Mission and Rationale for the Initiative

This business-led Initiative, in partnership with the University of Maine System, seeks to strengthen Maine’s economy by building Maine’s computer science, computer engineering and information technology (CS-IT) workforce capacity by increasing the number of college graduates with the requisite degrees. The lack of qualified employees in CS-IT fields has been identified as one of Maine’s top workforce gaps, made more serious by the relatively low numbers of students going into the field.

Goal of the Initiative

The Initiative’s goal is to double, in four years, the number of students graduating with Computer Science and Information Technology degrees from the University of Maine System, in a manner which is sustainable. This Initiative includes degrees in Computer Science, Computer Engineering and Information Technology. The targeted populations are matriculated students at the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System, adult learners and middle and high schools across Maine.

Background

To address this gap, a group of CEO’s from some of Maine’s largest employers convened and began this Initiative. During its inception, the Chancellor of the University of Maine System joined forces as a partner with the CEOs.

In 2011, a steering committee comprised of representatives from the businesses and the University created a lengthy and comprehensive set of 25 recommendations to meet the goal. A consultant was retained to help prioritize, organize and develop the Initiative. The 25 recommendations were rationalized into seven priority goals. In June 2012, about 60 stakeholders from higher education, business, K-12 education, and non-profits attended a preliminary work session to engage in the development of the initiative.

Governance of the Initiative

In early 2012, Educate Maine, a business-led organization whose mission is to champion college and career readiness, and increased education attainment, assumed responsibility for the Initiative. Educate Maine’s board, chaired by Mike Dubyak in 2012 and 2013, will govern the Initiative. The Board holds the ultimate responsibility for overseeing the funding and successful implementation of the Initiative.

The original CEOs who convened and initiated this effort will remain active in the Initiative, providing substantial funding, as well as human resources, internship opportunities and student engagement activities.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Educate Maine and the University of Maine System is being developed which articulates the roles and expectations between these two organizations in this partnership. The MOU will articulate the ability of the University of Maine System to review and evaluate progress on the Initiative, as well as engage in the development of further strategies and tactics.
Educate Maine will engage a Program Director and the University of Maine System will designate persons accountable for University action items. It is anticipated that the Program Director will be in place by February 2013.

**Progress to Date**

Phase One of the Campaign seeks to 1) develop a robust website that employers, faculty and students can utilize to learn about programs and internship opportunities; 2) develop an expanded number of paid internships across a range of Maine’s business; and 3) increase the retention rate of currently enrolled students. Phase Two seeks to increase applicants into these programs to sustain the graduation growth rate achieved in the four years. The Initiative intends to include the other Maine-based colleges and universities that offer the requisite degree programs.

A name and brand has been developed with input from students: *ProjectLoginForm*. Work is well underway to build a website and associated outreach and educational material. The Campaign will officially roll out on February 7, 2013.

The Chancellor met with CS-IT faculty at the five campuses which offer CS-IT programs (UM, UMA, UMF, UMFK and USM) to update them on the project. An email was sent to all students in mid-December to introduce them to the initiative and to give them advance notice of the roll out of the website.

A team of business and higher education representatives are working with CS-IT firms in increasing the number of paid internships. A survey was conducted of current CS-IT students related to summer internships and there was substantial interest (250+ students).

Receptions to occur during the spring 2013 semester are being planned for the five campuses; these are intended to network current students and CS-IT area businesses.

**Scalability**

The template created by this Initiative is one that is intended to be scalable to other workforce gaps in Maine. The website framework, the marketing tools and the collaborations between business, higher education, K-12 and non-profits all should serve as a model for other content and curriculum areas.