

# **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE SUMMARY REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM STUDY**

**With Recommendations for Action  
January 2000**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Why This Study was Undertaken**

At its state Convention in spring 1997, the League of Women Voters of Maine voted to support a major two-year study of the University of Maine System. This step was taken in response to members' concerns about what seemed to be a disintegrating situation in the state's most important educational institution. At that time, the press carried almost daily headlines about UMS's diminishing student population, disintegrating campuses, inadequate libraries, student drinking orgies, and even racial disturbances. Behind the headlines were serious concerns about the quality of teaching, the lack of research capability, non-transferability of credits, courses, and programs within the system, the role of ITV and other forms of distance learning (an issue which had forced the resignation of the previous Chancellor), companies complaining about their inability to find trained workers, and a general concern with the University's poor reputation both in and out of state. The new Chancellor had not yet had sufficient time to make his goals, agenda or managerial style clear, and there was a sense that competing interests and an uncooperative legislature could only contribute to the apparent disarray.

LWVME members were united in their belief that a strong state university system is critical not only to Maine's education capability but to the state's economic future. A statement by Robert Edwards, President of Bowdoin College, seemed to us to articulate the issues:

From the standpoint of Bowdoin College, the single great problem . . . is the declining strength of the University of Maine. In all other states with which I am familiar, a "flagship" land-grant university, with strong graduate and research programs, disposes a library, laboratories, cultural performances and intellectual concentrations of strength that create a major field of force for higher education in the state - and in the state economy - . . . The swirl of intellectual activity generated by the state university also ties the state into scientific and scholarly currents in other states and abroad, and in impalpable ways, this creates a climate that invigorates other colleges in the state.

After six years in Maine, I am still puzzled that the economic importance of a flagship university is not well recognized . . . The consequence is that educational strength in Maine is increasingly concentrated in its private colleges, which are solely undergraduate institutions and are remote from the State Legislature and the Department [of Education] . . . These colleges are great institutions, but they do not add up to, or replace, the major intellectual concentration of a strong state university.<sup>(1)</sup>

The League of Women Voters of Maine is a public policy educational organization that works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government. Because the by-laws of the LWV stipulate that it cannot act or advocate without a consensus of its members, and cannot achieve consensus without being broadly knowledgeable about the subject, a study group was formed, and early meetings were held to discuss the parameters of the study. Chancellor MacTaggart, in a speech to the League, had spoken of what he saw as a major problem, low student aspirations which impacted negatively on enrollment, and suggested that the League might join other groups in the state that were studying why this should be so and what could be done about it. The League, however, felt that "aspirations" was a socio-cultural issue, not easily amenable to legislative solutions, and that it was more appropriate for the League to concentrate on structure, governance, funding, tuition, financial aid, staffing, programmatic, academic and quality issues. Lois Lamdin and Nan Amstutz were named co-chairs of the UMS study project, and a group of 16 to 18 people volunteered to work with them.

### **How the Study was Conducted**

One of the first tasks of the study group was to develop a set of protocols to govern the conduct of interviews it would undertake. The protocols were designed to address three different groups of interviewees: administrators, faculty, and students. The plan was to proceed on a campus-by-campus basis to study such public documents as catalogs, directories, public relations pieces, campus newspapers, and recent reports from the NEASC accreditation teams, and to arrange interviews through the president's office with as many people as we could see in a few days on campus. Between campus visits, the group convened monthly to debrief those visits and to talk with legislators, faculty members, people with special knowledge about university issues, and members of the UMS administrative staff who were invited to attend.

In the course of the two years (1997-1999) devoted to this study, the group, usually in pairs, conducted 222 interviews, speaking to 116 faculty, 67 administrators, 31 students, 4 legislators and 4 UMS trustees. It visited seven campuses, a number of outlying Centers, and the Kennebec Valley Technical College, read widely in relevant documents and press reports, and did further research on issues as they arose.

The authors of this Report wish to thank their hard working friends and colleagues who tirelessly showed up at meetings, no matter what the weather, paper bag lunches in hand, traipsed from campus to campus, traveling largely at their own expense to the far reaches of this great state, asked important questions, were thoughtful in evaluating the answers, and were not daunted but invigorated by the intellectual challenge of this task. Special thanks are due to Ezra Lamdin whose exploration and interpretation of the UMS *Data Book* has revealed helpful statistical information and Ruth Benedikt for her work on the Liberal Arts section.

All of us wish to thank Chancellor Terrance MacTaggart, who was supportive of our effort from the beginning, the Presidents who welcomed us onto their campuses, their hard-working assistants who had the unenviable task of coordinating our schedules with those of busy faculty and administrators, and, of course, all of those busy administrators, faculty and students who made time to talk with us.

We also want to thank then-President of the LWVME, Sally Bryant, who also served on the study group and was among the first to recognize and support the potential importance of this study. Finally, we want to acknowledge the LWVME Education Fund, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that has contributed the major funding for this educational and voters' service activity as well as the the Portland Area League's Education Fund

### ***The LWVME Study Group on The University of Maine System***

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## **BRIEF**

### **HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM**

When the University of Maine System was created in 1968 the state already had over a century of experience in public higher education. The need for publicly supported higher education in the fields of teacher training and agriculture had been widely discussed since shortly after Maine became an independent state in 1820, and institutions to fill both of these needs were founded at about the same time in the 1860s. Operating independently until 1968, the University of Maine, which had been established to address the state's needs in agriculture, and five of the teacher training colleges were now consolidated in one overall system under the guidance of a Chancellor. A few years later, the Augusta branch of the University of Maine was granted autonomy and became the seventh campus in the system which we know today.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the 1860's the question of providing support for an agricultural school was debated largely in terms of the need to keep Maine's young people at home, arrest the state's slow decline in agriculture and promote new lines of endeavor. There was little opposition in 1865 when the Legislature took advantage of the Morrill Land Grant College Act and established the Maine State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.

