

Maine Compact for Higher Education

Board of Directors Meeting

October 4, 2006

FAME Office, Augusta

Minutes

Board members present: Wendy Ault, Ron Bancroft, Alan Burton, John Diamond, Shepard Harris, Joyce Hedlund, Susan Percy, Lynn Ploof-Davis, Colleen Quint, Rep. Christopher Rector, Betty Robinson, Sen. Margaret Rotundo, Susan Tuthill, and John Witherspoon

Guests and staff present: Henry Bourgeois, Dianne Heino, and Meredith Jones with the Maine Community Foundation.

Colleen Quint, vice chair of the board opened the meeting at 9:35 a.m., and asked Mr. Bourgeois to review the agenda.

Minutes of the April 27, 2006 Board of Directors meeting. Ms. Quint asked the board members if they had any changes to suggest to the minutes. No changes or corrections were offered. The board:

VOTED, on a motion by Mr. Diamond, seconded by Mr. Rector, to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2006 Board of Directors meeting. The vote was unanimous.

Program Report. Ms. Quint referred the board to a summary report on the Compact's priorities, and asked that we focus on two of the programs. The discussion is summarized below:

- a. **Maine Readiness Campaign.** Mr. Bourgeois outlined the two major strands of the Readiness Campaign: the community engagement portion which currently includes work with 23 communities and the roll-out of a new web page later this month for community leaders, parents and students; and, the social marketing campaign aimed at 8th graders transitioning into high school, most of which will be internet based and will roll-out with its own web page in January.
- b. **Compact's Scholarship Initiative.** Mr. Witherspoon led a discussion on the challenges facing the Scholarship Committee, which he co-chairs with Ron Milliken, in determining the appropriate level of support of students in need. He distributed charts depicting cumulative unfunded need, which ranged from approximately \$3 million to \$95 million depending upon the EFC range and the total college cost used (UMS Average Cost at \$16,500 or UM average cost at \$10,000 per year).

He also distributed an outline of a proposed "Corporate Maine Promise" program that would be a combination of a junior summer internship and post graduation fellowship program.

The scholarship discussion prompted several comments from board members:

- (1) One member asked that a focus of the scholarship initiative be the non-traditional student, because, demographically, we cannot achieve our goal unless incumbent workers enroll in college and graduate.
- (2) Other members observed that, although need-based scholarships are extremely important, it is equally important to support the basic infrastructure needs of the public higher education institutions. She noted that, if we are successful securing state government support for increased scholarship support, but state government reduces basic operational support to the MCCS and UMS systems, thereby resulting in tuition increases, we have gained nothing for needy students. Another member agreed, and indicated that we need a long-term strategy that addresses both basic needs of the institutions and low-income students.

- (3) Another member urged that the needs of persons with disabilities be considered in discussing scholarship aid, readiness for college, career and citizenship, and other Compact initiatives.
- (4) One member urged that we broaden our definition of 'attainment' to include certificates for skills that are vitally needed by Maine's employers and residents, e.g. welders, carpenters, automobile mechanics, etc. He went on to say that we have 'boxed ourselves in' by limiting our metrics to attainment of two and four-year college degrees when much of the economy does not require degree attainment but does require skill-attainment which is measured in part by certificate attainment. Another member agreed and indicated that we should look at the needs of employers first.

Mr. Witherspoon summarized by indicating that he and Mr. Milliken, and the Scholarship Committee, would push ahead with a proposal, while being aware of the limitations of state resources and the basic institutional needs of UMS and MCCS.

Ms. Quint asked the members to work in two groups, each to address a key question facing the Compact. A summary of the 'report-backs' follows.

Should the Compact play a stronger advocacy role in support of higher education initiatives, particularly with the Legislature?

