

STANDARD 4

PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTION



DESCRIPTION

Academic Programs and Courses

The University offers nine programs of study leading to degrees in various fields of study; seven lead to baccalaureate degrees and two to associate degrees. The University does not offer certificates as forms of academic recognition; however, many students, especially students in nursing and education, earn certificates or licenses granted by external sources while or after earning their degrees (Exhibit 4.01: Inventory of Degrees, *UMFK Statistical Abstract May 31, 2005*, page 7; Degree Requirements, Majors and Minors, *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog*, pp. 68-121).

Academic programs are guided by our mission to produce students educated in the liberal arts. Accordingly, a requisite portion of the courses planned in all programs is a core of general education courses. The current core is 42 credits for programs leading to the baccalaureate degree and 24 credits for programs leading to the associate degree (Exhibit 4.02: General Education Requirements, *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog*, pp. 69-70).

An additional goal of the baccalaureate programs is to prepare students for careers and/or advanced study in one of several fields including the arts, humanities, sciences, business, computer applications, electronic-commerce, education, nursing, rural public safety administration, and environmental studies. UMFK maintains

programs leading to the following baccalaureate degrees: Bachelors of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies (BSES), Bachelor of Science in Electronic Commerce (BSE-C), Bachelor of Science in Rural Public Safety Administration (BSRPSA), and Bachelor of University Studies (BUS). These degrees require, in addition to the general education core, courses in a major and/or a minor. In addition to the BUS, UMFK offers 15 majors and 17 minors.

At UMFK, associate degree programs primarily serve as a gateway to the baccalaureate programs for students who do not feel prepared for a four-year program at the outset. UMFK offers an Associate of Arts (AA) in General Studies and an Associate of Science (AS) in Forest Technology. The AA requires, in addition to its general education core, courses that comprise one of five study sequences. The AS in Forest Technology requires forestry courses in addition to its general education core.

Admission and retention policies and procedures described later in this chapter govern admission and retention to the various programs (Exhibit 4.03: Admission and Retention Policies, *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog*, pp. 6-15, 56-67).

Some graduation requirements also vary across programs. The minimum grade point average (GPA) for graduation is 2.0 for all programs except the Nursing program, which imposes a minimum GPA of 2.5

because of professional program accreditation requirements. Programs leading to baccalaureate, but not to associate degrees, require a C or higher average in a requisite number of upper-level courses.

Program Evaluation & Planning

Regular program evaluation begins with annual division reports (Exhibit 4.04: Annual Divisional Reports 2004-2005) outlining issues and changes occurring in the programs housed by that division. In addition to annual reviews, UMFK follows Board of Trustee (BOT) policy mandates (Exhibit 4.05: Program Reviews, *BOT Policy Manual*, Section 305.1) that programs be evaluated within an established time frame not to exceed ten years by University of Maine System (UMS) staff and consultants. With four academic divisions, UMFK uses a four-year cycle of divisional program reviews. One division is reviewed each year; therefore, every division conducts a self study and engages an outside consultant once every four years.

The review begins with a self study that describes the program rationale, enrollments, faculty, budgets, and progress made in relation to the recommendations of previous program reviews and the relation of the program to the campus mission. The self study addresses the quality of the faculty and the methods used to ensure that quality. It examines the quality and appropriateness of the curriculum, with attention to such matters as student outcomes assessment and pluralistic perspectives. The self study is then considered by external reviewers to ensure that our programs are appropriate to our mission and comparable with those at other academic institutions of similar size and mission. Recent program reviews are available for examination (Exhibit 4.06: Program Reviews).

The first step to new or revised program planning is an examination of how the curricular change or the development of a new program fits within the campus

mission. The next is preparation of a proposal, which is reviewed by divisional faculty who oversee the goals, objectives, syllabi, and all other pertinent issues of an academic program. On matters of major curricular change, divisional approval is followed by Academic Council review, a multidisciplinary faculty body. Finally, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and then the University President review the proposal. Proposals for new programs or for significant modifications to existing programs, with the approval of the campus President, are then submitted to the BOT. The BOT, and perhaps an independent ad hoc committee, considers such proposals and decides whether to approve them. Proposals for new minors and concentrations, with the approval of the campus President, are sent to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for review and information.

When substantial program changes are implemented, students have the option of choosing to meet the new program requirements or of continuing with the program requirements in place when they entered UMFK.

Nontraditional Programs & Instruction

UMFK offers distance education via interactive television (ITV) and on-line courses as well as evening and weekend classes (Exhibit 3.13: *UMFK Semester 2005 Course Guide*). These courses are developed within academic divisions and are subject to the same policies and procedures as are traditional courses. The University also offers non-credit instruction to its students and to community members. Offerings include training opportunities for local professionals such as teacher education workshops, children's summer day camps, and Elderhostel seminars.

APPRAISAL

Academic Programs and Courses

UMFK's programs are well suited to the mission of a liberal-arts institution serving rural northern Maine. A core of general education courses ensures that all graduates are educated in the liberal arts. At the same time, the University's programs in rural public safety, education, nursing, arts, and science respond to identified needs of the rural St. John Valley. Programs in environmental studies and forestry are driven by appreciation for northern Maine's natural environment. Programs in French and History respond to the University's historical-cultural mission.

Through the transition from admission to academic advising, we need to do a better job of insuring that all accepted students have the best possible chance of succeeding. The decision in 2004 to hire a Student Success Coordinator is one way in which we plan to address this issue. That search was successfully concluded in Spring 2005.

With increased emphasis on assessment, we are moving to more direct measures of course effectiveness and student learning. Implemented in 2003, the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Plan (IEAP), reveals that students' satisfaction with the general education component of their education is high (i.e., 3.14 on the 4 point National Survey for Student Enhancement, NSSE scale).

Undergraduate degree requirements and objectives are published in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog* (Exhibit 4.01), which is reviewed and revised every two years. Program requirements for Nursing are also published in the *Nursing Student Handbook 2005-2006* (Exhibit 4.07).

All programs share a basic, coherent design; a liberal arts core and additional courses in a

particular field of study. Distinctions are maintained between lower- (100, 200) and upper- (300, 400) level courses, the latter specifying at least one lower-level prerequisite course. The distinction between 100 and 200 level courses and between 300 and 400 level courses, however, is less clear. All programs specify a sequential progression of courses and all baccalaureate programs specify a number of required upper-level courses. Capstone courses that facilitate the synthesis of learning are used in 31% of degree-granting majors.

All programs at UMFK lead to college degrees in recognized fields. A significant portion of students, 43.6% in Fall 2003 and 39% in Fall 2004, are pursuing teacher certification (Exhibit 4.08: Percentage of Students Pursuing Teacher Certification in 2003/2004, *UMFK Statistical Abstract, May 31, 2005*, p. 15a). This program that attracts a large number of students from Nova Scotia was instituted during the 1990's in response to a regional demand and to strengthen weak enrollments. These students, who come to UMFK with a bachelor's degree from Canadian institutions, are enrolled in our BUS degree program and complete their teacher certification as well as degree requirements.