Major questions which would reveal geographical rivalries and tensions with existing institutions concerned the location of the new college and the subjects it would teach. Although the legislature quickly accepted the Morrill Land Grant, it was divided on whether the money should go to one of the three existing private colleges, Bowdoin, Bates or Waterville College (Colby), or whether a new institution should be set up. The majority of a commission formed to settle this question favored establishing a

professorship at Bowdoin, but the minority, backed by the state's agricultural interests, convinced the legislature to set up a new institution. Its geographical location presented still another thorny decision, and in a regional vote of 8-7, two adjacent farms in Orono won out over a site in Topsham. Important factors in the decision were the ability of the towns of Bangor, Orono and Old Town to raise the necessary funds, and the location near the geographical center of the state.

In the 1890s, the Agricultural College sought to take advantage of federal funds in order to include the liberal arts in its curriculum and become a university. Opposition to the move was immediate from those who feared the change, the added expense and the competition with the private colleges. Although the College did, in fact, become the University of Maine in 1897, opposition continued for another decade. On one side were those close to President Hyde of Bowdoin who wanted the state institution to limit itself to agriculture and the mechanical arts and to leave liberal arts courses to the private schools. On the other side were those who believed that students at the state institution needed an education that was not only inexpensive but that "included both practical and cultural aspects of life."

Adequate funding for the university, under whatever name, was always difficult and unpredictable. When financial crises arose, as they did periodically, the response was usually to raise tuition and scale back or eliminate programs. The first such crisis came in the 1870s soon after the Agricultural College was founded when there was an attempt to cut out all appropriations and abandon state responsibility. Another period of financial distress was during and after the first World War. Declining enrollment and standards as well as anti-German hysteria during the war and post-war inflation were factors. Added to this was a Governor, Percival Baxter, who believed that the university should pay for itself without any state appropriation as did his alma mater Bowdoin. He was overridden by the Legislature, but it was during this period that the School of Pharmacy and the Law School were both discontinued.

By the end of the 1920s things were looking up. A sympathetic Governor, William Tudor Gardiner, was in office, and the passage of a mill tax was expected to provide an established revenue base and hopefully remove educational matters from the political arena. Unfortunately, the ensuing depression made a mockery of these hopes, although the University did weather the decade with minimal damage. At first the mill tax helped, but its proceeds decreased as the Depression deepened, and later the full funds were never available. Federal funds played an important financial role during this period. Reluctantly applied for and accepted, they financed a number of campus projects and provided work and study grants for students.

The decade of the 1940s provided still new challenges, especially after 1945 when there was an influx of veterans taking advantage of the GI Bill of Rights. As the Orono campus was unable to accommodate the demand, some 200 students were housed at Dow Airforce Base in Bangor, and for three years a Brunswick annex for 800 students operated at the Naval Air Station. Any hostility on the part of Bowdoin had long since disappeared, and the college proved to be very helpful, especially in the initial stages of

setting up the annex. In the 1940s the legislature spent a great deal of money to meet the University's needs, but by 1949 it had returned to its more thrifty ways and adequate funding once again became a problem.

The University of Maine at Orono came into the university system with two branch campuses: Portland, which had been founded as Portland Junior college in 1933; and Augusta, where a two-year program had been established just a few years previously.

The reluctance of the state to fund its public university adequately is a theme running throughout the university's history and was, in fact, responsible for at least two presidents' resignations in frustration as they rode the alternate waves of support and denial. In 1948 a severe cut in allocations led to an increase in tuition so that by 1951 the University of Maine had the highest tuition of all the land grant colleges in the country. Lloyd Elliot, in his tenure as president (1958-1966) sought private money to support endowed professorships, the library and arts and cultural programs, and he turned to referenda on bond issues for financial support so that the people of Maine began to have a direct voice in assuring the financial health of the institution.

The five teacher training colleges which entered the University of Maine System in 1968 had originally been established because of a general recognition in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century that many school teachers were poorly trained and that those who wanted education beyond that provided in the secondary schools could not find it in Maine. By 1861 some thirty Maine students were enrolled in one of the four normal schools which had recently been founded in Massachusetts. After much discussion and heated debate, a Normal School Act was passed in 1863, and the site of the failing Farmington Academy chosen from a list of possibilities to be the location of Western State Normal School. Proximity to rail service as well as "the character of the community and healthfulness of the location" were among the reasons cited for the choice of Farmington.

Other teacher training schools soon followed - the Madawaska Training School at Fort Kent in 1878 to prepare bilingual teachers, a Normal School at Gorham in 1878, at Presque Isle in 1903 and at Machias in 1909. Over the years all these schools underwent a series of name changes; by 1968 they were known as Farmington State College, Fort Kent State College, Gorham State College, Aroostook State College, and Washington State College. Their mission, however, remained the same; they were almost exclusively teacher training institutions, although Farmington had always included a strong liberal arts program. Three of the schools were not accredited. Still another normal school located in Castine had been closed much earlier; in 1941 its campus became the site of the Maine Maritime Academy which has never been part of the University of Maine System.

In the 1950s serious consideration had been given to closing the smaller teacher colleges, Machias and, in particular, Fort Kent, which at times enrolled fewer than 50 students. The special educational needs of Washington County and of the St. John Valley argued against closure, and at Fort Kent a campaign was successfully undertaken to double the student body. When the University of Maine System was created, the teachers' colleges

needed to develop a new mission. It was generally agreed that no one model was suitable for all and that each campus needed a high degree of autonomy to develop its own personality and meet the special needs of the region it served.

The 1970s saw further changes in the alignment of the various campuses. In 1971 the Portland branch of the University of Maine and Gorham State College merged, becoming by the end of the decade the University of Southern Maine, and the Augusta branch became an autonomous institution and the seventh campus of the university system.

Some of the concerns expressed in 1968 in the debate leading up to the establishment of the University of Maine System sound familiar even today: tensions between Orono and Southern Maine over the allocation of resources, questions about the feasibility of maintaining the smaller campuses, frustrations over student transfer policies, and the accessibility of continuing education programs.

