



**Reimagining the University
Three-year Strategic Plan
AY 26-27 to AY 28-29**

January 2026

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

HIGHER EDUCATION AT A CROSSROAD

Higher education is at an inflection point. Staggering student debt, disruptive technologies, political polarization, and the absence of a clear path from degree to career are all contributing to questions about the value of a college education in its current form.

Nationwide, the cost of a college education with outstanding loan debt topping \$1.7 trillion has focused attention on the return on investment (ROI) of a college degree. Many employers are hiring high school graduates for jobs that once required an academic credential -- hiring for skills rather than a degree. In response, students have turned to career-oriented majors rather than the liberal arts to justify the time and expense in persisting to graduation.

In Maine, the population of high school graduates has steadily declined and is projected to continue to decline. Maine high schools graduated 13,170 students in 2013, and are projected to graduate only 11,180 in 2027, a 15.1 percent decline. To compound the problem, 45 percent of these high school graduates are projected to not pursue any form of higher education. Maine will not only have fewer people to replace its current workforce but fewer with the education to contribute to a society that depends on people with more, not less, education.

Maine's four-year public universities compete with the state's seven community colleges, several private universities, and with each other for the 55 percent of the high school graduates interested in pursuing a college education. The seven community colleges in Maine offer free tuition to recent high school graduates – making it even more competitive for four-year universities to recruit students directly from high school.

In addition to these financial and demographic challenges, today's generation of college students come to the university less prepared academically, emotionally, and socially than students in the past. These students suffer from the uncertain effects of social media and the loss of learning and social engagement during the Covid pandemic. Mental health has become a major issue on college campuses as more students seek mental health services and academic and living accommodations. Nationally, only 49 percent of students entering universities graduate in four years, and only 65 percent earn a degree within six years.

These forces have been challenging for institutions that serve the traditional student population, especially smaller, less elite private and regional public institutions. In response to these challenges, universities have turned to online education to accommodate busy students who often work while gaining their degree. With a declining demographic of high school graduates, universities are seeking to attract non-traditional students who are drawn to the convenience of an online education. Universities are offering credit for prior learning and shorter 8-week semesters for non-traditional students. Competency-based programs are rapidly attracting many non-traditional students because they allow students to move at an accelerated pace through courses at their own pace without having to attend classes in a typical 14-week long semester. But as more universities make this shift, this space, too, has become very competitive.

The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) is considering proposals to lower the requirement for a college degree for select programs from 120 credits to 90-96 credits, which presents both risks and opportunities for public universities. The risks include diminishing the value of an education from non-elite universities and increasing doubts about the value of higher education. The opportunities include encouraging more students, especially adult learners, to pursue a college degree, and shorter undergraduate degrees, which makes dual degrees (undergraduate to graduate) more attractive and affordable. Graduate programs are on the rise, and graduate enrollment has increased as college completers realize they need more education to advance in their professions.

Finally, artificial intelligence will likely enhance and alter higher education in unknown ways. Faculty and students will be aided with artificial intelligent tutors to free them up to create and participate in highly engaging learning experiences. Courses in the future may deemphasize information transfer from teacher to student and shift toward the acquisition of critical inquiry skills to solve unstructured problems as well as a greater emphasis on creativity, communication, and interpersonal skills.

UMF and the challenges of higher education.

UMF is grappling with all of the aforementioned issues that are confronting higher education. Over the last 15 years, UMF has seen its enrollment and credit hours drop by 45 percent, which has mirrored the demographic decline in 18–21-year-old students in Maine. Fewer students are graduating from high school, fewer are pursuing college, fewer are entering the teaching profession, fewer are studying the liberal arts, and most are being recruited by competing universities and colleges.

The precipitous loss of students has left UMF with too many faculty members in areas that lost students and too few faculty in its most popular programs. The university has underused buildings, including vacant rooms in its student housing. These factors have all contributed to persistent annual budget deficits. The three major strategic challenges the university is currently addressing are 1. developing strategies to attract more students 2. increase retention, and 3. developing strategies to operate more efficiently.

UMF has been in the forefront of experiential education, global experiences, teacher preparation, and dynamic programs in the creative arts, education, health, the environment, and business/policy. It has lagged in career preparation, online education, reaching non-traditional students, and graduate education outside of programs for pre-K-12 teachers. Over the last few years, the university has been working in all these areas to catch up with the market.

UMF is building into its value proposition career readiness for its students. UMF serves many first generation and Pell eligible students. These students and their parents see a college education as a pathway into a professional career. UMF is taking steps to deliver on that expectation without transforming itself into a narrow vocational school. Employers seek out students with skills that can be obtained by studying the liberal arts, the sciences, and business — critical thinking, problem solving, oral, written, and graphic communication, creativity, leadership, teamwork, and human relations. Over the next three years, the university will become

more explicit about teaching both hard and soft skills. We want students to acquire these skills, be able to articulate their learning, and possess the capacity to apply them in diverse situations.