Ms. Robinson summarized the group's consensus:

1. The Compact's advocacy, especially with the Legislature, should be mission-focused, with an emphasis on advocating for the Compact's five strategies.
2. Business people have an important role to play in advocating for higher education, especially with the Legislature.
3. Advocacy includes more than providing testimony to Legislative committees. For example, it should include education programs for Legislators to raise their awareness and understanding of higher education. And, it should include 'public' advocacy, e.g. submitting newspaper op.ed. articles, etc.
4. The Compact should have an advocacy committee that could prepare guidelines and provide advice and direction to the executive director.

Participants in the group discussion offered other comments:

5. One member said that higher education needs to speak with one voice in order to be more effective with the Legislature's Appropriations Committee and the Legislature as a whole. She said, for example, that higher education is not represented the way K-12 is in the Legislature. She went on to say that the K-12 is successful securing funds from the Legislature because they have a strategy, they speak with one voice, and they are not timid.
6. Another member observed that higher education does not have a strong constituency in Maine, reinforced the above comment.
7. A member described the new UMS initiative to recruit people to join the new "University Advantage Network" – an electronic network and database through which the UMS hopes to inform and move to action; 2,500 have joined, exceeding the organizers' expectations. He suggested that the Compact needs a similar way to pull people together.
8. Another member reminded everyone to not forget the private colleges in this discussion and strategic planning.
9. Another issue was that our advocacy efforts not jeopardize the Compact's IRS non-profit designation, which it just received.
10. It was noted that if the Compact is planning to support any new legislation, e.g. scholarship program, it must be submitted to the Legislature by December 9, 2007.
11. One member tried to summarize the discussion by saying that the credibility of the Compact requires that we be out there advocating. And, while we should broadly advocate within the walls of our mission, we should not be so bound that we marginalize ourselves. He suggested that a subcommittee of the board could not only establish broad guidelines, but set goals for this Legislative session.

How can we more meaningfully engage business people and other board members in the Compact's work?

Mr. Witherspoon summarized the group's consensus:

1. We need to convince business people that there is something in it (the Compact) for the private sector. The Compact should consider identifying the needs of the marketplace and the skills/education required in the future.
2. We should broaden the perception and scope of what the Compact is about; in addition to promoting an increase in the number of degree holders, we need to make the case in economic terms.
3. We need to identify and promote business and education partnerships at the local and company/campus-specific level.
4. One member described the Board Network's process of matching non-profit board needs with the business leader's interest and skills. Business people on the Compact board must have a demonstrated interest in education – higher education, preferably.
5. Another member suggested that we need to help business people find specific things that they can do in the community and as employers, such as bankers volunteering time to help parents fill out FAFSA forms for financial aid.
6. The group liked the Corporate Maine Promise concept that was discussed; it includes a summer internship program for college juniors, and a post graduation fellowship.
7. A couple of members commented on the obvious connection between the Compact's advocacy needs (described above) and ways of engaging business people more meaningfully in Compact work. Business people, as employers and community leaders, are often very effective at delivering testimony.

2007 Compact Priorities. The members brainstormed priorities for next year:

1. One member suggested that the Compact analyze the 5-year revenue forecasts for state government and the implications for higher education support. He said that he had recently heard a presentation suggesting that all of state government budget increases will need to go to support Medicaid increases.
2. Another member observed that, although there was lots of energy and enthusiasm, and many new ideas, at the Symposium, there was a lack of coordination. The panelists contributed valuable information, and there are many exciting programs, but there appears to be little coordination among them or any sense of a long-term or comprehensive strategy.
3. Ms. Quint suggested several priorities, based on the discussion:
 - a. Implement the Employer Initiative.
 - b. Propose and advocate for the Scholarship program.
 - c. Engage more business people by making our work more relevant to a wider audience.
 - d. Consider preparing a higher education strategy, based in part on the analysis discussed earlier, and use the Symposium next summer as the place to review it and reach consensus on priorities.

Board Committees. Ms. Quint asked for volunteers for three ad hoc committees – Nominating, Finance, and Advocacy. Several members volunteered, and Mr. Bourgeois was asked to organize their work.

Ms. Quint adjourned the board of directors meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Henry Bourgeois, Compact Executive Director