The several commissions which have looked at the university system during the decades since the merger have expressed similar contemporary concerns: a state with high graduation rates from high school but a low rate of enrollment in institutions of higher learning, a decline in university admission standards coupled with a need for remedial education, and insufficient attention paid to the importance of faculty development.

The merger into the University of Maine System in 1968 did little to improve financial support of the public higher education system, and its share of the state budget continued to decline from 15.2% at the time of the merger to 7.2% in 1997-98. The years 1975-1979 saw a further flattening of funding from public money, the impact of which was to cause budget cuts, salary caps, and still further increases in tuition. Following the relative generosity of the 1980s, the recession of the early 1990s led to drastic cuts followed by four years of flat funding, a fifty percent increase in tuition costs, deferred building maintenance, and further cuts in programs. Only recently have university appropriations seen a small increase.

In the past two years since this study began, there have been some encouraging signs. Chancellor MacTaggart seems to have established a better relationship with the Governor and the Legislature than many of his predecessors, and there has begun to be a recognition in state government that postsecondary education is a powerful engine of economic growth. So far the increased funding has primarily been for research and development in science, technology, and business, but it is our hope that the humanities, the libraries, the neglected buildings on campuses, the long patient faculty, and those in need of financial aid will eventually share in this new, more generous legislative largesse. Maine is slowly waking up to the realization that it cannot afford *not* to build a stronger university system.

## **SUMMARY OF CAMPUS INTERVIEWS**

Over a period of a year, members of the Study Group traveled to all seven campuses of the University of Maine System and conducted more than 200 interviews with faculty,

administrators, and students. We discovered that, although each campus has its own unique personality and mission and differs in size and geographic location, there were some common threads running through most of the interviews.

### **Faculty view of students**

There is a wide variation in the degree to which students are prepared for college work when they enter as freshmen, and a fair number of students at all the campuses need remedial work in some subjects. Faculty at the University of Maine were the most satisfied with student preparation and those at the University of Maine at Augusta the least satisfied. At the latter campus it was estimated that some 85% of the students need some amount of remediation. It is difficult for students ever to catch up if they need remediation in a lot of subjects, and therefore it is crucial to have good counseling and to select the right courses in high school. There was criticism on some campuses of the quality of the remedial programs being offered.

Many of the faculty seemed to prefer to teach non-traditional age students.<sup>(3)</sup> They found that traditional age students may be better prepared, but often they are not motivated; non-traditional students on the other hand may not be as well-prepared and their skills are rusty, but they have interesting and varied backgrounds and are highly motivated to learn.

Many faculty commented that the students are serious and work hard, but they regretted that students are obliged to spend too many hours at outside jobs; this is detrimental to their health and their studies. They often enter college with an unrealistic view of how they can combine jobs and study.

Many students have a utilitarian, short-term outlook focused on jobs. They are pressured to prepare for careers; one function of the university must be to broaden their outlook.

Many students are the first of their family to attend college, come with a whole array of non-educational problems, and need a lot of help in order to succeed. Their first year experience is crucial.

### **Student reactions**

Almost all the students with whom we talked were happy with their academic experience. They thought the faculty was competent and very approachable. They also thought there was a lot of assistance available for students who need help with their courses, either through peer tutoring or individual help from the faculty.

They did have complaints, mostly about physical equipment: libraries which have too few books or collections which are not current, computer labs with not enough computers and inadequate hours of operation, and poorly equipped and antiquated scientific laboratories.

In addition, especially at the smaller colleges, some of the courses which they need for their majors are offered infrequently, sometimes only once every four years, making it difficult to graduate in the traditional four years.

### **Faculty views of their campus and teaching in Maine**

There was little relationship between the physical appearance of the campus and the morale of the faculty. Presque Isle, with its well-maintained plant, had morale problems, while crowded Fort Kent and aging Farmington had high morale. Open communication on the part of top administrators was far more important. Campuses where faculty believed they were consulted, particularly on difficult decisions such as eliminating programs, had much higher morale than on campuses where administrative decisions were seen as top-down with little faculty input. This would seem to validate the opinion voiced by a former trustee that the most important thing the Trustees do is to select a Chancellor and the campus Presidents.

When asked to name the attractions of teaching at their campus, the quality of life in Maine ranked high on the list. The state was seen as a good place to raise a family. On the smaller campuses in particular, major attractions were the chance to concentrate on teaching, to develop new courses and programs, and to interact with students. Collegiality of the faculty was a factor cited on most campuses.

There were, of course, liabilities as well. High on this list were low salaries and, on the smaller campuses, isolation and lack of contact with peers. Several wanted more inter-campus contact, and the development of the joint liberal arts degree by Fort Kent, Presque Isle and Machias was cited as a stimulating experience. Many of the faculty felt they were subject to a lot of stress trying to combine heavy teaching loads, interaction with students, and expectations of performing community service. As a result it was difficult to find time for research.

Lack of employment opportunities for spouses is a problem on all the more rural campuses.

### **Spending priorities for any additional funds**

When asked to give their priorities for spending should additional funds become available, there was much agreement among faculty and administrators on all the campuses.

1. More affordable college costs achieved either by lower tuition and fees or increased financial aid, especially through work-study programs which would involve students in research projects related to their studies.
2. Better maintenance of buildings and infrastructure and the addition of new classrooms and more up-to-date labs. At both Fort Kent and the University of Southern Maine, the most cramped facilities, faculty noted their desire for a space where they could meet.

3. Better library facilities and computer systems and a need for more technical and support staff.
4. Additional faculty, especially full-time, in order to offer more courses and generally improve the academic program.
5. Higher faculty salaries; except for Fort Kent this ranked rather low in priority on most campuses, although it was generally noted that low salaries make it difficult to recruit faculty in some disciplines. Everywhere the need for additional funds for faculty and staff development was noted.
6. More attention to the humanities which currently receive little support. When funds are cut, the humanities are usually the first targeted.
7. More recognition of the role universities play as cultural centers for their communities. The university is often the major source for the visual and performing arts.