UMF offers credit and non-credit pre-professional seminars, workshops, mentorship programs, and public symposia thanks to the Alford Foundation Pathways to Careers grant. As part of the grant, internship fellows receive pre-professional training in the spring to prepare for a summer internship and obtain stipends for their participation. Our goal is to give every student at UMF a rich pre-professional experience.

OUR MISSION

As a premier teacher education and public liberal arts college in the state of Maine, the University of Maine at Farmington prepares students for engaged citizenship, enriching professional careers, and an enduring love of learning.

More than 160 years ago, Maine established what would later become the University of Maine at Farmington to educate teachers who would bring literacy and knowledge to the state. Students preparing to become teachers must be steeped in the liberal arts. Teacher preparation and the liberal arts are two dimensions of a common enterprise. Over the years, that task of educating educators became broader, more complex, and more demanding. In time, another dimension would be added to the University's charge: as a public institution, to use the liberal arts, sciences, and business to prepare graduates for diverse careers and community responsibilities.

As these two tasks have over the years become more demanding, UMF has responded by strengthening its own capabilities, but also by reaching to build partnerships with its community, its region, the state, its sister institutions, and the business and industries that rely on UMF for the human capital needed in a modern economy. This strategic plan both builds on this legacy, but also brings new dimensions and initiatives to the work.

OUR VISION

We believe UMF's success is grounded in a vigorous tradition of education in service to the public interest. Embracing this tradition without reservation, we seek to graduate individuals who will live purposeful, ethical, and personally rewarding lives, and who will strengthen the social fabric of the communities they inhabit in Maine and beyond. We know our success in realizing that vision depends upon our ability to preserve continued, affordable access to quality higher education.

The University's focus is on both undergraduate and graduate education delivered in a supportive residential setting for our traditional students who are recent high school graduates or transfers from community colleges and online for students who seek a Farmington education in that modality. UMF is committed to serving the community where regional and statewide needs correspond with areas of academic strength in the University. Through its focus on high quality academic programs in the arts and sciences, teacher education, and selected professional fields, the University challenges students to be active citizens in a campus community that helps them find and express with confidence their own voices, teaches

them the humility to seek wisdom from others, and prepares them for ongoing explorations of how knowledge can be put to use for their personal benefit and the common good.

Across our programs, academic rigor is non-negotiable, as is a commitment to experience-based learning that illuminates theoretical understandings of different disciplines and the relationship of those studies to a rapidly changing world. We foster an ethic of civic-mindedness and individual and collective duty to the common good, and a recognition that innovation, collaboration, and service with community partners is fundamental to the educational enterprise.

We also believe in a university that is intimately connected with the local environment. UMF's sense of place is shaped by the aesthetic, environmental, recreational, and intellectual heritage of the western Maine region. The bounty of the landscape and the locale contributes materially to a range of academic fields at UMF, to the exciting diversity of the extra- and co- curricular life of the University, and to our reciprocal relationships in support of the important work of our neighbors in western Maine. To fulfill its complementary responsibilities to its community, the region, and the State, the University also reaches out to national and international domains to broaden students' educational experience and assure that they are well prepared for employment and citizenship in contexts that are richly diverse and global. We never forget where we came from and what we have accomplished, but our eyes, our thoughts, and all our work are focused on the future.

OUR CORE VALUES

At UMF we have principles and ideals that guide our daily actions. These are our Core Values. These values reflect the mission, purpose, philosophy, and beliefs of the University. As individual contributors, we also strive to ensure our personal values align with UMF's. For us, the Core Values describe our actions when no one is looking. Living UMF's Core Values every moment of every day helps us create and maintain a culture of success.

- **Inquiry:** We value all our people, embrace our differences, and encourage critical thinking to create a culture of inquiry and civil dialogue.
- **Innovation:** We consistently search for new and exciting processes, methods, and ideas to positively infuse innovation into everything – our culture, curriculum, campus workplace, and student experience.
- **Collaboration:** We build strength through collaboration in our teaching, research, and service as well as partnerships with the wider community.
- **Resilience:** We change, adapt, and transform to meet the ever- changing needs of the University, and those who work and study here, and society beyond the campus boundaries, to help ensure the well-being of all.
- **Global Perspective:** We have a global mindset, and we recognize that we live in a globally connected world with enormous possibilities that we seek to pursue.

