

MAINE COMPACT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Meeting of June 21, 2004 – UnumProvident Offices, Portland

Compact Members Present: Mary Andrews, Wendy Ault, Henry Bourgeois, Yellow Light Breen, Mary Cathcart, Glenn Cummings, Sandra Featherman, Joe Foley, Bonnie Fortini, Joyce Hedlund, Michael Higgins, Judy Horan, Sue Huseman, Ron Milliken, Susan Percy, Colleen Quint, Betty Robinson, Henry Schmelzer, John Witherspoon.

Staff and Guests Present: Tom Broussard, Dianne Heino, Anne Larrivee, Steve McFarland, and Philip Trostel.

Notes

1. **Update.** The meeting began with a brief review of UnumProvident's commitment to higher education, and a report on the Governor's Youth Summit, followed by a Compact update:
 - a. As expected, ten members resigned following their one-year of service and completion of the action plan, and nine new members have been appointed. Additional employers/business people will be appointed to maintain the balance of the membership; members urged appointment of small firms and manufacturers.
 - b. MCF and MDF remain committed to sponsoring the Compact in its second year; Henry will continue as the lead staff for the Compact as an MDF employee.
 - c. Funds are being raised to support the marketing campaign.
2. **Vision, Beliefs, Goal.** The Compact briefly reviewed its vision statement, beliefs, and goal, and generally affirmed these statements during the meeting.
 - a. The Compact's vision is that college is a right and responsibility of all Maine people.
 - b. The Compact believes that higher education:
 - Is essential for all, not just important for some.
 - Results in improved lifetime earnings potential, a Maine economy that is more competitive, and provides a better quality of life for Maine people.
 - Is one of the most powerful predictors of virtually all forms of civic engagement, and leads to citizens who believe they have the ability to improve their community.
 - c. The Compact's goal is that Maine people will be among the best educated in America. Specifically, in 15 years Maine will achieve the New England higher education attainment average among its working age population – an increase of 39,500 degree-holders.
3. **Mission Statement.** However, the mission statement generated a considerable discussion about the role of the Compact and the scope of its work:
 - a. The Compact's mission is to champion higher education achievement, by:

- Providing a consistent and unified voice that promotes higher education;
 - Facilitating action to achieve the vision;
 - Changing Maine citizens' beliefs and behaviors about higher education; and
 - Promoting innovation, best practice, and accountability for results.
- b. Some members felt that 'providing a consistent and unified voice...' is a top priority, while others noted that it was presumptuous for the Compact to perceive itself as *the* voice for higher education when many other credible organizations are advocates.
 - c. One member said that advocacy and accountability are the Compact's highest values; we need to create a political context to support our agenda.
 - d. Other members said that facilitating action to achieve the vision (i.e. insuring that the strategies in the action plan are implemented) is the priority, while others expressed that 'changing Maine citizen beliefs...' is the Compact's highest value.
 - e. Some members expressed that the Compact should not take positions on controversial issues that are not directly relevant to our five strategies. Another member noted that the Compact is too new in this arena and should stick to its core strategies; it will take time to earn the credibility and trust of legislators and other government officials. Another member asked if the Compact should oppose proposed federal legislation that would significantly reduce federal aid to Maine students.
4. **This Year's Priority.** The Compact agreed that its top priority is implementation of the five action strategies in *Greater Expectations*. In this context, the Compact recognized that:
- a. The Compact is responsible for *facilitating implementation* of the first four strategies *implementing and delivering* the fifth strategy – the public education campaign. (planning, advocating, and monitoring), but is responsible for *actually implementing and delivering* the fifth strategy – the public education campaign.
 - b. Each strategy is at a different stage of development – some are well advanced and have lead agencies in place, while others are still at the conceptual level.
 - c. The Compact could achieve the 'voice' part of its mission statement through implementation of a comprehensive marketing campaign and the conduct of a higher education forum.
 - d. Other comments about the Compact's work and programs:
 - (1) Be sure that private colleges are integral to the Compact's College Transition program. The American Council on Education may be willing to help with it.
 - (2) It was suggested that we chose initiatives where we can have an early success.
 - (3) We should document the 'opportunity cost' of program changes; e.g., when scholarships are reduced, how many students are forced to drop out of college?
 - (4) Consider an annual 'report card' on higher education performance.
 - (5) The Compact should be the 'go to' place for higher education.

5. **Marketing Ideas.** The members agreed that the public education campaign should include both a media effort and grassroots initiatives. These are some of the grassroots ideas brainstormed by Compact members:
 - a. The Compact should be invisible – *collegetorme* should be the theme.
 - b. Build on existing public education initiatives, such as FAME’s College Goal Sunday.
 - c. Figure out how to market to young people and students, e.g. give a *collegetorme* button and transition booklet to each student to takes a PSAT.
 - d. What can we learn from the successful local Civil Rights Teams in high schools?
 - e. Imbed *collegetorme* in high school roundtables and advisory groups – i.e. imbed the message in the belief systems of other groups/initiatives.
 - f. Participate in annual meetings of education associations.
 - g. Figure out ways to reach adults who, unlike young people, are not captive audiences.
 - h. Focus on each audience – middle school students, adults, dropouts, etc. –find out what they think and test approaches on them.
 - i. Employers need a special marketing piece.
 - j. Participate in college fairs, e.g. booth.
 - k. Identify and support a ‘higher education leader’ in each Maine municipality (500).

6. **Committees.** The Compact decided to establish six committees – one for each action strategy and one for the proposed higher education forum.
 - a. The committees will be responsible for preparing a ‘business plan’ for each initiative, articulating the goal, strategy, performance indicators, and financial and political implications.
 - b. Staff will prepare a common template to insure brevity and uniformity, and make available data from last year’s work.