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Guiding Principles for Unified Accreditation

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR UNIFIED ACCREDITATION

Recognizing that greater coordination and integration among UMS universities, access to more collaborative, multi-campus programs, and the preservation of all UMS campuses where they are will maximize the benefit Maine students and the State realize under the UMS Board of Trustees' Strategic Priorities, while acknowledging the practical burdens that separate university accreditations impose on achieving these goals at the scope, scale, and pace necessary to meet the educational and workforce needs of the citizens of this State, UMS universities will unify their NECHE accreditations following a robust period of campus engagement led by the UMS Chancellor and System Presidents.

Principle One

UMS's primary goals are to:

- realize, to the fullest extent possible, the purpose and benefits the University of Maine System's formation was meant to achieve, which unified accreditation is expected to catalyze and foster;
- preserve the academic, financial, and administrative operations of UMS universities that best serve the interests of UMS students and the State and provide the highest quality educational experience; and
- relieve individual campuses of the burden of each fully complying on their own with all NECHE standards.

Principle Two

Pursuant to UMS Board Policy 212 and the UMS Statement on Shared Governance, faculty will retain all rights to academic freedom and shared governance to develop academic policy, curriculum, and faculty appointment and promotion and tenure standards on their campuses and as necessary for multi-campus programs developed under a unified accreditation.

Principle Three

UMS will follow existing collective bargaining agreements and bargain in good faith with its employees' representatives as necessary to achieve unified accreditation.

Principle Four

UMS universities will remain where they are as provided in 20-A MRS §10901-A, preserving all existing multi-campus arrangements (e.g., UMaine-UMM Primary Partnership, USM partnership in UMaine Graduate and Professional Center, etc.) and not merging or closing campuses to achieve unified accreditation. UMS Presidents will preside over their respective universities and

be responsible for the day-to-day operation and development of their university's academic, research, service, and extracurricular programs within limits defined by the Board of Trustees and Chancellor. UMS will continue to operate under its existing Charter, with Presidents accountable to the UMS Chancellor and Board as leaders of their universities and the Chancellor serving as UMS's Chief Executive Officer.

Principle Five

UMS will maintain, to the maximum degree possible, the current independent IPEDS reporting and financial aid eligibility and administration at each university (an example for which is the University of Maine at Machias IPEDS reporting separately from the University of Maine). Although UMS will be responsible for complying with NECHE standards, it will delegate substantial authority back to its universities for coordinated, unified compliance with NECHE standards where doing so improves the educational experience and student outcomes and maximizes efficiencies.

Principle Six

UMS will pursue unified accreditation transparently, making official written correspondence between UMS, NECHE, and the U.S. Department of Education and related materials publicly available without request, including past communications and records showing historical consideration of single and unified accreditation.

Principle Seven

UMS University Presidents will maintain and manage their current accreditations and correspondence with NECHE related to them and work with the UMS Chancellor to determine appropriate transition plans for unified accreditation. The Chancellor (and his designees) and UMS Presidents (and their designees) will develop and prepare all material UMS unified accreditation applications, reports, and correspondence, and Presidents will be copied on all records, reports, and correspondence received related to unified accreditation.

Principle Eight

The University of Maine will retain its land, sea, and space grant statuses, and each University will retain its Carnegie and related national classification and association status and individual program and professional accreditations according to all appropriate and relevant standards. All UMS universities will work to achieve strategic complementarity to ensure the success of unified accreditation. Each will retain, to the maximum extent possible within the higher education public policy of the State, its distinctive academic, research, athletic (including conference and division affiliations) and extracurricular programs.