SECTION 2: GOALS FOR 2026-2028

The Strategic Planning Committee organized their work and based the goals on the following concepts:

1. Outline a limited number of “objectives” and “strategies” that require significant human and capital investment to better ensure success in achieving them
2. Build on our assets and strengths: location, strong history, dedicated faculty and staff
3. Update curricula and operations to reflect today’s students and the current realities of higher education
4. Focus on low or no cost actions to achieve results within our budget
5. Focus on responsible use of natural and human resources
6. Ensure a culture that values all members and their contributions to the greater good on and off campus
7. Align with the University of Maine System Strategic Plan, the former Title III grant, and the National Institute for Student Success (NISS) goals

The goals are outlined as follows:

A. Goals

Subgoals

1. Objectives

a. Strategies

- Connections to University of Maine System Strategic Plan Goals are indicated in **BLUE**
- Connections to (our former) Title III (our federal DE *Strengthening Institutions* grant) goals are indicated in **GREEN**. NOTE: While we no longer have a Title III grant, the goals are still relevant.
- Connections to our National Institute for Student Success (NISS) goals are indicated in **PURPLE**

Strategic Plan Priorities

All of the goals in the Strategic Plan are important to ensuring a vibrant campus and community for students, staff, faculty, our stakeholders, and Western Maine. However, there are several goals that are critical for student access, persistence, achievement and the future of the institution. Success in these goals will help ensure a **balanced budget**, and the continued success of the institution.

1. Reimagine the academic enterprise and increase enrollment by serving:
 - a. traditional students (new and transfer) on campus and through in person classes
 - b. certificate, transfer / adult completers online, at other sites, and competency-based education
 - c. graduate students (certificate and degree seeking) online and in low residency programs.
 - d. While expanding, we must organize our academic programs to achieve an average class size of at least 20 students, and an average of at least 480 student credit hours per faculty per AY.
2. Improve retention rates, with a focus on at-risk students, through:
 - a. aggressive student success programs and interventions

- b. robust belonging initiatives
 - c. developing programs to prepare at-risk students for the rigor of university level classes.
 - d. Strengthening existing and creating new engaging experiences to assure a greater sense of belonging in both academic and extracurricular environments
3. Increase the interdisciplinary organization of the academic enterprise by:
- a. moving academic programs out of their silos by linking smaller academic programs and general education with larger programs and / or with other smaller programs to create greater coherence for students and as a way to preserve smaller programs.
 - b. Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) across the curriculum
 - c. Strengthening pathways to careers

A. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

UMF will use a disciplined, data-informed, and strategic approach to all actions. Our foci include:

- Increasing enrollment and improving retention through a focus on continually improving services, support and interventions differentiated based on student type, and
- Academic refinements, including optimization of the class schedule for students, ensuring faculty credit hour loads of at least 480 annually, and ensuring an average class size of 20.

(UMS Commitment 2, Financial Sustainability Action 1, Action 2, Action 3); UMS Commitment 3, Destination for Public Higher Education, Action 1, Action 2); (Title III goals: Increase the number of FT degree-seeking UGs enrolled; Increase fiscal stability via increased retention.)

SUBGOAL: UMF will **recruit / enroll** a robust and diverse enrollment portfolio of students. UMF will increase the number of credit hours each year (with different targeted outcomes for each student population), which will help ensure a balanced budget. *(UMS Commitment 3, Destination for Public Higher Education, Action 1, Action 2); (Title III goals: Increase the number of FT degree-seeking UGs enrolled at UMF; Increase UMF fiscal stability via increased retention.)*

1. Increase the number of recent high school graduates (first time) UG student credit hours by 360 by the end of AY 28-29
 - a. Expand direct admit programs
 - b. Expand Early College pathways
 - c. Build an Alumni Recruitment program
 - d. Increase recruitment in developing territories (geographic areas targeted by Admissions)
2. Increase the number of international UG student credit hours by 180 by the end of AY 28-29
 - a. Cultivate additional overseas partners
 - b. Expand Virtual Global Experience for UMF students and in collaboration with overseas partners
 - c. Collaborate with Athletics to recruit international athletes
 - d. Expand and refine international student orientation in collaboration with Orientation
 - e. Develop international student scholarships as part of the institutional aid program and / or the donor funded scholarship program (see Philanthropy)

3. Increase the number of UG transfer student credit hours by 360 by the end of AY 28-29.
 - a. Prioritize Maine community colleges in recruiting
 - b. Develop new and refine existing articulation agreements
 - c. Standardize degree progress tools to ease student transitions
 - d. Update Transfer Admissions Counselor position to include transfer academic advising tasks

