



## **Strategic Action Plan – Progress Report & 2007 Priorities**

**Background.** In April 2004, the Compact board of directors announced a long-term action plan – *Greater Expectations* -- to achieve its objective of 40,000 new degree holders, above projections, among Maine’s working age population by 2020. Two of the action strategies are aimed at traditional students – Maine’s Promise Scholarship and Early College – while two are focused on non-traditional students – College Transitions and Employer Initiative. The fifth action strategy is a social marketing campaign to change public perceptions of higher education and behaviors toward going to college. This is a summary of the five action strategies; more detail is available on each component. The last item describes how we evaluate progress.

### **Campaign**

**Goal:** Change the values, expectations and behaviors of Maine citizens regarding higher education, and inspire more of them to pursue and earn degrees.

**Strategy:**

- Work with key stakeholder groups on a targeted social marketing campaign;
- Work at the grassroots level to build the capacity to act; and
- Promote higher education, and inform and guide the decisions of policy makers.

**Actions:**

1. **Community Partnership Program.** The Compact is coordinating a two year effort to assist 50 high schools, and the 150+ communities they serve, to insure that all their students graduate ready for college, career, and citizenship.
  - a. 23 community partnerships have been selected and have started their work. Each partnership is comprised of 10-15 education and community leaders, and is co-chaired by the high school principal and a local leader.
  - b. Partnerships must identify priority needs and determine a program response; they receive a small grant to cover incidental costs. Their goal is to determine a course of action by January, and implement the program with their local resources by the fall of 2007.
  - c. Partnerships receive 9-12 months of information, training and technical assistance. Two workshops have been held for participating partnerships, and a third series is planned for January.
  - d. Partnerships will also be supported by:
    - A Promising Practices report, documenting effective local programs in Maine. The Great Maine Schools Project assisted with this report.
    - A new web site – [www.getmaineready.com](http://www.getmaineready.com) - will serve as a resource and networking opportunity for communities.
    - A short video and brochure that make the case for this work and incent local action.

## Campaign (continued)

- e. Another cohort of 27 partnerships will be selected in January.
  - f. The Community Partnership Program, and the campaign described below, are part of a larger initiative called the Maine Readiness Campaign, which is financed by a grant to the State Department of Education (DoE) from the National Governors Association and the Mitchell Institute. The MRC has been branded the 'Kick Start' campaign.
2. Kick Start Social Marketing Campaign. The Compact is part of a team that is organizing a campaign to help 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders transition successfully to high school. Research shows that a major cause of student failure in high school – resulting in dropping out or inadequate preparation for college, career and citizenship – is bad decisions and inadequate preparation in the 7-9 grades. As a 'social marketing' effort, this Campaign is designed to change the behavior of these 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders.
- a. The Readiness Team, led by the State DoE, engaged a marketing firm - the VIA Group - to determine ways to reach students in this grade range, with a particular focus on disaffected boys from first generation families.
  - b. This 6-9 month campaign will be launched in January and is aimed at helping the target audience make the right decisions this spring to be better prepared for a rigorous academic program in high school.
  - c. The primary vehicle for reaching these students will be the Internet and a web page designed specifically for this audience.
3. The Maine Symposium on Higher Education is conducted by the Compact in August each year. Its purpose is to further encourage innovation in improving educational attainment by showcasing best practices, discussing important policy issues, and assessing our performance.
- a. The one-day event, sponsored each year by a higher education institution, includes nationally prominent keynoters, local practitioners, and Maine leaders from education, business, government and communities.
  - b. 150 attended the event the first year, in 2005; 193 attended this year.
  - c. TDBanknorth is a sponsor of the Symposium.
4. Promotion of Higher Education is an ongoing Compact responsibility, which manifests itself in several ways:
- a. The Compact's web site – [www.collegeforme.com](http://www.collegeforme.com) -- is a resource for leaders seeking information about the Compact and how to be engaged in promoting higher education. The site also houses the Compact's action plan, a directory of best practices, and indicators report.
  - b. Legislative advocacy by the Compact's board members on issues that directly influence the action plan.
  - c. Support for *CollegeforME/Androscoggin*, which is a collaborative of business, education and community leaders whose goal is to double the number of bachelor degree-holders in the County in ten years.
  - d. Speaking engagements and other opportunities to promote the importance of higher education and the Compact's mission.
5. 2007 priorities include:
- a. Continue supporting the 23 community partnerships, and select and support an additional 27 partnerships: includes workshops, on-site assistance, and program evaluation.

## **Campaign (continued)**

- b. Implement a strategy for sustaining this effort without NGA support.
- c. Assist with the launch of *Kick Start* campaign, and promote the campaign among the Compact's stakeholders.
- d. Conduct the third annual Maine Symposium on Higher Education.
- e. Coordinate a legislative advocacy initiative with the Compact's board members, focused on the Compact's five action strategies.
- f. Continue promoting the Compact's message, and *CollegeforME/Androscoggin*.

## **College Transitions**

**Goal:** Over the next decade, 10,000 Maine adults, who are not academically prepared, will transition to college and earn a degree.

**Strategy:** Provide high quality, cost-effective and accessible pathways to postsecondary education for adults, through local adult education programs.

**Background:** For five years, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation has supported 7 college transitions programs in Maine, on a demonstration basis, to help adults who are earning their GED, or who need academic support, to prepare for and transition to college. This Compact action strategy is modeled after these successful demonstration programs. The cost of delivering these remedial courses at adult education centers is very low, compared to the cost of delivering them at higher education institutions. Currently, about 3,000 adults receive their GED or high school diploma each year through adult education programs – less than 10% transition to college. DoE administers the adult education programs statewide.