### **Allocation of funds among the campuses**

With the exception of the University of Maine, all campuses thought that the present allocation of funds is unfair and is based on historic factors which are no longer relevant. On the other hand, there was general agreement that UM has a special role and that the other campuses benefit from having a strong "flagship" university which offers a wide range of graduate programs. We found less appreciation at the University of Maine, however, for the present role of the smaller northern campuses which some respondents believed should confine themselves to associate-degree programs.

The new mechanism for allocating additional funding based on increases in enrollment raised particular concern at the University of Maine at Augusta. Several viewed it as a disaster and believed that stronger campuses would have a big advantage over those with fewer resources. The formula had just been announced when we visited Farmington, and there was some concern how it would affect this campus with its enrollment cap.

### **View of Trustees and Chancellor**

Among faculty and students there is little sense of what the Board of Trustees does or of what it should do. The few comments we did receive ranged from one who thought power lies with the Trustees and the Chancellor working together to one who thought the Trustees are a rubber stamp for the Chancellor. One person wondered how the Trustees receive their information about individual campuses since the format of their campus visits is not conducive to the exchange of ideas and information. It is ironic that the most negative comments about the Board came from the University of Maine when other campuses view the Trustees as too strong in their advocacy for UM.

Chancellor MacTaggart is viewed favorably as a good advocate for the System. There is a general belief that relations with the Legislature have seen a remarkable improvement since his arrival.

### **View of the Legislature and the Governor**

Most viewed their individual legislators as helpful and informed and say they listen to well-reasoned arguments. Some faculty maintain contact with individual legislators. The Legislature as a whole, however, received more mixed reviews, although most thought it has a better understanding of the importance of higher education than formerly. There were some comments about its being indifferent, short-sighted and even stingy. It was suggested that UMS needs to be proactive in educating legislators especially since the enactment of term limits and the attendant loss of institutional memory.

The faculty generally viewed the Legislature more favorably than the Governor who is believed to be too focused on the short-term and jobs, not much interested in the public university system, and favoring the technical colleges over the universities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The State of Maine has long recognized the importance of K-12 education and has enabled our public schools to be near the top in the nation, but meanwhile our University system has been sadly neglected and the primary target of repeated budgetary cuts. When the majority of jobs today require at least two years of college, and when Maine employers complain that they cannot find a trained workforce, we must reorder our priorities to ensure that citizens and voters are better equipped to fulfill their roles in Maine's future. This is not to take away from our strong public school system, but to bring our University funding into a more logical alignment with it.

### **1. STRUCTURE/MISSION**

After visiting all seven campuses and interviewing 200 faculty and administrators, the LWV study group has been impressed by how alike they are in their dedication to their educational missions and how creatively they have approached their different populations' needs. Each of the seven campuses, plus the satellite learning centers, is providing, to the best of its ability, the specific education programs needed by the students in its geographic area, each is giving individual support to a number of students who might have failed to reach their potential in a different environment, each is an integral part of the fabric of its community for which it provides a vital economic and cultural base, each has developed its own unique mission and culture, and each is operating to the fullest extent of its capability despite seriously straitened budgets. We thoughtfully considered some of the plans which would combine two or three of the smaller campuses under one administration, but we felt that the administrative efficiencies, if any, at best would be minimal and not worth the risk of destroying individual campus identity and morale. Maintaining the individual campuses enables them to best serve the economic needs of the communities in which they are located.

Recent national data show that in the nation traditional full-time students between the ages of 18 and 24 who live on campus now constitute only 20% of the total student population. Non-traditional students, most of whom live off campus, are entering colleges and universities in unprecedented numbers to complete their education or update it, to qualify for new jobs or to retain or advance in their present jobs. We are pleased to note that on all of the UMS campuses the new, non-traditional students seem welcome and are being well served by campuses near where they live and work. This is important not only to the students but to the University's mission to serve the citizens of Maine and to the state's economic future.

Similarly, despite periodic complaints over the years that the UMS central administration structure is wasteful and unnecessary, we feel that the Chancellor's office is providing critical services at a comparatively small cost. Under Chancellor MacTaggart's leadership, within the past few years the University has made progress in eliminating unnecessary duplication of courses, is well on the way to solving the problem of transferability of credits, has created a climate of cohesion and cooperation among the academic deans, and has done an excellent job of focusing on critical issues and the search for their solution. The administration has also been able to enter into a more productive relationship with the Governor and the Legislature and is receiving more positive treatment in the press than was formerly true.

### **Recommendation**

The League recommends that the current UMS structure of multiple campuses under the administrative umbrella of a Chancellor and Board of Trustees be retained and that all seven of the campuses be left intact with their present degree of autonomy.

## **2. FACULTY**

The study group has found that most of the faculty on the seven campuses of this University system are talented, hard working, and reasonably strong in their disciplines. Although underpaid relative to their colleagues in other institutions and teaching more hours, they are committed to their students and to teaching as much and as well as they can, while attempting to render service to the community and pursue their scholarly interests.

That said, the generally low level of salaries<sup>(4)</sup> is having an effect upon morale and recruitment. Many positions throughout the University system, especially those in technical and professional areas, go unfilled because the salaries are non-competitive with other colleges and universities as well as with business and government positions. Many faculty on both the large and small campuses were particularly unhappy about the fact that they were virtually frozen at their original salaries (annual increases being minimal) except at times when they were promoted (from assistant to associate professor, etc.), so that they frequently find new hires being brought into their departments at salaries close to, equal to, or higher than those they are receiving. There is also concern about the disparity between the salary levels of people teaching in professional or

technical fields and those in the liberal arts and sciences. This is, of course, a national issue, but here in Maine the disparity is particularly striking since base salaries in the arts, humanities and social sciences are below the national average.