In recent years, we have pursued a strategy of reducing the numbers of these students and enrolling larger numbers of four year undergraduate students. With the advent of the consortium, we intend to augment enrollment with master's degree candidates both from Canada and from Aroostook County, where there is a strong demand for graduate degree opportunities for educators.

Program Evaluation and Planning

As noted earlier, all divisions submit annual reports to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO). More extensive program evaluations are completed every four years for each division, including a self study and external program review. Annual division reviews have been based on the subjective judgments

of division Chairs and have at times been regarded as bureaucratic requirements, which foster little self-reflection. These have been beneficial as a reporting mechanism, but not as an evaluative tool. Since the implementation of the IEAP, information related to program and instruction performance indicators and program outcomes is being collected. However, reporting of these indicators and program outcomes need to be incorporated in the annual divisional reports to increase objectivity of each annual division review, perhaps allowing for greater self evaluation on areas for quality improvement.

External program reviews have provided useful data-driven analyses and fresh perspectives on the operation of UMFK programs. However, the recommendations that come from these and from the annual division reviews are not always implemented due to budgetary constraints.

Program planning benefits from a strong faculty voice in the design and execution of program curricula. In addition, UMFK benefits from its small size that allows it to adapt quickly with program revisions, additions, and eliminations to changing needs on campus. The IEAP promises to provide additional information that will allow faculty to identify needed changes even more quickly. When programs are changed or eliminated, the institution makes appropriate arrangements for students through a grandfather policy.

Nontraditional Programs & Instruction

UMFK adheres to the same policies and procedures for course development and implementation regardless of when the course is offered (day, evening, weekend, or summer) and regardless of the modality through which the course is offered. All courses are conducted with the same rigorous concern for, and adherence to, program standards.

Non-credit instructional activities such as conferences, seminars, and day camps result from faculty and staff initiatives or develop from community needs.

Last year (AY 2004/2005), UMFK placed 209 students in internships and practicums (Appendix 4.01: Number of Interns Placed Each Year Table). While some are placed in other states and Canada, most are placed in Maine and, in particular, in Aroostook County. UMFK is beginning to suffer from its isolation as the growth of its programs outstrips the local availability of internship positions.

PROJECTION

UMFK anticipates growth in current programs as well as changes in its programs. Growth is anticipated on the basis of past and projected increases in the size of UMFK's student body. The UMFK *Academic Plan, 2004-2008* provides enrollment goals by major with a total enrollment target of 1,150 students. Program changes are also anticipated in response to several changes called for by the *UMS Strategic Plan*. The plan calls for the transfer of most associate degree programs from UMS to the Community College System. The future of UMFK's Associate of Science in Forest Technology is more secure than the future of the Associate of Arts program (with four possible concentrations) because it is a well-established, unique program and well-suited to the University's mission. It is one of only two such certified programs in New England.

One very positive aspect of the *UMS Strategic Plan* is the opportunity to provide graduate programs in this region through the consortium. Discussions are underway with colleagues for master's programs in Education, Business, Nursing, Social Work, and Environmental Science. It is our hope

that graduate courses leading to a master's degree in education could come on line as early as the summer of 2006.

We will continue to improve our program evaluation and planning as the IEAP becomes institutionalized. Annual division reviews will become more objective and streamlined and external program reviews will be bolstered by a decade's worth of accumulated data. A primary benefit of the IEAP is that it mandates that feedback from evaluation go into subsequent program planning.

Budgetary concerns arise from the rapid growth in UMFK's student body. This necessitates additional funding for more faculty and appropriate facilities to support existing programs. The *Academic Plan, 2004-2008* will guide our efforts to add faculty over the next few years and to create a design for a much needed new classroom and laboratory building. Such a building is currently our number one priority in the *UMFK Facilities Master Plan 2002*, but program details for such a facility still need to be developed.

We anticipate a shift in the prevailing mode for offering distance education courses from ITV to on-line. ITV is being phased out across UMS. At the same time, UMFK remains committed to providing alternative means of instruction to serve nontraditional and underserved populations. UMFK projects a 25% increase in the number of its on-line courses each year over the next five years. Creative efforts to increase the number and diversity of internships are being considered, including the possibilities of on-line internships and internships offered through the proposed Center for Rural Sustainable Development.

The BOT challenge to the consortium to create a single set of general education requirements poses a formidable task. Initial discussion focuses on a broad set of distribution requirements with a small six to nine credit core unique to each of the three

institutions. All would agree to accept the "completed" general education requirements from each other.

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

DESCRIPTION

Undergraduate Education

The various undergraduate degree programs are described in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog* (Exhibit 4.01). The description of each major program includes appropriate rationale and clearly outlined program requirements and structure. The catalog lists the curriculum coursework in a progressive sequence, which is also printed in program brochures (Exhibit 4.09: Program Brochures). Program requirements are planned to move the student from a broad intellectual base provided by the general education requirements to specialization in a major. Additionally, program plans are developed for each major and maintained in the student record (Exhibit 4.10: Sample Student Program Plans).

All baccalaureate degrees require a minimum of 120 credit hours, a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0, with the exception of nursing (2.5), and a minimum of 45 credit hours of upper division courses. The associate degree programs, with the exception of the AS in Forest Technology, require approximately one-half or 60 credit hours to complete the degree requirements. The AS in Forest Technology is the exception because several upper level courses are required in this curriculum. The

requirement is unavoidable in view of the requirements of the Society of American Foresters' recognition that the degree currently holds.

General Education Program

Each undergraduate program includes a general education requirement and a major or concentration. The curricula are designed to provide students with the opportunity to engage in course work above the introductory and prerequisite requirements. Students pursue broad knowledge and understanding through elective courses. Practice in the use of information and technology resources is a requirement of all programs to supplement student learning.

UMFK's definition of an educated person comes to life within the general education requirements. The three principle components of the educated person are considerable breadth of knowledge, capacity for continued learning, and an appreciation of human creativity and cultural diversity.

The general education requirements for baccalaureate degrees consist of 18 credit hours of competency to include math, technology, and written and oral communication. Additionally, 24 credit hours in the category of Ways of Understanding are required, which focus on the arts and sciences to include three credit hours each in history and culture, physical and biological sciences, behavioral and social sciences, visual and performing arts, and language and literature. Furthermore, a minimum of nine credits outside of the major and distributed among three areas under the Ways of Understanding category are required for a total of 42 credits. The majority of these requirements may be met by courses at the 100 to 200 level where the focus is on the methodology and subject matter of the domains of arts and humanities, the sciences and mathematics, and the social sciences.

General education requirements total 24 credit hours for an associate degree. Students enrolled in associate degree programs tend to be more occupationally oriented, and degree requirements reflect this orientation. However, to preserve a liberal arts base 15 credit hours are distributed across five disciplinary areas.