### **Actions:**

6. The infrastructure to support a statewide college transitions program is being put in place, thanks to significant grant funds secured from the Lumina Education Foundation, through the Maine Community Foundation. In addition, Nellie Mae provided a grant this year to DoE to support the statewide program. The infrastructure work includes:
  - a. Engaging a program coordinator to manage and promote the program.
  - b. Preparing model curricula for use in local adult education programs.
  - c. Negotiating memoranda of understanding between local programs and Community College campuses for acceptance of college transition students.
  - d. Professional development experiences for local directors.
7. The Legislature and Governor appropriated \$200,000 to launch six new college transition sites in Bangor, Bridgton, Capital Area, Fairfield, Oxford Hills and Sanford. In addition, the Betterment Fund will support a pilot site in Machias. With the 7 sites supported by Nellie Mae, this brings to 14 the number of adult-education based College Transition programs. In addition, the MELMAC Education Foundation provides grants that reach 25 sites.
8. Permanent funding to support 30 sites statewide will be sought from the Governor and Legislature next session. The plan is to ask state government to provide \$30,000 to each of 30 local adult education centers, to be matched locally, with a 5-year gradual ramp-up to the 30 sites. These funds should be adequate to serve the entire state through regional cooperatives.

## **College Transitions (Continued)**

9. 2007 Priorities:
  - a. Evaluate program effectiveness.
  - b. Negotiate agreements with the University campuses and private colleges.
  - c. Promote the program.
  - d. Support permanent funding by the Governor and Legislature.

## **Employer Initiative**

Goal: Over the next decade, 10,000 additional Maine workers will earn a college degree with assistance from their employers.

Strategy: Provide assistance to Maine's public and private employers to help their employees pursue and earn a college degree.

Background: This initiative is led by the Maine Development Foundation (MDF), and would provide assistance to employers to help their workers earn a degree, by: removing employee barriers to higher education; building awareness among workers of the benefits that are available; providing financial support for tuition, fees and books; increasing access by providing flextime or courses on site; recognizing and rewarding attainment of degrees; and making an institutional commitment by aligning policies and practices.

### Actions:

10. Completed a feasibility study and business plan to launch a multi-year effort. With a Ford Foundation grant, through the Maine Community Foundation, the MDF:
  - a. Organized a 20-member business-education advisory committee to oversee an analysis of the feasibility of the concept.
  - b. Surveyed Maine public and private employers to determine the need for a program, and their willingness to participate.
  - c. Prepared a multi-year business plan setting forth measurable performance objectives, program deliverables, and budget.
  - d. Submitted the business plan, through the Maine Community Foundation, to national foundations for support.
11. 2007 Priorities:
  - a. Assist MDF and the Maine Community Foundation secure foundation support for a Maine initiative, and assist MDF launch the effort when funds are raised.

## **Early College**

Goal: Over the next decade, 70% of Maine high schools will offer an early college program to its students, allowing as many Maine students as possible to experience academic success at the collegiate level before graduating from high school – regardless of their academic records or postsecondary education plans.

Strategy: Build the statewide infrastructure to insure that each high school has an early college program. Identify alternative local models.

Background: Since this action strategy was articulated, three statewide 'early college' initiatives have emerged: the Maine Community College System's *ECforME* program, the Mitchell Institute's Access College Early (*ACE*) program through the University campuses and private colleges, and

### **Early College (Continued)**

a new distance education program at the University of Maine called *Acadam-e*. In addition, there are numerous local variations.

Thanks to the support of the Governor and Legislature, and the NGA grant noted above, the number of students participating in dual enrollment programs – Early College for ME, Access Early College, and other local initiatives – increased from 950 students last year to 1,020 students in 2005-06. This is according to a recent statewide survey of high schools by the Mitchell Institute, with 82% of high schools reporting.

A Lumina Foundation grant, secured by MCF for the Mitchell Institute, supports the program.

#### **Actions:**

12. 2007 Priorities.
  - a. Continue supporting the Mitchell Institute's early college infrastructure work.

## **Maine's Promise Scholarship**

Goal: Over the next decade, enable 6,300 low-income students to earn a college degree.

Strategy: Ensure that the cost of attending college in Maine is covered by financial aid sources for up to four years.

Background: The Compact's Scholarship Committee, following discussion at the last board meeting, will determine the unmet need of students in Maine, and present a program recommendation to the Compact board at its next meeting. This information will help size the program and determine what cohorts to target.

#### **Actions**

13. 2007 Priorities
  - a. Support this initiative with the Legislature and Governor in the next session.

## **Evaluating Results: The Compact's Annual Report on Indicators of Higher Education Attainment**

Background: Each year, the Compact evaluates its performance based on twenty-one indicators of higher education attainment. This report – available in hard copy and on the web – is designed to broadly assess the effectiveness of the Compact's action strategies and all the initiatives throughout the state to increase attainment. The indicators are clustered around six key questions, which we use to frame the discussion in Maine:

- Do more Maine working-age people have degrees?
- Do more Maine people value postsecondary education?
- Are more Maine people ready for postsecondary education?
- Are more Maine people enrolling in postsecondary education, and graduating?
- Is Maine postsecondary education more affordable?
- Are Maine's people, communities, and economy benefiting?

#### **Actions:**

14. 2007 Priorities
  - a. Update and publish the report, and review its findings with the Compact.