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## **UNIVERSITY SYSTEM LAUNCHES NEW STUDENT RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN**

**BANGOR** – “Seven unique universities. One amazing state.”

That’s the slogan that the University of Maine System has unveiled as it launches a New England-wide student recruitment and public awareness campaign. The campaign is intended to augment the existing recruitment and awareness efforts undertaken individually by Maine’s public universities, with a particular emphasis on promoting the State of Maine as an appealing destination for high quality education.

“It’s well known that Maine is viewed very positively by out-of-staters for its quality of life, work ethic, natural beauty, and blooming creative economy,” explained University of Maine System Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal. “Our campaign attempts to extend those positive perceptions to our universities. Through careful market research, we know that the idea of going to college in Maine will become even more attractive when students can associate our universities with all those positive qualities of our state.”

Westphal said that the University System decided to undertake this campaign in 2003, when an examination of Maine’s demographics revealed a projected steep decline in high school graduates beginning in 2007 and continuing for several years. Failure to act would have negative effects on both Maine’s economy and its quality of education.

“Maine’s economy cannot grow if we don’t increase the number of Maine residents with a college degree,” Westphal stated. “The decline in the state’s high school graduates means that new strategies and tactics must be pursued.

“Our response to this need was three-fold: to support our universities’ efforts to successfully recruit a greater number and percentage of Maine’s graduating high school seniors; to encourage more adults to pursue a baccalaureate or graduate degree; and to develop a campaign that promotes Maine to out-of-staters as a great place to pursue a university education.”

The resulting campaign consists of several thematically related elements:

- Promotional posters and brochures distributed to all high school guidance counselors in the six New England states
- A direct-mail campaign designed to introduce 70,000 high schools juniors in the five other New England states to the educational experiences offered by Maine’s “seven unique universities”

- A new user-friendly University of Maine System website designed especially to appeal to prospective students, their family members, teachers, guidance counselors, and other so-called “influencers”
- A coordinated e-mail campaign to directly communicate with prospective students, their family members, and others

Westphal explained that the campaign’s success in student recruitment cannot be measured until the spring of 2007, when today’s high school juniors – the target of the direct-mail campaign – will be making their decisions about whether and where to go to college.

“This is the beginning of a long process,” Westphal emphasized. “The student recruitment process involves many stages. Our System-level efforts focus on raising awareness of what our universities have to offer. Our universities themselves will take the necessary next steps – that is, to follow up with prospective students, encouraging them to visit our campuses and apply to our universities.

“If we are successful with this campaign, more in-state and out-of-state students will seek their university education here in Maine,” Westphal stated.

To support the marketing campaign, Westphal has budgeted \$400,000 annually. “That’s a very modest amount by higher education marketing standards,” he stated. “Unfortunately, our current financial condition precludes us from investing more. However, we are confident that our strategies and tactics are well designed and will produce positive results.”

The University System initiated the campaign in June 2003, when it solicited marketing related services through a competitive bid process. As a result, it contracted with two Maine-based companies for assistance: Strategic Marketing Services of Portland, which handled qualitative and quantitative research; and Swardlick Marketing Group, also of Portland, which provided graphic design, content development, and marketing strategies.

A separate competitive bid process was established to completely overhaul the functionality and appearance of the University System’s presence on the Internet. That contract was awarded in 2005 to Pennisi and Lamare of Falmouth and its partner on the project, TransitID of Portland.

Both projects are being overseen by the University System’s Office of External Affairs, with assistance from several other System-level and university offices and personnel.

**EDITOR’S NOTE: Copies of the direct mail brochure (sent to students) and the academic inventory brochure (sent to guidance counselors) were mailed to editors on April 26.**