4. Increase the number of UG adult online / site based / CBE (as part of Your Pace) subscriptions (equivalent to 1500 credit hours) by the end of AY 28-29.
 - a. Strengthen support for degree completion students / work with Admissions on overlapping responsibilities.
 - b. Develop online programs that meet workforce demands (see Academic Innovation and Excellence)
 - c. Determine what is successful in existing collaborations with school districts; add additional collaborations where there is the best chance for mutual benefit; improve existing collaborations where necessary.
 - d. Develop UMF based CBE degree programs (see Academic Innovation and Excellence)
 - e. Develop UMF based CBE certificate programs (see Academic Innovation and Excellence)

5. Increase the number of graduate students/graduate credit hours by 1121 by the end of AY 28-29.
 - a. Enhance / diversify marketing for graduate programs
 - b. Market graduate programs to prospective undergraduate students
 - c. Develop a communication plan to recruit graduate students from our UG student body
 - d. Develop a robust marketing plan to recruit graduate students from our alumni base
 - e. Develop scholarships and fellowships for graduate students through the institutional aid program and / or the donor funded scholarship program (see Philanthropy)
 - f. Increase professional development funds for graduate students
 - g. Develop additional graduate programs that meet workplace demands (see Academic Excellence and Innovation)

6. Ensure high-touch practices for all prospective students at all stages in the pre-enrollment funnel
 - a. Develop specialized peer to peer communications
 - b. Develop specialized faculty / academic department communications
 - c. Create mechanisms to learn as much as possible about prospective students to provide information about related academic and cocurricular opportunities, on campus and virtually.
 - d. Create individualized breakdowns of financial aid awards for each student
 - e. Provide opportunities for prospective students (and families, when relevant) to meet and discuss financial aid awards; meetings can take place virtually and outside of traditional work hours to meet the needs of students
 - f. Pre-test (or assess) first year, first time students in English and Math (also Student Engagement and Success)

7. Work to meet the full financial need of undergraduate students, and to provide more institutional aid

to graduate students, which in turn will improve retention rates

- a. Increase the number of scholarships by 5% (see Philanthropy)
- b. Increase emergency funds available for students in crisis; seek to have at least \$50,000 on hand (total, among the crisis accounts) (see Philanthropy)
- c. Develop graduate aid programs / strategies to better meet the needs of graduate students (see Philanthropy)

SUBGOAL: UMF will ensure effective and efficient use of resources in an environment that supports environmental sustainability

1. Optimize human, technological, and physical resources
 - a. Increase the annual number of campus space rentals to local community partners by 20%
 - b. Consolidate underutilized campus spaces
 - c. Improve Net Asset Value (NAV) (lower operational risk; attending appropriately to operational demands)
 - d. Optimize class sizes to achieve as least a 20 student average
 - e. Schedule classes across the days of the week to optimize classroom and student schedules
 - f. Ensure technical accessibility of campus facilities (the minimum standard) as well as practical accessibility (i.e. optimize usability and inclusion).
2. Ensure sustainability in physical infrastructure, programs, and purchasing
 - a. Expand renewable/sustainable energy sources when possible
 - b. Move the compost program/collaboration with Farmington and Sodexo (currently under the purview of the SCC) to UMF Facilities oversight.
 - c. Implement a new supervision model for the Sustainable Campus Coalition (SCC); align SCC extra curricular programs with Student Affairs operations and academic/co curricular efforts with faculty and the internship program.
 - d. Expand existing and develop sustainability curricula for use in classes and programs
 - e. Encourage/recognize Sodexo's local food program

B. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

The academic enterprise is at the heart of the institution. Academic innovation is key to meet the ever changing demands of our markets, which include students and their needs and desires, as well as employers in all sectors. UMF seeks to creatively address these challenges by capitalizing on the knowledge, talents, and dedication of the faculty in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders, and by prioritizing interdisciplinary programs and incorporating liberal arts competencies and artificial intelligence literacy across the curriculum.

GOAL: UMF will cultivate an environment among the faculty, supported by the administration, that facilitates nimble academic innovation and recognizes outstanding ideas, programs, and practices in undergraduate and graduate teaching. (*UMS Commitment 1: Student Success Action 3, Research Action 5, Teaching Action 1, Teaching Action 5, Service Action 1; Commitment 2: Effective Academic Portfolio, Action 1, 2;*

Commitment 4: Opportunities for Learning, Action 2)

