Strategic Re-Envisioning Update, July 31, 2024

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Dear University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias communities,

Our first Strategic Re-envisioning (SRE) flash survey yielded over 120 responses to the question: *What is the most pressing question or concern for SRE leadership to be considering?*

The top concern for those who responded was “how is this process different from previous strategic planning initiatives at UMaine and UMaine Machias?”

This is a very reasonable question. The major UMaine/UMM strategic planning document, Strategic Vision and Values (SVV), was developed the year I arrived under the leadership of Provost Jeff Hecker in 2018-19, with extensive opportunities for campus-wide engagement and contributions. That plan, which is quite high level, I believe still stands as a sound expression of the university's major goals and objectives. The University of Maine System (UMS) also released a strategic plan in 2023 that was built on extensive stakeholder, faculty, staff, and student input, and that is also available.

I view SRE as a visioning exercise, rather than a planning effort. It provides a way for us to collectively discuss what we want this university to look and be like going forward. It reflects the goals of SVV and also draws on the work of UMaine COMPASS, a process I launched during the pandemic through the appointment of a broad commission of individuals from inside and outside UMaine.

We could consider SRE projects as actions underneath our current strategic plan and SVV, and informed by COMPASS and the UMS plan. SRE involves doing the analysis, detailed thinking, and strategic prioritization that we will need to realize our future vision.

The landscape of higher education is continuously changing. Demographic challenges, the continued growth of online education, changes brought about by the pandemic, the shifting landscape for social justice and inclusion, and the potential of generative AI technologies require us to continue to think differently about the university’s future.

This strategic re-envisioning process engages a broad range of stakeholders around a specific set of
themes to allow for a deeper analysis of opportunities and risks associated with potential changes. The formative question for this work, “What would UMaine look like if we were designing it today?” allows a broad and current scope for imagining our shared future.

Planning and re-envisioning need to be ongoing processes because new and pressing challenges continue to emerge. Our community continues to grow and change and we are committed to engaging as many of you as possible to face these challenges. Along those lines, we are pleased to share the names of over 100 colleagues who will be joining working groups around the initial project themes announced last week.

This week, we invite your response to a question about integrating teaching and research at UMaine. I look forward to seeing your responses.

Lastly, SRE leadership will host another in-person and virtual office hours session on Tuesday, August 6, from noon-1 p.m. You can sign up to meet in-person at 207 Shibles Hall or via Zoom. I plan to attend and look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you to all who are involved with this process. I am pleased to see the increasing community engagement each week.

Sincerely,

Joan Ferrini-Mundy

President