Executive Summary

Background and Charge

In January 2012, the UMS Board of Trustees endorsed a series of “Goals and Actions” to increase student success, meet workforce needs, and control costs. Central to these was a focus on “adult” students who may have attended an institution of higher learning but who had not completed a baccalaureate degree. In response, Chancellor James Page organized a system-wide committee to “develop a comprehensive, system-wide plan to enhance baccalaureate degree attainment and completion by Maine’s adult and non-campus based citizens incorporating consideration of the multiple pathways (certificates, associate degrees, prior learning assessment, etc.) that students may follow.” The Board approved this charge in November 2012 and later agreed that the committee would deliver a report on its findings to the Board by July 2013.

Key Findings:

- Because UMS institutions were initially developed to serve the traditional, 18-22 year old student, an essential first step to providing effective service to adult students is to audit all existing policies and procedures to determine whether they pose unnecessary barriers to adult students.
- Because they are usually working either full- or part-time, have family responsibilities, and have limited ability to relocate to pursue education, adult students are best served by flexible educational formats and scheduling; easy transferability of credits; the ability to earn credit for demonstrated prior learning; and a “concierge” approach on each campus.
- Examples of existing best practices related to adult degree completion already exist at most of Maine’s public universities, but they are not coordinated and have not been implemented to scale or embedded with a policy structure.
- Although some consensus exists nationally on “best practices” in this area, this is a relatively new focus for higher education and a great deal of experimentation is occurring. It will be essential that any UMS initiatives be rigorously assessed to determine impact and effectiveness in our System and State.
- Because funding is a major barrier to adult degree completion, the UMS must work with key stakeholders to provide needed financial assistance to adult students. The UMS must also ensure that adult students are not disadvantaged by financial aid policies.
• UMS faculty and staff will need additional professional development to serve adult students most effectively.
• After the UMS had developed a plan to serve adult students, the UMS will need to vigorously communicate its desire to serve adult students and how it is innovating to do so to potential students, to political and economic leaders, and to potential funders.
• Adult students and the workforce needs of the state will be best served by developing targeted new programs and offering existing programs in new formats.

Summary Recommendations:

• Develop a comprehensive UMS Outreach & Communications Plan regarding Adult Degree Completion that is integrated and clearly communicates the importance of degree completion.
• Adopt a UMS “concierge” (e.g., single point of contact) model to serve adult students which will be implemented on each campus
• Enhance both face-to-face and online support services designed to address the unique needs of adult students.
• Provide professional development and support to enable faculty to teach and work more effectively with adult students.
• On-line courses, programs and degrees represent a means of growing new enrollments as well as assisting with Maine’s adult degree completion goals. The UMS should continue online program development including the development of high quality new programs and/or the expansion of existing programs into new modalities
• Determine and implement consistent e-tuition (e.g., rate for online coursework) rate
• Establish a strategic selection process for new programs, both undergraduate and graduate, that will be added to the OnLine Maine web site to ensure responsiveness to the employment needs of the state and the aspirations of Maine’s citizens
• Explore potential external funding sources to support adult degree completion by Maine citizens.
• Continue to incentivize (through Outcomes Based Funding and other means) institutional support for adult degree completion.
• Assess the OBF for its ability to reward collaboration and recommend future enhancements to the model that would build an incentive for collaboration into the updated model.
• The UMS should engage in an annual assessment of adult support services and establish annual goals for continuous quality improvement
Background

Between 2008 and 2011, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education sponsored a Lumina funded project that examined the policies and practices of six states that were working to improve the degree completion rates of adult students. The subsequent report, “Going the Distance in Adult College Completion: Lessons from the Non-traditional No More Project,” provides a thoughtful and pragmatic blue print for other states that are also attempting to increase adult degree completion.

In January 2012, the University of Maine System (UMS) Board of Trustees identified a number of system-wide public policy and operational priorities that included adult degree completion and the enhancement of eLearning opportunities for Maine citizens. In November of 2012, the UMS Board of Trustees officially approved the charge for Chancellor James Page’s Adult Baccalaureate Completion/Distance Education (ABCDE) Initiative.

ABCDE Committee Charge

The ABCDE Steering Committee will develop a comprehensive, system-wide plan to enhance baccalaureate degree attainment and completion by Maine’s adult and non-campus based citizens incorporating consideration of the multiple pathways (certificates, associate degrees, prior learning assessment, etc.) that students may follow.