1. Explore / pilot develop new interdisciplinary programs (majors, minors) based on in-demand knowledge and skills
 - a. Support interdisciplinary team teaching where relevant
 - b. Develop and implement new interdisciplinary programs or concentrations to foster holistic learning and address complex challenges
 - c. Integrate general education courses into the large majors to create interdisciplinary programs
2. Explore / pilot new and update existing undergraduate and graduate certificate, credential, and micro credential programs that capitalize on faculty/ staff collaborations/campus resources and meet in-demand knowledge and skills (e.g. Alpine Operation, Health Coaching, Camping Administration, Global, Leadership, etc.)
 - a. Fully implement UMF Online and CBE (through Your Pace) programs for the undergraduate, graduate, and adult completion students.
 - b. Develop stand-alone CBE minors, certificate, and degree programs, such as Public Policy, International and Global Studies, Cannabis Business, Community and Public Health, Artificial Intelligence in Education, Health Informatics, and Data Analytics.
 - c. Develop online undergraduate programs, such as Community and Public Health, Health Informatics, and Professional Studies, with focus areas in Elementary Education, Creative Writing, Data Analytics, Data Visualization, Business, Psychology and Bioinformatics
 - d. Assess the success of the Master's Certificate in Climate Education and update if necessary
 - e. Explore the development of an EdD program (doctorate of education); conduct a needs assessment and assess the competition as part of the exploration.
3. Revitalize a culture of teaching excellence
 - a. Foster a culture of mentorship and collaboration among faculty members.
 - b. Implement institution-wide professional development programs focused on innovative pedagogical approaches and the effective use of AI and technology in teaching
 - c. Develop annual recognition for teaching excellence (undergraduate and graduate; in person, online, and hybrid).
 - d. Develop a peer observation and feedback program for growth (separate from reappointment / promotion process)
 - e. Explore the development of a scholar in residence program (Or: Maximize the reach of the Libra Scholar program)
 - f. Explore the development of an intra-campus faculty exchange program and joint appointments across the UMS universities.
 - g. Collaborate with other UMS classes to share faculty for online classes and programs.
4. Foster administrative and faculty support for academic innovation, including proficiency in the use of AI as well as technology and class modalities and scheduling
 - a. Develop a peer review process that identifies and supports academic innovation
 - b. Train and support faculty in the appropriate and effective uses of AI and other new/emerging

- technologies in teaching and learning
 - c. Re-think the semester concept for various teaching modalities across the academic year (short courses, modules, etc.) to meet the needs of different types of students (online, adult completion, traditional, graduate); pilot new models.
 - d. Establish university-wide initiatives (e.g., workshops, seed funding) to encourage and support faculty, staff, and students in developing and implementing innovative ideas.
5. Optimize the course schedule
- a. Cycle courses in a way that allows students to complete a program expeditiously (i.e. undergraduate in four years).
 - b. Schedule classes in a way that ensures required classes do not overlap, forcing students to take electives at other campuses, or to create a need for substitutions or waivers for required courses.
 - c. Provide enough online classes to meet the needs of programs like Adult Degree Completion and Early College.
6. Ensure support for a full array of experiential learning opportunities for students in all undergraduate majors
- a. Increase the number of programs offering experiential learning opportunities (e.g., internships, co-ops, service-learning)
 - b. Focus on cost effective programs to increase student participation in global experiences (study abroad, travel classes, VGE, academic exchange)
 - c. Embed service learning into the curriculum
 - d. Expand class-based, community-based, and research opportunities for students
 - e. Develop additional micro-credentials and licensing (and related) opportunities for students based on employer needs and input.
7. Academic departments will identify hard and soft skills, and develop mechanisms for students to acquire these skills.
- a. Expand Pathways to Careers by making connections with Maine industries, in order to expand internships and other experiential learning opportunities
 - b. Strengthen and expand collaborations with schools, healthcare facilities, social service organizations and local industries, including outdoor recreation
 - c. Develop additional internship and pre-professional opportunities.
 - d. Develop workforce training programs addressing Maine's economic needs
 - e. Collaborate with Alumni
 - f. Collaborate with student organizations that are discipline-based

C. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUCCESS

The student and engagement functions at the institution work diligently to support the academic mission of the institution, and academic and extracurricular goals of the students. These areas use data and current literature to provide continually improving programs, services, supports and interventions. Their role is to help students address barriers so they can have positive educational experiences and persist to completion.

GOAL: UMF will increase the first to second year undergraduate retention rate (using return rates) from 71% (fall 23-fall 24) to 80%, second to third year retention from 87% to 92%, third to fourth year retention from 89% to 93%, the overall six year graduation rate from 52% to 60%, and the Pell student student six year graduation rate from 44% to 52% by the end of AY 28-29.

UMF will increase retention and graduation rates through 1. enhanced academic support programs, processes, and services, as well as 2. safety, well being, and ‘sense of belonging’ programs and services for our diverse student population. (*UMS Commitment 1: Student Success Action 2; Commitment 4: Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Action 2*)

SUBGOAL: UMF will strengthen **retention**-related programs (academic student support services, processes, and practices) to promote goal and degree attainment for all undergraduate students.

