

***Memorandum***

October 21, 2003

**TO: Members of the Task Force on Creating A Future for Youth In Maine**

**FROM: Ted Potter, Special Assistant to the Speaker**

**RE: Minutes of the October 17 meeting**

Please find attached a copy of the minutes of the Task Force's public hearing held on Friday, October 17, 2003 at Brewer High School.

As I read my notes, several themes became apparent. These themes include:

- The tracking system in public schools discourages students in the "lower tracks" from applying and attending college;
- Guidance counselors do not have the time necessary to spend with each student to encourage and assist students with respect to applying for college or to discuss job opportunities in Maine – it is up to the student to do most of the work;
- All students should be required to take a basic core of courses to qualify them for college, and all students should apply to college;
- Maine should not discourage its youth from going out of state to college to obtain new experience and get a taste of the world. Rather, Maine should do a lot more to attract out of state youth to Maine colleges and to attract young adults to jobs;
- Maine needs to assess its financial aid packages. In several cases, it has been cheaper to send Maine students to private colleges in other states than it is to send them to the University of Maine;
- Maine needs to apply more emphasis on entrepreneurial courses and curricula at campuses of the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System. These courses, in conjunction with business incubators, can result in the germination and implementation of ideas for new businesses that can help the Maine economy grow.
- The shortage of "slots" in higher education programs is a serious problem for some occupations and professions. Opportunities for optometrists, dentists, nurses, and other careers are limited as a result of the capacities of facilities or programs. Many qualified Maine people are turned down because the programs simply cannot accept many students.

## **Presiding Officers Task Force on Creating A Future For Youth In Maine**

**Public Hearing  
October 17, 2003  
Brewer High School, Brewer, Maine**

### **Minutes of the Hearing**

#### **A. Members Present at the Public Hearing**

- The Honorable Pat Colwell, Speaker of the House, Co-Chair of the Task Force
- The Honorable Elizabeth Mitchell, Co-Chair of the Task Force
  
- Senator Steven Stanley
- Senator Christopher Hall
- Senator Christine Savage
- Representative Jonathan Thomas
  
- Joseph Perry
- Linda Petrie
- Patrice Putman
- John Simko

#### Members Not Present

- Rep. Jeremy Fischer
- Megan Gean
- Jeremy Pare

#### **B. Introductory Remarks – Task Force Members**

The Honorable Elizabeth Mitchell opened the hearing by welcoming students to the hearing and extending the Task Force's appreciation for their participation. Ms. Mitchell expressed the importance of hearing directly from students with respect to their reasons for leaving the State of Maine for higher education and work, and urged them to make suggestions to encourage young adults to return to Maine. She explained that everyone on the Task Force supports economic development and the creation of jobs. The Task Force is interested in why high school and college students make decisions regarding the location of the college they attend or the job they accept.

The Honorable Pat Colwell welcomed the students and wished the Brewer Witches success in their upcoming football game. The Speaker also referred public hearing participants to the four questions on the agenda, and asked them to address these questions and any other issues in their discussion and testimony.

Specifically, the Speaker requested the students to focus on the steps that the Legislature could take to attract young people to Maine. He asked them to address the effectiveness of a college loan forgiveness program to keep youth in Maine.

Both Co-chairs expressed their appreciation to Mr. James Frost, Principal of Brewer High School, for hosting the public hearing. The Task Force was greatly impressed by the gracious hospitality extended to Task Force members.

Task Force Members introduced themselves and made introductory remarks as briefly summarized below:

- Linda Petrie: Young people are our treasure and Maine needs to keep them here.
- Patrice Putman: Stated that she has five children, and three are students. Some have gone out of State to school, and she hopes that they will be able to find a good job in Maine.
- Senator Stanley: The Millinocket area has been hard hit by the turn of events at the Great Northern Mill. Youth are leaving the area. It is a very sad time for the region. Maine needs jobs for Maine youth in order to keep young people here.
- Senator Hall: Stated that he moved to Maine from England. Sen. Hall explained how he came to Maine and that it may be more important to attract young adults to Maine than it is to try to keep young adults here without the benefits of experiencing the world outside Maine.
- Senator Savage: Stated that she wants her grandchildren to stay in Maine. It is so important to bring more jobs to Maine that will enable young people to remain here.
- Joe Perry: It is important to provide for a decent future for our young people, and the students here can help us address this issue.
- John Simko: Stated that he knows the problem personally. He graduated from Bowdoin, and decided to stay in Maine. It was a very difficult choice because he saw others who left Maine and found very good jobs. It took time for him to find a good job, and now he is Town Manager for Greenville.

### **C. Introductory Remarks – Mr. James Frost, Principal of Brewer High School**

Mr. Frost welcomed the Task Force to Brewer High School, and apologized for being unable to stay for the entire hearing.

- Mr. Frost explained that He went to a school out of state, but always wanted to return to Maine. The school that he selected to attend was one of the best in the field that he wanted to enter.
- As a parent, he found it was more expensive to put his son through the University of Southern Maine than it was to send him to a private school in North Carolina. He later related that the fees that the University of Maine System imposes on all types of services and activities and other requirements increase the cost of education substantially.