Baccalaureate students are advised to begin their programs by satisfying general education requirements within the first two years. All four-year academic programs are grounded firmly in the liberal arts and sciences. UMFK requires the same general education base of 42 credit hours or slightly more than one-third of a student's coursework. The current program is outlined in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog* and in the on-line catalog (Exhibit 4.02).

General Education Requirements
<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/admissions/>

Major Curricula

Work within an undergraduate major at UMFK requires 30 to 63 credit hours, with professional programs occupying the high end: electronic commerce (63), nursing (63), elementary education (62), public safety administration (60), business (44), and environmental studies (41). Most of the traditional liberal arts or science majors, however, require only 30 credit hours. One or two introductory level courses or instructor permission generally is the prerequisite for 300-400 level and some 200 level courses.

The BUS differs from other UMFK four-year degrees in that it has no specific major requirements. The BUS does require a minimum of 120 credit hours, a minimum GPA of 2.0, a minimum of 45 hours of upper-division credit, and completion of the general education requirements and at least 30 credit hours at UMFK or through one of its programs. A student, with the support of an appropriate advisor, may complete an acceptable major while pursuing the BUS

degree and have that major appear on the transcript. Many students working toward the BUS have transferred into UMFK, and will often receive approval for block transfer of general education requirements after transcript review.

Assessment of Graduate Competencies

Faculty believe that a graduate of a baccalaureate program should possess competence in reading and writing; math; oral communication; logical, analytical, critical, and creative thinking; technology; history and culture; visual and performing arts; and sciences. Starting in 2002-2003, the faculty, through a campus-wide committee, began a systematic assessment of student writing. The following academic year, faculty, in conjunction with the VPAA, began additional assessments of student outcomes in the majors. These efforts have wide faculty support as evidenced by the high turnout at a faculty development day in January 2004 dealing with assessment of programs. A follow-up faculty development day on outcomes assessment is planned for the fall of 2005 (Exhibit 4.12: Faculty Development Days Assessment Materials and Program Outcomes).

Many programs require performances and presentations that demonstrate achievement of course, program, and/or general education outcomes. In addition to the standard evaluation methods of individual courses, some courses require senior project papers, publication of creative and scholarly works, and portfolios as a means to demonstrate achievement of student learning outcomes (Appendix 4.02: Academic Program Assessment Techniques in Use, Spring 2005 & Sample Program Outcomes).

In addition, senior capstone experiences have been instituted by some program faculty to verify and showcase the knowledge and skills of their students. Furthermore, many of the professional programs have required internships and practica that not only allow third party

verification of the students' abilities as they approach the culmination of their baccalaureate studies, but also integrate classroom knowledge with professional practice in the field (Exhibit 4.11: Sample Capstone/Internship Projects).

Other means used to demonstrate external achievement of student outcomes include employer surveys and norm-referenced general examinations such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), National Teacher's Exam (NTE), and National Council Licensure Exam for Registered Nurses (N-CLEX-RN). Currently, UMFK is using the NSSE to gather information about student response to the general education curriculum.

The divisions are responsible for making sure that the assessment findings are used for ensuring that the information generated becomes meaningful feedback for the improvement of the educational experience within their majors. The Council for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (CIEA) has general oversight of these activities to ensure a quality University experience.

APPRAISAL

Academic Programs and Courses

The bachelor and associate degree programs at UMFK have clearly articulated requirements that guide students through increasingly complex and theoretically challenging material. The BUS has limited requirements beyond the 120 credit-hour threshold for graduation, completion of the general education core, and 45 credit hours of upper level electives. The value of this degree is ultimately dependent upon the

timely advice provided by the student's faculty mentor.

The requirements for General Education and majors are provided in a clear and concise fashion in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog* (Exhibit 4.01, 4.02), which is available to students both online and in paper form.

General Education Program

The general education policy was first published in the *UMFK 1992-1994 Academic Catalog* and the uniform application of the general education requirements to all degrees was recently reaffirmed by the faculty in April 2005. All bachelor degrees also have a concentration ranging from 30 to 63 credit hours.

A proposed new set of general education requirements was explored by the faculty in 2004 seeking to accomplish the ideal established by NEASC of "showing balanced regard" for the traditional aspects of the liberal arts (Exhibit 4.13: Faculty Assembly Minutes of 5/12/2004). Based on the proposed set of general education requirements, all bachelor degrees at UMFK would require at least 45% and the AA degrees 40% of the student's education be completed by fulfilling general education requirements. The only exception to the 33% minimum is the AS in Forest Technology. Of a total of 75 credit hours required to complete the degree, only 17 credit hours or 23% are devoted to general education. This is less than the 33% minimum that is established for this standard, and a close inspection of the requirements for the AA degrees versus the AS degree suggests that the degree fails to provide the student with adequate exposure to the "historical and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions." This is

largely a product of requirements of the Society of American Foresters and the desire of the forestry faculty to keep degree completion to five semesters.

Final action on the proposed new General Education Requirements has not been taken and is currently on hold while we examine the direction from the UMS Office to explore a single set of General Education Requirements for the consortium.

Major Curricula

Each of the majors or concentrations follows a logical sequencing and a progression of introductory to advanced topics in the discipline. The breadth of required coursework in each of the majors ensures that the student is exposed to the depth of knowledge in each of the fields of study (Exhibit 4.01).

Over the past several years, to determine programmatic success, each major has been working toward identifying clear student outcomes and employing adequate methods of assessment to determine programmatic success. All professional programs at the University employ a combination of capstone courses, internships, practica, and/or student teaching to allow students the opportunity to apply classroom learning. This experience also exposes students to the current practice of working professionals. In addition, most of the professional programs hire adjunct faculty members who are practicing professionals to deliver instruction where appropriate to the program and course content. The program and students benefit from the perspective that these individuals bring to the classroom and curriculum development.

Associate degrees at the University afford many first generation students and those who are uncertain about their readiness for a four-year program with the opportunity to test the waters with what they perceive as a more achievable goal. Many of these students ultimately stay to pursue a

bachelor's degree once they develop confidence in their abilities to succeed. The transfer of students from AA to either BS or BA degrees in two recent years indicates that 51% in 2001 and 54% in 2003 stayed to pursue four year degrees. Several of the associate degrees do offer the student the opportunity to link their classroom education with applied field work. Forest Technology, Human Services, and Criminal Justice concentrations require or offer students the opportunity to pursue internships and other experiences that emphasize the relationship between the classroom and the workplace.

Assessment of Graduate Competencies

We have embarked upon a strong program of assessment to determine the effectiveness of graduate competencies in the majors. Most of our programs have also developed program outcomes, assessment instruments, and success thresholds (Appendix 4.02: Academic Program Assessment Techniques in Use, Spring 2005; Exhibit 4.12: Program Outcomes). The instruments and success thresholds promise to become an effective process for tracking and improving program performance. A faculty development day was held in January 2004 on program outcomes and assessment, which was lead by an expert in outcome assessment who also provided individualized program consultation. A follow-up faculty development day, again, led by the assessment consultant will be held in September 2005 to discuss progress on program outcomes and assessment. Additional time will be required before the assessment cycle is fully operational for general education and for all majors.

