

MAINE COMPACT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Meeting of March 8, 2005 at the offices of TD/Banknorth in Portland

Notes

Compact Members Present: Henry Bourgeois, Yellow Light Breen (by phone), Alan Burton, Sandra Featherman, Joe Foley, Mike Higgins, Judy Horan, Meredith Jones (for Hank Schmelzer), Susan Percy, Kent Peterson, Colleen Quint, Betty Robinson, Judy Ryan, and Ted Scontras.

Staff and Guests Present: Heidi Farber, Dianne Heino, Reno James, Laurie Lachance, Kim Lipp, Carl Little, Steve McFarland, Cary Olson, Patrick O'Regan, Kate Reilly, and Joe Riley.

Chairman Foley opened the meeting at 9:40 a.m. He welcomed members and guests, reviewed the agenda, and thanked Mr. Scontras for hosting the meeting. Mr. Scontras briefly described the Higher Education Group's initiatives of TD/Banknorth.

Steering Committee Report. Mr. Foley explained that three committees were established at the last meeting to work on an ad hoc basis on specific issues. The Steering Committee was charged with addressing the governance and decision-making structure of the Compact. Members of this committee represented each sector of the Compact's membership – business, government, education and community – and were selected by their colleagues in conference calls. Members are Joyce Hedlund, Yellow Light Breen, Colleen Quint, and John Witherspoon, in addition to Hank Schmelzer, Henry Bourgeois and the chair.

He noted that another group has been formed to determine the legal status of the Compact and its continuing relationship with its sponsors, MDF and MCF. That working group, which has yet to meet, is composed of two members each from MDF, MCF and the Compact; the Compact representatives are Ms. Quint and the Compact chair.

The purpose of today's discussion, he said, is to receive feedback on the broad recommendation; the Steering Committee will then reconvene and present a final recommendation to the full Compact when it meets in May. It is the intent of the Steering Committee to develop recommendations that are consistent with the decisions of the working group.

At Mr. Foley's request, Mr. Bourgeois summarized the Steering Committee's recommendation:

- a. The Steering Committee recommends a change in the structure of the Compact to reflect that our work has evolved over the last two years from planning to implementation and action.
- b. The original Compact design – 32-members representing geographic, sector and program diversity – was ideal and necessary for preparing a long-term action plan because it was able to tap into the ideas and energy of so many leaders. But, this 32-member Compact that meets bi-monthly is not as agile as it needs to be to support the implementation phase of the work.
- c. The Committee recommends restructuring the Compact to achieve two goals:
 - Focus on implementation of the strategies, particularly the Campaign; and
 - Meaningfully engage a large group of leaders in setting overall direction, evaluating results, and serving as ambassadors for and delivering the message of the Compact.

Steering Committee Report (continued)

- d. The Committee proposes to:
 - Create a 10-member Steering Committee, which could meet monthly or as often as necessary to oversee and support implementation and provide support to the executive director, and
 - Expand the Compact's membership and have it meet less often to evaluate programs, advise on new approaches, serve on committees, and appoint the Steering Committee.

Reactions from Compact members follow:

1. One member endorsed the basic approach, citing her continuing commitment and enthusiasm for the Compact but her inability to attend frequent statewide meetings.
2. Another member observed that the proposed 'expanded Compact' appears to be advisory in nature and questioned if we would be able to secure buy-in from members if they had no authority. Others agreed with this assessment. One member referenced her positive experience with the K-12 coalition as a member of their executive committee and full board.
3. In response to a question, Mr. Bourgeois explained the structure of the K-12 coalition:

The Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education has a 55-member board of directors that meets quarterly. Annually, in December, the board approves the budget and operations plan, and elects members to the board and their 10-member executive committee through a nominations process. Members serve three-year terms. The chair is always a business-person. Their executive committee meets monthly, and it makes program and operational decisions, raises funds, tracks legislation, prepares the agenda for the coalition meetings, and monitors committees. The current chair, Peter Geiger, is pleased with the structure.

