



# University of Maine at Fort Kent

## Consulting Audit Report December 2008



**SEMWORKS**





## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
UMFK Context	4
Strategic Opportunities	9
Common Purpose	10
Market Opportunities	20
Inquiry Generation	27
Inquiry Cultivation	29
Web Presence	31
Student Retention	37
Antecedents to Success	40
Final Thoughts	41



## Introduction

SEM WORKS, a higher education consulting firm, was hired by University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK) to complete an enrollment management audit. The audit was conducted December 1–3, 2008, by Dr. Jim Black, hereafter referred to as the consultant. Findings from the consulting visit are presented in this report along with related recommendations.

## Methodology

The three-day consulting visit included interviews with groups consisting of students, faculty, staff, and senior management. Prior to the site visit, the consultant reviewed documents and marketing materials provided by the institution. During the visit, additional information was supplied to the consultant.

Using a combination of the physical evidence described above along with secondary data sources, on-campus interviews, and direct observations of existing practices, the consultant utilized a research method known as “triangulation” to validate findings. Any finding supported by all three research techniques was considered to be valid. The consultant used a complementary method called “pattern matching” to validate findings that did not appear to be triangulated. Pattern matching describes reoccurring themes that emerge from one or more of these research techniques.

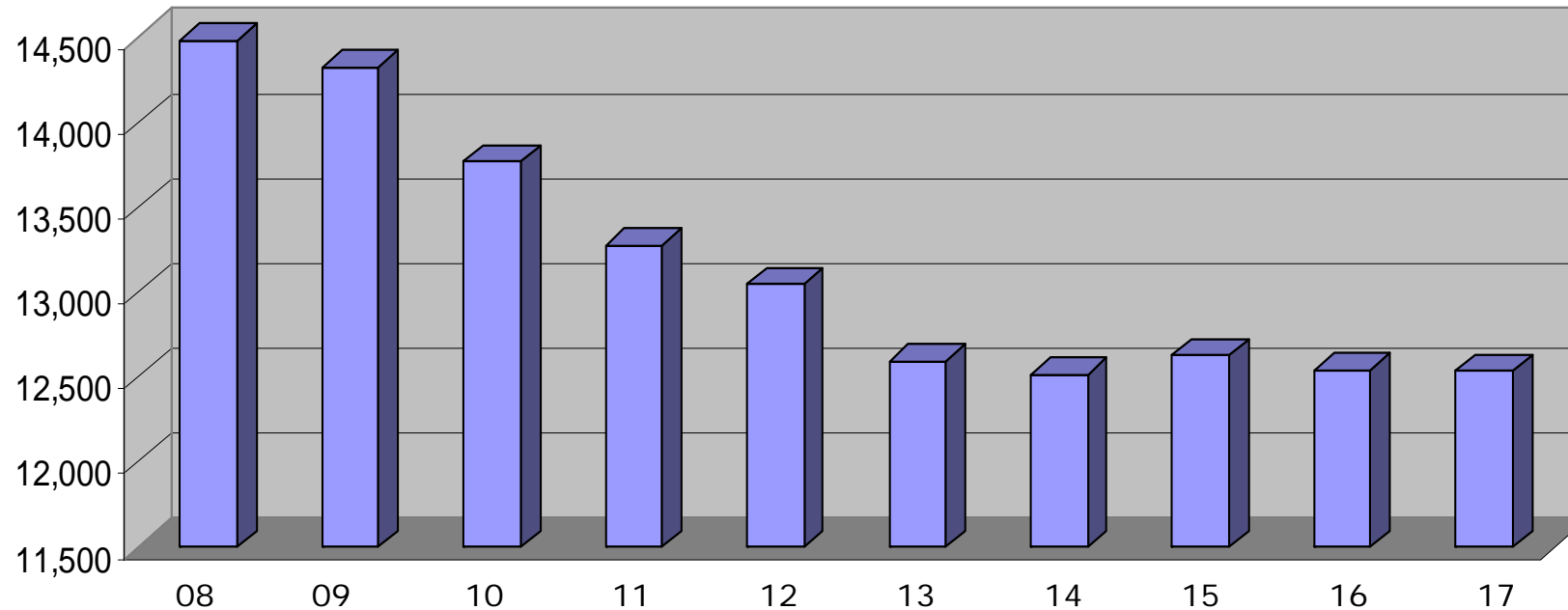
Recommendations in the report are prioritized using the following rating scheme: MC (mission critical), E (essential), and D (desired). The University is encouraged to begin work first on those items denoted as “mission critical.”



## UMFK Context

UMFK's potential student market is in the midst of significant change. These changes are the result of several environmental factors. For example, the State of Maine will be experiencing a decrease in the number of high school graduates through 2013 and then plateauing at around 12,500 graduates between 2013 and 2017—nearly 2,000 fewer high school graduates than 2008 levels. It is important to note that the decline in graduates is expected to be exclusively among white, non-Hispanic graduates. Modest increases in Asian/Pacific Islanders; Black, non-Hispanics, and Hispanics are predicted during this same period. These increases will be insufficient to compensate for the forecasted decline in white, non-Hispanic graduates.

**Maine High School Graduates 2008-2017**



Source: WICHE



## UMFK Context

The table below illustrates a negative in/out migration of students attending a degree-granting institution in Maine. Put simply, 1,100 more Maine residents leave the state to attend a college or university than out-of-state students pursuing a postsecondary opportunity in Maine. In total, 73% of the freshmen enrolled in Maine degree-granting institutions are residents of the state. Of the total number of Maine residents enrolled in a degree-granting institution anywhere, only 66% are enrolled at a college or university in Maine. Some 4,000 Maine residents migrate out of state, while fewer than 3,000 leave their home state to attend a college or university in Maine.

Though these data are not specific to UMFK, they do suggest it will be difficult to attract out-of-state students to the University, and one could argue that keeping Maine students in-state—attending UMFK—is challenging as well.

Residence and Migration of All Freshmen Students in Degree-granting Institutions								
State	Total freshman enrollment in institutions located in the state	State residents enrolled in institutions		Ratio of in-state students To freshman enrollment (col. 4/col. 2)	Migration of students			
		In any state/1/	In their home state		To residents enrolled in any state (col. 4/col. 3)	Out of state (col. 3 - col. 4)	Into state/2/ (col. 2 - col. 4)	Net (col. 8 - col. 7)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
United States	2,630,243	2,575,811	2,133,727	0.81	0.83	442,084	496,516	54,432
Maine	10,760	11,860	7,846	0.73	0.66	4,014	2,914	-1,100
NOTE: Includes all first-time postsecondary students enrolled at reporting institutions. Degree-granting institutions grant <u>associate's</u> or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs.								
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).								



## UMFK Context

The charts below reflect the unemployment trends in Maine over the last year. The number of unemployed as well as the unemployment rate have grown dramatically in recent months as is expected in a global recession. This trend is important to UMFK for two reasons. First, in a faltering economy, adults are more compelled to return to college—suggesting enrollment opportunities related to this population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Maine population of individuals who are age twenty-five or older has grown by some 50,000 people since 2000. Assuming a larger market size of potential adult students in the state includes a similar rate of growth within a fifty mile radius of the University, this also presents an opportunity for UMFK.

Second, as the economy continues to impact the discretionary spending and investments of families, the selection of colleges are often affected. Students who would have attended four-year privates are increasingly considering four-year publics, and those who have historically gravitated toward a four-year public are increasingly deciding to complete their first two years at a community college before transferring to their first choice institution. These trends may positively or negatively impact the number of native freshmen selecting UMFK, but there will almost certainly be an increased flow of two-year college transfers to the University.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



## UMFK Context

There were multiple factors that led to the enrollment drop in the fall of 2008. However, the most significant factor was the decline in teacher certification students migrating from Canada to UMFK. Theories related to causation of the dramatic decline in teacher certification students range from internal policy changes potentially creating barriers to enrollment to external factors such as an oversupply of certified teachers in nearby Canadian provinces, the Nova Scotia Minister of Education publicly discouraging people from pursuing careers as teachers, and the opening of spaces in comparable programs at Canadian universities. In all likelihood, it was the convergence of these factors in a single year that led to the enrollment decline at UMFK. Regardless of the reason for the decline, the probability of returning to past enrollment levels is not high.

Hence, the University must seek alternative means of replacing these lost enrollments. There are four viable options: (1) increase market penetration in your primary market, namely among adult learners; (2) expand to new markets—starting with southern Maine and then NEBHE states and nearby Canadian provinces; (3) grow the distance learning offerings to include niche, complete programs; and (4) retain more of the students currently enrolled at the University. To fully compensate for the loss of teacher certification students and to mitigate against other external forces that will negatively impact the University's future enrollments, you will need to adopt some combination of the aforementioned alternatives.