Goals & Deliverables

The committee will develop a report and recommendations regarding:

a. existing and proposed “best practices” to attract and serve place bound and time bound adult students,

b. innovative programs, policies and strategies to strengthen access,

c. the removal of institutional and system barriers to success, and

d. System-wide exemplary academic and student support for distance learners who are served through University College, ITV or web-based program delivery approaches.

In order to avoid duplication of effort, the committee collaborated with existing UMS initiatives and projects that are currently underway regarding adult learners, credit for prior learning, transfer credit and teaching through technology.
Committee Members

Bonnie Newsom, Member, Board of Trustees, University of Maine System

Dr. Allyson Hughes Handley, President, University of Maine at Augusta

Dr. Linda Schott, President, University of Maine at Presque Isle

Rosa Redonnett, Chief Student Affairs Officer, University of Maine System

Dr. Monique LaRocque, Executive Director, Professional & Continuing Education, University of Southern Maine

Dr. Lucille A. Zeph, Interim Associate Provost & Dean of Lifelong Learning, University of Maine

Bonnie Sparks, Director, University College Ellsworth Center

Process

Over a period of nine months, the ABCDE committee engaged in comprehensive deliberations, conducted reviews of pertinent research and literature, and examined UMS, state, and national best practices. In addition, members of the committee met with adult students as well as faculty and staff members who work with adult students across all seven campuses and the outreach centers of University College. Students who were unable to attend the campus and center meetings were encouraged to complete a questionnaire made available on the UMS “Creating Mission Excellence” website.

Members of the ABCDE Committee also participated in and/or visited working sessions of the Credit Transfer Steering Committee, the Teaching through Technology Task Force, the Steering Committee for Adult Learner Programs, the Prior Learning Assessment Committee, the UMS Enrollment Management Council, the Distance Learning Steering Committee, and the Learning Management Systems Committee.

Committee members debated the desirability of including associates and graduate degrees as part of the UMS goal for the ABCDE recommendations. Several of the seven public universities already offer associates degrees. However, since baccalaureate degree attainment is highly correlated with better per capita incomes, the committee focused on pathways to bachelor’s degrees.
The Imperative for Change

Public higher education institutions are expected to assist with the economic development needs of the states in which they are located in addition to addressing the multiple issues of college access, affordability, and completion across a range of student populations. It is imperative that a strategic plan with clear action steps and goals, formed collaboratively across key stakeholders within the University of Maine System and within Maine, be formulated and implemented.

Economic Development:

A highly qualified workforce is central to any state’s workforce and economic development. By 2018, 59% of all jobs in Maine will require a post-secondary education. National goals, including those from President Obama, call for 60% of all adults to have achieved a post-secondary degree by 2025. Individuals with professional certificates and postsecondary education degrees at the associate’s, bachelor’s and graduate levels are projected to experience higher levels of employment and wage growth than those without.

An estimated 230,000 adults in Maine have some college but no degree, which impacts their personal aspirations as well as their future earnings and the workforce development of the state. These adults have accumulated debt for higher education but are unable to get a return on that investment because they have not completed a degree.

The need to link higher education to career and economic development has never been stronger. The public and individual students expect a return on their investment in higher education, and that return must translate into a quality education and a good job upon graduation.

The Revolution in College Access, Affordability, and Completion:

The landscape of higher education is changing so rapidly that most experts agree that we are experiencing a higher education revolution. Virtually every daily news item in any one of the numerous higher education journals today refers to one or more of the recent phenomena that are “disrupting” our current system of higher education.¹ Most significant is the impact of

¹ http://people.uis.edu/rschr1/onlinelearning/?m=201208
online courses on both the pedagogy and the changing face of the student profile of today’s learner.

We are only beginning to experience the burgeoning capacity of technology to revolutionize higher education. Just as the internet transformed the news and music industries, so too is it now transforming the most expensive commodity in American life: higher education. Whereas twenty years ago online education was considered to be a second-rate education delivered en masse and generally by for-profit institutions, today the most prestigious colleges and universities throughout the country are getting on the band wagon with their own versions of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) available to anyone across the world with an internet connection. And despite the early refusal of many institutions to accept credit for these types of online courses, almost all institutions are now exploring the impact of this newest phenomenon and determining how to best respond.