1. Create and scale existing structures & supports in the first year, including bridge program(s), first-year learning communities, the Alford Transforms program, and first year seminar courses that include financial wellness and career components (*NISS*)
 - a. Revisit and update the FYS Collegial Agreement
 - b. Engage students who are at most significant academic risk in a bridge-like program (pre first year) to build academic skills.
 - c. Create intentional and mandatory first-year learning communities designed to help new students find the "right fit" majors during their first year and increase their sense of belonging.
 - d. Require all first year, full time students to enroll in a systematized FYS course that links academic pathways, career / experiential opportunities, and financial and academic supports.
 - e. Refine RLEs (Research Learning Experiences) and develop new opportunities where resources are available.
2. Use academic data to direct appropriate resources to undergraduate courses with high DFWL rates and students who demonstrate the greatest need (at risk students) (*NISS*)
 - a. Track and share DFWL rates for all courses each semester with appropriate individuals; use this information to strategically plan early alert and intervention programs
 - b. Focus academic supports in gateway courses with significant DFWL rates.
 - c. Pre test (or assess) first year, first time students in English and Math; use results for appropriate scheduling and academic support and interventions.
 - d. Identify students who demonstrate a risk for dropping out/leaving and provide proactive, wraparound support
3. Standardize undergraduate academic advising systems and practices by enhancing support and training for academic advisors to ensure all students (first time, transfer, adult degree completion, post traditional, and non traditional) receive high-quality and consistent support and interventions (*NISS*)
 - a. Empower the existing undergraduate Academic Advising Council to align advising systems and practices across campus.
 - b. Ensure all UMF undergraduate students receive a consistent, high standard of advising services

- that are responsive to student needs and efficient degree completion
 - c. Maximize the effectiveness of advising services through systematic and proactive strategies
- 4. Use academic data to systematically inform UG course/program sequencing and strategic course scheduling (*NISS*)
 - a. Use data such as "time to degree", High Point degree planner, and course availability to support strategic course scheduling
- 5. Support academic and cocurricular programs that address high academic achievement
 - a. Explore additional components for the Honors Program
 - b. Enhance the campus impact of honor societies; ensure honor societies include non-traditional students; add honor societies that UMF does not have that are focused on non-traditional identities and life experiences
 - c. Develop opportunities for recognizing honor societies and members
 - d. Support academic recognition (e.g. Dean's List, Symposium, capstone events, grad student events, grad student presentations at conferences, etc.) (also Culture of celebration, recognition, and appreciation)
- 6. Undertake a study to determine undergraduate and graduate student perceptions of what helps and hinders their persistence in order to develop appropriate and effective interventions
 - a. Conduct interviews with undergraduate students who entered "at risk" and graduated in 4-5-6 years.
 - b. Update the exit process survey; ensure graduate students are included; share results and make recommendations for improvements
 - c. Conduct exit interviews with undergraduate and graduate students who depart without a credential to gain insights into their experiences and reasons for departing.

SUBGOAL: UMF will ensure robust, networked campus environments (in person and virtual) that support the safety, well-being, and belonging needs of students so they will have positive collegiate experiences and can **persist** to goal/degree completion. (*UMS Commitment 3, Place to Work, Action 1; Commitment 4, Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action 3; Commitment 1, Service Action 1*); (*Title III Goal: Create a campus that is focused on belonging and retention.*)

1. Update health resources in order to serve a population of students with a variety of health needs.
 - a. Strategically update the range of student-centered health services
 - b. In collaboration with appropriate faculty, Disability Services, and Mental Health and Counseling services, develop training programs and resources to support a student body that includes many neurodiverse students; ensure an asset based set of programs and resources; use universal design wherever possible
 - c. Ensure clinicians collaborate with Athletics, Club Sports, local resources, and students' other providers
 - d. Continue the PHE program so traditional residential students are familiarized with healthy living practices and health resources; develop an internship component for PHE student