## UMFK Context

These environmental factors create or are compounded by UMFK’s enrollment dynamics. The University has several issues that give rise to a compelling sense of urgency. A sense of urgency is necessary for most institutions to engage in significant change. So, you are encouraged to embrace the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats depicted in the SWOT analysis below—leverage your strengths, address your weaknesses, seize the opportunities, and defend against threats.

	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
POSITIVE	<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passionate People</li> <li>A Sense of Urgency</li> <li>Program/Faculty Quality</li> <li>Student Services</li> <li>Campus Environment</li> <li>Affordability</li> <li>The College Community Project</li> <li>Communications Flow</li> <li>Rolling Testing, Advising, &amp; Registration</li> <li>Student Success Efforts</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Downturn</li> <li>Increase Market Share within the Service Region</li> <li>Draw Beyond Service Region</li> <li>Product/Demand Alignment</li> <li>Niche Program Opportunities</li> </ul>
NEGATIVE	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrollment Declines</li> <li>Technology Optimization</li> <li>Actionable Intelligence</li> <li>Playing the Blame Game</li> <li>Lack of a Common Purpose</li> <li>Internal Communication</li> <li>Small Number of Campus Visitors</li> <li>Internal vs. External Recruiting</li> <li>Limited Faculty Involvement in Recruitment and Retention</li> <li>Not Staying The Course</li> <li>Firmness Of Deadlines</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget Cuts</li> <li>Dependence Upon Northern Maine Students</li> <li>Dependence Upon Teacher Certification Students</li> <li>Limited Market Size</li> <li># of High School Graduates</li> <li>Rural Flight</li> <li>Transportation Costs</li> </ul>





## Strategic Opportunities

The institutional strengths cited in the SWOT analysis on the previous page reflect UMFK attributes as well as enrollment-related initiatives that are yielding positive results. Specific examples of the latter include the number of touch points in the communications flow to prospective students; customization of the campus visit experience; the introduction of a fall open house and a spring acceptance day; the in-take advising process; faculty-assisted student registration; the payment and purging process that results in minimal registration cancellations; adequate course offerings to meet student demand; turnaround time on processing such as inquiry information requests, admission credentials, transfer credit evaluations, and transcript requests; as well as a range of programmatic and individualized efforts to foster student success. In addition to these strategy- and process-oriented strengths, the University has engaged in innovative academic programming initiatives through teacher certification and distance education degrees in criminal justice (AA), a RN to BSN, and a bachelor's in university studies. It also is important to note the impact of the VPAS group under the leadership of the Vice President of Administration. This group addresses student problems; procedural, process, and technology issues; and generates ideas primarily targeted at improving enrollment outcomes. In the absence of an enrollment management division, the group has provided tactical direction and coordination for the University, and to the extent possible, the Vice President of Administration has served as the "enrollment champion" for the campus.

Within this context, the University has opportunities to "sharpen the saw" (Covey, 1989). The remainder of this report will highlight strategic opportunities in the area of enrollment management and related recommendations. By implementing the proposed recommendations, focusing on the following strategic opportunities, and ensuring the corresponding antecedents for success are in place, the University of Maine at Fort Kent will enhance and sustain its position in an increasingly competitive region:

- A common purpose
- Market opportunities
- Inquiry generation
- Inquiry cultivation
- Web presence
- Student retention



## A Common Purpose

At the time of the consulting audit, the University community appeared to be engaged in a textbook group dynamic cycle—storming, norming, and performing. Different segments of the campus community are at various stages of this cycle. It behooves UMFK to consciously move the entire organization to the performing stage. For this to occur, however, issues that paralyzed individuals at the **storming** stage—manifesting blame for the current enrollment crisis and panic-driven strategies—must be addressed directly with extraordinary efforts to communicate transparently with all internal stakeholders. You are strongly encouraged to engage in the internal campaign described in *Appendix A*. **(MC)**

As part of the communications campaign described in *Appendix A*, a common enrollment purpose must be identified and universally embraced, so that the entire organization can reach the **norming** stage. It is recommended that said purpose be aligned with the institution's strategic planning process. The current strategic directions (supporting rural communities, honoring your Franco-American heritage, and leveraging and preserving the UMFK's natural environment) have minimal impact on enrollment outcomes. Therefore, you are urged to adopt a fourth cornerstone—student success. The conceptual underpinnings of student success are prevalent on the campus through your people, your programs, and your strategies. Student success is a prominent characteristic of the institution's personality and as such, can serve as a galvanizing strategic direction. **(MC)**

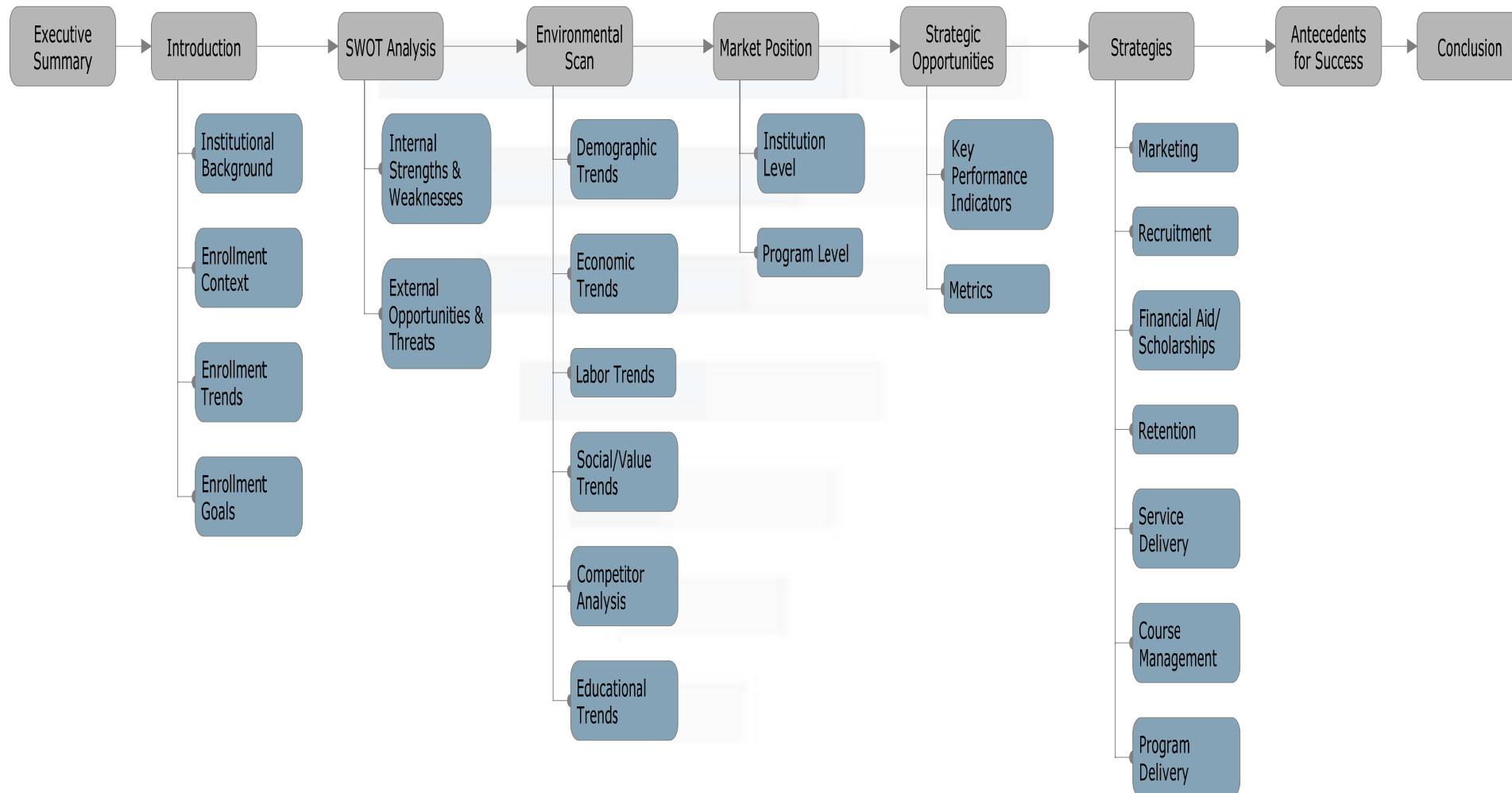
Through the campaign described in *Appendix A*, define student success including the identification of related key performance indicators and metrics. More importantly, determine how the concept should be operationalized by every unit and individual on campus. Student success, as defined by the University community, should become the lens through which everything is viewed (e.g., budget decisions, priority setting, strategy development, service delivery, curriculum design, program innovation, hiring practices, job descriptions, performance evaluations). If student success is integrated into the institution's DNA, it will become your brand, your promise to students, and the differentiating factor UMFK desperately needs to secure a competitive market position. It will be the lever that catapults the University to a high **performing** organization—maximizing enrollment opportunities from the first point of contact with a prospective student through to graduation from UMFK and beyond. **(MC)**



## A Common Purpose

A foundational component of any high performing enrollment management enterprise is a comprehensive plan. The diagram below illustrates the elements of a strategic enrollment management (SEM) plan. Ideally, the SEM plan should be driven or at least, aligned with the institution's strategic plan. As previously recommended, student success would be the focus of the SEM plan. Once student success is defined for UMFK, develop a SEM plan with involvement of the campus community. **(E)**

*Strategic Enrollment Management Plan Elements*



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## A Common Purpose

Many of the elements of a SEM plan already exist at some level (e.g., a communications plan, a recruitment travel plan, student retention strategies). However, there are two critical gaps that should be addressed in UMFK's SEM plan: (1) institutional branding and (2) faculty involvement in recruitment and retention efforts.

