

To: Jeff Hecker, Provost  
From: François Amar, Dean of Honors  
Re: UMaine Priorities and Strategies

Date: May 2, 2019

This report incorporates feedback on goals and strategies based on UMaine's three Strategic Values Statements from a survey distributed to Honors faculty and staff during the weeks of April 14-26.

## **I. Fostering Learner Success**

The university is committed to fostering learning for all. We provide access and opportunity in and out of the classroom to prepare students for career success and civic engagement. Our faculty and staff support lifelong learning through excellence in teaching and co-curricular activity. Our inclusive community welcomes all learners and strives to sustain an enriching environment in which they can flourish and succeed.

*Goal:* Students will be able take on important tasks and engage with big issues.

*Strategy:* Prepare students to see what small steps can be taken to address what seems like an insurmountable problem through both classroom and extracurricular opportunities that allow students to see how issues of social justice, climate change, et al. are addressed on smaller scales.

*Indicator of success:* Activities and assignments will assess how students are able to critically engage with issues from multiple viewpoints.

*Goal:* Develop leadership and mentorship skills.

*Strategy:* Connect senior Honors students with a high-school age mentee.

*Strategy:* Connect senior Honors students with older community members around a project of collecting their narratives (like Story Corps).

*Indicators of success:* Numbers of such interactions and assessment of their quality via narratives.

*Goal:* Prepare Honors students to be engaged citizens locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

*Strategy:* Ambassadorship begins at home, in this case by increasing partnerships between the UMaine Wabanaki Center and UMaine Honors College via seminars/lectures/workshops communicating Wabanaki cultural traditions, especially as related to sustainable use of Maine's natural resources.

*Indicators of success:* Gauged initially by anonymous surveys distributed for comment and then collected upon completion.

## **II. Creating and Innovating for Maine and Beyond**

As Maine's land grant and sea grant institution, we produce new knowledge to serve the state, the nation, and the world. Innovation, creativity, and discovery are fundamental to who we are and what we do: they help us serve the people of Maine and people everywhere. We train the next generation of leaders to solve problems and promote solutions for the challenges we all face.

*Goal:* Honors students will be adept in working in groups on difficult (wicked) problems.

*Strategy:* More opportunities for peer collaboration, such as the research collaboratives (RCs), but also disciplinary reading groups, thesis cohorts, and so forth. Students should see and hear what their peers are involved in; through their peers, they will hear of opportunities and learn about what's happening around campus.

*Strategy:* Use Hackathon approach as a model. Alternative applications of existing technologies and use maker spaces for trans-disciplinary work.

*Indicators of success:* Established and designated spaces for cohorts to meet regularly (whether it's part of a classroom dynamic or not). Increase in # of RCs and joint theses. Increase of use of VMRC, Hacker space, and so forth

*Goal:* Enhance support for undergraduate research experiences with particular emphasis on first-generation and underserved students as well promoting ways to include first and second-year students in research and creative activity.

*Strategies:* to pursue these goals include finding more funding for undergraduate research, encouraging faculty to enlist undergraduate students, and creating a clearinghouse or webpage for student opportunities to be listed. Courses that go beyond the textbook to provide projects and experiences for students should also be considered.

*Indicators of success:* Differential increase in the number of students being awarded grants and fellowships to conduct research and creative activity, increase in student conference participation, and for Honors, increase in percentage of students finishing a thesis.

### **III. Growing and Stewarding Partnerships**

We collaborate with many partners to advance the cultural, economic, and civic interests of communities throughout Maine and the world. As a public flagship university, we are stewards responsible for the resources entrusted to us. Through our engaged partnerships, we seek to make a difference in science, industry, commerce, state and local government, and the arts for the present and future betterment of all.

*Goal:* Ensure that the humanities are included in this value.

*Strategy:* Reach out to groups and organizations that work on local/public history or are part of social justice endeavors that seek to better the situations of the poor, marginalized, and/or ill populations in society.

*Indicator of success:* Increased number of students doing an Honors thesis based on these kinds of partnerships.

*Goal:* Enhancing the role of service component in Honors education.

*Strategy:* Create both requirements and especially incentives for students to connect to their personal and professional communities

*Indicators of success* could be quantified (hours of service) and expressed qualitatively via narratives from community served and narratives from the students

*Goal:* Broaden the partnership between UMaine and the Penobscot Nation.

*Strategy:* Host events to create community and promote learning. For example, during Indigenous Peoples Week (formerly the week of Columbus Day), the HC could partner with other campus entities to host a lecture/presentation on the Penobscot people and their use of the birch bark canoe to travel Maine's many waterways and incorporate an event on the river.

*Indicators of success:* Gauge participation in such events and awareness of students

#### **Summary:**

*The Honors College* is focused on student contributions to research and is connected to many creative research efforts at UMaine, including the rigorous Honors thesis process. It has also developed and fostered the Research Collaborative model which is inherently partnership based and has implemented a number of instances such as the Sustainable Food Systems RC, Servant Heart RC (Sierra Leone), the Genomics RC, and the Margaret Chase Smith Recipe Collection RC to name a few. The HC seeks to improve students' access to research and creative projects earlier in their careers in order to help foster early success. Strategic planning effort is underway to more strongly integrate the HC curriculum to connect the core to the research/creative experience of the thesis and develop skills for the students to be successful.