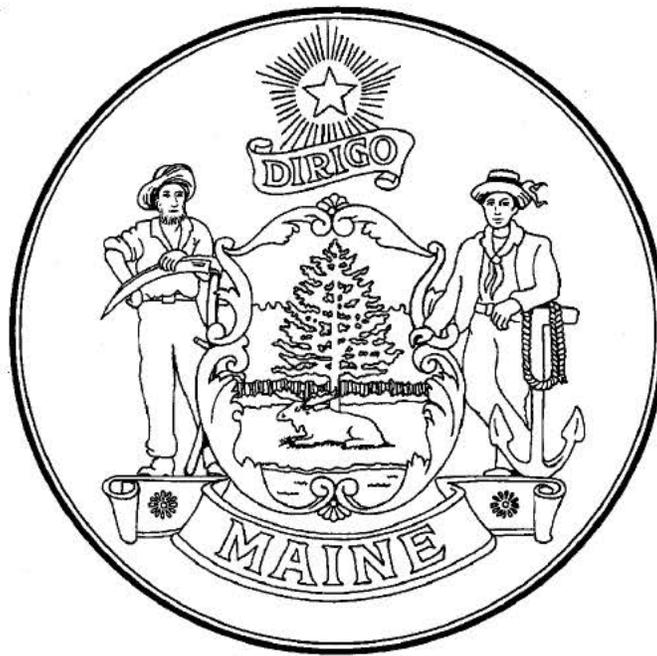


MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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State of Maine
Senate Chamber
Augusta, Maine 04330

January 22, 1975

Senator Jerrold B. Speers, Chairman
Legislative Council
107th Legislature
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Senator Speers:

In accordance with Senate Papers 688 and 689, directing the Committee on Education to study the delivery of post-secondary educational services at the University of Maine since the consolidation of the university, I enclose herein the final report of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,


BENNETT D. KATZ
Chairman

BDK/ac

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
ON ITS STUDY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
SINCE CONSOLIDATION

Senate

Bennett D. Katz, Chairman
Richard B. Olfene
Carroll E. Minkowsky

House

Elmont S. Tyndale, Chairman
Roy A. Bither
Robert C. Ferris
Joyce E. Lewis
David R. Ault
William R. Lawry
Arthur P. Lynch
Frank J. Murray
Bertrand M. LaCharite
Armand A. LeBlanc

Submitted to the
Legislative Council
107th Legislature

January 22, 1975

Origin of
the Study:

Two joint orders relating to studies of the University of Maine were introduced during the Regular Session of the 106th Legislature. The first, Senate Paper 688, directed the Education Committee "to review and study the delivery of post-secondary educational services to Maine people by the University of Maine and to further review its use of financial resources relating thereto which come from public sources..." The second, Senate Paper 699, focusing on just one branch of the university, ordered the Legislative Research Committee "to conduct a full inquiry into the management, curriculum and conduct of higher education provided at the University of Maine Portland-Gorham.

After both of these orders were indefinitely postponed, the newly created Legislative Council requested that the Education Committee blend the somewhat different approaches of the two orders and initiate a study of the university.

Reasons for
the Study:

In 1968 the Special Session of the 103rd Legislature enacted L.D. 1849, which, by designating the state colleges as branches of the university and joining these new branches with the existing units of the university, created the new consolidated University of Maine. The

bill which accomplished this merger was a compromise of several other well studied and thoroughly debated pieces of legislation which had failed to be enacted during the Regular Session of the 103rd.

Advocates of consolidation argued that such a university system would encourage a more efficient use of state money and would widen educational opportunities for all Maine students. The competition of separate campuses for scarce dollars at each legislative session would be replaced by the submission of a single budget for all branches of the university. The unnecessary duplication of facilities and programs permitted by the prevailing fragmented administrative and funding practices would give way to the planned and coordinated growth of the entire system. Finally, supporters of the merger held that the needless administrative obstacles frustrating student transfer of courses and programs would be eliminated.

In striking contrast, the opponents of the bill contended that the merger would destroy the identity of the individual campuses, sharply reduce the administrative and academic independence of all the branches and lower the standards at Orono and Portland. Rigidity and conformity would be imposed on institutions which previously

had been able to respond flexibly to the state's changing educational needs. Compounding these potential effects, opponents also suggested that the new system would be more costly than was claimed by its supporters and would produce little, if any, savings through administrative efficiency.

