More than 55 faculty/administrators attended the Forum.

**Provost Hecker Comments:**

Provost Hecker welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He provided background on the forums. This the third year of the Blue Sky Project and the goal now is to integrate the plan’s strategies and goals into the organizational structure of the university. The President’s Cabinet members have taken on responsibility for ensuring the integration of specific strategies. The Signature and Emerging Programs strategy was outlined in the Blue Sky Plan under Pathway 1 (third bullet) and is now part of the implementation list for which Provost Hecker is responsible.

Over the course of the academic year, the Provost’s office, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate leadership, will hold a series of Academic Affairs Faculty Forums. Three Faculty Forums have been planned:

- December 3, 2013 – Signature & Emerging Programs
- February 3, 2013 – Retention & Graduation (NOTE: Date change)
- March 31, 2013 – Topic to be determined (NOTE: Date change)

In an effort to employ an inclusive process, the Provost seeks through the forums to provide an avenue for faculty to discuss and provide input on the process and outcomes associated with this work. The Provost reiterated that collaboration between the faculty and administration of the university is essential if we are to advance toward our strategic goals.

A website has been developed to provide an opportunity for faculty to contribute further input. Background documents have been linked to the website. Additionally, a video of the forum and the PowerPoint presentation will be posted. Interested parties can visit the website by linking to it from the Provost’s webpage.

In January, 2013, Faculty Senate sent a letter to the Blue Sky Pathway 1 Team outlining a detailed draft proposal process that might be used for the identification of “Signature Strength Areas and Emerging Growth Areas”. This is one of the documents linked to the Faculty Forum webpage. Key features include:

- Definitions of “Signature Strength Areas” and “Key Emerging Growth Areas”
- Inclusion of “Foundational Areas” with a definition
- Idea that all UMaine programs be eligible to apply for these designations
- Proposed a detailed 14 component process including a review panel

The Pathway 1 team worked on the Signature and Emerging Programs process during the 2012-2013 academic year. The Pathway 1 Team released their own draft proposal in May 2013. This is the second background document linked to the Faculty Forum webpage. The Pathway 1 Team proposal included the following features:

- “new interdisciplinary areas of excellence"
• “these initiatives are intended to recognize and support new and developing initiatives that will help to shape the University of Maine’s future progress and growth.”
• “The University will invest in Signature Initiatives through directing new funding into them”

A component of the implementation efforts of the Vice Presidents will be working with Advisory Teams. The Provost’s Advisory Team of Signature and Emerging Programs includes the five College Deans, the Honors College Dean, the Vice President for Research, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, the Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance, two faculty members who were previously on Pathway 1, two faculty members to be selected from Faculty Senate nominees, and two faculty members to be selected by the Provost.

Provost Hecker outlined issues to consider:
• Preparation for the next fundraising campaign: A greater understanding of campus signature and emerging areas will illuminate appropriate goals as fundraising efforts proceed.
• Budget pressures – Annual funding decisions: An increase in clarity regarding signature/emerging programs will aid in the allocation of limited resources.
• No “new” money on the horizon: The Provost indicated that any significant “new” money is unlikely to materialize in the near future. The BOT is committed to not increasing tuition, the legislature’s appropriation to the UMS is unlikely to increase, and fundraising efforts will typically take around 5 years to bear fruit. We need to operate within the resources we currently have.
• Impact of faculty retirement incentive (?): If the AFUM contract is ratified, the impact of a proposed retirement incentive on the current faculty make up is unknown.

The Provost reminded the group to visit the website and to please encourage others to do so, as well. The written summary, video, two background documents, and a form to submit comments, questions, and suggestions are provided. Disclosure of your name is optional when submitting input.

**Harlan Onsrud comments:**

Dr. Onsrud indicated that he takes another perspective. The Faculty Senate suggested a foundation for the proposals and review process in response to their perception that historically the administration has provided resources to programs without proper vetting as to the program’s worth in the context of other UMaine programs.

The assumption is that programs designated as signature programs have preferred status for MEIF funding, state funding, private funding, campus marketing, and “limited funds access”. If this is true, it makes the process for determining this status extremely important.

Dr. Onsrud noted that programs benefit from completing the proposal process even if they are not ultimately designated as signature programs.

Dr. Onsrud described the Faculty Senate as “taken aback” at the Pathway 1 proposal and it was seen as overly simplistic. The Faculty Senate proposal is patterned after the processes used by external funding agencies. The review panel should be comprised of faculty since deans would need to recuse themselves from review of any proposals from their colleges.
**Discussion:**

Dean Nichols suggested that we’re really talking about two ideas. The first from Pathway 1 is related to “Signature Initiatives” and the second from Faculty Senate is related to “Signature Programs”. “Initiatives” is not necessarily categorized as a “program”. Dr. Nichols also suggested that program prioritization should be done within departments and colleges. The striation into high, middle, low categories impacts funding.