- mentors; provide alternative opportunities for non-traditional students.
 - e. Provide opportunities for students to advise campus professionals who provide well being related services (Student Health and Wellness Board)
 - f. Ensure staff have the proper training and development to meet evolving student needs.
2. Update mental health clinical and outreach services to serve a diverse population of students and to assist UMF faculty and staff as they serve students.
 - a. Strategically updated the student-centered clinical service model, both on campus and virtually
 - b. Provide training and support to faculty and staff working with students with mental health challenges
 - c. Work with relevant undergraduate and graduate student organizations or representatives to provide mental health outreach programming on campus
 - d. Ensure staff have the proper training and development to meet evolving student needs.
 3. Ensure a vibrant co-curricular student life for all students in all programs
 - a. Expand student governance / advisory board opportunities to ensure participation from students in all programs (undergraduate and graduate)
 - b. Develop and implement new ways for varsity athletic programs to be part of the fabric and traditions on campus, and embedded in the community
 - c. Expand service opportunities for students (short-term, long-term, alternative breaks, class/credit based, student organization based)
 - d. Develop and facilitate opportunities for faculty and staff to easily participate in extracurricular programs and services, including student organization programming
 - e. Develop and facilitate opportunities for staff and students to easily participate in academic programming
 - f. Explore new ways to support for student-developed and led undergraduate and graduate student organizations
 4. Ensure a safe, supportive, and integrated residence and dining environment
 - a. For safety: strengthen current staff, staffing structures, and key partnerships (Public Safety/Campus Police, Mental Health and Counseling Services)
 - b. Improve campus housing and dining integration with other co-curricular activities.
 - c. Integrate academics and extracurriculars into on-campus living.
 - d. Reimagine student lounges and shared spaces.
 - e. Increase on-campus housing occupancy percentage (has been increasing incrementally each year; from Fall 24-Fall 25, increased from 66% to 75%)
 5. Enhance the culture of celebration, recognition, and appreciation of students
 - a. Expand Chomper's Recognition program
 - b. Reconceive the First Family Awards, which recognize students for persistence through challenges
 - c. Develop additional ways to support the Student Senate's Student Leadership Awards program/banquet

- d. Develop additional ways to support academic recognition (Dean's List, Symposium, capstone events, graduate student events, graduate student presentations at conferences, etc.)
 - e. Work with the student government and student reps from the graduate programs to create faculty, academic advisor, and student organization advisor appreciation programs
6. Develop and provide centralized platforms for students to ask questions and seek support. Design communications to be coordinated, personalized, proactive, and reactive in a timely manner. (NISS)
- a. Appoint a cross-functional Student Communications Committee and revisit current student communications to better understand their nature and cadence.
 - b. Prioritize communications from offices key to student progression and standardize communications in critical areas related to enrollment and student success (also relevant for academic support services)
 - c. Use data to target and personalize communications, including text messages, with focused content sent in a proactive manner (also relevant for academic support services)

D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

UMF is located in an area with abundant natural beauty, opportunities for outdoor activities, and engaged community members. UMF has been a strong presence in Farmington for 160 years, employing many local residents and contributing to the economic well being of the area. UMF will continue to be a strong partner to our area's businesses, industries, educational institutions, social services agencies, and cultural organizations, and to ensure mutual benefit in all relationships.

GOAL: UMF will serve as an "anchor institution" in Western Maine, contribute to the economic health and overall well-being of the community and people we serve, and maintain a strong Beaver Nation. (UMS *Commitment 1: Service Action 1, 2*)

1. Promote community and reputational awareness through external communications
 - a. Establish a communications strategy that emphasizes the accomplishments of our students, alumni, faculty, and staff; ensure reflection of UMF's core values
 - b. Increase visibility and accessibility of graduate offerings
 - c. Increase visibility of Western Maine workforce development-related academic programs (degree and certificate)
2. Promote a culture of belonging among alumni and affinity groups
 - a. Increase alumni events, especially in areas where there are significant numbers of alumni
 - b. Revive and update the Outstanding Alumni program
 - c. Strengthen alumni networks for mentoring and career placement
 - d. Develop a Student Alumni Association
3. Promote a culture of philanthropy and advancement to build reliable sources of funding to help support UMF's vision and goals (also a Financial Sustainability goal)
 - a. Build infrastructure to secure major donors
 - b. Explore / implement improvements to donor stewardship

- c. Work with faculty and staff to develop targeted mini-campaigns to support specific needs on campus
 - d. Continue to raise funds for aid (undergraduate and graduate) and emergency funds
 - i. Increase the number of scholarships by 10% by the end of AY 28-29.
 - ii. Increase emergency funds available for students in crisis; seek to have at least \$50,000 on hand (total, among the crisis accounts)
 - iii. Develop graduate aid programs / strategies in order to better meet the needs of graduate students
4. Promote grants as a way to support research and programs on campus
 - a. Strengthen the process for discussing potential grants and how they fit with UMF's goals
 - b. Ensure adequate grant support staffing
 - c. Ensure grant writing support
 5. Enhance and build new community partnerships for mutual benefit
 - a. Ensure a thorough understanding of current partnerships/purposes across the institution
 - b. Develop (or expand) partnership promotion and stewardship
 - c. Work with community leaders to explore potential partnerships

E. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Our goals--ambitious but realistic--will not be completed without a strong organization of employees-staff, faculty, and administrators--to work together to tackle the challenges in an optimistic, creative, and diligent manner. UMF will ensure staff and faculty address our goals, objectives and implement our strategies in an environment that supports their work, keeps them engaged, and both recognizes and celebrates their efforts.