4. One member encouraged a quick resolution to the issue and requested clarity and transparency about how decisions get made.
5. Another member pointed out that the group needed to be expanded, and that we can separate strategic decisions from operational decisions.
6. Another member expressed support for a smaller steering committee that is able to be more agile and responsive than a larger 30-person group. And, she felt that the larger group should have clear decision-making authority so that it has a meaningful role. She also encouraged greater diversity among Compact members to include people with disabilities.
7. Another member said that the Compact will succeed, and its membership will be more fully engaged, when it becomes independent of MCF and MDF, and organizes around actions.

Legislative Committee Report. Mr. Breen, Ms. Quint and Ms. Ault met on February 18 to give direction and guidance to this effort. Mr. Bourgeois summarized their recommendations:

- a. The Compact should arrange a presentation before the Education Committee to brief them on our vision, goals and strategies, and help them understand our purpose, our non-partisan and independent nature, and that we can be a resource to the Committee on higher education.
- b. The Compact should testify in support of bills that directly support one of our five strategies. The Compact should testify neither for nor against on bills that impact our goal/strategies.
- c. In all cases of testimony, the content should include and reinforce the Compact's key themes (e.g. economic imperative, goal of the Compact, five strategies, etc.). Whenever possible, a Compact member other than the executive director should testify.
- d. Information meetings should be held with the leadership of the House and Senate.

Legislative Committee Report (continued)

Mr. Bourgeois reported on testimony he delivered on behalf of the Compact in support of the following proposed legislation: Rep. Cummings' Loan Repayment bill (LD 786); Senator Rotundo's bill to increase the state subsidy for the Adult Education centers (LD 96); Senator Rotundo's legislation to implement the Employer Initiative, which was included as part of the Governor's bond issue. Regarding the latter initiative, Mr. Bourgeois reported on a meeting he attended with the Governor and Senator Rotundo to clarify the Compact's support. Mr. Bourgeois also testified neither for nor against on Rep. Fischer's bill to waive first year tuition at Maine public institutions.

Comments from Compact members and guests follow:

1. While the recommendations are excellent, we are missing an overall legislative strategy. The Compact needs to be perceived as a credible voice for higher education with the Legislature.
2. This year, we should establish with the Legislature who we are, why we exist, and our major areas of interest.
3. One measure of our success is the extent to which the Compact is represented on important task forces relevant to higher education.
4. Testifying 'neither for nor against' should be done sparingly.
5. The Compact should only be testifying on the important bills. Stay in touch with UMS and MCCS representatives who could keep us apprised of the status of bills.
6. The higher education agenda is missing from most legislative deliberations, although the implications are significant, e.g. tax policy. The Compact should be more visible on issues that are influenced by or influence higher education.

Marketing Committee. Since only two of the members were able to meet last week, this committee will report at the May meeting.

Video Presentations. Ms. Olson presented video spots that WGME is airing promoting higher education and the Compact. She indicated that UnumProvident would continue to air these sponsored spots on WGME's 'Giving Maine Promise' series.

Mr. Riley presented five video spots that MPBN aired during the basketball tournament. He said that the spots were pilots and they had learned a lot. MPBN intends to air similar spots beginning in the fall, but with a more clear focus on college and aimed at all students.

Compact Update. Mr. Bourgeois briefly updated the members on the Compact's work priorities since the last meeting and plans for the next quarter. Ms. Quint reported on the Stakeholders Group and the Early College initiative; regarding the latter program, a Summit will be held on May 9 to which Compact members will be invited.

Higher Education Symposium. The Compact will host a symposium on August 18-19, 2005. Ms. Ryan, Mr. Higgins, Mr. Scontras, Ms. Percy, Ms. Lipp and Mr. McFarland agreed to serve on the planning committee.

Chairman Foley thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.