Since the merger in 1969, some uncertainty has been expressed about the progress toward the goals of the consolidated system. Any growth in the number of administrators has been seen by some as simply the development of another expensive top-heavy bureaucracy and by others as the formation of the needed coordinating machinery for the system. Similarly, difficulty in transferring courses and programs has been assailed by some as a continuing problem unresolved by the merger, but offered as proof by others that academic standards throughout the system have not diminished.

During the last several years, legislative concern has developed against this background of mixed reactions to the consolidation. The merger brought new administrative structures immediately and suggested major changes to come in the delivery of services. Since the enactment of L.D. 1849 in 1968, however, the Legislature has conducted no overall review of the university's efforts

in carrying out these changes and no study of its own ability to deal effectively with the university. Finally, since the state is still without a Post-secondary Education Commission (#1202 commission), no comprehensive study of the needs for higher education throughout the state has been carried out.

The Committee's
Task:

A single slim report can neither fully communicate the changing role of the university nor examine in detail the numerous activities of the eight campuses. The committee has conceived its task, then, not merely as a one-time comprehensive study, but rather as the first of several needed reports on both the university and the working relationship between the Legislature and the university. We recognize that the vagaries of the voting booth work regular, though sometimes unexpected, changes in the composition of the Legislature and its committees. The work initiated with this report must, therefore, be carried on by a new committee. This inevitable change in membership, however, is balanced by the cumulative knowledge and concern of continuing members. The committee believes that within these limits the Legislature, in its relationship with the university, is better served by several carefully considered reports of limited scope, than by a single study of more sweeping dimensions.

Course of study
adopted by the
Committee:

The committee has initiated and conducted this study in a supportive spirit appropriate to constructive critical inquiry. The cooperation of the university throughout the study has only served to reaffirm our belief in the honesty, openness and dedication of those who form the university community.

Our obligation, however, is to begin to identify and evaluate the progress since consolidation to measure that progress against the legitimate expectations aroused by the merger and to make recommendations, if necessary, which may enhance and accelerate that progress. In carrying out the study, then, uncertainties may be expressed and questions raised about some aspects of the university's development and direction. Such doubts and questions, however, will be accompanied by a strong underlying belief in the continuation of the university system.

The approach adopted by the committee reflects its conception of the task. We have in our efforts thus far visited five campuses of the university: Orono, Fort Kent, Presque Isle, Machias and Portland-Gorham. On each campus we have met separately with students, faculty and administrators. In addition, during three visits public hearings were held in order to provide the committee with the perceptions of those on the

periphery of the campus community. What follows, then, is not pages of detailed data, but rather a set of general reflections on certain aspects of the university.

Autonomy
of the
University:

The University of Maine is not an agency of state government.¹ By legislative design, rather than by accident of birth, the university acts with virtual independence in its development of policies and programs. The Legislature, unlike its counterparts in some other states, has given the Board of Trustees complete authority for the operations of the university. Neither tuition guidelines nor mandatory teaching and counseling hours have crept into the statutes. The concept of the line budget has been repeatedly rejected. In general, the Legislature has consistently refused to meddle in the internal affairs of the university.

In addition to this independence, the Legislature has also provided money. Given the condition of the state's economy, Maine people have been generous beyond reasonable expectations in their sustained support of the university. Presently, Maine taxpayers provide nearly 70% of the university's educational and general budget.

¹ 105 Me 214, *Orono v. Sigma Alpha Epsilon Society*, 1909, p.

The committee believes that the Legislature has shown and should continue to show great restraint in its relationship with the university. The prevailing autonomy is a necessary condition for the existence of a great university. We share with the university a common appreciation of educational purposes and a commitment to the preservation of the independence of the university. Consolidation has left that independence thus far unimpaired.

Campus
Autonomy:

During the legislative debate preceding consolidation, some opponents of the merger predicted that the identity of the individual campuses would be engulfed by the larger university and that their academic and administrative independence would be lost. Our visits to five campuses reveal no such identity crisis.

In contrast to these gloomy forecasts, we find that the emergence of the individual campuses stands out as one significant feature of the university's performance during the last five years. Each campus perceives itself as making a unique contribution to the university system and this perception is moulding the development of diverging campus missions.