### Institutional Branding

Your brand should be a reflection of the institution's personality. It is the image you want to be top-of-mind when external constituents think of the University.

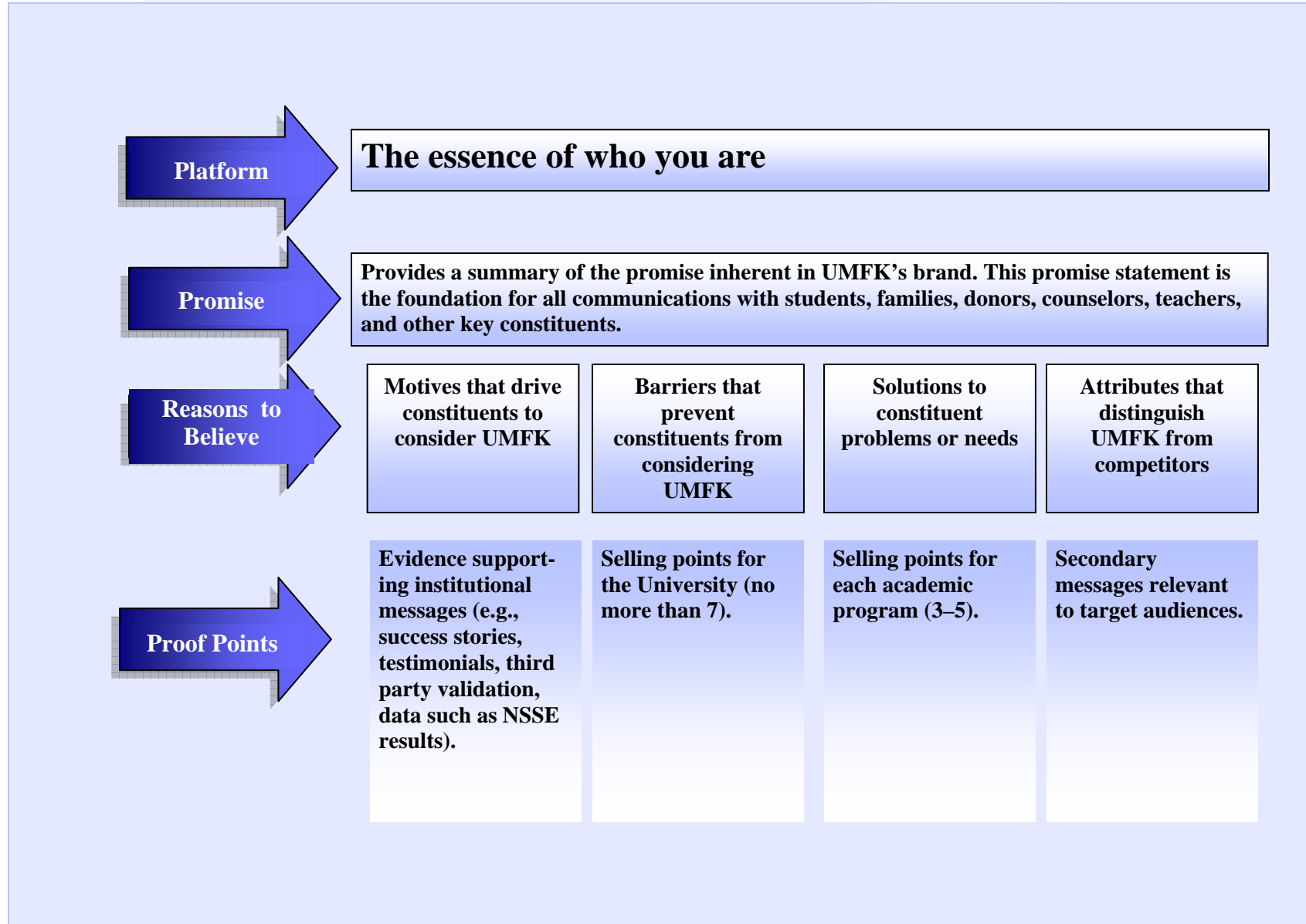
A **brand positioning platform** is a short baseline summary of who you are and what you hope to communicate that differentiates UMFK from other college and university choices. The primary purpose of the brand positioning platform is to communicate effectively the essence of the University in an accurate, authentic, concise, and consistent method. A brand positioning platform brings to life your mission, vision, values, and goals, and aligns your internal culture with your external reputation.

The version illustrated on the next page highlights the components that make up a brand positioning platform and how they can be applied to your school. It is intended to serve as a working document that guides everything from communications to marketing, as well as recruiting and retaining students, faculty, staff, donors, and others. **(E)**

- The *platform* describes the essence of UMFK. It's a good one-sentence reminder to all internal and external audiences of who you are.
- The *promise* statement summarizes the promise inherent in UMFK's brand. This message should provide the foundation for all communications with prospective students, faculty, staff, donors, and others.
- The *reasons to believe* address enrollment motivators and barriers as well as demonstrate the institution's awareness of constituent needs and attributes that distinguish UMFK from other institutional choices.
- The *proof points* (also called selling points) are examples of the reasons to believe in UMFK. These demonstrate how the UMFK brand is embodied in your school and through your programs.



## A Common Purpose



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## A Common Purpose

The University's current message, "A Community Atmosphere—A Global Perspective" can be adapted to reflect a student success brand. Regardless of your choice of messages, the **brand message** should reflect the essence of the brand in a way that captivates the target audience—leaving them with a longing to learn more. It also must be supported by proof points that add credibility to the message and compels people to trust the messenger—in this case, the University of Maine at Fort Kent.

The message must be pliable enough to work with applications such as business cards and signage as well as speak to each of your primary constituent groups. When used consistently along with supporting proof points, the primary message should convey a sentiment that is appealing to the masses. Everyone should find something relevant in the message. Students will see it as preparation for the next phase of their lives; alumni will reminisce over what the University did for them and take pride in what it is doing for others like them; donors will contribute to the potential of others or invest in the economic fuel (a UMFK education) for the region; and legislators will simply see the UMFK message as good for the constituents they serve and for the state.

The brand message should be accompanied by secondary messages that are unique to a particular population, program, or service provided by the University. Regarding the latter, secondary messages should align with the brand message and more importantly, the brand itself. Secondary messages should always focus on how the University helps students become successful. **(E)**



## A Common Purpose

While the articulation of the brand may vary somewhat to be relevant for each audience, **the “drumbeat”** must be the same. The “drumbeat” must include a body of evidence that supports your claim.

Institutional selling points associated with your brand include: **(E)**

- Experiential learning
- Flexible, convenient learning options
- A living and learning environment second to none
- Preparation for a career
- Affordability and academic quality = great value
- Small classes
- A caring and culturally rich community
- A focus on student success

Along with these selling points, the University must create an inventory of “proven results.” You must demonstrate the impact of a UMFK education on students’ lives. By highlighting student achievements, successful careers of graduates, admission rates to graduate and professional schools, and other life accomplishments that have been powered by a UMFK education, the University will add credibility to the promise inherent in the brand. **(E)**



## A Common Purpose

The selling points previously listed have little meaning or relevance to a student without some translation to a **benefit that is relevant** to them personally. Relevance is defined by the recipient of the UMFK experience, not the institution. Often relevance is unique to an individual and thus, the articulation of the message should be customized whenever possible. However, for purposes of illustration here as well as practical application at UMFK, the examples that follow are described for a particular segment of the institution's market. **(E)**

Market Segment	Selling Point	Benefit
<b>Adult learners</b>	A focus on student success	Someone will always be here to help you with questions, academic concerns, and practical matters associated with your education.
<b>Traditional freshmen</b>	Experiential learning	At UMFK, you will have opportunities to apply the knowledge you acquire in the classroom as well as through field experiences and internships.
<b>Online learners</b>	Flexible, convenient learning options	You can conveniently get a UMFK education from anywhere in the area as well as the world. Preserve your lifestyle while earning a degree.
<b>Transfers</b>	Small classes	In UMFK classes, you will receive the individualized support and challenge you need to succeed academically.



