



## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between  
University of Maine System (UMS)  
and  
Maine Community College System (MCCS)

### PURPOSE

This Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System is intended to improve educational attainment in Maine by enhancing transfer between our two systems through the adoption of a comprehensive general education block transfer agreement.

Students have transferred between the MCCS and UMS for many years, taking advantage of over 150 articulation agreements that exist between our programs of study. In one recent three year-period, 42% of MCCS graduates pursued further education. Forty percent of these graduates (1,115) did so within the University of Maine System. It is our expectation that this percentage will grow as our partnership continues to grow.

For the most part, current UMS/MCCS transfer agreements are between specific programs of study at specific institutions. Although these agreements provide clear guidance to students interested in transferring from one program to another, each has its own requirements that can make the process more complicated than absolutely necessary.

With this memorandum of understanding, we intend that students enrolled in any one of Maine's 14 community colleges and public universities will be able to transfer their general education requirements as a block of credits counting towards their degree.<sup>1</sup> This block transfer memorandum of understanding is designed to eliminate confusion, simplify pathways into and through Maine's public colleges and universities, strengthen advising, accelerate time to degree completion, and reduce costs for students.

This work complements and builds on other transfer initiatives between our two systems that will allow for both reverse transfer<sup>2</sup> and a more coordinated approach to the awarding of credit for prior learning. All of these initiatives are designed to serve the best interests of our students and ensure maximum transfer of credits for students moving between our two systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Development of specific content of the block transfer is currently underway and will be further determined by the UMS and MCCS faculty per their respective governance processes.

<sup>2</sup> Reverse transfer makes it possible for students to earn all of the college credentials to which they are entitled. A more detailed description is included on page 2 of this MOU.

## SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS

The MCCS and UMS agree to the following elements of a **general education block transfer**:

- In order to meet the general education requirements of both systems, courses in the transfer blocks will incorporate common learning outcomes that have been adopted by both the UMS and MCCS using the LEAP framework.<sup>3</sup>
- Each of the 14 institutions agrees to maintain a current listing of courses that fulfill general education requirements and to update each semester their equivalency tables to reflect equivalencies across the two systems.
- The MCCS will increase its general education requirements in the Associate of Arts degree from 21-22 credit hours to 34-35 credit hours to align with general education requirements of the UMS.
- In expanding general education credit hour requirements for the Associate of Arts degree, the MCCS will revise existing courses and/or create new courses and opportunities for students to fulfill the requirements.
- Courses included in the transfer block will count toward the general education requirements at all 14 institutions. In the past, some courses were accepted only as electives.

We intend that the core elements of the general education block transfer memorandum of understanding will be fully operational within both the UMS and MCCS by fall of 2016.

This memorandum of understanding has broad, positive implications for MCCS and UMS students interested in continuing their educations. Future collaborative efforts between the MCCS and UMS will further expand the impact of these advances. Work has begun and will continue in the following areas:

- **STEM pathways:** UMS and MCCS teams are working to designate clear pathways in a number of high demand STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) pathways, among them Information Technology and Nursing in which students enroll in key courses that provide them a more efficient and effective path to a STEM-related degree.
- **Prior learning assessment (PLA):** our two systems are continuing our work to align PLA scores along with standards for portfolio and credential review so that students can carry PLA credit forward as they transfer between the two systems.
- **Reverse transfer:** This process enables MCCS students who transfer to the UMS before graduating to transfer credits earned at the UMS back to the community college to fulfill the requirements of an MCCS degree or certificate. It has been piloted at several of our institutions and will be fully implemented at all 14 colleges and universities by the start of the fall 2015 semester.

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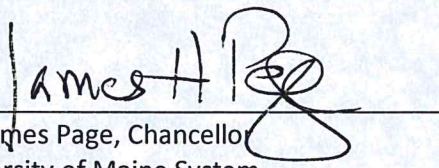
<sup>3</sup> LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise)—an initiative of the American Association of Colleges and Universities—organizes courses and curricula around a set of essential learning outcomes.

## PROCESSES

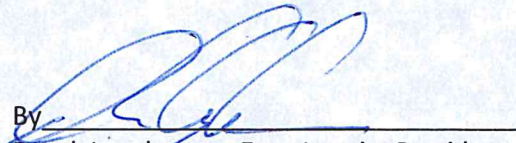
To support this memorandum of understanding and its initiatives, faculty and staff from the UMS and MCCS will continue working in close collaboration on transfer issues:

- A Joint Transfer Committee comprised of transfer officers at each of the colleges and universities will continue to meet each semester to identify any areas of concern, remain current on transfer issues, and discuss ideas for continued improvement. Recommendations from the Committee will continue to inform the work of the MCCS and UMS transfer teams.
- A Joint General Education Workgroup of faculty and academic affairs administrators from the UMS and MCCS will meet regularly to review new courses and assess curriculum changes as they are made.
- The two systems have also established a subcommittee to create a common assessment framework for general education courses. This is another important step in ensuring that credits earned within one institution are fully comparable to those at other institutions within the two systems. As a part of this work, faculty teams across the two systems will play a critical role in developing an assessment plan and establishing procedures for ensuring that learning outcomes and standards are compatible across the two systems.
- Institutional research staff in both systems will continue their work to enhance and analyze data on transfer activity and student learning outcomes.
- The chief academic affairs officers of each system will maintain their focused, collaborative efforts on transfer and will continue to meet regularly to assess progress and identify new opportunities and challenges as they relate to transfer.
- Recognizing that a successful transition from high school to college helps lay the groundwork for successful transfer and the attainment of higher education credentials, a joint UMS/MCCS committee will continue working with the Maine Department of Education to assure that the state's public higher education community is prepared for the far-reaching changes resulting from the new (Smarter Balanced) state standards and assessment.
- Finally, the UMS and MCCS teams will continue to work to make transfer among their institutions as seamless as possible by waiving fees whenever possible, developing co-advising and transfer orientation programs, and developing communications and marketing materials that promote transfer and provide students, faculty, and staff with clear guidance on the transfer process.

**For the University of Maine System**

By   
Dr. James Page, Chancellor  
University of Maine System  
June 8, 2015

**For the Maine Community College System**

By   
Derek Langhauser, Esq., Interim President  
Maine Community College System  
June 8, 2015