GOAL: UMF will ensure a vibrant campus life for all community members.; this will help ensure a strong team that can work together to achieve our goals. We will meet our goals through effective, efficient, and people-centered operations while building on our strong history. *(UMS Commitment 3, Place to Work Action 1, Action 2; Commitment 4, Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Action 3)*

1. Ensure strong internal awareness and communications
 - a. Create and maintain organizational charts in discrete areas and for the overall institution.
 - b. Advertise and support the shared community planning calendar
2. Enhance and sustain an infrastructure that facilitates, supports and coordinates effective external communication
 - a. Establish the updated Marketing and Communications staff (hire and onboard the social media manager and the website manager)
 - b. Complete the new website
 - c. Develop a strategy for promoting UMF events to the community
 - d. Develop and implement mechanisms for managing the UMF brand to ensure brand adherence
 - e. Once the Digital Media position is filled, overhaul the social media strategy; provide training

- and support to students, faculty, and staff responsible for social media
- f. Provide training and support for webpage management, promotions, and social media.
3. Expand staff recognition, celebration, and appreciation programs to ensure a positive culture
 - a. Initiate a Student Alumni Association--the “tradition keepers” at the institution.
 - b. Document and promote all existing recognition, celebration, and appreciation programs
 - c. Create and implement a mechanism for recognizing retirements
 - d. Create and implement a mechanism for recognizing work anniversaries
 - e. Create and implement a mechanism for recognizing promotion and tenure
 - f. Update the planning/implementation of the Staff Awards program at the direction of the planning committee.
 - g. Develop annual recognition for teaching excellence in each college (Academic Excellence and Innovation)
 4. Ensure use of a small set of shared communication and work tools in order to provide information efficiently and consistently to students and among the campus community; provide training and support for use of the tools. *(Note: new goals for AY 26-27 to AY 28-29 will be developed after these AY 25-26 outcomes are evaluated.)*
 - a. Increase the number of UG classes (not including Early College only classes) that actively utilized Brightspace from 830 in AY 24-25 to 850 in AY 25-26; move toward 100% use of Brightspace where appropriate. AY 24-25 info:
 - i. Fall, 404 active Brightspace courses / 100 unique instructors / 82% of faculty
 - ii. Winter/Spring, 384 active Brightspace courses / 98 unique instructors / 80% of faculty
 - iii. May/Summer, 42 active Brightspace courses / 28 unique instructors
 - b. Increase use of Navigate for undergraduate “concern” alerts from 33 in AY 24-25 to 50 in AY 25-26
 - c. Increase faculty use of Progress Reports from 45 in Fall 24 and 56 in Spring 25 to 60 in each semester in AY 25-26; work toward 100% faculty use
 - d. Increase faculty use of positive undergraduate Progress Reports from 67 in AY 24-25 to 75 in AY 25-26; work toward 100% faculty use
 - e. Increase faculty participation in Enrollment Census surveys from 83.17% in fall 24 and 81.11 in Spring 25 to 90% in Fall/Spring 25-26; work toward 100% participation
 - f. Increase faculty, staff, and student staff use of Navigate for undergraduate student appointments from 23 faculty and staff and 55 student tutors in AY 24-25 to 40 faculty and staff in AY 24-25 (already at 100% use among student tutors)
 - g. Increase information shared on Navigate (campus events, etc.)
 - h. Increase mobile Navigate users from 252 in AY 24-25 to 500 in AY 25-26; work toward 100% student adoption.
 - i. Deploy the shared planning calendar (inward facing; to prevent overlap among events)
 - j. Revised the shared calendar (outward facing; to advertise events and deadlines)
 5. Ensure effective communication among governance organizations (faculty, staff and students) and administration
 - a. Student, Faculty, and Staff Senate leadership, as well as the Unions and graduate student

- representatives will meet regularly (at least several times a semester) and with the President and key administrators to discuss the challenges of the university and ways to address these challenges
- b. Undergraduate Student Senate will share goals with Student Affairs staff to ensure support of student endeavors
6. Elevate a culture of inquiry and continual improvement
- a. Create an assessment, evaluation, and research website, where undergraduate and graduate student, faculty, and staff work can be shared
 - b. Continue with regular assessment of academic programs
 - c. Create an implement a program assessment program for non academic areas; use Counsel for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) or professional organization standards where relevant
 - d. Create mechanisms to ensure scholarly work is submitted to ScholarWorks.
 - e. Develop and implement ways to support the Faculty Senate committee that plans Symposium in order to increase participation of students, staff, and faculty.
 - f. Develop / implement financial and other mechanisms to support graduate student professional development (Philanthropy)