One exemplary program that sets the standard for assessment at the University is Nursing. Nursing program majors must successfully complete a comprehensive nursing Health Educations Services, Incorporated (HESI)[®] exit exam, which is used to predict student success with nursing licensure. The presence of this program with

a long history of assessment provides a valuable model as we seek to extend this way of thinking across the curriculum.

In 2004, the institution began employing NSSE, a national survey of undergraduate quality. This instrument will serve to query undergraduates directly about their general educational experiences as particular classroom activities and specific faculty and peer practices are related to high-quality undergraduate student outcomes.

The importance of assessing general education outcomes is recognized; however, for two years the focus of the general education outcomes assessment has been on writing, which was driven by the Academic Assessment Committee (Exhibit 4.14: Writing Assessment Results). However, this committee was not active in AY 2004/2005 for several reasons. First, the committee Chair resigned and relocated. Second, UMS encouraged the consortium to determine a similar set of general education requirements, which is currently in progress. Third, at the spring Appreciative Inquiry Consortia Summit discussions among the participants occurred around identifying similar general education outcomes.

PROJECTION

The Associate of Arts degrees continue to be an important part of the constellation of degrees offered at UMFk. The most recent evidence suggests that the number of AA degrees awarded per year relative to the total degrees awarded each year is shrinking, 34% in 1993 to 14% in 2003 (Exhibit 4.15: Graduates by Degree, *UMFK Statistical Abstract, February 2004*, p. 23). However we do not want to eliminate the AA degrees for the foreseeable future. These programs are well attended and serve local needs. In addition, the AA degrees offer an accessible

gateway for many non-traditional students who question their ability to succeed at higher education.

The *UMS Strategic Plan 2004* that proposes moving most Associate Degrees to the Community College System provides an exception for unique programs such as Forest Technology at UMFK. Beyond that, a procedure is proposed for judging other offerings through a committee composed of three Presidents from UMS and the Community College System. We intend to use this appeal process in order to serve the needs of our community.

Future discussions surrounding general education requirements and outcomes will continue as current collaborative efforts among the consortium institutions move ahead to explore a unified general education program, thereby reducing restrictions for transferability of general education credits among the three campuses.

The Academic Assessment Committee will be established in the fall of 2005 as a standing committee and be charged with continuing with evaluation of the writing outcome results for quality improvement in the general education courses as well as more clearly identifying other general education outcomes. Objective measurement of the general education outcomes will be increased and a systematic approach to assessing additional general education outcomes will be developed. In addition to the writing assessment tool and NSSE, instruments will be developed to assess the general education program outcomes of individual courses as well as graduating senior and alumni surveys of student satisfaction with their general education.

In recent years, UMFK has made a concerted effort to increase its enrollment to stabilize finances. To build upon the remarkable growth in enrollments (151% increase in fulltime equivalent, FTE, during the last 10 years), academic divisions will work with admissions to offer programs that

are attractive to students and that produce graduates that are attractive to potential employers (Exhibit 4.16: Student FTE Fall 1995-2004, *UMFK Statistical Abstract, May 31, 2005*, p. 10b). As faculty members work to develop concentrations within existing majors and seek accreditation where appropriate, program mission, quality and rationale will be more defined. In addition, program outcomes and defined measures of success will give faculty members meaningful data to determine the efficiency of curriculum and teaching methodology. Ultimately, this approach will produce stronger majors and better prepared graduates. The process, in turn, will be verified over time through the use of alumni surveys.

New programs established in recent years include the Rural Public Safety Administration Major, E-Commerce, and a concentration in Winter Sports Management within the business program.

The CIEA will formalize a process to ensure that the information generated from the newly initiated assessment methods and data generated will be interpreted and used to provide meaningful feedback for the improvement of the educational experience at the University. As sufficient data is gathered, the next step of the process will be to ensure that the results of the assessment become an engine that drives improvement of programs or validates their current methods and content. With these assessment processes in place and operational, the assessment loop can be closed with the development of useful feedback.

SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

DESCRIPTION

Scholarship

Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship has been widely adopted by UMFK (Exhibit 4.17). The Boyer model maintains that scholarship is comprised of four activities: discovery - traditionally referred to as "research;" application or the use of our knowledge to the benefit of society; integration, or the process of relating discoveries in one's own discipline to the greater body of knowledge; and teaching, the process of transferring knowledge to students. In keeping with NEASC's separate categories of scholarship and research, the term scholarship will be used below to refer to those activities associated with the application, integration, and teaching of knowledge. The term research will refer to those activities associated with the discovery of knowledge.

Scholarship and research are required for promotion and tenure as mandated by UMS (Exhibit 4.18: UMS Tenure and Promotion Guidelines, *UMS Policy Manual*), and UMFK at both institutional and divisional levels (Exhibit 5.16: Divisional Tenure and Promotion Guidelines).

In keeping with UMFK's mission, activities supporting instruction are given priority. Faculty seek support for scholarly activities through several campus funds. The *Faculty*

Development Fund and *Innovative Teaching Fund*, which had helped support these efforts over most of the past ten years, were combined in FY 2003 into the *Academic Development Fund*. Other funds that have been tapped for professional development projects by the faculty include the *Instructional Computing Development Fund*, the *Libra Professorship* and, since 1999, the University Trustee Professorship (Appendix 4.03: Faculty and Staff Development Annual Allocations Table). Programs supporting faculty development are explored more fully in Chapter Five, Faculty.

Experiential learning activities and laboratories play an increasingly important role in our education, natural science, and nursing curricula. Travel-study programs over the spring break and during the summer are also expanding learning horizons, as are field and laboratory assistantships for faculty doing research. Students are also engaging in internships and job-shadowing opportunities, participating in independent and directed study projects, presenting at local and regional conferences, and finding summer jobs in their chosen fields (Appendix 4.04: Sample Syllabus with Student Experiential Learning Activities). Please note that all syllabi will be made available for perusal in the document room.

While the campus does have an Academic Outreach Coordinator that works with the faculty to inform students of the extracurricular opportunities available to them, most of these efforts are currently being undertaken by the faculty. Many students are also participating in campus clubs and organizations and are developing their scholarship through community outreach activities in the public schools and other local agencies.

Research

UMFK faculty conduct research in a variety of fields and on a wide range of topics. The findings from faculty research are disseminated in community and professional

presentations, at local, regional, national, and international conferences, in peer-reviewed journal articles, and through broadcast media (Exhibit 4.04: Annual Divisional Reports; Appendix 4.05: Number of Faculty Scholarship and Research Activities, 1995-2005).

Policies and procedures for conducting research at UMFK are published in the *UMFK Faculty Handbook* (Exhibit 4.19: Policies for Conducting Research). These include policies and procedures for submitting grants (section 9.19), for sabbatical leaves (section 6.19) and for conducting research involving human subjects (sections 5.9, 5.10).