This open access, whole-scale democratization of higher education will constitute a tsunami-like force in educating the masses that we have not seen the likes of since the birth of the printing press. This realization has not been lost on our government as it seeks to add requirements around online education that have the potential to dramatically impact how it is delivered and financed (e.g., state authorization of distance education).

The multiple and various platforms for the distribution of knowledge and the growing response to determining the assessment of that knowledge promises to overhaul our systems of education that have existed for hundreds of years. Moreover, the race towards providing low cost education and the $10,000 degree will force all institutions to examine their current practices and find ways to cut costs while promising the best value in the education they offer.

The convergence of these many external phenomena, coupled with the explosion of competition for the very students we used to consider our own, causes us to rethink our educational system and respond in a more comprehensive and cohesive fashion so that we are stronger as a university-wide system. How do we transition from what we currently do to what the university of the future needs to do in order to remain competitive in this increasingly global climate?

To remain viable, the University of Maine System must fundamentally rethink how it operates. We must foremost acknowledge that Maine’s student base is changing, and we must modify our current policies and procedures, indeed our systems, to respond to the changing demographics in the state and nationally. We must reexamine practices and structures that, in

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2 Marcus, Jon “http://hechingerreport.org/content/free-courses-may-shake-universities-monopoly-on-credit_7426/
large part, were designed for “traditional” Maine students coming to college directly from high school. We must put in place best practices that are geared to a different market place of students; a market where students demand customized service and customized products in all areas of their technology-enhanced lives. And we must continue to assess the effectiveness and educational quality of those practices and commit ourselves to continued improvement and innovation.

Who Are UMS’s “Adult Students”?

The adult student age 24+ represents 38.8% of the fall 2012 UMS entire student population\(^3\). In fall 2012 the adult student age 24+ represented 36.4% of all UMS degree students and 61% of non-degree students. To underscore this trend, it should be noted that 26% of the UMS student population is over thirty years of age. Of the degree students, the vast majority of adults aged 24+ attend part time and are most often pursuing majors in one of the following areas of study: Liberal Studies/ Liberal Arts/University Studies, Social/Human Services, Behavioral Science, Mental Health, Psychology, Nursing, Business Management, Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Computer Information Systems, Education – Teacher Certification, Early Childhood Education, Criminal Justice and Justice Studies.

As indicated in a March 2012 presentation by the UMS Enrollment Management Council to the Board of Trustees, adults are the New Traditional yet while the UMS like many institutions across the county has good quantitative data about this population, little solid qualitative data about the experiences, the needs, and the barriers these students face exists. Most of what we know is anecdotal, gathered from UMS student services personnel working directly with adult students.

Females represent 59.7% of the entire population of UMS students; we know from experience that a significantly higher percentage of adult students are women. Most, both male and female, have family responsibilities in addition to one or more jobs. Many are caring for a family member, either a child or an older adult. Many struggle financially and some are receiving benefits from a third party agency like the Department of Labor or the Department of Health and Human Services. Most come to the University as a result of a life changing event: such as death, loss of employment, children entering higher education, a life changing disability, a divorce or discharge from military service.\(^4\) Student service personnel report that many adult students or their family members have chronic healthcare issues, childcare needs, unreliable transportation, and frequently lack the self-confidence or resilience to navigate bureaucracies without significant coaching.

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\(^3\) 2012 Age Details Report, University of Maine System; this number includes undergraduate and graduate enrollment

\(^4\) Notes from student and faculty forums
Often returning adults, with some college credit but no degree, have financial aid holds, defaulted loans, or have been academically dismissed from a college or university, any of which can prohibit them from returning to college. College-ready adult students, even those returning with some college, are likely to be challenged by technology, mathematics (particularly algebra), lab science, and study and time management skills.⁵

The campuses of the UMS have many units currently providing excellent service to adult students. These include the Tele-service Center at the University of Maine at Augusta; the University of Maine’s Division of Lifelong Learning that has a major focus on adult education students; University College which functions as a single point of contact for students in their local communities; and the Osher Re-Entry Scholars Fund at the University of Southern Maine.

**What Barriers Do Adult Students Confront?**

In spite of the efforts that UMS has made to better serve adult learners, student focus groups conducted by the committee and student surveys indicate that significant barriers remain for adult students.