The committee believes that maintaining this sense of campus identity and encouraging a diversity of campus missions will continue to strengthen the entire university system. A degree of independence permits

each campus to identify and respond to the special needs of the region which it serves. When firmly balanced by the overall planning and coordinating efforts of the university, this limited ability of each campus to shape its own destiny will improve the delivery of educational services.

Transfer-
ability:

The committee commends the concept of limited campus independence, then, as an instrument to ensure that regional needs may be satisfied. Unfortunately, this concept carries some much less desirable side-effects.

The elimination of impediments to the transfer of courses and programs within the university system was advanced as one dividend of consolidation. The committee finds that progress in this area has been discouragingly slow and that the expectations reasonably raised at the time of the merger are still unrealized.

The committee recognizes that the problem of transferability involves the vast array of courses and programs offered throughout the university. Establishing workable standards of acceptability for hundreds of different courses and programs is unquestionably a difficult and time-consuming task. The importance of this task, however, is at least equal to its complexity.

We further acknowledge that the Chancellor's office is sharply limited in the improvements which it can directly achieve. Although leadership and assistance can be provided, the transfer of credits is primarily a function of the separate faculties of each campus. The unfulfilled promise of increased student mobility within the university system, therefore, seems to reflect a disappointing and continuing failure of cooperation among these faculties. In the area of transferability, then, campus independence may simply veil a persisting faculty rigidity.

The cooperation and compromise required to resolve the problems of transferring credits may seem inconvenient and intrusive to the separate faculties. The needs of students to move freely throughout the university as their academic and vocational goals change, however, far outweighs any mere inconvenient modifications in faculty practices.

The committee believes that a continued lack of progress in the transferability of credits may seriously jeopardize the legitimate concept of limited campus independence. Such an outcome is as unnecessary as it would be deplorable. We strongly recommend, therefore, that efforts to ease the transfer of courses and programs should be immediately and rapidly increased.

University
Growth:

With consolidation, a single budget for the university system has replaced the separate and uncoordinated campus reports which formerly competed for legislative attention. This significant change has given the university the opportunity to carefully assess and order any proposals for further expansion. Since the Legislature will be asked to fund such proposals, the topic of university growth is a major concern of the committee.

Although the total number of students in higher education continues to rise, a decline in the rate of increase of these students has been the general trend nationally during the last several years. According to a soon to be released Carnegie Commission report, enrollments will level off after 1983 and then actually decrease.

Changing lifestyles, rising education costs, the end of the draft and numerous other factors have contributed to a changing perception of the university experience. As this perception has altered, changes have followed in the level of general interest in higher education. Many institutions which responded to the demands and incentives of the 1960's with massive physical plant expansion now find themselves with empty or poorly utilized classroom and dormitory space. Such facilities have become a liability, draining money away from areas of real need.

The committee does not suggest that the university is presently suffering from an overexpanded physical plant.

A change in future demands, however, may leave several campuses with unused or underutilized facilities. To what extent Maine is experiencing or can expect to experience the national trend in student population, however, is presently unclear. What is also uncertain is whether the university has acknowledged this trend, made a judgment that it is still several years away, made accommodations to it or simply said "it can't happen here."

This uncertainty is not diminished when any campus announces a building program which is to be funded from private sources. While such initiative might be applauded in the abstract, the committee recognizes that public funds will be sought to maintain and operate these buildings even if the construction costs are borne by other sources. We also suggest that money from private sources provides no savings to the taxpayer unless it is used to serve the most vital needs of each campus.

Growth at
Orono:

Although the committee is concerned about growth throughout the university, the further increase of the student body on the Orono campus requires specific consideration. While impressions from one-day visits may be somewhat unscientific and subjective, they may nevertheless be quite accurate. At Orono, parochial concerns replaced the broader approaches articulated at the smaller campuses. The number of campus police seemed more pressing than the quality of the liberal arts or engineering programs. Similarly, the student complaint of impersonality,

of being merely a number and of lacking a relationship even with an advisor or counselor was unique to Orono. If size has created diminishing educational returns as well as this loss of a sense of campus community, further expansion will merely exacerbate a presently undesirable situation. In contrast, the committee believes that if Orono is relieved of the pressures of constant expensive growth, the campus will be freed to pursue excellence in whatever roles it shapes for itself.