Administrators and faculty also spoke, on every campus, about the lack of funds for faculty development (attending professional meetings, support for scholarship and research) making it difficult for faculty to keep up with developments in their fields and to remain professionally productive. Many faculty members told us that in order to attend major professional meetings where they had been asked to present papers, they had to pay out of their own pockets not only for travel, food and lodging, but even the registration fees. Faculty development is particularly important in Maine where those teaching in small towns have little opportunity for interacting with colleagues in other institutions.

The increasing use of part-time faculty is another problem. This is a nationwide issue and can be justified by a number of reasons:

1. It saves money. Part-time faculty are paid by the course, significantly less than if they were full-time, and they are not eligible for benefits.
2. There are some courses taught routinely (*e.g.* remedial work or basic courses in the discipline) in which the use of part-time faculty can relieve full-time faculty for more demanding courses.
3. In some departments, professional and technical experts from the community who would not want to give up their non-academic jobs may be the best qualified to teach their specialties and lend breadth to what the department can offer.

Despite these reasons, a college or university that relies too heavily on part-timers for its teaching is liable to dilute the quality of the education its students receive. Since part-time faculty spend less time on campus they are generally unavailable to counsel or advise students, which puts a heavier burden on full-time faculty. They also tend to be disengaged from campus activities and issues, do not serve on committees or governance bodies, and are less committed to creating a climate in which everyone is striving for excellence.

## **Recommendations**

- a. *Faculty salaries should be raised* gradually over the next few years to make them reasonably competitive with those across the country.
- b. If the University values scholarship and research (and since these are tenure requirements we must assume it does), then *faculty development must be better supported* than it currently is and increased funds should be distributed on a rational basis throughout the system.

c. All the campuses of the University should move towards clearly articulated policies concerning how and why they use part-time faculty, as justified by conditions on each campus, and should aim for *appropriate ratios of full-time versus part-time faculty*.

### **3. LIBRARIES**

The libraries of the University of Maine System are disappointing, to put it mildly. The libraries of the smaller colleges are considered inadequate not only by the librarians, faculty, and students, but by the regional accrediting organization, Northeast Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) which has repeatedly in its reports on the UMS campuses, deplored the students' lack of sufficient access to books and journals in their own libraries. Even the flagship library of the system, that of the University of Maine, is working with severely strained resources, insufficient for many of its graduate programs, especially in the liberal arts, where history and English professors have serious complaints about their students' abilities to access texts that meet their scholarly needs.<sup>(5)</sup> Moreover, the journal collections are a real problem. The librarians are in a Catch 22 situation: if they were to subscribe to the newest journals in some disciplines, they would have to let older subscriptions lapse, thus leaving them with an abruptly truncated collection, thereby inhibiting scholarly research; if they don't subscribe to newer journals, their collection fails to inform on new developments in many fields. Moreover, as the price of foreign publications rises, the libraries are having to forego acquiring many important texts.

When faced with criticism of the libraries, university system administrators frequently cite the success of the interlibrary loan program and the increasing use of electronic sources as mitigating the need for better resources on each campus. However, the interlibrary loan system is a mixed blessing. Its heavy use (which costs about \$45,000 per year in postage alone) frequently leaves Orono's shelves bereft of standard texts needed by its own undergraduates, while the student on another campus who needs a specific text for a current assignment has to wait until it is delivered, often past the time when the assignment is due. As for research on the Net, while it's undoubtedly a vital ancillary resource, any serious researcher knows that it is no substitute for the educational experience of searching through the stacks of a well-stocked library, which is invaluable.

#### **Recommendations**

The League recommends that the librarians on each campus be asked to document their respective libraries' strengths and weaknesses based on ALA standards and their priorities for new acquisitions. We suggest that the libraries of the Augusta, Presque Isle, Fort Kent and Machias campuses should be funded to fill out their collections to meet minimum standards for a two-year college plus four year standards for their major degree programs; that the UMF library be funded to minimum standards for a four year campus; that UM and USM libraries be funded not only to four year campus standards but as appropriate to the graduate programs they offer; and that UM library shelf space be increased.

#### **4. TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID**

The members of the study group, when interviewing faculty and administrators, frequently posed the following question: "If a large sum of money were available for your campus what would your priorities be for spending it?" Despite the concerns about salaries, faculty development funds, infrastructure or equipment they had voiced during the interviews, their most frequent responses were "to lower tuition," or "to provide more financial aid."

Indeed, the University of Maine System's average tuition is among the highest in states of comparable economic status.<sup>(6)</sup> As has been widely lamented, while we graduate a greater percentage of students from high school than most states, we have next to the lowest percentage going on to college. The respective roles of aspirations and cost in limiting college enrollment is debatable. There are certainly socio-cultural reasons that contribute to this dismal record, but there are also hard economic facts. While disposable income in Maine is among the lowest in the nation, the university's tuition and fees are higher than 76 percent of public universities across the country. Moreover, the state's contribution as a percentage of general fund revenues has decreased from 9% to 7% in the last ten years, and its share of the University's operating funds has decreased from 45% to 35%. Consequently, and inevitably, tuition costs have gone up.

In New England we are part of a northeastern area where advanced education developed under private auspices, and our cultural traditions have affected attitudes to this day, preventing sufficient attention to public education. Outside this region, public universities are the centerpiece of the state's educational system and are funded as such by the state. Maine must be prepared to increase state funding to a level commensurate with the needs of its population.

Lower tuition and increased financial aid are not alternatives. They must go hand in hand. When tuition levels are in balance, sufficient or at least enhanced student aid funding should be available to fill the calculated need of students and their families. It will take innovative programs to address the needs of non-traditional students, particularly those attending part-time, in order to fill the gap between federal financial aid programs and private ability to pay.

#### **Recommendations**

- a) Lower tuition and financial aid should not be considered alternative solutions to the problems contingent on "paying for college." The two must go hand-in-hand.
- b) Tuition should be at levels appropriate to the income of Maine residents.
- c) Sufficient financial aid funding must be made available to fill calculated need and innovative programs must be devised to address the needs of non-traditional and part-time students to fill the gap between federal programs and private ability to pay.