On campus resources available to support scholarship and research include the Acadian Archives, the Blake Library, Audio-Visual Services, and Computing Services. During Spring 2004, Libra Professorship Foundation Funds were used to bring a grant-writing expert to campus to present workshops and to work with individual faculty members on preparing grant proposals.

Academic freedom to pursue scholarly activity is guaranteed to faculty by Article 2 of the *Agreement between UMS and Associated Faculties of the University of Maine (AFUM) System, MEA/NEA*, which maintains that “Unit members shall be free from any censorship, threat, restraint, or discipline by the University with regard to the pursuit of truth in the performance of their teaching, research, publishing or service obligation” (Exhibit 4.20: Academic Freedom, *Agreement between UMS and Associated Faculties of the University of Maine (AFUM) System, MEA/NEA* July 2004-June 2005, Article 2; *Faculty Handbook*, Section 8.1)

APPRAISAL

Scholarship

Faculty participate in numerous scholarship activities to include participation or presentations at professional conferences, publications, grant-writing, creative works, consultation, book reviews, manuscript reviews, and development of professional workshops. Overall faculty at UMFK published an average of 6 manuscripts and presented for conference an average of 7 times per year since NEASC’s last visit (Appendix 4.05: Number of Faculty Scholarship and Research Activities, 1995-2005; Exhibit 4.04: Annual Divisional Reports).

To fund scholarly activities, UMFK received two external grants in AY 2003/2004 and two in AY 2004/2005, resulting in \$62,648 and \$49,602, respectively (Appendix 4.06: Faculty Grants Table). Funding for faculty scholarship continues to be a challenge for UMFK.

In addition, course development is an integral part of faculty scholarship. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and the development of distance education courses (ITV and on-line courses), Honors Program courses, off-site classes, service learning, and other opportunities (Exhibit 4.04: Annual Divisional Reports).

Research

In view of extended teaching workloads, the extent to which research is pursued at UMFK is notable. Review of divisional annual reports, for the last 10 years, revealed that faculty were involved in an average of 5.4 research activities per year since NEASC’s last visit (Appendix 4.05). There is, however, substantial variation in the amount of research in which faculty engage; several faculty have completed multiple

research projects while most have not engaged in research.

Funding for research has ebbed and flowed, but has generally been inadequate to support serious research on campus. While a new (1999) Trustee Professorship has provided several faculty with funding to conduct research, support for research from the Libra Professorship Fund was withdrawn by UMS. Even with the Trustee Professorship, the funds available to support the research of over 30 faculty is only \$12,500 annually (Exhibit 4.21: Libra and Trustee Professorship Guidelines, Awards, and Awardees).

Research funds, though inadequate, have at least been made available. However, relief from teaching and other responsibilities has not been provided either in part, through release time, or in whole, by way of a sufficient number of sabbaticals per year. Faculty who have managed to develop ongoing research projects are engaged “on their own time” during the summer and over breaks. Combined with the declines in funds allocated for professional development through 2002, many faculty are, frankly, discouraged.

Support for Scholarship & Research

The level of support for scholarship is adequate at UMFK. Faculty have access to on-line resources that are virtually unlimited to support their scholarship (Exhibit 4.22: *Blake Library Faculty Guide*). Additionally, a subcommittee, for *UMS Strategic Direction #4* focused on enhancing library resources to all universities within UMS, has developed a draft report that lays the foundation for comprehensive recommendations for enhancing digital library services (Exhibit 4.23: *Strategic Direction #4: Enhancing Library Resources Draft Report*).

PROJECTION

UMFK’s emphasis on instruction and service as well as scholarship will continue. As part of the *UMS Strategic Plan*, campus identities are being more narrowly described. As part of the proposed consortium of smaller campuses, UMFK will continue to focus on the educational needs of its rural region and develop educational programs that are unique among the three campuses.

An emerging niche for curriculum and research focuses on the needs of rural communities across America. The centerpiece of this effort will be the proposed Center for Rural Sustainable Development at UMFK. At the same time, faculty and the administration are committed to restoring development funds as the budget permits.

INSTRUCTION

DESCRIPTION

Instructional Methodologies

Fulfilling the mission of UMFK requires teaching excellence. Faculty members employ a variety of instructional techniques in state-of-the art classrooms and laboratories to further the purposes of the institution as well as objectives of individual courses. In addition to the traditional lecture, cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, interactive discussions, case studies, field and clinical experiences, and conferencing are among the techniques used to deliver instruction. Beyond the on-campus delivery of course work, students participate in on-line, interactive television (ITV), and

directed and independent instruction. Educational support software such as WebCT® and Blackboard® also supplement on-campus hybrid-based approaches and distance education. Visit the UMFK academic webpage for a listing of distance education courses offered (Exhibit 4.24).

Distance Education

<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/distance/>

UMFK serves students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds as well as those who are exceptionally well prepared. To meet the needs of diverse groups of students, classes, for the most part, are kept small (1:17), giving the professors opportunity to tailor learning experiences to meet student needs. Academic and Counseling Services (ACS) offers tutoring and mentoring. All freshmen experience the Humanities 102 course, which helps learn knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful transition into the college experience (Exhibit 4.25: HUM 102 Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes for Success Syllabus). Professors are encouraged to provide students with formal and informal assessments to help tailor appropriate instructional strategies/learning experiences for their students.

Students are encouraged to demonstrate academic excellence and creativity through a variety of assignments such as research projects, capstone projects, internships, presentations, musical and theater productions, or art exhibits (Exhibit 4.26: Samples Creative Student Works). For example, research projects are completed in the NBS and Nursing programs, capstone projects in the Forestry, French, Environmental, and Nursing programs, and internships in Behavioral Science, Business, Electronic Commerce, Environmental, and Public Safety programs. Student achievement is recognized through the presentation of academic awards at the Awards Convocation held at the end of each academic year.

The Honors Program consists of a series of upper-level, interdisciplinary seminars designed to help students integrate knowledge across disciplines through the use of self-guided research. To promote diversity of thought and interest, courses are developed to incorporate a focus on culture, race, and gender variation. Student presentations are shared at UMS-wide colloquia held on a different campus each year (Exhibit 4.27: Honors Program Seminars and Information). At times, students' research is published in the *Maine Scholar*, a publication of the UMS Honors Program (Exhibit 4.28).

Inter-disciplinary teaching is encouraged and is common in most divisions, especially education and nursing. Furthermore, the University utilizes part-time and adjunct faculty who have skills and knowledge that complement the full-time faculty.

Quality of Teaching

To evaluate and improve instruction, periodic and systematic assessment of teaching and learning is conducted using adequate and reliable methods. Assessment of instructional effectiveness primarily takes the form of course instructor evaluations completed by students at the end of each semester. Evaluations are comprised of a series of questions that assess instructor preparedness, creativity, responsiveness to student needs, course content, and appropriateness of classroom setting, assignments, and exams, which are quantitatively analyzed. Student comments are also encouraged to provide more intense instructor feedback.