Dr. Onsrud reminded the group that the UMS Board of Trustees wants to understand “signature programs” throughout the University of Maine System.

Provost Hecker articulated some reservations to the process suggested by the Faculty Senate. One is a question regarding whether it is the best use of time (and resources) to have all programs put forward a proposal. Is there a point in the end for this? Another concern is “When do we do it?” and “When do we do it again?” The time it takes for campus to do this work would be massive.

Dr. Eleanor Groden would like to see a “happy medium” to the proposal process. Due to a low probability of funding, perhaps a “pre-proposal” would be a good idea. This is a model used at NSF.

Dean François Amar asked what the scale of rewards is for doing these proposals? A funneling process could be beneficial and would allow the process to be more dynamic and repeatable. He added that research is important, but how to define it needs to be identified.

Dr. James McClymer suggested that every program should not feel compelled to do a proposal. Dean Naomi Jacobs indicated that the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has both signature and foundational programs. Foundational programs are not addressed in either of these proposals, but are critical to the success of UMaine’s programs. They need to be addressed more specifically.

Dr. Onsrud responded to Dean Jacobs’ concern indicating that the Faculty Senate proposal calls for Signature programs to identify how they relate to foundational programs. It’s built into the proposal.

Provost Hecker argued that foundational programs are more than just instructional. To be good we need to have scholars in these areas.

Dr. Richard Borgman indicated that this appears to be a “zero-sum game”. He asked if this is a redistribution of funding. The Provost answered yes and that the goal is for a process to emerge.

Dr. Max Engenhofer suggested that it is important to separate signature from emerging programs for international significance. The expectations for these two categories will be quite different with regard to being internationally known. Dr. Engenhofer also stated that it is important to know how many programs we are “shooting for”. This provides context for programs to decide to submit a proposal or not.

Dr. Emmanuel Boss suggested that Signature programs may have different purposes (e.g., research, workforce needs, etc.). We should hire “between” departments so the interdisciplinary hires can help the “good departments bolster others”.

Dr. Groden noted that Graduate Education and Research need to be acknowledges as well as Undergraduate Education. She posed the question, “How do we provide opportunities for faculty we want to attract?” New hires need graduate students and research opportunities. As we shift, we need to think about this, too.

Dr. Patti Miles offered that assessment is key to this work. How do we know what we’re doing well? We need to assess.

Dr. Michael Kinnison suggested that time is a factor here. It seems like we should be looking for synergy rather than prioritization. Due to time to impact, we should restructure what we have.

Dr. Daniel Harrison noted that “Risk vs. Opportunity” is an important consideration. What is the risk of a strong program NOT participating in these proposals? Also, small departments will have to use substantial resources in order to participate.
Dr. Onsrud said that part of the reason for Faculty Senate moving forward is the inequity of past “rewards” like new buildings, new funding, etc. to certain programs. Why are they the “chosen ones”? Administrators should not make “capricious” and “arbitrary” decisions about allocations of resources such as these.

Provost Hecker used the Department of Art and the Innovative Media Research and Commercialization Center and the recent renovation to Stewart Commons as an example to suggest a different perspective than “capricious” and “arbitrary”. The Administration was able to leverage a very generous donation and a Maine Technology Institute (MTI) grant that enabled the repurposing of this building. The invoking of a campus-wide process was not appropriate. The University cannot use a one-size fits-all model in resource allocation. He suggested that some decisions that seem “arbitrary” and “capricious” might be viewed as “innovative” and “opportunistic”.

Dr. Roger Sher suggested that the review group might be able to suggest synergistic opportunities between separate proposals put forth. Dr. Stephen Shaler noted that this often happens in EPSCoR proposal processes.

Associate Dean Servello noted that he often feels pressure in Research to articulate outcomes and impacts. He suggested that it is very difficult to write proposals without knowing desired outcomes and impacts.

Dr. Todd Gabe asked “What is the RFP?” This is where the actual criteria lives so this should be the first piece developed.

Dr. Scott Johnson added that the RFP should be specific. This shouldn’t be a win/lose. There are lots of ways for programs to show their value. Every seven years we do external reviews, but there is no feedback or response from this. Programs will think they are in competition for E&G funding. Provost Hecker indicated that he wants to “tell the truth” regarding moving E&G dollars.

Dean Nichols noted that, although not all programs will be significant, external/public demand should be important. Interdisciplinary programs should be important, as well.

Provost Hecker thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged them to share with their colleagues. He reminded attendees that the website will have the video, background documents, summary, and form to provide feedback.