I A

Provost Joseph Wood engaged the team of Lovett Collins Associates, LLC (Lovett Collins) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) to: 1) assess the current state and supporting infrastructure of research creative, and scholarly activity (RC&SA) at USM; and 2) produce and deliver a series of findings and recommendations to guide USM's policies and strategic direction for RC&SA.

¹ "The University of Southern Maine must become one of the top-ranked public, regional, comprehensive universities in the United States in the quality, breadth, and the accessibility of its academic programs."

² "A comprehensive, multi-campus, urban university serving the southern and central regions of the State, offering undergraduate programs as well as a focused set of graduate, research, and outreach offerings related to the needs of those regions."

In his strategic plan for the University, *Transforming USM*, President Richard Pattenaude offers five “levers” of change³ necessary to fulfill the expectations of USM’s communities. It is in the context of this plan that the consulting team set out to assess the role and value of research, creative, and scholarly activity (RC&SA) as a tool to achieve the goal of national excellence articulated by the University’s Board of Visitors.

The consulting team used a three-tiered approach to the assessment:

1. The consulting team engaged a Steering Committee with national, regional, and community representatives to broaden the discussion on RC&SA and its value to USM.
2. Lovett Collins conducted many interviews on-site over several months, met periodically with the deans, held a series of town meetings open to all members of the USM community to keep them apprised of the process, and engaged an internal panel appointed by the Provost to provide feedback on the key emerging issues brought to them for discussion. Lovett Collins also met regularly with senior leadership during the process to update them of the status of the assessment.
3. AAAS brought a panel of external experts to Maine to conduct a site visit on the Portland and Gorham campuses. Over several days, the panel interviewed a cross-section of USM faculty and staff from across the three campuses to address two issues: personnel and existing system capacity. The panel prepared a report on their findings, *Building Capacity for Research, Creative and Scholarly Activity at the University of Southern Maine* (Appendix D). The AAAS report focuses primarily on externally funded research and the infrastructure required to conduct research, creative, and scholarly activity competitively, efficiently, and effectively.

This document considers scholarship on each of USM’s three campuses, the impact of RC&SA on its communities, the faculty’s role in *Transforming USM*, and the changes to University leadership, policies, and infrastructure necessary to maximize USM’s investments in RC&SA.

The report details a comprehensive set of recommendations from this assessment that focus on fixing functional weaknesses in RC&SA infrastructure and investing in the University’s strengths. Key recommendations are:

- Be bold. Decide where the University wishes to excel and focus investment in those areas.

³ 1) Revitalize the curriculum. 2) Invest in current programs and people. 3) Change the enrollment profile. 4) Upgrade and expand facilities. 5) Raise additional external support.

- Build on excellence. Focus USM program investments using established criteria. Terminate ineffective investments and reallocate funding. Establish performance expectations, outcomes, and timelines for investment of MEIF and internally supported funding for RC&SA.
- Hire a Chief RC&SA Officer (CRO). Ensure that research infrastructure, policies, procedures, expectations, and rewards are aligned across schools, colleges, and campuses. Upgrade and formalize RC&SA functions under the leadership and direction of the CRO.
- Create a RC&SA Council. The Council's membership should represent the faculty and professional staff from all of the colleges and schools. Among its responsibilities, the Council will gain input from the faculty and staff on the recommendations of this report.
- Overhaul indirect cost rate structures and budgeting. Develop policies on indirect cost recovery, match, and space and equipment requirements of adding new faculty. Develop an interactive budgeting mechanism and transparent financial reporting.
- Establish a RC&SA fund. The funding goal should be \$5 Million over 3-5 years to support the role of the faculty and staff in the implementation of *Transforming USM*. The fund should be seeded by the community, awarded competitively, and based on internal and external peer review.
- Look to the future. Support small investments in promising individual faculty endeavors. Use peer review. Make expectations clear. Develop performance standards for continued funding. Hold awardees accountable.
- Support faculty scholarship. Develop objective standards to document and assess the breadth of the faculty's scholarship as articulated in the "Boyer model."
- Support community/University integration. Constitute, where required, and actively engage community Councils for Research, Industry, Community Engagement, Public Health, Arts and Humanities, and Human Services. Catalogue and celebrate the integration of the faculty and professional staff with their communities. Increase communication venues for and among faculty.
- Implement the report's recommendations. Develop action steps, assign responsibility, create a timetable, and measure progress.

This assessment provides the University with a comprehensive strategy to increase the value of RC&SA to the University and its communities. It also creates a platform for engaging the faculty in the implementation of *Transforming USM*.

The observations, recommendations, and action steps in this report are in six discrete sections: A) The State of the University B) Community Engagement C) Scholarship D) Leadership Structure of RC&SA E) Financial Strategies and F) Funding Challenges and Investment Opportunities. Although the recommendations are presented in separate sections, they are interdependent and mutually supportive elements of a complex whole.