Given the prevailing uncertainties about student population, the committee recommends a fundamental reappraisal of the traditional university growth patterns.

The #1202
Commission:

Any expansion of the university has direct and powerful effects on the entire education community within the state. The investment of tax dollars in the university is in direct competition with the other investments in primary, secondary and vocational education and manpower training. Also, the impact of the university on the private non-profit and proprietary postsecondary institutions has remained too long either unnoticed or ignored. Currently, we see unused facilities and a decrease in students and faculty which threaten the survival of some private colleges. At the same time an aggressive and expansionary policy on the part of the university worsens an already precarious situation. In general,

the committee finds too little cooperation and too much competition.

In the past the university has enjoyed great cost advantages over the state's non-public schools and suffered from no rivals outside the state. The future, however, may be somewhat different. Both public and private institutions may find themselves subject to intense competition through recruitment from outside the state. The absence of planning and cooperation among all of the members of Maine's higher education community will only increase the vulnerability of each.

Finally, the relationship between the university and the postsecondary vocational technical institutes should be mentioned. Despite the fact that a continuing dialogue exists between the Commissioner of Educational and Cultural Services and the Chancellor, the committee finds that the level of real cooperation, coordination and sharing of resources is unacceptable. The committee believes, therefore, that the need for a permanent postsecondary education commission is urgent.

In April 1974, the Governor added 5 persons representing public, private and proprietary postsecondary education to the present State Board of Education and designated this enlarged body as the Maine Postsecondary Education Commission. The Governor had just vetoed a bill enacted during the Special Session which would have created a permanent postsecondary education commission.

By designating this augmented State Board the Maine Postsecondary Commission, the Governor enabled the State to qualify for available Federal money.

The committee finds that the State Board of Education has substantial authority and experience in the areas of primary, secondary and postsecondary vocational education. We believe that adding new responsibilities in the area of postsecondary education will dilute the State Board's effectiveness in carrying out its main duties and will fail to provide the state with the kind of concentration on higher education required of a postsecondary education commission. We strongly recommend, therefore, the creation of a permanent and separate postsecondary education commission.

Students:

Historically, the university has primarily sought and subsidized the traditional undergraduate student - the 4 year-degree seeking recent high school graduate. In recent years, however, and increasingly since the merger, adult and continuing education programs have experienced a rapid development and a significant expansion. As a natural accompaniment to these changes, the concept of education as a life-long process, rather than a block of time set aside for post high school preparation and reflection, has been revived and has gained a wide acceptance.

The university has responded with increased course offerings and somewhat more flexible degree programs. What is not clear, however, is whether the university has appreciated the force and magnitude of these new directions in education. The Continuing Education Division student currently receives only a small fraction of the subsidy provided for the traditional student. Degree-program requirements are still too unyielding for the needs of the part-time student. If the non-traditional student is to be recognized as a continuing major participant in the university, both tuition and degree-program policies require a thoughtful re-evaluation.

Although the role and numbers of traditional students may be changing, access to the university remains a problem for too many students. Consolidation offered the possibility of easier access to the university. Although student assistance has increased, these modest beginnings in student aid fall far short of the goal of a comprehensive student assistance program. We identify this as a priority need if the university is to improve access for Maine people.

Many student needs fall outside the area of course offerings and assistance programs. The committee would recommend increased flexibility in areas such as the university calendar. Presently, for example, the timing of the winter holidays guarantees that students will be

unable to earn needed dollars before Christmas. A minor adjustment in the calendar providing for an earlier vacation period would benefit large numbers of students.

Faculty:

The changing number and type of students influence the practices of the university faculty. If Maine is on the brink of a period of declining increases in student population, serious questions about faculty security immediately arise. Presently, general trends within faculties accent rapid specialization, professionalization and an increasing fragmentation of the traditional disciplines. These trends, coupled with declining student population increases, may encourage a faculty increasingly pressured to do research and write, rather than to teach, and more concerned about improving professional credentials than with satisfying the needs of students. At the same time, students are asking for more attention from their teachers, for better teaching and counseling and for more flexibility to find and pursue interdisciplinary studies crossing the now rigid departmental lines. Faculties may move to secure themselves and their specialties while students require more liberating structures. The committee is concerned about these opposing movements and recommends that the university devote considerable attention to their potentially harmful effects.