## A Common Purpose

**Segmentation** is the true power of marketing. It is the lever that moves people to action—to read your materials, visit your campus, apply for admission, enroll in classes. The magic of marketing is segmenting to an “n” of one with as little effort and expense as possible. Communications with prospective students should tap into their interests, values, beliefs, and motivators.

The current level of segmentation practiced by the University is insufficient to influence choice. Furthermore, there are several key segments for whom UMFK has no tailored communications. Each segment has its own motivators and barriers to enrollment and thus, is less likely to be influenced by generic communications. You possess a tool in EMAS that allows for extensive segmentation to occur.

The following student segments are recommended: **(E)**

- Dual enrollment students
- High school students
- Adult learners
- Online learners
- Transfers
- Potential readmits

Unique communications and secondary messages should be created for each of these audiences and integrated into a communications plan like the one proposed later in this report.



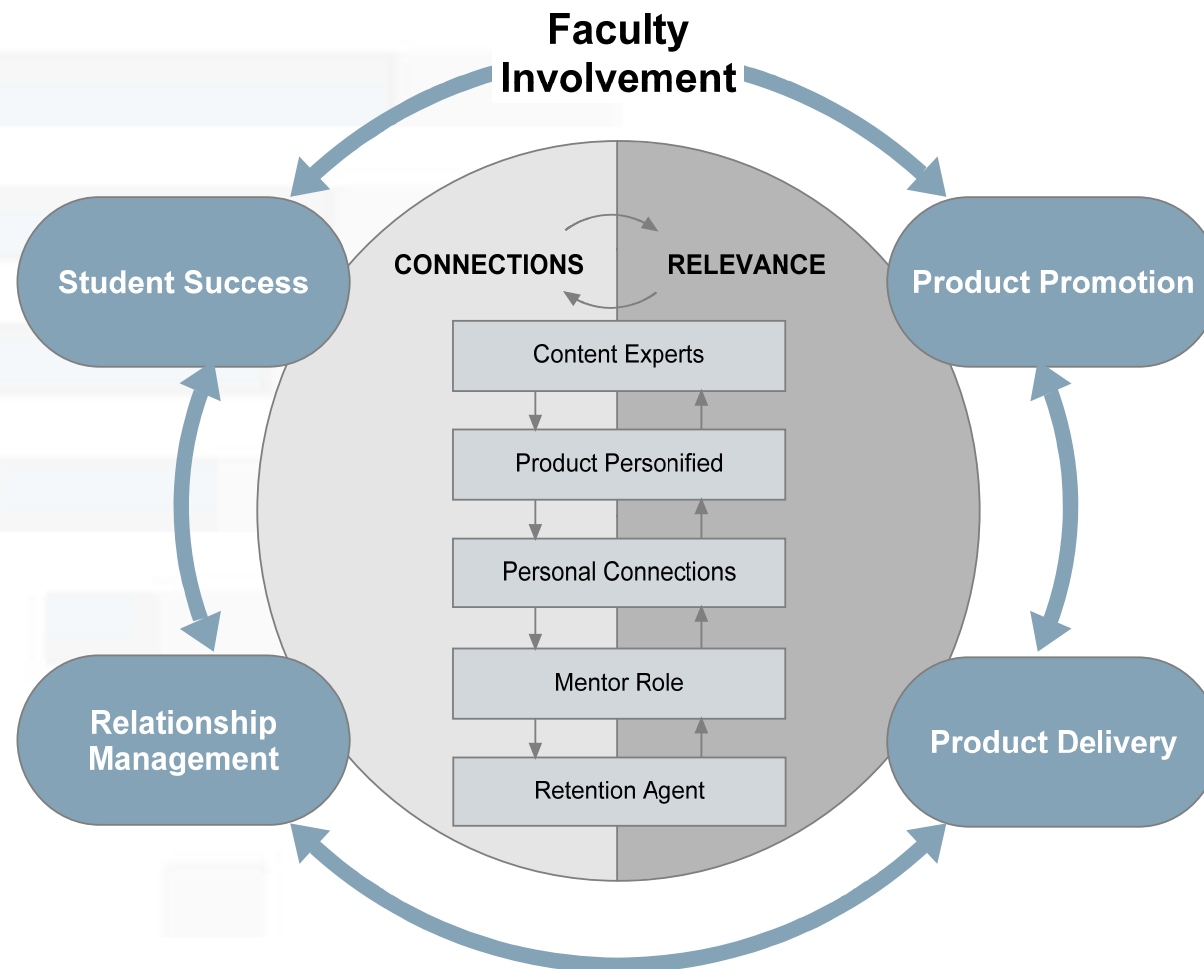
## A Common Purpose

### Faculty Involvement in Recruitment and Retention Efforts

The model depicted below focuses on the two faculty strategies that impact recruitment and retention outcomes the most: (1) personal connections and (2) relevant information and learning. In terms of recruitment, faculty are the content experts and as such, know their program better than anyone.

The Admissions Office should assign the director, associate director, assistant director, and the counselor a liaison relationship with each of the four academic divisions. Divisional liaisons would assume several responsibilities in this relationship:

(1) interview faculty to identify key program selling points, (2) gather information regarding the programs in the division and share that information with others on the staff with recruitment responsibilities, (3) provide information to the faculty regarding admission activities and events, policies, enrollment stats, etc., and (4) solicit faculty involvement in open houses, phone-a-thons, Webinars, blogs, etc. **(MC)**. The aforementioned interviews will yield valuable content for promotional materials and the Web site. Item two above will ensure recruiters are equipped with accurate information as they interact with prospective students. Item





## A Common Purpose

three will ensure faculty are “in the loop” and have the information they need to effectively interact with prospective students. Once a relationship based on mutual trust is developed, engaging faculty in recruitment efforts will become simpler and more productive for all involved.

Faculty are the personification of the programs they deliver. By creating opportunities for faculty and prospective students to interact in person, on the phone, and online, programs will come to life. Prospective students will begin to envision how they may become a part of a dynamic, experiential learning community. Just as important, they will begin to develop a relationship with their future faculty. Other than your current students, there is no other relationship that will influence prospective student enrollment decisions more than the mentoring relationship they have with your faculty. **(MC)**

Ultimately, faculty are responsible for delivering programs that meet student demand, are relevant to today’s student and align with their educational goals, and are delivered in modalities and formats that actively engage students in the learning experience and fit their lifestyles. There is no single contribution to recruitment and retention efforts more critical to the enrollment vitality of the University than this one **(MC)**. Specifics to achieving this objective are described in the “Market Opportunities” section of this report.

Faculty also are the most influential retention agents on campus. They have more contact time with students, more in-depth relationships, and more opportunities to facilitate student success than anyone at the University. Regarding the latter, student success begins prior to enrollment. For that reason, you are strongly encouraged to develop a faculty advisory committee to recommend admission policy to senior management. Ex-officio members such as the Director of Admissions, the Registrar, and the Director of Institutional Research should serve the committee by providing needed data, analysis of the potential consequences of policy changes, peer and competitor comparisons, knowledge of best practices, and other information as deemed necessary. **(D)**

Finally, faculty can further contribute to student retention by increasing participation in the early alert system, providing early academic feedback, building mentoring relationships with their students and advisees, and making referrals to student support services on campus. **(MC)**



## Market Opportunities

### Penetrating Your Primary Market

As inferred in the “UMFK Context” section this report, it is imperative that you work to decrease the out-migration of Maine students. A strategy for improving market share of Maine high school students is described in the “Inquiry Generation” portion of the report.

