



*Association  
of American  
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Universities*

1818 R Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
202.387.3760  
fax: 202.265.9532  
www.aacu.org

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Richard L. Pattenau, President  
University of Southern Maine  
96 Falmouth St.  
P.O. Box 9300  
Portland, ME 04104-9300

Dear Rich,

At my request, Judy Tizón has kept me updated on the progress of general education reform at USM since my visit in 2004, and has just informed me that you are moving on to the chancellorship of the University of Maine System. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, and to let you know before you leave that the work being done on your new general education curricula is cutting-edge in the national context. Indeed, I have referred to USM's model at national AAC&U conferences as an example of excellence.

The recent AAC&U report, *College Learning for the New Global Century* reflects the best thinking of the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), a group of diverse policy leaders who are strong advocates for educational excellence. The *Vision, Goals and Outcomes for General Education at USM* parallels the report's *Essential Learning Outcomes*:

- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Personal and social responsibility
- Integrative learning

The curricular attention to rigor, evidence of learning outcomes, practice (through co-curricular integration), ethics and civic responsibility exemplifies the LEAP report's *Principles of Excellence*.

There are three great strengths to the design of the USM general education curriculum: a) the vertical nature of curriculum development represents not only a broadening of the student's content knowledge, but also an intellectual complexity sequencing of ever increasing cognitive and integrative capacities needed to "master" the curriculum; b) there is a deliberate attempt to engage what are usually understood to be general education courses with courses in the major (and "minor" or theme clusters) at the upper levels of the curriculum; c) there are explicit pathways for students to follow as they negotiate the total curricular experience.

Finally, consistent with the curriculum's emphasis on ethics and civic responsibility, it is inclusive by delivering to all students the quality of education usually reserved for elites.

Curricular reform is a difficult and often slow process; sustained administrative support is critical. I am pleased to hear that USM's effort has the full support of the provost and deans, and, I trust, of your future successor. Its implementation should be a source of pride for the University of Southern Maine.

Congratulations again on your new position, and very best wishes.

Sincerely,

  
Carol Geary Schneider  
President