The intention of this document is to define Signature Initiatives at the University of Maine and present a process of identifying them and investing in them. It has been developed by the Pathway 1 Committee on the basis of suggestions made by the Faculty Senate.

**Signature Initiatives** are new interdisciplinary areas of excellence where UMaine’s faculty, staff, and students are leaders in their respective fields. The contributions of these initiatives provide exceptional value to our constituents in any of the UMaine three missions of teaching, research, and service. We are interested in both initiatives that already have a record of success and initiatives that are nascent, i.e., have not yet achieved the same level of national/international reputation or critical mass of performance but hold strong promise.

Although there are many areas of excellence in existing programs, departments and colleges, 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.

Signature initiatives will be exemplary and rare. They will be a primary source of competitive advantage for UMaine among other educational institutions, and we want to build and expand on them. Signature Initiatives must incorporate one or more scholarly and/or research enterprises and are most likely to be interdisciplinary. These initiatives address critical education needs for the people of Maine and provide opportunities for them to develop knowledge and products that are recognized as the best. Signature Initiatives can be the source of, or help define, the new Maine economy. They must sustainable over time and thus must include a sufficient number of full time regular faculty members to allow them to become self-sustaining.

A program for identifying and supporting Signature Initiatives cannot be used as a justification for cannibalizing existing educational programs, units or centers at the university. These new initiatives will not be fixed, rather they will evolve over time and will be required to both justify their continuation beyond the initial funding period and become self-sustaining.

**Funding sources.** The University will invest in Signature Initiatives through directing new funding into them. Sources include:

- MEIF funding
- bond funding
- private fundraising
- limited competition federal proposals
- marketing money
- any other sources of revenue independent of the base E&G budget of the university.
Proposal Development Process and Timeline: To prepare for the next round of funding, we propose that the University conduct a proposal development process as follows:

- **Informational Presentation (September 2013):** An informational session will be held for interested participants throughout campus.

- **Phase I - Concept Papers (October 15, 2013):** Interested parties will submit a two-page concept paper to address ideas and criteria (i.e. a comprehensive, integrated, cross-disciplinary statewide focus that addresses at least one of the areas of our mission: teaching, research, and service). Signature Initiatives are not designed for individuals and should cross existing institutional boundaries. Concept papers will be posted on a public web page.

- **Phase II - Informational & Networking meeting (November 1, 2013):** A networking meeting will be held to allow participants to do short presentations on their submitted concept papers and participate in additional Q&A on the signature initiatives and hear;
  
  i. The audience will include UMaine support structures, i.e. Development, Enrollment Management, ORSP, Marketing and Communications, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, students, etc., special invitation to guests based on concept papers.

  ii. Participants will have an opportunity to network, develop further partnerships, and solidify possible projects that will proceed to next phase.

  iii. A Reality Check Panel will provide written comments to participants. This will be a panel made up from campus and off campus: faculty, development, administrators, and students.

- **Phase III – Proposals (December 1, 2013):** Following the above process, groups will submit 5 page proposals for their specific focus areas (sustainability, finance template, market opportunities, broadest audience) In addition, this proposal will have a one page response to the question of: “What is the “WOW” factor to this proposal that makes it meaningfully unique and will attract the attention both inside and outside the university?”

- **Phase IV – Review Process (Possibly Include Panel Presentation) – (February 1, 2014):** The proposals will be reviewed by group selected to include internal/external review, and comments distributed to the groups so that they can be addressed below. (This level of review needs to be fleshed out – both Academic Merit/Sustainability) Ranking (Highly/Recommended/Not Recommended) and send forward to ……President/Admin?

- **Phase V – InitiativesSelected - Finalize Business, Marketing, Finance and Operating Plan – March 1, 2014**

- **Phase VI: Initiative Begins Resource Allocation, Milestones, Evaluation criteria and schedule to align with resources etc.**

We propose identifying initially a limited number of initiatives, including both established and emerging, for example 4-6 total, and funding them for 4-5 years. Funded initiatives will provide annual reports on how they are achieving their goals. At the end of that
period, initiatives will be required to justify their continued funding. Like all public programs this justification must be in terms of benchmarking to similar initiatives at both peer and aspirational institutions (e.g., peers: Mississippi State University, Montana State University, New Mexico State University, North Dakota State University, University of Alaska, University of Idaho, University of New Hampshire, University of Wyoming, University of Rhode Island, South Dakota State University) as well as the achievement of the goals stated in their original submissions.