**Access and availability:**

- Most of the campuses do not have a simplified application for adult students (e.g., one that does not ask for guidance counselor recommendations and a list of athletic and school activities).
- Course rotations, course delivery modalities, and semester course schedules are designed for traditional students.
- Lab science courses are not offered in alternative schedules or formats to meet the needs of working adults.
- Tutoring is not available at night, and working adults cannot afford to leave work early.
- Most student support services are available only from: 8am-4:30pm.

**Affordability:**

- Confirmation deposits for students accepted into degree programs must be paid before enrollment and although these fees are waived for financial need, the waiver practice is not widely communicated.
- Financial aid does not support the adult who can take only one course per semester due to family and work responsibilities.

• If a student is a multi-campus student, they are confronted with varying tuition costs and fees across the seven campuses.
• The cost of commuting to a campus may be expensive.
• Childcare for adult students who are also parents is expensive.

Technology:

• In the admissions process, adults with little or no computer experience must navigate sign-on and passwords to submit the application to college.
• College catalogues and semester course schedules are available primarily online.
• Students must go online to accept financial aid.
• Course selection and enrollment is online in MaineStreet.
• Many faculty require that course work be submitted or test taken on BlackBoard.
• There are portions of the state that do not have easy access to broadband internet service.

Fragmented services:

• The time and place bound adult must contact multiple departments for support services: financial aid, admissions, advising, transfer.6

Academic policies and practice:

• Academic forgiveness policies 7 exist, but they are not well communicated and often necessitate that students demonstrate improvement prior to academic forgiveness being implemented.
• If a student is directed to improve his/her GPA prior to being readmitted, he or she must bear the cost of retaking courses.
• Residency policies are inconsistent across the UMS and often result in the accumulation of more credit hours than needed for degree completion.
• Residency requirements at the home institution do not take into consideration general education courses taken at one of the other institutions of the UMS.

6 Western Interstate Commission, “Going the Distance in Adult College Completion: Lessons from the Non-traditional No More Project”, June 2012
7 Academic Forgiveness Policies exist on all of our campuses. These policies enable a student who has been out of school for a period of time to appeal to have a portion of their academic record (usually a semester) ignored for the purpose of GPA calculation, etc.
What are the Best Practices in Adult Degree Completion?

Examples of best practice related to adult degree completion exist in part at most of Maine’s public universities. As was the case with the credit transfer initiative, these practices exist in isolation from each other and have not been implemented to scale at all of our institutions nor embedded within any policy structure, either within the UMS or more broadly, such that they can be implemented statewide.

It is clear from all available research that there are a variety of best practices being employed by states as they grapple with increasing college completion, specifically among those adults with some college. It is also clear that this is an area still in development, and ongoing assessment will be required to determine which initiatives will have the most impact. When considering best practices, it is important to recognize that the cultural context, educational climate, mission, and social setting of an educational system will influence the success of adult degree completion programs and should be taken into consideration as any solution is implemented.

The following points emerged from our research as national best practices in adult education. Where appropriate, the best practices are conceptualized in terms of UMS and Maine examples.

- **Student Service and Support**
  - **Institutional level:**
    - Develop a single point of contact for returning adults – “Concierge” services
    - Provide mentoring support either as a component of the “concierge” service or through their academic major
  - **System level:**
    - Work with campuses to review policies and procedures related to student services and support with the goal of removing barriers and formulating solutions
    - Review policies and procedures related to students enrolled on more than one campus to identify barriers and formulate solutions
  - **State level:**
    - Identify grant programs at the state level that provide either financial assistance for adult students or provide funding for student support services

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8 Michelau, D. and Lane, P. “Bringing Adults Back to College: Designing and Implementing a Statewide Concierge Model,” Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (November 2010)
9 “Pathways to Success: Report to Congress Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance,” February, 2012
• **Marketing and Outreach**¹⁰

  **Institutional level:**
  - Identify potential students, both first time and those with some college, at the institutional level¹¹
  - Tailor marketing and outreach to students regarding degree completion opportunities at each institution

  **System level:**
  - Identify potential students, both first time and those with some college, through appropriate state agencies that target adults
  - Statewide coordination of marketing and outreach to students regarding degree completion opportunities at UMS institutions

  **State level:**
  - Cultivate key stakeholder support, at both the institutional and state level, in promoting opportunities for adults to come to/return to college¹² Examples of key stakeholders include but are not limited to employers, workforce investment boards, Adult Education, and state departments such as Education and Labor.