Other opportunities exist among potential **adult learners who live or work within driving distance** of the University or who are **inclined to enroll in online programs**. To improve recruitment of the former, the institution must first ensure you have a product they want. In particular, this refers to (1) programs that lead to jobs that are in demand and employment opportunities are high, (2) courses delivered at times and in formats that allow adults to maintain family and work obligations and accelerate time to degree (e.g., evening and weekend classes, hybrid and online classes, compressed semesters, transfer credit for life experiences), and (3) access to services such as food, the library, the bookstore, and Web-based business transactions. Once these product elements are in place, UMFK should purchase names of adults in the area that have some college but no four-year degree, host information sessions for adults, and tailor communications to this audience. **(E)**

Regarding the latter, niche online programs should be identified and developed. The infrastructure required to develop and sustain online programs is described later in this section. In addition to full programs online, UMFK should continue to increase the number of general education courses offered online that can be used at any higher education institution. These are “cash cow” courses that typically fill without extensive marketing. **(E)**

Beyond the adult learner market, you are encouraged to develop school partnerships like the one recently forged with Lee Academy. The College Community Project is yet another example of how to penetrate your primary market. This program can be a national model, but it is currently under resourced. Invest University personnel in this endeavor, particularly faculty resources. **(E)**



## Market Opportunities

### Expand to New Markets

The lure of expanding to new markets is compelling. UMFK possesses some of the data necessary to inform such decisions—find markets that are growing, students that are mobile, families that are reasonably affluent, and potential students within the market that mirror those already at the University. However, expanding to new markets seldom provides a “quick fix.” To establish institutional visibility where there is none requires a protracted commitment of institutional resources—money, personnel, and time. Buying search names in a new market and sending a recruiter once or twice a year is not the solution. You will never establish visibility with this approach. Instead, the institution will need to invest marketing dollars in the new market designed to enhance awareness and place a recruiter permanently in a region to recruit students, cultivate relationships with prospective students and their influencers, and develop partnerships with schools and agencies. The difficulty with entering new markets is that they are already oversaturated with college and university competitors; they are expensive markets to purchase and sustain awareness campaigns; and in the case of Canadian markets, there are barriers associated with visas.

Consequently, it is recommended that the University limit the purchase of names and recruitment travel to Maine and select geo-markets in NEBHE states/programs **(E)**. Geo-markets with populations of 100,000 or more provide a logical starting place. Many of the geo-markets below can be eliminated based on historical enrollment trends, the socio-economic status of residents, or the lack of mobility among residents. As an experiment, the University may want to consider placing a part-time recruiter in the Boston area—possibly an alumnus who lives in the area and is seeking additional income. **(D)**

1. [Boston, Massachusetts](#): 589,141
2. [Providence, Rhode Island](#): 173,618
3. [Worcester, Massachusetts](#): 172,648
4. [Springfield, Massachusetts](#): 152,082
5. [Bridgeport, Connecticut](#): 139,529
6. [Hartford, Connecticut](#): 124,558
7. [New Haven, Connecticut](#): 123,626
8. [Stamford, Connecticut](#): 117,083
9. [Waterbury, Connecticut](#): 107,271
10. [Manchester, New Hampshire](#): 107,006



## Market Opportunities

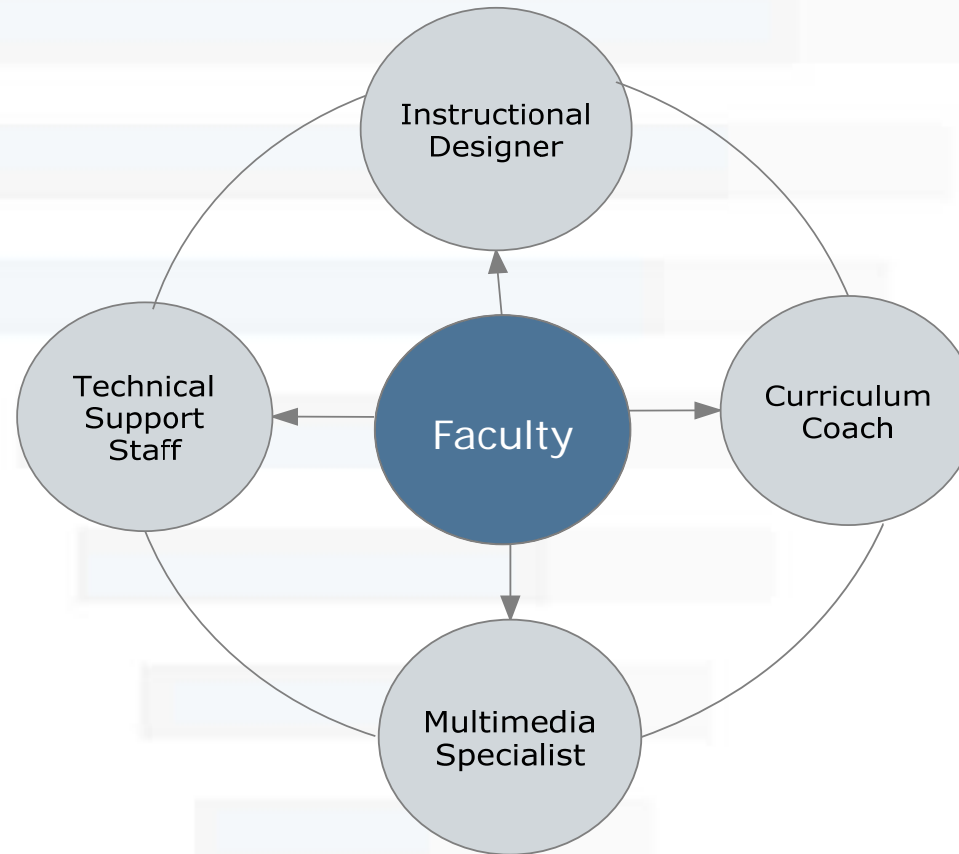
The University is in a position where it must pursue new market opportunities. When considering such options, be aware of the risk inherent in these opportunities. The following graph visually illustrates the level of risk associated with each.

	Established Programs	New Programs
Established Market	<b>Lowest Risk</b> Market Penetration	<b>Medium Risk</b> Program Expansion
New Market	<b>Medium Risk</b> Market Expansion	<b>Highest Risk</b> Market Diversification

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## Market Opportunities



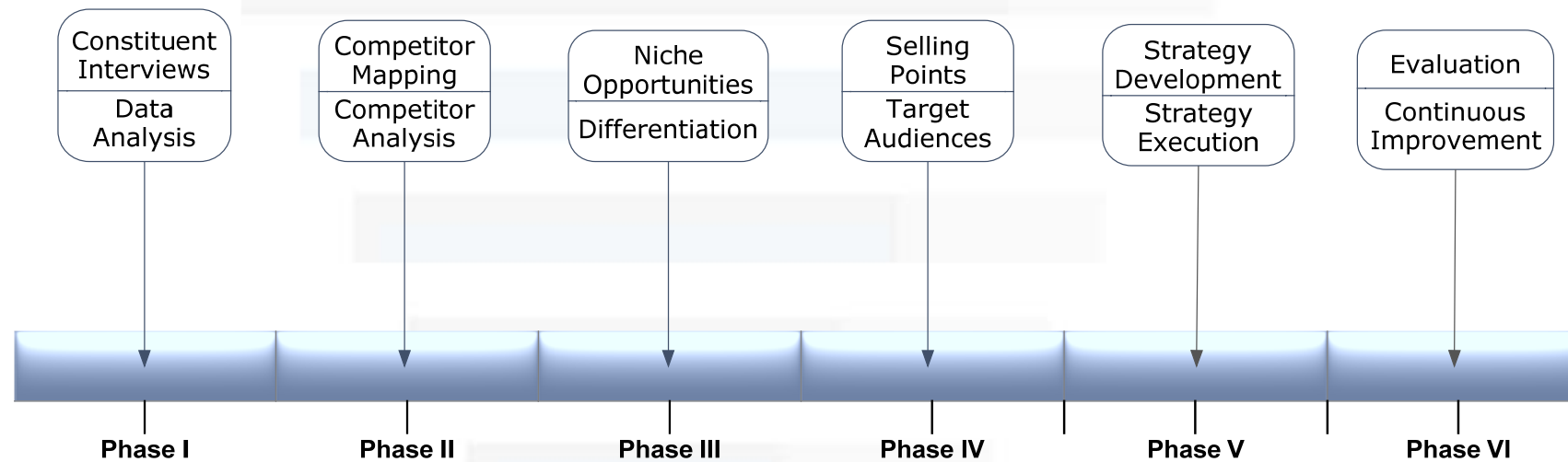
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The above online course development model requires an institutional investment in infrastructure. In this model, the faculty member is the content expert. Team members with curriculum and technical expertise support the instructor in converting content into dynamic online courses. To yield desired results, the University also must provide meaningful incentives for faculty to engage in online course development (e.g., monetary compensation, release time, credit toward promotion and tenure consideration). Previous forays into online courses at UMFK were successful because of the “good will” and interest of “early adopters.” It is believed that this pool of faculty may be exhausted—they already are teaching online classes. To get these faculty to teach additional online classes and recruit others to the cause will require leadership and incentives. **(E)**



