

Final Report
University Review and Improvement Committee

Executive Summary –Section One

The University Review and Improvement Committee is pleased to present the results of its work over the past seven months to the President’s staff. This document will review the process and identify emerging trends, and suggest alternatives for moving forward and a communication strategy. Most importantly, the report compiles almost verbatim the suggestions, thoughtful comments, and ideas provided by the Campus community as it seeks to move USM forward.

Background

On April 17, 2003, President Pattenaude issued a report to the USM community entitled, *Moving Forward: USM Budget Reduction and Long-Term Work Restructuring Initiative, Proposed Actions and Process 2003-05*.

In that document he wrote, “USM, along with its colleague institutions in the System and across the nation, faces declining state budgets. . . . The challenge becomes finding a way to meet unyielding financial concerns while also moving the institution forward on its mission of teaching, scholarship and service. Accomplishing this will call for the best from each of us.”

The draft Work Plan which was presented to the USM community in the April 17th memo was followed up with a series of discussions with the Senates, divisions, advisory groups and open campus forums. It was published in final form on May 7, 2003. The Work Plan called for Year 2 (2004/05) actions in two specific areas. It set a target cost reduction of \$550,000. It also challenged the USM community to rethink, reconsider and redesign itself.

While the Vice President of University Advancement and Planning was called upon to be responsible for overseeing the initiative, vice presidents and executive directors continued to retain full responsibility for decision-making in their respective areas. The Work Plan also called for the creation of a small steering committee of faculty, staff and students to assist with the development of a work restructuring and reorganization plan, with a report to be provided to the President’s staff by December 1, 2003.

University Review and Improvement Committee

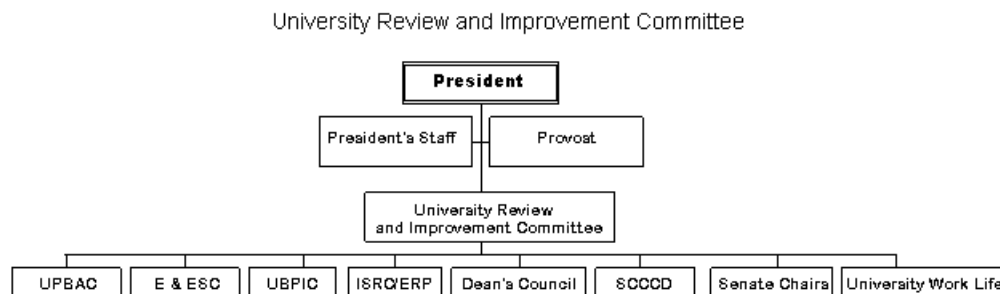
The University Review and Improvement Committee (URIC) was convened to create the plan referenced in the 2003-05 Work Plan, and the committee began its work in July, 2003. The charge to the committee was:

- 1) Serve as an umbrella group, coordinating areas involved in quality improvement and cost reduction.
- 2) Serve as a repository for potential initiatives, both long and short-term.
- 3) Identify key areas for improvement.

Membership was designed representative of the campus community: (see figure 1)

The Senates: Roxie Black, Nancy Chagnon, Robin Day, and Ezekiel Kimball
Faculty-at-Large: Jean Gutmann
University Planning/Budgeting Advisory Committee: Jan Burson and Sam Andrews
Environmental and Economic Sustainability Committee: David Early and Dudley Greeley
Information System Review Committee/ERP: Rosa Redonnett and Bill Wells
University and Student Life: Craig Hutchinson, Mike Mullett and Joe Austin
Human Resources: Kathleen Bouchard
University Work Life: Grace Noonan-Kaye
Deans' Council: Joe Wood
University Business Process Improvement Committee: Pat Davis
Standing Committee on Campus Climate Civility and Diversity: Kathleen Roberts

Figure 1:



1. University Planning/Budgeting Advisory Committee
2. Environmental and Economic Sustainability Committee
3. University Business Process Improvement Committee
4. Information System Review (Including ERP)
5. Dean's Council
6. Standing Committee on Campus Climate Civility and Diversity
7. Senate Chairs
8. University Work Life

The Committee framed its work around three key areas: the USM vision and mission, the USM Plan and the goals contained therein, and USM's core values. The Committee understood that the outcome of its work should be to make USM a better place to go to school and a better place to work.

The Committee met monthly and more often if needed. Its members became familiar with the work of Guskin and Marcy and the difference between just “muddling through” and “transforming the institution.” Using this work as a guide, the Committee defined its task in two parts:

- Short-term - Identifying the ideas and the means to reduce the operating budget by \$550,000;
- Long-term - identifying the ideas and the means to transform the institution for the long-term.

The URI Committee initially identified a two-pronged approach for the generation of ideas to support both the long and short-term activities. First, the supporting committees or work groups (UPBAC, Senates, etc.) were to generate ideas for short-term savings and long-term transformation from their respective perspectives. Second, a World Café approach was identified and planned for areas of specific focus. The World Café approach was deferred until sometime in the first quarter of '04.

At its September meeting the Committee identified and refined a series of questions designed to elicit ideas regarding the charge—short-term savings and long-term transformation. Each committee was tasked with addressing the questions, as were the operating divisions. This work took place throughout October and November. The results are presented in Section 2 of this document.

Trends

The complete report of the University Review and Improvement Committee reflects and contains the thoughts and ideas of the entire USM community and represents six months of discussion. No significant editing has taken place, nor has any judgment been made regarding the ideas contained within the report. The URI Committee has, however, identified the following trends that emerge from the report.

Short-term trends

- Climate control/electronics - turn things off or down
- Cross training staff
- Evaluate purchasing procedures/external contracts
- Streamline/online paper work
- Eliminate paper mailings/duplicate mailings to employees
- Rethink work schedules
- Evaluate supervision training/retraining
- Assess and implement student and community fees as appropriate

Long-term trends

- Budget management redesign—chargebacks, carryovers and black market economies
- Technology investment and improvement
- Environmental sustainability/waste reduction
- Adequate, appropriate compensation, workspace, and general environment
- Institutional redesign, reorganization, restructuring and outsourcing
- Student services systems

Moving Forward

The URI Committee recognizes that there are several ways in which the ideas represented within the full report might be approached. There are some; for example, mailing bills to campus addresses rather than incurring mailing costs to home addresses which could be implemented immediately, while there are others that require thought and study, and others that are simply not feasible.

The Committee offers these approaches for moving forward.

- Identify “low-hanging fruit”
- Identify short and long-term options
- Review and analyze report categorically
- Identify and create an implementation team
- Identify major trends around which there seems to be strong consensus and begin the process there

Communication Process

The Committee was in strong agreement regarding the need for communication, follow-up and feedback to the Campus community regarding the initial report and subsequent activities.

Upon receipt of the report, a communication should be sent from President Pattenauade. It should outline the process for initial review and the steps to be taken. Following the President’s staff retreat on December 11, another communication should be sent providing more detail regarding the next steps in the process. From that point on, regular communication should be sent regarding the implementation steps and process. Each idea or category of ideas should be tracked and responded to.

Conclusion

It is fair to say that the process brought forth skepticism, cynicism and fear. Strong, consistent and frequent communication regarding the process and the next steps and implementation can serve to alleviate these concerns.

The URI process was also informative, educational and engaging. It served to elicit thoughtful ideas from faculty and staff who clearly care deeply about the University of Southern Maine, the students they serve, and the work that they do every day to ensure that USM is a good place to work and to go to school. Their engagement in this process indicates that there are certain steps that can be taken to make USM the top-ranked University it seeks to be.