• **Academic Programs**

  **Institutional:**
  - Identify and offer programs that provide the flexibility to enable place-bound, time-limited learners to achieve degrees
  - Identify and offer programs via distance education and/or online

  **System:**
  - Review academic policies and procedures across campuses to identify barriers and formulate solutions¹³ and incentivize collaboration and innovation
  - Expand degree completion opportunities through the collaborative offering of degrees

  **State Level:**
  - Involve key business and community stakeholders in the identification and development of certificates and degrees needed for the workforce

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¹⁰ Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, “Going the Distance in Adult College Completion: Lessons from the Non-traditional No More Project,” June 2012
¹¹ HigherEdInsight.com, p. 3
¹² Western Interstate Commission, “Going the Distance in Adult College Completion: Lessons from the Non-traditional No More Project”, p. 45, June 2012
¹³ Ibid
• Financial Aid/Tuition Support\textsuperscript{14}

  \textit{Institutional:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Identify any financial aid policies that may be a barrier and formulate solutions
    \item Ensure that there are multiple payment options for students
  \end{itemize}

  \textit{State Level:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Work with key stakeholders in state government and within business and industry to develop scholarships and grants to support adult degree completion and to develop partnerships to enhance employer tuition support programs
  \end{itemize}

• Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Transfer

  \textit{Institutional:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Facilitate the transfer of credit for prior learning among campuses
  \end{itemize}

  \textit{System:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Work with campuses to ensure System-wide consistency in the awarding of credit for prior learning
    \item Offer the full menu of PLA (to include testing, portfolio, credential review, military credit, etc.)
    \item Develop partnerships with employers in ways that support the PLA process, e.g. working with institutions and subsequently employees about what skills translate into credit for prior learning, helping employees prepare portfolios, etc.
  \end{itemize}

  \textit{State level:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Coordinate with those local and state agencies and organizations that can enhance and support access to employers, employees and unemployed adults.
  \end{itemize}

• Partnerships (across campuses and centers, with employers, with other state organizations)

  \textit{Institutional level:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Work collaboratively with Adult Education
    \item Work collaboratively with the Maine Employers Initiative
  \end{itemize}

  \textit{System level:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Coordinate UMS work with the Maine Employers Initiative
    \item Work with Foundations (such as the Maine Community Foundation, MELMAC, and Lumina) to secure financial assistance for adult degree completion initiatives
  \end{itemize}

  \textit{State level:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Work with the State Legislature on policies to support adult degree completion
  \end{itemize}

• Assessment, Evaluation and Research\textsuperscript{15}

  \textit{Institutional level:}
  \begin{itemize}
    \item Assess campus initiatives
  \end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid
\textsuperscript{15} U.S. Department of Education, “College Completion Tool Kit”, March 2011
Utilize assessment data for continuous improvement

**System level:**
- Assess the effectiveness of initiatives across the UMS
- Share assessment data with all constituencies
- Assist with continuing innovation across UMS campuses

**General Findings**

1. To ensure that we are providing the appropriate level of service, it will be helpful to use a commonly agreed upon definition of who is considered an “adult learner”.

2. Having specific UMS goals for degree attainment by adults will accelerate the development of more user friendly practices for adult learners and help Maine achieve President Obama’s goal of having 60% of the US population with a postsecondary degree by 2025.

3. Institutional incentives for adult degree completion play a critical role in the ultimate effectiveness of adult outreach efforts. The UMS has already taken positive steps in this direction by including “adults” within the recently adopted metrics for the Outcomes Based Funding (OBF) initiative. In addition, the Chancellor’s Office is exploring potential Maine Legislature generated incentives as well as private funding opportunities to support adult learners.

4. Campus visits and online surveys documented the barriers to success for adult learners within the UMS. Those barriers should be systematically addressed with a view to successful resolution.

5. Campus engagement and collaboration with UMS experts who work effectively with adult learners is an important first step in enhancing academic and student support. For example, University College specializes in working with adult students throughout Maine and can readily identify registration and admissions barriers that impact student success. Similarly, many of the universities have faculty and instructional design experts who can identify best practices for distance and/or online learners. Experts across the UMS should be engaged in collaborative efforts to improve as a system.

