

MAINE COMPACT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Meeting of September 22, 2004 at the Finance Authority of Maine in Augusta

Compact Members Present: Mary Anne Alhadeff, Mary Andrews, Wendy Ault, Henry Bourgeois, Yellow Light Breen, Mary Cathcart, Sandra Featherman, Joe Foley, Bonnie Fortini, Kevin Healey, Sue Huseman, Susan Percy, Derek Pierce, Colleen Quint, John Witherspoon.

Staff and Guests Present: Tom Broussard, Greg Gollihur, Dianne Heino, and Anne Larrivee.

Notes

Chairman Foley opened the meeting by thanking FAME for hosting the session, and welcoming new members of the Compact--Derek Pierce and Mary Anne Alhadeff.

1. Updates

- a. Briefings were just held for candidates for the State Legislature; about 60 candidates attended sessions in Portland, Augusta, Presque Isle and Bangor. Candidates asked excellent questions at each session. Henry thanked Compact members who attended three of the sessions.
- b. Each of the Compact's six committees held two or more conference call meetings this summer in order to move the strategies to implementation. Most Compact members participated on a committee. Summaries are below.

In introducing the next agenda item – discussion of the Compact's strategies, Mr. Bourgeois reminded everyone that the Compact is responsible for facilitating implementation (planning, advocating, and monitoring) of the first four strategies, but is responsible for actually implementing and delivering the fifth strategy – the public education campaign. He also noted that 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.

2. Maine's Promise Scholarship Program (MPSP)

The Compact had a lengthy discussion, led by Mr. Witherspoon, whose agency has the lead in implementing the Scholarship Program. The discussion centered on the issues described below. The Compact asked Mr. Witherspoon and the committee to come back to the November 15 meeting with recommendations to respond to these issues, a set of principles about the program, and an implementation plan.

- a. Stand-alone program or expansion of the Maine State Grant Program (MSGP)
 - (1) There was consensus that, to expedite implementation and reduce administration expenses, it made sense to have the MPSP built on the MSGP, which FAME currently delivers.
 - (2) However, there was also agreement that the MSGP name should change to the MPSP to better express the intent and boldness of the new idea.

- b. Private college participation
 - (1) Ms. Featherman and others argued that, no matter how it is named/administered, the MPSP should not harm Maine's eleven private colleges who educate about 30-35% of Maine's college students. The current proposed program would finance the entire 'gap'; the MSGP provides students \$1,000 for public institutions and \$1,250 for private institutions.
 - (2) Members expressed continuing support for not harming the private institutions, but little discussion of how this translates into program details.

- c. Meeting all unmet need
 - (1) There was considerable discussion of the scope of the MPSP, which, as proposed, would meet any eligible student's unmet need. Some members suggested that the boldness and simplicity of this approach has great merit, while others argued that this level of financing support is unrealistic.
 - (2) Another member observed that the approach of meeting all unmet need without the requirement that the applicant borrow money seems to run counter to the Compact's principle of 'right and responsibility'.
 - (3) One suggestion to meet the unmet need was by providing half the support in scholarship and half in a loan, which would be forgiven if the graduate worked in Maine.
 - (4) Another suggestion was to use a sliding scale, whereby the amount of financial support would be based in whole or in part on the level of poverty experienced by the family.

- d. Other suggestions/considerations
 - (1) It was suggested that the MPSP stimulation requiring students to attend for four consecutive years in order to receive the support was inconsistent with the Federal requirement of six years (three years for community college).
 - (2) Also, 'maintaining satisfactory academic progress' was suggested as a preferable expectation than the proposed requirement -- 'maintaining a 2.0'.

- e. A comparison of the MSGP and the proposed MPSP was prepared by FAME and is on page t of these notes.

3. Maine Early College Program

Ms. Quint, whose organization has the lead for the Compact in facilitating implementation of Maine's Early College program, reported on the discussions held by the committee. She indicated that priorities the next several months would lay the groundwork for expansion of early college programs. Mr. Foley and others expressed their support of the business plan. Compact member observations follow:

- a. She reported that several initiatives are already underway, including the Wells High School/York County Community College program, which the Mitchell Institute is sponsoring and which will be evaluated next month. She also noted that the MELMAC Education Foundation and the Mitchell Institute are forming a working group to coordinate their efforts.
- b. Ms. Featherman indicated that college presidents and administrators should be doing more to speak at high school events to reach parents and students, and that high school administrators need to be more proactive to accommodate these presentations.

- c. Ms. Huseman reported on UMM's experience with early college programs, noting that 15 students participated last year and this year the figure is up to 35.
- d. Ms. Percy urged the inclusion of students with disabilities in the program.
- e. Mr. Gollihur referred to a survey that Indiana has administered to measure aspirations among its middle school and high school students. Mr. Breen suggested that there might be questions on the MEA that would be very helpful in tracing aspiration changes.