## Market Opportunities

The effective positioning of existing, viable academic programs is essential to UMFK's continued enrollment vitality. If executed well, the phases outlined in the diagram below will augment the existing program review process and marketing efforts—ensuring effective positioning. **(E)**

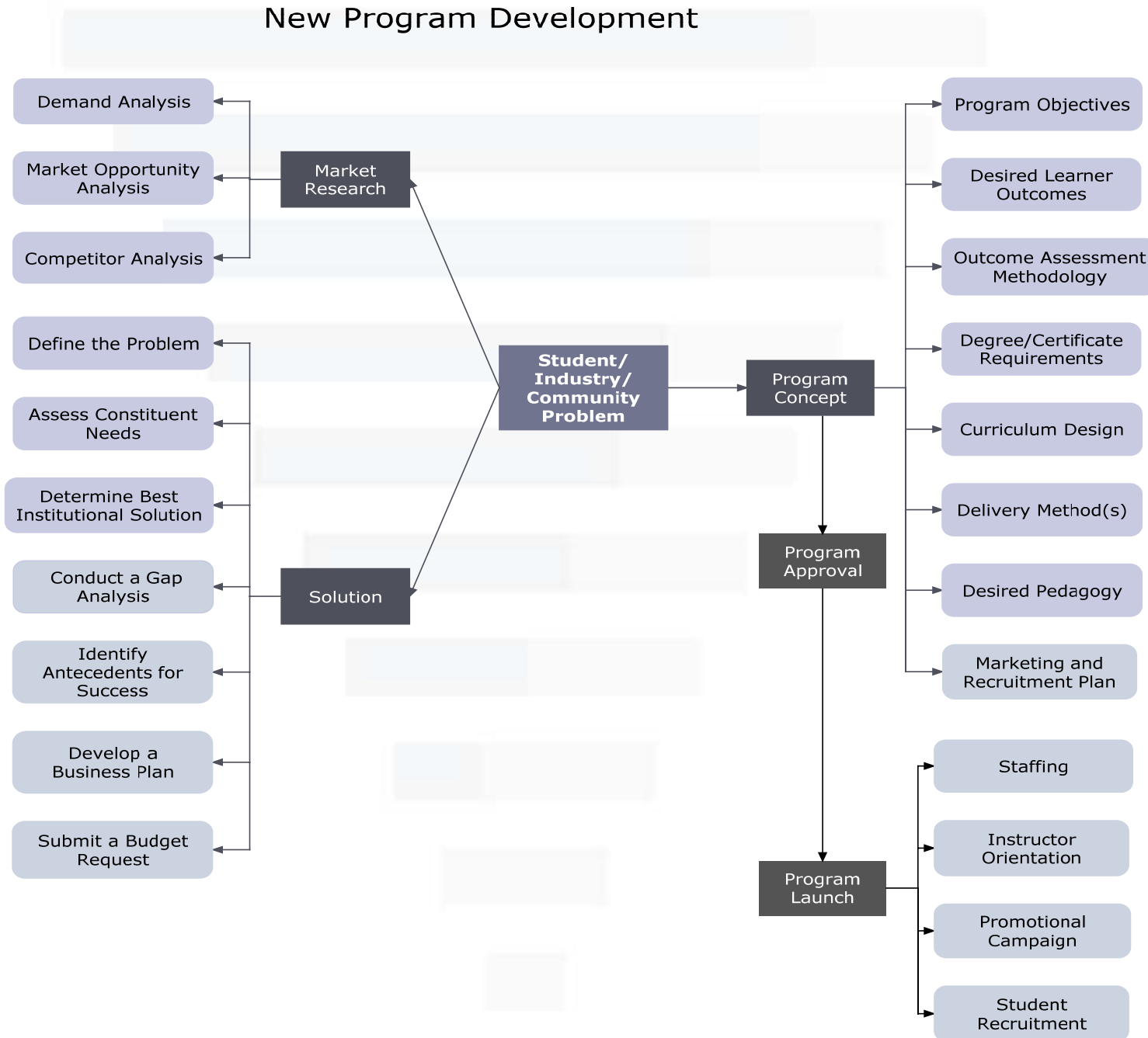


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New program innovation also is vital to growing enrollments. The capacity to launch new programs is tightly coupled with the review, renewal, and discontinuation of existing programs. In fact, resource constraints severely limit new program creation without the reallocation of resources from redesigned or “sunset” programs. Even when resources are available, a successful development and launch requires a carefully constructed R&D process. As members of the University community engage in the creation of an institutional R&D process, you are invited to consider the model on the following page. It is based on best practices within the academy. Furthermore, you are encouraged to consider creating multiple levels for existing programs (e.g., certificates, associate degrees, bachelor degrees). **(E)**



# Market Opportunities





## Market Opportunities

This new program development process begins with a perceived student, industry, or community problem that the institution seeks to address. Perceptions about the problem are validated through market research. The market research also helps to define the scope and nature of the problem as well as dimensions of the possible solution. Using data produced from the market research, academic units can (1) define the problem (e.g., magnitude, potential market, target audience); (2) assess the needs of the various constituents that will be served through the new program (learning and service needs); (3) determine the best institutional solution given the University's mission, strategic direction, competing priorities, areas of expertise, and constraints; (4) conduct a gap analysis to identify gaps between the ideal solution and the institution's capacity to deliver said solution; (5) identify the antecedents necessary for a successful program launch as well as sustainability of the program following the launch (e.g., additional instructors, needed services, space, leadership support); and (6) develop a business plan using the following checklist:

- Problem Statement
- The Market Context
  - Demand Analysis
  - Market Opportunity Analysis
  - Competitor Analysis
- Constituent Needs
- Program Concept
- Program Objective
- Learning Outcomes
- Program Risks and Rewards
- Resource Requirements (Human and Financial—including a detailed budget proposal)
- Key Issues Requiring Decisions
- A "Call to Action"



## Inquiry Generation

UMFK needs to expand its inquiry pool with prospects who have a moderate to high probability of enrolling at the University in order to generate enough applications to increase enrollments. To generate quality inquiries, it is recommended that the University: **(MC)**

- Purchase PSAT names of high school sophomores and juniors for all six test administrations. Names should include students who mirror the academic profile of UMFK enrolled students (e.g., PSAT score ranges, self-reported high school grades), attend school in Maine or select NEBHE geo-markets, and indicate an intended major offered by the University. Mail a search piece, a tailored letter for each segment, and a business reply card or form. The search should be preceded by an e-mail campaign with a link to an online inquiry form and followed four weeks after the mailing with an e-mail to all non-responders giving them another opportunity to inquire.
- Continue to purchase names from the National Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA) using the parameters described for PSAT names. Ensure NRCCUA does not sell the University duplicate names. Follow the same communications process outlined above.
- Use geodemography to develop prospect lists of potential credit and noncredit, adult learners. Send teaser postcards inviting them to information sessions and providing a mechanism to request a printed schedule of courses.
- Develop “point of sale” posters with attached inquiry cards for dissemination to feeder high schools, businesses, community agencies, and high traffic areas in the region.
- Generate Internet leads through search engine optimization, placing a prominent link on the home page and the prospective student pages of the UMFK Web site to “request information,” explore “pay per click” options with the major search engine providers such as Google and Yahoo!, and consider ads on high school, community college, and chamber of commerce Web sites.

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## Inquiry Generation

- Adopt a territory management plan that differentiates the allocation of institutional efforts and resources based on the value of the school to UMFK—the number of students historically enrolling at the University. A territory management planning template is provided in *Appendix B*.
  - Schools that yield 25% or more of the students enrolling should be classified as tier one schools and receive multiple visits, personal contacts, guidance counselor relationship building strategies, advertising, partnerships, etc.
  - Schools that yield 5%–24% of the University’s enrollments should be classified as tier two schools and receive one or two visits, mass mailings, etc.
  - Schools that yield fewer than 5% of the institution’s enrollments should be classified as tier three schools and be visited only if time and resources permit.



## Inquiry Cultivation

Currently, there is adequate follow-up with prospective students from inquiry to application in terms of the number of “touch points.” However, the nature of some communications at the inquiry stage are not ideal. The athletics and work and play pieces will appeal to many traditional freshmen, but not to adult learners and most transfers. Moreover, all the communications at the inquiry stage are generic and not tailored by audience. These factors severely limit the effectiveness of these critical “touch points”—reducing yield from inquiry to applicant.