Faculty have access to student reviews after grades have been submitted and use student feedback to improve instruction. The data become part of the faculty member's personnel file for consideration during peer review, tenure and promotion, and post-tenure review. In addition, all non-tenured faculty account for their teaching activities in self-evaluations that are reviewed each

academic year by their Division Chair, the Peer Review Committee, and the VPAA. Continuing contract and tenured faculty prepare self-evaluations for review every four years. To further assess quality of teaching, in the Division of Nursing (DON), full-time non-tenured faculty members are required to assess their teaching effectiveness through peer faculty reviews conducted annually. Additionally, in the DON, student representatives from each class level attend monthly divisional Curriculum Committee meetings and are encouraged to share issues concerning instructional effectiveness.

Academic Advising

In the past, all incoming students, including transfers have been advised by a single faculty member who is well versed in programmatic and core demands. Currently, this individual advises most students in the summer, except for RN-to-BSN students and Elementary Education students who are advised by faculty in those programs. Specific course recommendations are forwarded to this faculty member from the Divisions. During their initial semester, new students are placed in HUM 102, a First Year Experience (FYE) class where they work with instructors to design course schedules for their spring term. Education students are advised by their curriculum faculty for their upcoming semester's work. Transfers are handed over to faculty in their discipline early in the fall semester.

APPRAISAL

Instructional Methodologies

Faculty have choices in instructional methods used. The inventory of on-campus learning strategies in the fall of 2003 confirms the use of a wide array of teaching and learning methodologies (Appendix 4.07:

Inventory of Learning Strategy Inclusion On-Campus Course Offerings, October 2003). For example, over the past two years (AY 2003 and 2004), 155 and 209 students in education, nursing, and in the natural and behavioral sciences have participated in an internship or practicum experience, respectively. UMFK is, however, mixed with respect to enriching academic experiences. For example, our students do more community service, internships, and practica, but less study abroad. Overall, freshmen report a 76% level of satisfaction with the entire educational experience, as compared to seniors who report a 79% level of satisfaction, which is similar to peer institutional group norms (Exhibit 4.29: *National Survey for Student Engagement Institutional Report, 2004*).

UMFK is a leader in the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning. Significant resources have been devoted to state-of-the-art instructional technology, described further in Chapter 7. Faculty multimedia stations are permanently situated in 16 instructional classrooms. The number of classroom seats dedicated to instruction in a mediated environment is 346. Professors developed and delivered 23 ITV and on-line courses in the fall and spring semesters of 2003 and 2004, respectively. Additionally, sophisticated Web-based course management systems are used to support a variety of instructional technology methods such as electronic-mail, live chat sessions, bulletin board discussions, testing, incorporation of Web-based course materials, and video streaming.

Inter-disciplinary teaching is strongly encouraged and widely used, particularly in education and nursing. Approximately one-third (32%) of part-time and adjunct faculty are used to teach core courses to complement the full-time faculty methods of instruction.

Assessing the Quality of Teaching

The University is committed to appraising the teaching effectiveness of all faculty, including full-time, part-time, and adjunct, through the completion of the course instructor evaluation forms at the end of each semester. The current form was last revised on October 21, 1999 and follows the Purdue Cafeteria System (Exhibit 4.30: Instructor/Course Evaluation Form). This form is used by all programs of study and does not reflect changes in curriculum, in teaching methodologies, or in student needs. Heavy emphasis is placed on the quantitative method of student evaluation, although individual faculty members encourage student comments. The Administrative Assistants for each division tabulate these forms manually before the results are distributed to the Divisional Chairs.

Instructor/Course Evaluation Form

<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/pdfs/affairs/cieval.pdf>

Use of assessment results to improve instruction is on-going. An expert in outcome assessment was brought to campus for a campus workshop and worked with departments individually to develop outcomes. Each department is working on meaningful outcomes (Exhibit 4.12: Program Outcomes). See prior section on graduate competencies for further detail.

The existing faculty teaching evaluation process primarily focuses on full-time tenure-track and permanent part-time faculty. The Divisional Chairs share or review the results with individual faculty prior to the beginning of the following academic semester before they become part of individual faculty member's permanent file. Both Divisional Chairs and Peer Review Committee members examine teaching accomplishments and teaching issues and make specific recommendations

based on the results. Part-time and adjunct faculty members are also evaluated by students using the instructor course evaluation form, which becomes a part of their permanent file; however, these individuals usually do not undergo either a divisional or peer review process.

Academic Advising

Currently, the advising process at UMFK is being systematically studied by a task force operating under the direction of the VPAA. The task force is concerned with several issues including the transfer of advising responsibility from the first year advisor to permanent, discipline-based advisors, the assignment of transfer and Teacher Certification students to permanent advisors at intake, enrollment management during the summer, and resources for advisor training (Exhibit 4.31: Advising Task Force Minutes). Additional concern centers on the potential centralization of the advising process under a specific Coordinator or Director in a broadly defined "Academic Success Center" and the development of an internal assessment instrument to complement the NSSE survey. The task force has gathered and compiled the results of satisfaction and needs surveys from students and advisors and is using this data in their deliberations (Exhibit 4.32: UMFK Internal Advising Survey Instrument/ Results). According to the NSSE 2004 survey results, the quality and adequacy of academic advising is rated by UMFK students as significantly better than students at peer institutions. Over three-fourths of seniors (79%) and freshmen (76%) report satisfaction with the advising process. In the fall of 2004, a team of faculty and staff attended a UMS sponsored two-day workshop on academic advising. The session incorporated outside experts and "team sessions" for UMFK personnel to address our own campus issues. This session helped to revitalize our efforts to review and revise our own campus policies and procedures. The new Student Success

Coordinator is charged to pull all of these recommendations into a coherent program.

PROJECTION

Divisional assessment of teaching/learning strategies to align these with the UMFK mission and course objectives is ongoing. Faculty will continue to experiment with teaching methods to improve student learning as well as explore additional opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and program development. In addition, we will study the possibility of expanding the number of programs that require community service, internships, and practica, as well as study abroad and participation in culminating senior experiences.

Integration of technology-based instruction is widespread and will expand. The extensive infrastructure of technology throughout the campus will afford faculty and students new ways of learning via a very fast, wired network connection and through the recently installed wireless-network system. The academic community will develop further alternative means of instruction to provide options for traditional students, and better serve non-traditional and underserved populations through the use of technology for distance and distributed education. UMFK faculty will increase the integration of more web-based course materials into more traditionally delivered general education courses to help students develop information technology literacy.

More effort will be made to include adjunct and part-time faculty in curricular discussions. Furthermore, to enhance diversity of thought and varying viewpoints, UMFK will continue to seek increased numbers of minority faculty as positions become available.