6. Programs such as the Maine Development Foundation’s “Maine Employers Initiative” and the business-led “Project Login” initiative have strengthened the UMS connection to workforce and labor needs within the state. The ongoing collaboration between the Maine Department of Labor and the UMS is designed to strengthen the supply and
demand elements of the state’s workforce and re-training needs. Partnering with other higher education institutions in Maine, Maine employers, state and local government, and other state agencies (adult education, workforce investment boards, for example) will be a critical component in the development of a comprehensive project designed to increase adult degree completion. Our engagement with these partners must include a clearer definition and understanding of the benefits of an educated workforce and citizenry, and the role the UMS plays in this.

7. Initiatives such as the Teaching through Technology Task Force, the Learning Management Systems committee, and the newly released UMS Institutional Technology Plan focus on academic technology support as a central element within the UMS. Continuing to engage faculty across the system and within each university regarding the impact of technology on teaching and learning paradigms will be an important factor in our ongoing work within all pedagogies.

8. Providing and enhancing professional development support for faculty who are working with adults and who are delivering instruction via distance learning and technology, and providing the appropriate support for faculty in the dynamics of adult learning and the corresponding teaching of adults is an important element within faculty development.

9. Students report the success of the “concierge model” (a single point of contact) as a desirable practice. Advisors (academic or staff) are described by these successful adult learning students as being similar to a “life coach” for them.

10. Institutions should attempt to define “responsiveness” and to potentially set preferred goals for activities like prior learning assessment. As recommended in the report of the Credit Transfer Committee, the UMS should consider using the ALFI (Adult Learning Focused Institution) Assessment to establish benchmarks for performance. Public universities should consider enhancing support services for specialized groups such as community college transfer students, military and veteran students, and distance learners. Institutional responsiveness is equated strongly with student success for adult learners.

**Recommendations and Preliminary Implementation Plan**

The recommendations below encompass the priority elements that must be developed and acted upon in order to best address the needs of our adult students and our state. It is recognized that this will be a “work in progress”; additional recommendations and actions will result as this work advances over time. It is our collective hope that the ability to make
decisions and solve problems occurs at the lowest possible level of the organization. The ability to meet the deadlines established within these recommendations hinges on the availability of appropriate and adequate internal and external funding.

1. **Outreach & Communications**
   a. Develop a comprehensive UMS Outreach & Communications Plan regarding Adult Degree Completion that is integrated and clearly communicates the importance of degree completion. This plan will have two components: 1) the development of partnerships with Maine employers, other higher education institutions, local and state governments, and agencies that work with adults; and 2) the development of a comprehensive outreach and marketing effort that reaches and targets potential Maine adult students, the Governor’s Office and state Legislators, employers that may be engaged in promoting degree completion, and potential external funding organizations.

   1. **Actions Needed to Implement:** Develop a plan that encompasses both elements of this recommendation. This plan should include collaboration with appropriate partners and be developed in recognition of the Task Force work contained within legislation (LD 90). This plan will include the identification of the target population for our efforts and will establish a numerical goal for achievement.
   2. **Responsible Team:** ABCDE Steering Committee in collaboration with appropriate subcommittees
   3. **Deadline:** January 2014

2. **Student Support Services**
   a. Adopt a UMS “concierge”(e.g., single point of contact) model to serve adult students which will be implemented on each campus.

   1. **Actions Needed to Implement:**
      1. Develop a “position description” for this type of responsibility.
      2. Work with the campuses to identify appropriate candidate(s) and assign this responsibility.
      3. Incorporate funding request within overall funding needs for ABCDE

   2. **Responsible Team:** ABCDE Steering Committee working with the Presidents or their designees
   3. **Deadline:** October 2013
b. Enhance both face-to-face and online support services designed to address the unique needs of adult students.

1. **Actions Needed to Implement:**
   
   1. Conduct the ALFI as needed on each campus to develop a baseline for the identification of barriers, opportunities, and possible improvements.
   2. Inventory all academic and student support policies and procedures that could potentially impact students. These should include but not be limited to an analysis of information accessibility on websites, recruitment processes, application and admission processes, financial aid information, academic amnesty, re-admission, and credit for prior learning.¹⁶
   3. Develop recommendations and plans for improvement.
   4. Identify best practices for online support services to include 24/7 service, technology support and education, orientation, etc. Formulate an implementation plan for same.

2. **Responsible Team:** The UMS Enrollment Management Council and the Distance Learning Steering Committee

3. **Deadline:** May 2014

3. **Faculty Support**

   a. Provide professional development and support to enable faculty to teach and work more effectively with adult students.