Because of the changing enrollment patterns, unemployment has become more common in many academic disciplines. In spite of the intense competition for academic jobs, however, the committee has found a very low rate of change in faculty at the university. Although a higher rate may not be necessary, the committee does recommend that the university examine and evaluate current practices in order to ensure that the present rate encourages the highest possible standard of faculty performance.

Faculty salaries are too low. Faculty salaries at the university fall below the levels at many comparable institutions across the country. The committee recognizes that in spite of its general appeal, Maine may be failing to attract some outstanding scholars and may be losing others because of the present salary schedule.

The university faculty is sometimes characterized as working only 12 to 15 hours each week for 9 months of the year. When joined with the nagging problems of course transfer and effective counseling, this perception of the faculty weakens any arguments for higher salaries.

The committee recognizes that each hour of classroom teaching requires several hours of preparation and that many faculty members teach or do research during the summer months. We respect the integrity and commitment of the faculty and recommend improvements in the salary schedules. Nonetheless, in times of budgetary stress, increased faculty productivity is a legitimate area of examination. Around the nation, experience suggests that this whole question of faculty load is best addressed by the trustees, and not by the legislature. The legislature has every right to presume that the trustees are keenly aware of the need for optimum productivity from a very labor intensive human service.

The legislature and the university:

The committee cannot initiate a study of the university since consolidation without also turning the light of inquiry upon the Legislature and its relationship with the university. The Legislature frequently experiences frustration in its encounters with the university. Fueled by this frustration, voices may become shrill and strident on issues wholly unrelated to the important questions which should be regularly raised about the university's performance. Too often, attention is diverted and focused on tangential problems, while the major efforts of the university, the programs and policies on which most money is spent, remain largely unconsidered by the Legislature as a whole. The committee believes that these

difficulties in the relationship between the legislature and the university can and should be resolved.

The Legislature encounters most of the major recipients of state funding through a variety of bills during each legislative session. In contrast, the university, because of its traditional autonomy, comes to the Legislature in a single bill, the annual budget request. This bill is reviewed and reported by the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. The Committee on Education, whose responsibilities and experience include primary through graduate school education has no role in the process.

The strength of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs rests in its ability to carefully unpack and assess budget proposals. This committee should not be expected to accumulate extensive knowledge in the areas of policy and program development. The development of this knowledge and experience is properly the responsibility of the other joint standing committees.

If the university is to become more familiar to the Legislature through the oversight of its activities and yet retain its independence, still coming to the Legislature in a single bill, a greater involvement in the handling of this bill must be encouraged. The present methods of consideration of bills must be replaced by a process which involves a careful scrutiny of policies.

We recommend, therefore, that the Committee on Education should participate in the annual hearings and review of the university budget request.

The second part of the problem in the relationship between the university and the Legislature is the sheer size of the university. Until the Regular Session of the 106th, the Legislature had failed to provide itself with a permanent research staff. The flood of information which the university generated could not be filtered and used. While the addition of staff was a salutary first step toward enhancing the Legislature's ability to deal with the university, we believe that the utilization of all legislative support services must be greatly improved.

Finally, the committee recognizes that a dilemma is at the core of the relationship between the Legislature and the university. As the principal source of funding for the university, the Legislature needs to be assured that educational policies are developed which fulfill the needs of Maine students and enrich the quality of Maine life. To ensure that these policies are carried out, the Legislature must be meaningfully involved in the life of the university. The Legislature's need to actively participate, however, must be continually balanced against the university's traditional independence.

The committee believes that such a balance must be pursued and sustained by each new Legislature. With the development of better machinery for oversight of the university and the more effective use of Legislative support services, we believe that the Legislature can carry out its responsibilities without becoming involved in the internal affairs of the university.

Final
Thoughts:

In this report we have presented general recommendations to both the Legislature and the university. Three of these recommendations should be reemphasized.

We have strongly supported the continued independence of the university, not because it better serves the interests of the university, but rather because it best serves the needs of the state. We have been deeply concerned with the lack of improvement in the transferability of courses and programs because this problem frustrates the reasonable desires of Maine students. Finally, we have recommended certain changes in the relationship between the Legislature and the university. We believe that these changes will strengthen that relationship and will ensure a better legislative understanding of the further progress toward the goals of consolidation.