*Appendix C* represents a robust communications plan that can be implemented at minimal cost. Largely, this communications plan calls for a change in the dissemination of existing pieces, the infusion of low to no cost electronic communications, and the audience segmentation of some communications. **(MC)**

Three basic principles should be followed when implementing this strategy:

1. Every prospective student communication should have four basic elements:
  - A clearly written marketing objective
  - An identified target audience
  - A compelling “call to action”
  - An effectiveness measure
2. Where possible, communications should be tailored to a specific audience rather than generic.
3. Deploy multichannel communications. Deliver communications through multiple mediums and multiple authors.
  - Ensure communications are from people who will have the most influence over the recipient’s college decision. For UMFK, desirable authors include the president, faculty, academic deans and department heads, the director of financial aid, alumni, and select UMFK students.
  - Have paid student ambassadors extend their contacts beyond phone calls to encourage students to complete enrollment steps or to answer questions into relationship building interactions via phone, Facebook, blogs, and Instant Messaging.



## Inquiry Cultivation

In order to implement the communications plan recommended in this report and to increase the level of segmentation, UMFK must create the infrastructure and capacity to deliver the communications flow on a timely basis. This will require a new position. **(MC)**

- A **marketing and communications specialist** should be embedded in the Admissions Department and be dedicated to the development of new communications recommended in the attached plan. This individual will be responsible for identifying the target audience, specific communication objectives, effectiveness measures, concept, and content. He or she should develop a project plan for all print and electronic communications.

The most powerful yield activity is the campus visit. Other than additional training needed for student tour guides, the current campus visit experience is exceptional. The level of customization for each visitor is impressive.

Last year, the University documented 153 campus visitors. So, very few inquiries or applicants have this memorable experience. The campus visit mailing was sent to all inquiries and 803 calls were made by telecounselors. These efforts were insufficient to yield a significant number of visitors. Consequently, it is recommended that multiple communications promote campus visits, open houses, and information sessions. Said communications are described in *Appendix C*. Furthermore, you are encouraged to provide bus transportation for inquiries from select feeder schools. This will need to be coordinated with school personnel and parents. **(MC)**



## Web Presence

Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, geographic origin, or educational objective, prospective students typically begin their college search on the Web. In fact, there is emerging evidence that suggests an increasing number of prospective students are becoming “secret shoppers”—surfing the Web and making their initial decision of where to apply without ever acknowledging their interest in an institution prior to submitting an application. For these reasons, it is imperative that the prospective student pages are designed to capture the interest and imagination of site visitors. In particular, the design objectives that are paramount to a successful prospective student Web site include:

### General

- Captivate prospective student interest through visual images and interactivity
- Develop a creative, flexible, and entertaining Web environment
- Ensure content is relevant to a viewer and is up-to-date
- Design the site with the intent to maximize conversion of prospective students into matriculated ones

### Inquiry Stage

- Pique interest in order to generate inquiries
- Promote campus visits
- Cultivate existing interest to generate applications
- Convey student benefits and outcomes

### Applicant Stage

- Emphasize the steps necessary to complete the application process
- Enhance understanding of the admissions criteria

### Admit Stage

- Connect admitted students to their peers, faculty, staff, and alumni
- Create a sense of belonging to the institution
- Address their basic needs (a variation of Maslow’s hierarchy) for safety, comfort, socialization, and lifestyle fit
- Emphasize the steps necessary to complete the enrollment process



## Web Presence

### Enrolled Stage

- Facilitate transitions (e.g., high school to college, work to college, family to college)
- Provide information regarding important deadlines and enrollment processes on a single Web page
- Direct students to institutional support services
- Build institutional loyalty
- Connect students to their peers, faculty, staff, and alumni
- Create opportunities for engagement (e.g., events, clubs, organizations, online social networks)

To increase site visitor engagement, you must add dynamic, interactive features that create “sticky”—reasons to remain on your site and return for subsequent visits. Examples include:

- Blogs that are actively managed to ensure conversations are ongoing, appropriate, and focused.
- Webinars designed to engage participants in interesting subject matter presentations and University information sessions.
- Compressed video with student testimonials and sample class vignettes.
- Social networks like Facebook.
- Live chat with University personnel or student ambassadors.
- An interactive question and answer tool such as IntelliResponse (<http://www.intelliresponse.com/>).
- Online advising through an authenticated chat or using a tool like UAdvise (<http://uadvise.urbaninsight.com/>).
- A virtual tour like the one that is on the current site but has never been completed.

The prospective student site at the University of Richmond provides an excellent example of the right “calls to action” (request information, visit the campus, and apply now) along with some audience segmentation (transfers, international students, and guidance counselors), selling points (The Richmond Difference and Experience Richmond), as well as multiple opportunities to engage and be entertained (podcasts, blogs, online chat, a student spotlight, student diaries, TV spot, video FAQs, a campus life slide show, a virtual tour, a Webcam, and Fast Poll). They also provide important forms, information about affordability, a new student profile, and accepted student information—all with minimal copy. You are encouraged to create a prospective student site with this type of functionality and visitor engagement. **(MC)**

Richmond Home

University Quicklinks University Search

**Visit Campus**  
**Request Information**  
**Apply Now**  
**Important Dates**  
**Forms You Will Need**  
**First Year Student Profile**  
**Can I Afford It?**  
**Learn About Majors**  
**Experiential Learning**  
**Life at Richmond**  
**Career Development**  
**Transfer Students**  
**International Students**  
**Contact Us**

**Fast Poll**

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you choose?

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Middle East
- South/Central America
- Other

**VOTE**

**Undergraduate Admission to Richmond**

You're an intellectually curious student. You want to know the opportunities awaiting you at Richmond, how to apply, the classes you'll be able to take...you want to know what it's like to be a student at the University of Richmond.

You've come to the right place. So take your time and explore. And, when you're ready, [come visit campus](#) or [apply online](#).

Be sure to check out:

- [The Richmond Difference](#)  
See what sets Richmond apart
- [Experience Richmond](#)  
Learn about student life, study abroad, research and more, directly from our students

We also have special information for:

- [Transfer Students](#)
- [International Students](#)
- [Guidance Counselors](#)

If you have questions, don't hesitate to [contact us](#) or even [email a student!](#)

We're glad you're here.

Directions Calendar  
 Campus Map Virtual Tour  
 People Web Cam

**PODCASTS**

**ACCEPTED STUDENTS**  
WELCOME CLASS OF 2012

**ADMISSIONS BLOG**

**ONLINE CHAT**  
POWERED BY CHAT UNIVERSITY

**PLAN A VISIT**

**SPOTLIGHT**

**CHINA STUDY ABROAD**

Spider Diaries >>  
 Student Research Videos >>  
 Easter Island Project >>  
 China Study Abroad >>  
 TV Spot >>  
 Video FAQ >>  
 Campus Life Slide Show >>

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## Web Presence

A sample of best practice prospective student page features follows:

- <http://mysocialnetwork.umaryland.edu> University of Maryland (social network)
- <http://www.hws.edu> Hobart and William Smith Colleges (experience maps)
- [http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/20701\\_learning\\_24\\_7.cfm](http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/20701_learning_24_7.cfm) Sacred Heart University (student stories via video)
- <http://www.gotostedwards.com/calculator> St. Edwards University (scholarship estimator)
- <http://www.dickinson.edu/academics/pgm vb.html> Dickinson College (custom academic viewbook)
- <http://admission.gustavus.edu/admissions/connect/im.asp> Gustavus Adolphus (Instant Messaging)
- <http://admission.case.edu/secondlife.asp> Case Western Reserve (Second Life)
- <http://www.engineering.cornell.edu/prospective/connect/blogs.cfm> Cornell (admissions blogs)
- <http://messageboard.chatuniversity.com/neuparent/default.asp?action=10&fid=861> Northeastern (a parents message board)
- <http://www.whylongwood.com/longwoodlive> Longwood University (multimedia)
- <http://www.brand.umn.edu/discover/howItUnfolds/index.php> University of Minnesota (integrated ad campaign)
- <http://my.cmu.edu/site/admission/menuitem.e5fc30afd07833c019300710d4a02008> Carnegie Mellon (virtual counselor and virtual student)
- <http://explore.fortlewis.edu/prospective/index.asp> Fort Lewis College (audience segmentation with audience-specific messaging and testimonials)

SEM WORKS



## Web Presence

Web development is an organic process, and as such, there are always opportunities to enhance the site. As the Web team engages in discussions of a redesign, there is a fundamental question that must be answered: “What is the purpose of the Web site?” The current site is struggling to serve two masters—internal constituents as an information solution and external constituents as a marketing solution. Straddling the chasm between the needs of both audiences has rendered the site somewhat ineffective. You are encouraged to redesign the site as a marketing solution and serve internal constituents through an intranet, a portal, or a separate Web site. **(E)**

The Web team also should create guidelines for Web usage along with criteria for determining the worthiness of inclusion of items on the home page. Said guidelines should be reviewed, adopted, and visibly supported by senior management. **(E)** Two notable examples can be found at <http://ced.ncsu.edu/guidelines/index.php> and <http://www.uncg.edu/woc/uwsr>.