## 5. DISTANCE LEARNING

The sheer geographic size of Maine and the dispersal of its population, particularly in the North, argue for an emphasis on distance learning to provide access to those inconveniently far from current campuses and centers. However, distance learning is not a cure-all but has certain drawbacks that must be recognized.

- It demands independence, commitment to learning and highly developed learning skills on the part of the would-be learner, qualities perhaps more likely to be found in older than in younger students.
- It to a large extent limits the amount of social interaction (dialogue and challenging of ideas) between teacher and student and, perhaps more importantly, among students, than one receives in the classroom.
- It demands new conceptual presentation skills on the part of the faculty.
- It demands an administrative structure that oversees a system that is dedicated to faculty development in new instructional media, to fair compensation (in money and/or time) for those who create the new courses, and equally fair compensation for teaching those courses, particularly when they are heavily subscribed or delivered asynchronously.<sup>(7)</sup>

Based on our observations, none of these demands are being met consistently or systematically.

- Despite the high failure or drop out rate in some of these courses, few administrators (as opposed to faculty) ever articulated to us the possibility that there are certain types of students for whom distance learning may not be appropriate .
- It is assumed by many administrators that ITV, computers, phones, mail and e-mail provide sufficient opportunity for dialogue.
- We were constantly told (and we believe) that resources exist for faculty development in media techniques. Indeed, on the Augusta campus there are fine studios for the production of ITV courses and a competent staff. We were also impressed by the resourcefulness and creativity of the ITV staff on other campuses. However, the courses we viewed and the testimony of disgruntled students are evidence that many faculty simply transfer their usual classroom techniques to the medium. Moreover, there are problems in getting materials and on-line capability in place and complaints that the quality of the asynchronous electronic courses varies widely.
- No two faculty or administrators were able to state the same figures for how faculty are compensated for their work in preparing and teaching distance learning courses. The system would seem to lack coherence.

- There is a dismaying amount of unease and competitiveness on campuses concerning the mechanics of who gets FTE credit for providing distance learning to students.
- In what looks like a free-for-all race to deliver ITV and on-line courses, competition among the campuses and overlap of course content are causing inter-campus dissension.

### **Recommendations**

If distance learning is to be a viable mode of instruction in the university, we believe that its overall mission, its intended audience, its relationships to the individual campuses, curricula, allocation of resources and responsibilities must be rationalized. A structure should be articulated that is fiscally sound and fair to the individual campuses, faculty and students. Competition and overlap should be either recognized and encouraged as a healthy manifestation of intellectual energy, or it should yield to some formula that would put the needs of the system ahead of the desires of the individual campuses. Attention must be given to quality in content and presentation.

## **6. REMEDIATION**

As it is with every institution across the country, remediation is a major issue on most of the campuses, even UM. Quality cannot be maintained if students enter colleges unprepared and are permitted to stay that way. Remediation at the college level is expensive and wasteful of resources, but the alternative, not providing remediation, would make a mockery of our attempts to provide access and to achieve diversity.

### **Recommendations**

1. Each college should work with the high schools and adult education programs in its area to improve their preparation for advanced education, to strengthen their remedial programs, and to provide adult basic education classes for non-traditional students. This should be seen not as something that can be done immediately but as a process over time, developing relationships of trust between the high schools and the university, and, when appropriate, giving college professors release time to work with their colleagues in the high schools to develop new programs and teaching techniques.
2. Meanwhile, the primary responsibility for remediation for students with serious deficiencies spanning more than one specific problem (reading, writing, listening, numerical literacy, other cognitive problems), should be addressed by the high schools and community college/ technical colleges where it can be accomplished at less expense and where there may be more expertise.
3. There are some existing remediation techniques and strategies that have proven to be more effective than others. A top flight remediation specialist should be hired at the

University level to critique present programs, support the best current efforts, and move towards providing a level of excellence that will help more students succeed.

## **7. GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

The demand for graduate programs at both the master's and doctoral level continues to grow in Maine, as in the rest of the country. Some students go on to graduate programs immediately after completing their bachelors' degrees and many of these can continue as full-time students, but the majority of graduate students have jobs and must adjust their lives and schedules to accommodate both work and part-time graduate studies. These students are looking for graduate programs near where they live and work.

Unfortunately, our state system was designed in an era when most students were in full-time residence, and the main campus of the system was in Orono. The faculty at Orono were recruited to offer graduate as well as undergraduate programs, and the campus has been funded as the flagship of the system with the best library and other facilities. Now, however, cultural and demographic changes in the state have raised questions about the wisdom of concentrating all of our graduate resources in one place.

Since many of the current and potential graduate students in Maine are living in the southern and mid-coastal regions of the state, they gravitate to the University of Southern Maine. Despite the pressing need for graduate programs there, the bulk of graduate programs are still offered at the Orono campus, too far from their workplace to be convenient, or even possible, for a considerable number of men and women.

There is a rich mix of professorial talent and scholarship at Orono which we should not displace. UM has a well-deserved reputation for its marine biology, forestry, engineering, education, and agricultural programs, and these and its other graduate programs should continue to flourish. However, USM, with increasing demand for graduate studies, has only half the number of graduate programs and cannot, at this writing, initiate a doctoral program without the assent of UM as well as the Trustees. The economic development of Maine requires that USM be empowered to develop doctoral programs in such fields as biotechnology, business, social work, information science, and the humanities that are needed close at hand by the men and women in southern and midcoast Maine.

### **Recommendation**

USM should become one of two graduate campuses, sharing with UM the responsibility for designing and implementing new graduate programs suitable to the needs of students and the state. To do this, USM needs enhanced library resources, laboratories and other facilities, as well as adequate funding to hire appropriate graduate faculty.