   1. **Actions Needed to Implement:**
      
      1. Develop “guidelines” for best practices in working with adult learners.
      2. Implement regular faculty development workshops which would encompass this and best practice in distance teaching and learning.
      3. Expand the availability of instructional designers throughout the System and determine the appropriate funding mechanism

   2. **Responsible Team:** Distance Learning Steering Committee in collaboration with the VCAA/CAOs and University College.

   3. **Deadline:** June 2014

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¹⁶ The recently completed report of the Adult Learner Task Force provides a detailed analysis of such barriers.
4. **On-Line Learning**
   a. On-line courses, programs and degrees represent a means of growing new enrollments as well as assisting with Maine’s adult degree completion goals
      1. Building upon the goal of delivering 20% of all UMS credits through on-line courses and programs by 2015—established by the UMS Board of Trustees in *New Challenges, New Directions*--, continue online program development including the development of high quality new programs and/or the expansion of existing programs into new modalities.
      2. **Actions Needed to Implement:** Achievement of recommendation #5
      3. **Responsible Team:** Presidents with ABCDE Steering Committee in collaboration with the VCAA/CAOs
      4. **Deadline:** June 2014
   b. Determine and implement consistent e-tuition (e.g., rate for online coursework) rate
      1. **Actions Needed to Implement:** VCAA/CAOs and CFOs make recommendations to the Presidents
      2. **Responsible Team:** Presidents in collaboration with the Chancellor
      3. **Deadline:** December 2013

5. **New Program Development**
   a. Establish a strategic selection process for new programs, both undergraduate and graduate, that will be added to the OnLine Maine web site to ensure responsiveness to the employment needs of the state and the aspirations of Maine’s citizens. This will include a clear process for the development of jointly-offered, UMS collaborative degrees, programs and courses.
      1. **Actions Needed to Implement:**
         1. Review the current process for online degree approval and recommend a revised process.
         2. Inventory all existing online programs and courses to develop baseline of existing programs and determine gaps.
         3. Explore the feasibility of offering selected graduate programs at the UMS small campuses.
         4. Develop, pilot and evaluate a model for collaborative offerings of courses, programs, and/or degrees. The model should include the requirements for both course development and administrative structure.
2. ** Responsible Team:** VCAA/CAOs in collaboration with the Distance Learning Steering Committee
3. **Deadline:** June 2014

6. **External Funding Support**
   a. Explore potential external funding sources to support adult degree completion by Maine citizens. This funding will provide (1) scholarship support for returning adults and (2) operational funding to support the implementation of the recommendations including but not limited to: the development of a concierge model, expansion of faculty development opportunities, implementation of the ALFI, etc. (see appendix for overview of funding needs)
   1. **Actions Needed to Implement:** Identify appropriate funders for each component and pursue funding. This will include UMS “seed” funding to begin implementation as well as advocacy with the federal Department of Education and legislators for increased funding for part-time students.
   2. **Responsible Team:** ABCDE Committee working with the Chancellor and, as appropriate, campus development officers
   3. **Deadline:** December 2013

7. **UMS Institutional Incentives**
   a. Continue to incentivize (through Outcomes Based Funding and other means) institutional support for adult degree completion.
   b. Assess the OBF for its ability to reward collaboration and recommend future enhancements to the model that would build an incentive for collaboration into the updated model.
   1. **Actions Needed to Implement:** Determine incentives to collaboration including an enhanced OBF, seed money for new initiatives, funding for collaborative work. Recommend, identify sources of funding, and implement.
   2. **Responsible Team:** ABCDE Steering Committee working with the Presidents and Chancellor
   3. **Deadline:** Spring 2014

8. **Assessment & Improvement**
   a. The UMS should engage in an annual assessment of adult support services and establish annual goals for continuous quality improvement. This assessment should include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the recommendations detailed within this report.
1. **Actions Needed to Implement:** Working with each responsible subcommittee, determine the appropriate assessments for each element of the ABCDE recommendations. Working with the campuses, determine the best approach to assessing the overall effectiveness of our improvements aimed at the adult learner (surveys, focus groups, etc.)