The faculty course evaluation process will be reevaluated to examine the evaluation format, survey items, and method of collecting and disseminating the information. Campus-wide computerization of the course evaluation will also be considered to facilitate completion of timely evaluations as well as analysis and dissemination of the data. Additionally, the teaching evaluation process of part-time and adjunct faculty will be reviewed to determine an appropriate mechanism for assessing the teaching effectiveness of part-time and adjunct faculty. The Academic Assessment Committee and the CIHE will be the engines that drive the development of enhanced teaching evaluation processes.

The VPAA and the Advising Task Force have brought increased attention to the advising process. The in-house advising survey, accompanied by additional, external review information from the NSSE survey, provides more complete feedback from students and faculty. Through this systematic gathering of data, the committee is pinpointing the areas of concern within the process and moving to make the necessary changes to assure timely, responsible, and accurate advising. Initially, students will experience a smoother and more predictable transition from their freshman advisor to discipline-based faculty. Broadening the number of advisors for freshman, specifically discipline-based faculty, will increase access for students and allow for more career-based discussion and course selection. Good advising is increasingly seen as key to academic and co-curricular success, as well as retention and recruitment.

In December 2004, a decision was made by the President's Cabinet to fund a position that will combine coordination of academic advising and creation of a career counseling organization. Entitled, "Student Success Coordinator," this search culminated in a successful hire in May 2005.

ADMISSIONS AND RETENTION

DESCRIPTION

Policies and Practices

Admissions and retention policies and practices are clearly stated in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog* (Exhibit 4.03) and the Admissions website. Admissions and retention policies and practices are further guided by UMFK's mission to respond to the educational needs of northern Maine residents. Hence, the Admission Office's recruitment efforts target residents of northern Maine and seek to ensure that any individual who has a reasonable chance of success in a rigorous academic program is granted admission to the University.

To this end, the Admissions Office screens applicants on the basis of high school program of study and GPA. Though not required, applicants are also encouraged to submit School Admission Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) scores and letters of recommendation. On the consideration of these materials, students' applications may be accepted, accepted conditionally, or rejected.

Students who do not score over 500 on the verbal and mathematics portions of the SAT (including students who did not submit achievement test scores), must demonstrate minimum proficiency requirements in reading, writing, and mathematics by either 1) passing the appropriate portion of the College Board Computerized Placement Test (CBCPT); 2) passing the appropriate remediation course(s) by the end of their first semester, which are remediation courses offered by ACS; or 3) transferring credit from an appropriate course taken at an accredited institution. To facilitate their

success, students taking remediation courses have a reduced course load (four courses, normally 12-13 credits hours) for their first semester.

UMFK admits individuals with special needs including, but not limited to, individuals with learning, physical, or mental disabilities, bilingual and international students, adult learners, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. ACS provides remedial and developmental support with reasonable accommodations for these individuals. ACS is federally funded by a U.S. Department of Education Student Support Services Program Grant and follows its guidelines. ACS also integrates the *UMS Procedure of Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities* (Exhibit 4.33) to accommodate students with special needs into the larger student body to assure that they have similar academic experiences.

In the interest of retaining the students it admits, UMFK has developed practices designed to assimilate new students into the college environment including first-year orientation, the FYE program, and Academic and Counseling Services. Additional retention efforts are directed at students throughout their college experience. These include a coordinated system of academic advising and efforts by the Office of Student Services. The Director of Student Services oversees student activities, diversity, wellness and conduct, and matters of residential life, dining, and health clinic services (including mental-health services). The Director currently oversees student retention efforts, first-year orientation, and FYE. A more detailed description of these retention efforts is described in Chapter 6, Student Services.

Transferring Credit

UMFK accepts transfer credit from applicants who have taken university-level courses as part of or as a supplement to their high school program. UMFK also grants transfer credit for passing standardized tests.

UMFK recognizes the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Dante's Subject Standardized Tests (DDST) as such tests. UMFK transfers credit from other accredited colleges, and, to a limited degree, from vocational or technical schools. Finally, UMFK transfers credit from prior experiential learning.

UMFK awards credit for passing grades in courses that comprise the UMFK curriculum. UMFK offers several for-credit learning experiences with course area, topics, and requirements determined on a student-by-student basis. Cooperative education experiences merge classroom time with specific periods of employment; directed study enables students to pursue special areas of study under the direction of a faculty sponsor; and independent study enables students to develop a research project, field study, or practicum.

Program Continuation, Readmission, and Termination

UMFK's criteria for academic standing are clearly published in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog*, p. 68). These mandate a minimal cumulative GPA that increases in value with the number of semester hours the student has attempted. Failure to maintain academic progress will result in counseling, probation, or suspension at the discretion of the VPAA. Readmission into a degree program is not permitted until one year after academic suspension.

Graduation requirements vary by degree and program and are clearly published in the *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog's* sections titled "Degree Requirements" and "Majors & Minors." One semester prior to graduation, students are advised to submit an "Application for Degree" form (Exhibit 4.34) to the Registrar, who approves or denies the application and indicates which courses, if any, the student needs to complete in order to graduate.

APPRAISAL

Policies and Practices

Since NEASC's last visit, the Admissions Office has pursued a number of well coordinated efforts to study the characteristics of students attracted to UMFK and to target potential applicants with those characteristics. As a consequence, the proportion of inquiries that have resulted in enrollments more than doubled between 1997 and 2004. This increased efficiency of the admissions process contributed to a three-fold increase in the number of admission applications between 1997 and 2004, and a two-fold increase in the size of the incoming class during the same period (Exhibit 4.35: Admissions Progress Report 1997-2003). UMFK has consistently surpassed all other UMS campuses for percentage increases in the size of its incoming class (Exhibit 4.36: UMS Enrollment Data Percentage Increase Comparisons, 1997).

Guided by its mission to serve the residents of northern Maine, the Admission Office's recruitment efforts target residents of this region, but also strive to attract a diverse student body. UMFK has increased its visibility on the world-wide-web in an attempt to attract students nationally and internationally. In 2004, 65% of applications to the University were submitted through our website (Appendix 1.03: *Institutional Performance Scorecard*, KPI 4.26). In that same year, 20% of our Maine students came from outside of Aroostook County.

Admissions Website

<http://www.umfk.maine.edu/admissions/ontheroad/>

In the fall of 2004, roughly 50% of incoming students were Maine residents, 25% were Canadian, and 25% were from

elsewhere (Exhibit 4.37: Enrollments by Geographic Regions, *UMFK Statistical Abstract, May 31, 2005*, p. 18a), representing approximately 15 different countries (Appendix 1.03: *Institutional Performance Scorecard*, KPI 4.25).

Since 2000, UMFK has accepted, on average, 88% of its applicants (Exhibit 4.38: Admissions Inquires/Applications *UMFK Statistical Abstract, May 31, 2005*, p. 22b). Since 1995, the University has enrolled between 30 and 40 students each year who were accepted conditionally (Exhibit 4.39: Conditionally Accepted Students, 1995-2004) and each year between 40 and 70 students have taken one or more of the academic skills development courses in reading, writing, and math skills (Exhibit 4.40: Students Taking Academic Skills Development Courses).

