

Response to Report

The University of Maine at Presque Isle

The University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI) thanks the review team for an excellent campus visit and reaccreditation report. We greatly appreciate how collegial and engaged the members of the team were while on campus and the hard work they put into crafting a clear and helpful final report.

The campus has been busy in the months since the campus visit and is providing the following updates on issues raised in the report.

Standard One: Mission and Purposes

UMPI's new vision, mission, and strategic plan were approved by the University of Maine System Board of Trustees in May 2014. The Board was uniformly complimentary about the new direction for the University.

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

With an approved strategic plan in place, the campus has begun the implementation phase. Sub-committees were formed in late September to develop, prioritize, and schedule the actions that are needed to carry out each strategic direction. Their reports are due to the Strategic Planning Implementation Committee (SPIC) in early November. The SPIC will then develop a comprehensive implementation plan and assign responsible parties. The SPIC will also further develop the evaluation metrics and schedule.

While planning continues, the campus has already made a great deal of progress on some of the items listed in the approved strategic plan. These changes will be detailed under the relevant Standard.

The campus is developing a culture of assessment and evaluation. The transition to personalized, proficiency-based education has enhanced this culture. The faculty have begun a process of curriculum mapping for all majors, with Program Learning Outcomes and objectives linked to proficiencies, and with ongoing assessment of student learning across the curriculum.

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

The senior leadership of the institution has changed to better implement the new strategic plan. Because closer linkages between academic and student affairs will enhance student recruitment, retention and success, the position of Vice President for Student Affairs was combined with that of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Leadership for both areas is now provided by the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. The Dean of Students, who had formerly served as the interim Vice President for Student Affairs, now reports directly to the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

The contemplated sharing of the Vice President for Administration and Finance with the University of Maine at Machias was ultimately deemed unworkable, thus the VPAF continues as a full employee of UMPI.

4. The Academic Program

The Provost is coordinating the scheduling of live and online sections of required and elective courses with College chairs to ensure that needs of on-campus as well as distance education students are being satisfactorily met. Particular attention is being paid to our Education programs, which must provide instruction for our on-campus cohort of approximately 150 majors, as well as cohorts of distance education students from institutions such as the University of Maine at Augusta, with whom we maintain a memorandum of understanding to deliver specific courses in pedagogy and methods in Elementary Education.

We have substantially revised our Prior Learning Assessment guidelines, including provisions for portfolio assessment, challenge examinations, and military service credit, and are currently building a comprehensive web site detailing these options that should be live by December 1. In addition, we have substantially revised our placement testing system, relying now upon a comprehensive review of student achievement within their secondary education classes (or dual credit/PLA coursework) and utilizing Accuplacer examinations as “challenge” tests to our placement process. We will assess the success rate of first year students under the new placement system in May, 2015.

Most substantively, beginning in the spring 2014 semester, and continuing throughout the 2014-15 academic year, we have initiated a comprehensive review of our General Education and Program level learning outcomes to ensure that they comprehensively identify all required proficiencies for graduates. In addition, a comprehensive set of “Essential Learning Outcomes” (or ELOs), mapped to specific achievement levels within Bloom’s taxonomy and benchmarked at 30 credit hours, 60 credit hours, and prior to graduation, has been established for all students, regardless of major or program. These ELOs were established to ensure all majors would possess, and demonstrate, the skills necessary for success within the professions and/or graduate degree work; we have worked closely with local business partners to ensure that they provide skills commensurate to those required within the workforce, locally as well as nationally. All programs will have completed comprehensive revised Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) by May, 2015 as well as completed extensive curricular mappings ensuring that such outcomes are achieved at appropriate levels of complexity by all majors within individual courses. Assessment of both the General Education Curriculum and of individual programs will now occur annually. We are also now formally employing data from the NSSE, BSSE, and ETS academic achievement data to assess the effectiveness of General Education as well as academic program outcomes as part of our ongoing assessment process. In addition, we are administering NSSE, BSSE, as well as FSSE surveys this academic year to serve as a benchmark to assist in the assessment of the effectiveness of proficiency education initiatives.

5. The Faculty

The IDEA course evaluation system was formally and unanimously adopted by the faculty (at the recommendation of the VPAA) in Fall 2014. We have developed more systematic methods of encouraging higher levels of student completion of online evaluations, which averaged over 50% for the Spring 2014 semester (and we expect to average over 60% in Fall 2014), a significant improvement from previous semesters. In addition, faculty now have the option of administering proctored evaluations electronically during scheduled course time or employing traditional pencil/paper evaluations, both of which have significantly increased overall student participation in the evaluation process.

6. Students

The admissions policy has been placed on the admissions webpage.

UMPI is pleased to report that graduation and retention rates are improving. The six year graduation rate rose significantly. The rate for the Fall 2007 Cohort was 30% while the rate for the Fall 2008 cohort was 46%. Furthermore, the first to second year retention rate increased from 59% in 2012 to 61% in 2013.

7. Library and Other Information Resources

As envisioned in the new strategic plan, the Library is transitioning to the Center for Innovative Learning. The first floor has been reconfigured as a “learning commons” and is supervised by the newly created Director of Student Success and the Learning Commons. New furniture promotes student and faculty collaboration, and faculty members are beginning to hold their office hours in this space. Student support services have been relocated to the learning commons, enabling students to access them more easily. Similarly, the Information Technology help desk is being relocated from the basement to the first floor. A café will be installed on the first floor when funding allows.

9. Financial Resources

UMPI is working hard to reverse recent declines in enrollment. The University has partnered with Royall and Company, a recruitment marketing firm, to increase the number of applications to the University. The University has also hired an enrollment management consultant who is working “on-ground” with the Office of Admissions and with staff across the University to enhance recruitment and retention. Furthermore, the entire campus received training in “service excellence,” the first step to improving service to all campus constituencies and enhancing the student experience.

As noted above, the possibility of sharing the Vice President for Administration and Finance with the University of Maine at Machias was fully explored but ultimately rejected as unworkable.

The Student One Stop Shop is now fully operational within Preble Hall. This area combines the Financial Aid, Student Financial Services and Registrar Functions into one central location to ease the administrative and business needs of our students.

10. Public Disclosure

The University is engaged in a complete revision of its website, to be completed no later than July 2015. In addition, the University has established a website maintenance plan that involves weekly checks by staff and work-study students to find and update incorrect or obsolete content as well as monthly sweeps by staff across campus to ensure that areas of the website in their areas/departments are accurate and up-to-date.