## **8. MAINTENANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

For far too long, maintenance has been deferred on many of the campuses of the university system. In fact, some college administrators told us that it was easier to get

money for new buildings than money to keep up the old ones, so that was what they and their predecessors had done. The campus at UM is a prime example of deferred maintenance. Indeed, some old dorms have simply been allowed to deteriorate to the point where it is now less expensive to replace them than to repair them. Other campuses where maintenance seemed particularly problematic include the University of Maine at Farmington and the Gorham campus of USM, where music classes are conducted in former broom closets and serious roof problems are evident in badly stained ceilings throughout the older buildings.

### **Recommendation**

The League recommends that maintenance become a priority and that an appropriate portion of every campus budget be assigned to this purpose with each campus administration accountable for its use. If funds are not used within a designated period of time, they should revert to the UMS general fund to be allocated as needed elsewhere.

## **9. BUDGET ALLOCATION**

The complex and arcane funding formulas of UMS are beyond the ability of the LWV study group to comment upon, though the inequities are obvious and impact negatively on many campuses. Many of them date back to an earlier point in the University's history and seem to us inadequate to address the realities of the present day system. It is not intuitively obvious why almost half of the university's fiscal resources<sup>(8)</sup> are allocated to UM which has only 36 % of the FTE students<sup>(9)</sup> nor why UMA has the smallest allotment per student in the system. Graduate programs and facilities are expensive, but shouldn't overshadow the educational needs of other campuses to that extent.

### **Recommendation**

The Chancellor should appoint a blue ribbon panel to overhaul and make more rational and equitable the formula for the allocation of funds among the campuses. The panel should address itself to:

- identifying present inequities;
- developing a new and unbiased formula that takes account of the number of students on each campus, number of credits generated, nature of programs (some more expensive than others), number of graduate programs, special situations, etc.;
- making special provisions for campuses for which capital expenses (buildings, libraries, laboratories, deferred maintenance, etc.) are necessary;
- making hard decisions on how distance learning will be funded - and managed;
- devising formulas for funding professional development activities;

- working with the faculty union to work toward a more equitable pay scale with the possibility of merit pay increases.

## **10. THE ROLE OF THE LIBERAL ARTS<sup>(10)</sup> IN UMS**

In visiting the different campuses, our study group members were impressed by the extent to which the colleges have not only accepted but have welcomed and adapted to the shift to an older and often part-time student body. We are told that, for both the University of Maine System and the Technical Colleges, the average age of students is approximately 27 years and steadily increasing. Maine public colleges recognize the role of lifelong learning and are arguably well ahead of public perception in this recognition.

What is less evident is a recognition of the role of liberal arts in lifelong learning because so much of the public dialogue, legislative funding, and, perhaps, the popular conception, assumes that education's primary purpose is as a job training tool. To the extent that education for the workplace becomes the defining mission of higher education, the liberal arts and humanities are too often shunted to the background. This is unfortunate for three reasons:

First, the very nature of the workplace is changing with increasing rapidity. What most employers need today are workers who have not only mastered skills and acquired specific information but who have also acquired the reasoning ability, the broad multidisciplinary background and the intellectual curiosity to think critically and to develop new approaches to problem solving.

Second, higher education should prepare students to assume the vital responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society. That requires an understanding of the historical, political, economic and ethical factors which frame the questions brought before voters in every election. One basic priority of an educational system is the preparation of those who will control local, state and national government in the future - and in a democracy, that includes every student.

Third, higher education should address people's needs for their non-working hours, which constitute two thirds of their lives, plus the increasingly long years of life after retirement. This doesn't mean just an acquaintance with art, music, literature and history to enrich their lives, but also to have the ethical and philosophical experience that goes directly to the quality of life. It is this broader exposure to the arts and humanities that enables adults to participate in the broad range of recreational, social and charitable activities that add meaning and fulfillment to life. It is a vital element of what is quite rightly called "higher education."

### **Recommendation**

We believe that each campus in the University of Maine System, no matter what its professional or vocational focus, should have the commitment and resources to provide a

quality four-year program in liberal arts, and that staffing, funding, and renewed attention at each campus should be directed to this goal.

## **11. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

In the last few years there has been much discussion of the relationship between research and economic development and of the fact that Maine, which ranks near the bottom of all 50 states in the amount spent on research and development, has an economy that has not kept pace with other states. In December 1999, the Washington-based Center for Enterprise Development gave Maine a "D" for economic development capacity because its colleges and universities do not produce enough scientists and engineers and do insufficient research and development.

The \$20 million bond which was approved in 1998 to upgrade university and private research facilities and a legislative appropriation to staff these facilities are both steps in the right direction and should enable Maine to take better advantage of federal and institutional matching grants.

However, these are only first steps. The strength and status of a university system is linked to its level of research. At both UM and USM, it is still significantly below the level needed to attract federal and institutional grants. This seriously limits the ability of UM and USM to draw high quality graduate students and faculty as well as their ability to function as centers for economic and intellectual growth.

### **Recommendation**

The League recommends that the Legislature continue to increase funding for research and development in the university system, especially at UM and USM.

## **12. COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

There is little question that Maine needs to provide cost effective education for both technical and professional two-year programs as well as strong two-year foundation programs for students intending to continue on to a four-year degree. At the present time, the Maine Technical College System is doing a fine job of the former, and UMS is doing the latter, albeit at a greater price. However, in 1998 only 19% of Maine citizens had a baccalaureate degree compared with a national rate of 24% and a New England rate of 29%.<sup>(11)</sup> It would seem critical to raise this percentage in the next ten years.

The information that has been made public so far regarding the current plan for creating a community college system leaves us with some questions. The Governor and Legislature have accepted the idea that Maine can have a system at little new cost, but we feel that is unrealistic. The plan, as formulated to date, with total transferability of the A.A. and A.S. degrees from the MTCS to UMS, takes insufficient account of the academic differences between them. We wonder whether the Technical Colleges, while they are doing an excellent job in their special fields, won't need to make basic curricular and faculty

changes in order to give students the kind of basic liberal arts foundation that would enable them to succeed in a four-year program.