Students are taking advantage of and positively evaluate the practices UMFK employs to help retain students. Student satisfaction with orientation and the FYE is high. See Chapter 6, Student Services, for further detail. ACS is widely used for academic counseling, its writing center, and peer tutorial services (Appendix 1.03: *Institutional Performance Scorecard*, KPI 4.19). And students are generally satisfied with the academic advising process (Appendix 1.03: *Institutional Performance Scorecard*, KPI 4.20). UMFK has not had a strong emphasis on career planning and placement service for students. Increasing these efforts may also help retain students by enabling them to set career goals. See Chapter 6, Student Services, for further detail.

Between Fall 1995 and Fall 1997, the retention rate to term 3 for first-time students entering bachelor's degree programs averaged 75%. The retention rate is somewhat lower for recent entering freshmen students. The average retention rate to term 3 between Fall 2001 and Fall 2003 for full-time, in-state, freshmen seeking the bachelor's degree at UMFK is 70%,

which is slightly less the national average of 75% for bachelor's degree seeking students after their first year in the state of Maine.

Since 2003, UMFK continues to lose, on average, 30% of its incoming class in the first year. Also, retention is higher for transfer students (primarily Canadian education students with bachelors degrees) than for new first-time students and higher for first-time students pursuing a four-year degree than for first-time students pursuing a two-year degree (Exhibit 4.41: Admission and Retention Rates, *UMFK Statistical Abstract, May 31, 2005*, pp-28a-b; Appendix 1.03: *Institutional Performance Scorecard*, KPI 4.23).

On average, nearly half (49%) of new first-time bachelor's degree seeking students entering between Fall 1995 and Fall 1998 graduated within six years (Exhibit 4.42: Graduation Rates, *UMFK Statistical Abstract, May 31, 2005*, pp. 27-28b; Appendix 1.03: *Institutional Performance Scorecard*, KPI 4.24). Also see, Scannell & Kurz, Inc. report for retention summary by subpopulation (Exhibit 4.42).

UMFK has not had staff solely committed to retention. The Director of Student Services is the general coordinator of retention efforts. However, this individual is also responsible for overseeing student activities, diversity, wellness and conduct, matters of residential life, dining, health clinic services, first-year orientation and the FYE.

We are taking steps to address the declining retention rates. A Student Success Coordinator was hired in May 2005. This Coordinator will work with the Director of Student Services and the VPAA to establish goals for improved persistence and retention rates. By 2008, we intend to raise the freshmen to sophomore retention and graduation rates by 5% each year. Additionally, stop-outs, readmits, and transfers may return to complete degrees in the future. Furthermore, as a member of the Consortium, we received a \$6,000 planning

grant from the Melmac Foundation in 2005 to work on an implementation grant proposal with the University of Machias and Presque Isle. The three will propose a single Retention Coordinator to serve all three campuses. This individual will recommend policies and best practices for all three institutions.

Transferring Credit

To ensure that UMFK transfers credit only for college-level work, the university imposes specific criteria. Credits from university-level courses as part of a student's high school program or as a supplement are transferable only if the student achieved at least a grade of "3" in the Advanced Placement Examinations of the College Board.

Credits from standardized tests (e.g. CLEP, DSST) are transferable only if the student demonstrates, by earning passing scores on those tests that he/she has the knowledge comparable to someone who completed a classroom course in the subject. In accordance with Board policy, UMFK transfers credit from other accredited colleges for grades of "C" or higher. Students must submit an official transcript from the other institution to the Registrar, who will determine which credits are transferable. UMFK maintains articulation agreements with numerous institutions in Maine and Canada to facilitate the transfer of credits from those institutions to UMFK (Exhibit 4.43: Transfer Credits/Transfer Articulations Agreements, *UMFK 2005-2007 Catalog*, pp. 12-14, 123-125). These include other institutions in the UMS who offer courses through the UMS Network for Education and Technology Services (UNET).

Credit may be transferred from vocational or technical schools only if taken as part of an Associate degree. Credit from a non-accredited institution of higher learning may be accepted depending on a review of documents by the Registrar to determine

equity with academic courses and requirements at UMFK.

UMFK accepts credit from prior and experiential learning upon presentation of evidence that the student has the knowledge or skills appropriate to the course for which the individual is seeking credit and by submitting a "Credit for Past and Experiential Learning" form (Exhibit 4.44) and supportive evidence. Division faculty determine the amount of credit to be transferred, the equivalent UMFK course, and submit this recommendation to the Division Chair for approval.

UMFK ensures that college-level standards for performance are upheld through faculty review of proposed course syllabi, which specifies the learning objectives of the course and the criteria for meeting those objectives (Exhibit 4.45: Suggested Syllabus Outline Form). The review is conducted in divisions for courses offered by that division, by the Faculty Assembly for courses that are not division specific, (e.g., Academic Services Program - ASP 120, college vocabulary); and by the Academic Council for interdisciplinary courses.

The Office of the Registrar, after approval by the appropriate academic body in consultation with the VPAA, assigns numeric designations for all courses. No degree credit is awarded for pre-collegiate or remedial courses numbered 00-099. Lower-level degree credit is awarded for courses numbered 100-299. Upper-level degree credit is awarded for courses numbered 300-499.

PROJECTION

In 2003-2004, we witnessed an increased enrollment of 11.4 percent, and in 2004-

2005 a further increase of 16.9 percent. Looking forward, Admissions will shift some of its focus and resources toward specific programs as outlined in the *Academic Plan, 2004-2008* (Appendix 1.08).

Retention efforts will be the responsibility of a new Student Success Coordinator. That individual will not only oversee initiatives designed to retain students, but will systematically study the efficacy of those initiatives. Moreover, that individual will be charged with conducting exit interviews and tracking students who leave the University, so that it may be determined why students leave and where they go. We hope this individual will be supported as well by a shared Consortium Retention Officer through a successful Melmac proposal.

These data will be used to inform a discussion that the UMFK community needs to have about how its mission is best served. If we determine our decreasing retention is a consequence of our nearly open admissions policy, then we need to decide whether our target population is best served by 1) better remediating the students it accepts under its current admissions criteria or 2) imposing higher admissions criteria. If the University community decides to retain its current admissions criteria, then it is anticipated that there will be more focused on additional resources for remediation.

Changes in policies and practices to affect tighter controls on the remediation process are anticipated. Students must not be allowed to “slip through the cracks” of remediation and enroll in college-level courses if they are under-prepared. A partial solution to this problem may be as simple as modifying software in the Registrar’s Office that makes it impossible to sign a student up for a college-level course until a passing grade has been recorded in all required remediation courses.

We will work at developing the right mix of degrees and major programs to meet the

needs of this region and of the students who wish to study here. Our current retention experience, especially between the first and second year, leaves room for improvement. Advising focused more closely on the life goals and therefore development of specific academic goals for students, along with monitoring progress toward those goals, all appear to be essential to greater future success.