Once a clear purpose and guidelines have been developed, the next step is to create a site map that depicts the desired information architecture. The site should be tested with key constituent groups to ensure the flow of information and labels are intuitive. **(E)**

You are encouraged to begin with the fifty or so pages most likely to be visited by prospective students (e.g., home page, future student pages, admissions page, financial aid page, program pages). Eventually, you can expand the redesign to the entire site, but by focusing on the marketing-critical pages first, the University will receive a more immediate return on investment. **(D)**

To fully leverage the marketing power of the redesign, it is recommended that you consider an audience-based navigation using the key prospective student audiences identified in the “market segmentation” section of this report. By doing so, site visitors will have fewer “clicks to truth”; pathways of relevance will guide site visitors; and messages, visuals, features, and steps to enrollment can be tailored for each audience. **(D)**

As cited earlier in the report, search engine optimization is essential to driving traffic to the site. Maximize cross-links, back-links, and the design elements within the site to ensure search engine crawlers are finding your site at an optimal level. **(E)**



## Web Presence

The University should investigate the acquisition of a content management system (CMS). A CMS will increase the quality and consistency of content on the site, prevent “dead” links and expired content, and make site maintenance markedly more efficient. **(D)**

To better serve prospective and current students, the University should create a virtual one-stop like the example provided below. This is basically a packaging exercise—pulling together existing content and business transactions on a single page with intuitive, process-oriented labeling. **(D)**

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

*Inspire. Change.*

SEARCH ▾  
UNCGENIE SITE TOOLS

Information Station Home | Important Forms | Calendars | FAQs | Live Chat

### UNCG Virtual Information Station

**Student Services**

With more than 140 clubs and organizations, involvement in a club or organization instantly connects you to the life of the University.

[Find out more](#)

**How do I...? Where do I...? When do I...?**

When you have a question about UNCG that starts like these, the Virtual Information Station is THE place to start. This website covers topics from admissions to graduation and most everything in between. Quickly find topic specific information and helpful hints as well as a listing of "How To's," FAQs, Forms, Resources, and links to the UNCG offices that provide the services you need.

If you need help via email send a message to [info@uncg.edu](mailto:info@uncg.edu) and we can direct you to the information you are seeking. We are here to help you!

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- Apply for Admission
- Apply for Financial Aid
- Attend Orientation
- Plan Your Courses
- Get Academic Advising
- Register for Classes
- Pay Your Bill
- Check Immunization Status
- Find Housing
- Choose a Meal Plan
- Get an ID
- Register for Parking
- Buy Books
- Get a Campus Job
- Activate Computer Accounts
- Make Campus Connections
- Update Contact Info
- Request Academic Help
- Check Your Progress
- Prepare for Exams
- Check Grades
- Check Academic Standing
- Graduate!



## Student Retention

UMFK has several retention efforts under way that are considered best practices in the industry. You are encouraged to focus retention efforts on building upon these existing strategies. **(E)**

- **Academic support services** are sufficient for the student population you serve. Staffing levels are adequate and practices are consistent with other comparable institutions. The gap that needs to be addressed is one of participation. Special Support Service has limits on the number and type of students that can be served because of the nature of the federal grant UMFK receives, but other academic support services have no such constraints. Hence, it is recommended that the institution mount an internal campaign to promote these services. That said, similar campaigns at other institutions have yielded modest increases in student participation. The most effective way to encourage participation is to provide early academic feedback. Consider asking all instructors of freshman level courses to provide some form of feedback within the first few weeks of class. An increasing number of institutions are incorporating clicker technology in the classroom for this purpose.
- **Developmental courses** appear to be meeting student needs. However, many students are engaged in protracted developmental course work before taking credit courses toward their degree. This presents a substantial barrier for many students in terms of time and eligibility for financial aid. Consider offering developmental courses in combination with credit courses that do not require requisite skills for said courses. Some institutions have created learning communities for developmental students where courses are team taught and thematically linked together.
- The **placement testing** parameters at UMFK appear to be arbitrary. Analyze the success rates of students based on their placement scores to determine accurate cutoffs for SAT scores and percentile ranking on the placement tests.
- The existing **in-take advising model** was adopted from the National Academic Advising Association and represents a best practice that serves as a recruitment and retention tool. If feasible, frontload the in-take advising experience earlier in the recruitment cycle—ideally beginning in March or April. This will require earlier placement testing and perhaps a different testing model.



## Student Retention

- Depending on when students declare a major, they are transferred to **faculty advisors** at some point within the first sixty hours of course work. Faculty know their discipline and related degree requirements but otherwise are unprepared to effectively facilitate the advising experience. Few participate in advisor training, have access to reports on their program majors, or are able to access student profile information.
- The **early alert system** is effective for students who are referred to Student Affairs early enough to provide a meaningful intervention. Most interventions, however, are dependent upon midterm grade reports, which occur too late to provide interventions that will alter a catastrophic outcome. As previously stated, early academic feedback and increased faculty referrals are needed to reach additional students in time.
- **Supplemental Instruction (SI)** is being piloted in Bio 2. If implemented properly, this is a strategy that has documented positive effects on academic performance and persistence at hundreds of institutions in the United States and beyond. Expand SI to other high risk courses (courses that historically have high percentages of D, F, and W grades).
- The University does engage in some **protective scheduling** of high risk courses. This practice should be standardized for all first-year students unless it conflicts with degree requirements or will delay time to degree.
- Though the consultant was unable to delve into the issue thoroughly, it appears that improvements in **course sequencing and degree planning** are needed. Further study is recommended.



## Student Retention

In addition to building on existing retention practices, the University should consider investing in a few new initiatives: **(D)**

- Engage in **“quality enrollment growth.”** This simply means that you should slowly ratchet up admission standards while growing enrollments modestly. The analysis of cutoffs, potential enrollment effects, and timelines should be provided by the previously recommended Faculty Admissions Committee with recommendations submitted to senior leadership for consideration.
- Create **a profile of successful UMFK students.** Said profile will guide recommendations made by the Faculty Admissions Committee as well as direct institutional recruitment and retention efforts.
- Implement a required **summer bridge program** for conditionally admitted students. Programs of this nature typically last five to six weeks and include math, English, and first-year experience courses along with academic support such as required study halls or SI sessions.



## Antecedents to Success

Regardless of the report recommendations selected by senior management for implementation, it is imperative that the institution develop the infrastructure necessary for successful execution of selected strategies. Important antecedents to success include:

- A common purpose that will mobilize the campus community to collectively work toward enrollment objectives.
- A compelling sense of urgency that motivates the campus community to engage in substantial change that will impact enrollment objectives.
- Incentives to engage faculty and staff in enrollment efforts.
- Visible and unwavering leadership support of enrollment efforts.
- Organizational transparency as it relates to enrollment efforts and outcomes.
- Internal communication that fosters organizational transparency, a common purpose, and the coordination of enrollment efforts.
- Actionable intelligence—meaning data that is easily accessible, analyzed, and used to inform institutional actions.
- Long-term, adequate resources to execute the recommendations in this report, and short-term, seed money to begin initiatives that will have an immediate impact on Fall 2009 enrollment.
- Purging or morphing less effective strategies, so that scarce resources can be reallocated to more effective strategies.
- Technology optimization.



## Final Thoughts

In the Jim Collins book, *Good to Great*, the author describes a common phenomenon among companies that is equally as prevalent among colleges and universities. Collins calls it “the flywheel”—the belief that one dramatic strategy or effort transforms an organization from good to great. You are discouraged from searching for the “quick fix” that will propel UMFK to a new market position or garner increased enrollments. Unfortunately, there is no single defining action or strategy significant enough to turn the giant flywheel—to yield dramatic results that are sustainable over time.

It will be the cumulative effect of your efforts that will pave the path to success. It will not be the strategies per se that will get you there but rather your ability to execute better than your competitors. Indeed, every strategy currently in place at UMFK or recommended in this report can be replicated. There is no sustainable competitive advantage in a strategy. UMFK will ultimately be successful in achieving its bold aspirations by fostering a singular focus on improving the capacity to execute.

That capacity is your people. An investment of time and resources in staff learning can be correlated directly to high-performing marketing and enrollment organizations. Be intentional about the development of human capital as well as the motivation of your employees. The flywheel will turn if everyone is pushing in the same direction with equal vigor.