Giving students specific skills and competencies for specific jobs is useful in getting them good first jobs, but research has demonstrated that to move well beyond entry level jobs demands a more complex mix of skills. In the U.S. and other industrialized countries, employers are looking for people who *know how to learn*, who possess basic reading, writing and computation skills, who can communicate their ideas, interact positively with people singly or in groups, have computer literacy and familiarity with a variety of audio and visual media, have problem solving skills, and are able to synthesize and analyze increasingly complex information.

Moreover, the steep difference in tuition - \$68 per credit in the Technical Colleges opposed to an average of \$116 at UMS - has the potential of drawing many students away from the University for some of whom that might be a more appropriate choice. This has implications for the smaller campuses which have developed programs and counseling systems that give them the ability to nurture at-risk students. A school like Presque Isle, for example, has a high proportion of students who are the first in their families to go on to higher education and who may come with minimal expectations of getting a two-year degree. The college has been able to support such students and give them a solid liberal arts and sciences background, so that, when buoyed by their academic success, they decide to go on for a four year-degree, they are prepared to do so.

Despite all the discussion of how the new community college will work, this committee has yet to see a comprehensive plan nor have we heard any serious discussion of how Maine is going to provide the well educated and trained workforce that is necessary to attract new business and industry to the state. We fear that the State has not spent sufficient time working through the structural, academic and financial implications of this move before simply declaring that Maine now has a de facto Community College.

### **Recommendation**

Although the LWVME welcomes the attention being given to creative new ideas regarding the development of a community college system, we can make no recommendation at this time regarding the current community college plan which seems to us still a work in progress. While we support the idea of lower entry thresholds into education, we believe that any plan should address the following issues:

- a) that all students are equally well served;
- b) that the academic quality of all programs is maintained;
- c) that the needs of communities are met;

d) that criteria are in place to measure success or failure; and

e) that the plan supplements and adds to rather than detracts from the University of Maine System.

## CONCLUSION

From its inception as a land grant college in 1865, the University of Maine has been historically and radically underfunded. A series of governors and legislatures, failing to attach importance to the idea of a university as a critical educational and economic asset to the State, have nickel-and-dimed it, if not to death, at least to ill health. Even in good economic times, the university was grudgingly supported, and in bad economic times, its budgets were savaged. The most recent upward blip in the amount of money allocated to the University System for research and development is welcome, but does not address underlying problems.

The League of Women Voters is heartened by the very real advances that have been made in the University system over the two years in which we have been engaged in this study. Under the Chancellor's leadership, inter-campus transfer of credit among campuses has been to a large degree codified and the information made available to students, a considerable amount of unnecessary duplication of courses and programs has been addressed, some effort has been made to distribute funds more equitably, campus morale has improved, and the university's relationship with the legislature and governor's office has been strengthened.

However, much remains to be done. We are concerned that as a consequence of the present funding system, in which the legislature must vote for each year's budget annually, there is little or no opportunity for the university to engage in long term planning. Without the ability to plan on a three to five- year basis, administrators are unable to achieve the kind of budgetary projections (and savings) that look beyond the immediate present to see how future needs and expenses will affect their mission and goals

If most of the recommendations that the LWV study group is making sound as though they will impact on the taxes we pay, that is probably true. But the dollars that will be spent will bring in more dollars through new jobs, better paying jobs, and economic revitalization in the State. It has been calculated that every dollar spent on higher education brings back at least \$1.73<sup>(12)</sup>. This is not a bad rate of return!

In thinking about the future of the University of Maine System, legislators and citizens alike should keep in mind that "the only thing more expensive than going to college is not going to college,"<sup>(13)</sup> or, to turn this around, "the only thing more expensive than maintaining a quality university system is not maintaining a quality university system."

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1. From a letter written in 1996 in response to a series of questions posed by the Commission on Higher Education Governance and quoted in its Final Report, July 1996, p. 4.
2. Throughout we refer to the components of the University of Maine system as follows:  
  
UMS(University of Maine System); UM (University of Maine, located at Orono); UMA (University of Maine at Augusta); UMF (University of Maine at Farmington); UMFK (University of Maine at Fort Kent); UMM (University of Maine at Machias); UMPI (University of Maine at Presque Isle); USM (University of Southern Maine).
3. The non-traditional student is defined as 25 years or older, independent of parental support, usually working at a full-time or part-time job, and frequently responsible for spouse and/or children.
4. *When rated with comparable institutions in the U.S., average salaries of full-time faculty at UM rank in the lowest category, in the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile or below; at USM in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile, and at other UMS campuses in the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. (Barron's Educational Series, Profiles of American Colleges, 23<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1999)*
5. The *Maine Sunday Telegram* printed the story of a graduate student at UM who spends about \$1,000 a year to buy books not available in the school's library and who has had to join three professional groups to get forestry journals to which the library does not subscribe.
6. David Silvernail, "Statistical Information on Student Aspirations and Higher Education Policy in Maine," September 1997, Table 5.
7. Courses delivered in a mode that can be accessed by the student at any time; courses that are not dependent upon the teacher and student interacting simultaneously. *E.g.*, computer- or video-delivered courses.
8. Unrestricted and general base expenditure budget, 1998-9 and 1999-2000 (UMS *Data Book*).
9. As opposed to USM which has 30% of the system's students and only 22% of its budget. (See Appendix B.)
10. We are using this term to encompass the study of language, literature, history, philosophy, and science as opposed to professional or vocational skills.
11. Maine Development Foundation, *Measures of Growth*, Maine Economic Growth Council, 1999, p. 10.
12. Robert J. Goettel, "The Economic Impact of the Public University in Maine," *Maine Business Indicators*, XL:1, Winter 1995, p. 4.

13. Tom Mortenson, "The Private Investment Value of Higher Education 1967 to 1996," *CAEL Forum and News*, 22:2.