4. **Maine College Transition Program**

Mr. Bourgeois reported on the committee's progress, noting that the business plan reflects the importance of investing in the 'infrastructure' of adult education over the next nine months in order to implement the program in the fall if state government support is available. Members offered a couple of small changes to the business plan, and there was overall support for the approach.

5. **CollegeforME Employer Program**

Mr. Bourgeois summarized the committee's business plan, noting that this initiative does not have a sponsor. He reported that the committee approached a statewide business organization for sponsorship but they declined. The work plan for the next several months involves research and best practice analysis to learn more about employer needs and to position the initiative to be ready to implement when a sponsor is located.

- a. Mr. Healey and others commented on the difficulty they have in getting their employees to participate in higher education courses supported by the employer. More needs to be done to figure out why employees do not participate and what employers can do differently to increase participation.
- b. Ms. Percy and others noted that the initiative is not bold – it will not capture the imagination of the business community. Citing her agency's experience, she noted that workers have low aspirations to go to college.
- c. Others noted that, in keeping with our 'rights/responsibilities' vision, this proposed program places too much responsibility on the employer and not enough on the employee.
- d. One member suggested that the Compact host a 'best practice conference' for employers to share experiences.

6. **CollegeforME Campaign**

Mr. Bourgeois noted that, based on two committee conference calls and ideas from other Compact members, the central thrust of this initiative has shifted from primarily a media-driven campaign to more of a grassroots/community-based set of initiatives. Although a statewide campaign continues to be important, most change will come from locally based efforts that build on the unique assets of Maine's different regions and communities. There was strong sentiment that much work is already being done – locally and statewide – and the Compact's work should support and complement others' efforts. Generally, the Compact agreed with this approach and offered several suggestions:

- a. A very important role for the Compact is to raise awareness of what's already going on.

- (1) Documenting best practices in Maine and elsewhere would be very valuable.
- (2) A robust web site would facilitate sharing of information.
- b. Mr. Healey described the development of a new health care providers consortium in Lewiston-Auburn, and asked 'what can you do to help us?' He suggested that the Compact might provide a 'tool box' to help a local initiative that would include resources, people, networking, seed money and a vehicle to share experiences. Others agreed, suggesting that the tool kit be built upon our report, *Greater Expectations*.
- c. Ms. Featherman noted that the Lewiston-Auburn example reinforces the importance of strong local organizations that can support change; not all communities have such a strong infrastructure. In that regard, the idea of building the capacity of institutional leaders was raised as an important consideration.
- d. Many suggested that the Compact should focus on some of the basics in a creative manner:
 - (1) Prepare a 15-minute DVD that makes the case for going to college, aimed at first generation potential students.
 - (2) Promote college importance creatively, i.e. not among the 'usual suspects'. For example, promote college on coffee shop place mats, material in barbershops and beauty parlors.
 - (3) Document the case about the importance of college for legislators and policy makers.
- e. Get the colleges to do their share, by building partnerships with local schools. Invite college presidents/faculty to speak to students and parents early in their high school careers. Work through the guidance counselors to facilitate access to students.
- f. A valuable role for the Compact is to collect and report on indicators of readiness and persistence. Also, the Compact could survey citizens/students to establish a baseline to measure attitude change.
- g. Tell success stories; experience matters more than facts and figures.

7. Higher Education Forum

- a. Change the format to focus on regional action. Make it a working forum. For example, ask regions to send delegations to the Forum. Prepare data for them, and ask the delegations to work in regional groups for a couple of hours to develop their strategies.
- b. Rename the title to reflect our rights/responsibilities vision; build on the theme of 'every high school graduate college-ready'.

<u>Maine State Grant</u>	<u>Maine's Promise Scholarship</u>
Be a Maine Resident	Be a Maine Resident
Eligibility determined by the federal calculated Expected Family Contribution on the FAFSA Form	Have a reported family income at or below 200% of the established poverty level
Meet campus admissions requirements	Meet campus admissions requirements
Enroll in a public or private Title IV institution in Maine and reciprocal states (New England)	Enroll in a public or private higher education institution in Maine
Be enrolled in a one year certificate program or degree program	Be enrolled continuously in a degree program
Attend on a full time basis or a part time basis	Attend on a full-time basis
File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid by May 1	File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid by March 1
Maintain satisfactory academic progress	Maintain a GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale
Must apply annually	Renewable
12,000 students awarded	3,255 students awarded
\$12,000,000	\$34,309,811
Award amount up to \$1,250	Award would eliminate all unmet need
Available for 5 years in a degree program	Available for 4 consecutive years