2. **Responsible Team:** ABCDE Steering Committee in collaboration with the Project Leadership Team

3. **Deadline:** December 2013

**Conclusion**

To recruit, retain, and graduate adult students for high demand, high paying jobs that will help Maine compete in the global marketplace, the UMS must be more responsive to the needs of adult students. The above recommendations identify the services, institutional practices and academic policies that will promote adult student academic success. Moving forward, coordination with other UMS groups, such as the Credit Transfer Task Force, will be essential to success. Furthermore, to be certain that our efforts to meet the unique needs of adult and returning students are constructive and the results efficient, the UMS must invest in self-assessment tools like ALFI-Adult Learning Focused Institution, engage in enhanced data mining focused on adult students, and annually assess the services and programs delivered for all students, but particularly adults, to ensure continuous improvement.

**Organizational Structure and Governance**

In order to implement a phased, multi-initiative project, a structure with clear governance and reporting will be necessary. In order to ensure collaboration, cohesiveness and the broadest range of perspectives, expertise and responsiveness, it is important to note that all elements of this structure must encompass campus, University College and System representation. Additionally, it is our expectation that this structure permits the appropriate level of authority such that decisions and change can occur at the lowest possible levels of the organization. The following organizational structure is envisioned for this project:

**Steering Committee**

The ABCDE Committee already in place will continue to be the Steering Committee for the implementation phase. As needed, additional members with specific expertise may be added.

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18 http://www.cael.org/Whom-We-Serve/Colleges-and-Universities/Adult-Student-Services/ALFI-Assessment-Tools
Responsibilities:
- Sets priorities for the executive leadership and project implementation team
- Resolves conflicts and coordinates resource identification and allocation
- Monitors outcomes, to include
  o achievement of strategic goals, milestones and deadlines
  o fulfillment of priority public policy agendas
  o quality assurance for design integrity
  o communications internally and externally, with key stakeholders
  o assessment of each stage of this work
- Develops subsequent phases and recommendations of the project including, but not limited to, expanding the partnerships with employers and state agencies and government needed to enhance our adult degree completion efforts.

Project Leadership Team – To be composed of representatives from the subcommittees as well as a UMS staff member

Responsibilities:
- Serves as the implementation team for the Project
- Oversees the “nuts and bolts” of implementation
- Integrates with the administrative and academic functions impacted by the project
- Coordinates with the Steering Committee to ensure that cross-campus and cross-departmental components are dealt with in a coordinated fashion. It is envisioned that this team will be comprised of representatives from each of the standing committees responsible for implementation of each recommendation encompassed within this report.

Subcommittees for Each Project Component -- Existing governance structures appropriate to each recommendation will be responsible this work. These structures include the CAOs, Enrollment Management Council, the Distance Learning Steering Committee, etc.

Responsibilities:
- Oversee, direct, and manage the “nuts and bolts” implementation of each recommendation, including formulation of work plan for each
- Develop and present additional recommendations that may be needed for successful implementation to the Project Leadership Team and/or the ABCDE Steering Committee.
Steering Committee (ABCDE Cmte)

Project Leadership Team

Subcommittee

Subcommittee

Subcommittee
**Funding Estimates for Implementation**

In order to achieve our goals for adult degree completion, investments must be made in a variety of areas. While an initial investment will be required in order to start this work (some components within our recommendations must begin in the Fall 2013 semester), the revenue gained from students returning to our campuses to complete their degree will over the long term more than fund our ongoing degree completion efforts. For example, for every 10 students needing 60 credits to complete their degrees who return, $180,400 in tuition and fee revenue is generated (exclusive of room and board)\(^{19}\)

The amounts below are *preliminary estimates only*. As implementation work occurs within the various subcommittees, these estimates will be refined.

**Major Funding Categories**

- Scholarship Support Secured Externally $1,000,000\(^{20}\)
- All other operational components of initial plan $400,000-$1,000,000

Operational components include but are not limited to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach &amp; Communication</td>
<td>-Identification/outreach to students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Enhance adult marketing budget to include OnLine Maine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>Concierge service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Estimate depends on model developed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Support</td>
<td>Faculty Development Workshops</td>
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<td>Instructional Designers – 2 per year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment/Improvement</td>
<td>Conduct the ALFI</td>
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<td>New Program Development</td>
<td>Incentivize the development of UMS collaborative pilot Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Line Learning</td>
<td>Incentivize the development of new online programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Incentives</td>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^{19}\) This is based on a weighted average undergraduate tuition of $7604 and mandatory fees of $1416 (based on 15 credits for two semesters). The calculation of $180,400 equates with two years to attain 60 credits.

\(^{20}\) This is the estimated amount which is a combination of legislative appropriation and externally generated funding. Additional internal match funding would be in addition to this.