## **D. Testimony of Participants**

1. Peter Hoff, President of the University of Maine at Orono.

There are several widely held perceptions about Maine students that need to be closely studied to determine their veracity. These perceptions include the following

- Maine has one of the highest rates of high school graduation,
- Maine students are well prepared for college, but a low proportion actually continue on to higher education,
- Maine students have an aspirations problem,
- Community colleges can address the problem access to higher education.

There is conflicting data regarding these perceptions, and officials don't really know with certainty the veracity of these assumptions.

### **High School Graduation**

- The Department of Education asserts that 86.7% of all students entering high school graduate from high school, placing Maine near the top of states with the highest rate of graduation.
- The National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] finds that 86.2% of all high school students graduate with a diploma.
- The Manhattan Institute finds that 75.0% of Maine high school students graduate from high school, placing Maine 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation.
- Mortenson claims that 76.0% of Maine high school students earn a diploma.

### **Preparation for College**

- Mortenson claims that only 42% of Maine high school graduates have college ready transcripts.
- Mortenson also claims that only 33% of Maine high school graduates are able to pass a reading test on the college level.

### **High School Graduates Continuing on to Post Secondary Education**

- The Department of Education claims that in the year 2000, 66.4% of high school graduates went on to college and that in the year 2002, 72.4% went on to college. These figures include students attending community colleges and joining the military.
- The National Council on Education Statistics finds that 54.3% of Maine high school graduates attend college, which places Maine 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in this category.
- With respect to numbers of Maine high school graduates who go on to 4-year colleges, the University of Maine finds that in 2002, 47% fell into this category. Maine ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation in this category.

## **Location of Post Secondary Maine Students**

- 8.9% enter the University of Maine System
  - 19.5% attend other Maine colleges
  - 17.5% attend other post secondary schools in and out of state
  - 26.5% attend out of state
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- A total of roughly 50% of Maine High School graduates attend post-secondary schools out of state
  - 27.6% of students do not pursue higher education
1. Based on performance, the University of Maine and out of state colleges have high proportions of students who perform well in Maine high schools and in college.
  2. New Hampshire and Vermont are net importers of students who are attracted from out of state to those states. Vermont has worked for years to attract students from out of state.
  3. According to statistics, 64.1% of students [resident and non-resident] graduating from the University of Maine stay to work in Maine. Of all Maine residents graduating from the University of Maine, 69.2% remain in Maine.
  4. Of all out-of-state student graduates from the University of Maine, 34.3% remain in Maine.

## **Aspirations**

- The aspirations of Maine high school students appear to be good. The problem that needs to be addressed is adequately preparing students for college.
- There is a myth that students who leave the state to attend college have higher aspirations than those who remain in Maine. This is not true.

## **2. Comments/Questions.**

- John Simko. Does Maine need an incentive program to attract more of the better-performing students?
- President Hoff. The University of Maine has a very good program of incentives. Maine can do more to attract good students from out-of-state. Maine needs to match the efforts of other states, but it will take a while. Vermont has worked for years to establish a net in-migration.
- Senator Hall. The New England Board of Education finds that for every student that leaves Maine, .71 students come into Maine from out of state.

- Maine needs to focus more on in-migration of students. He is opposed to discouraging Maine students from going out of state for experience and education. It is good for Maine students to learn more about other places in the world.
- President Hoff. It is important to get the message out that Maine education is a great buy for a top-notch education. Maine has dropped from 54% to 48% with respect to the percentage of students who go out of state for a college education.

#### **E. Student Comments – Financial Aid, Leaving the State,**

1. High school students need more information and they need it much sooner to plan the high school courses that one needs to take for college.

2. Most of the students in attendance wanted to go out of state to college for experience and to see what the rest of the world has to offer. But they want to come back to Maine.

3. One student pointed out that board and room at the University of Maine is more expensive than tuition. This discourages students from attending the University.

4. President Hoff said that financial aid takes this into consideration. In addition, there is a college campus within 25 miles of 90% of Maine students. [See below for more discussion.]

5. A graduate student in communications at the University of Maine in Orono pointed out that all of her friends had better financial packages from out of state colleges than she was able to get from the University of Maine.

6. President Hoff. Maine has to compete with schools with better endowments than the University of Maine. While the University of Maine may give smaller financial aid packages than many out-of-state colleges, the costs are lower at Maine and are just as competitive. **[It is important to note that James Frost, principal of Brewer High School, discovered that it is much cheaper to send his children out-of-state to private colleges than to educate them in Maine because the out-of-state financial aid packages and scholarships are so much better than the University of Maine system.]**

7. John Simko asked if students went to the University of Maine for 3 years and went to an out of state college for a year, would that satisfy the desire to go out of state?

- The students replied that they to go to colleges out of state because they are excellent in their fields of study and provide good jobs for students out of state.
- Joseph Carbone, a junior at the University of Connecticut, stated that the quality of life is better here in Maine. He wants to return to Maine, but Maine should not discourage students from going out of state to school to get different experience and to see what life is like outside Maine.

8. Chris Rank, an out-of-state University of Maine graduate was accepted at the University of Vermont. He chose Maine because it was cheaper than Vermont. He loves Maine, and he established a business here that is part of the University incubator. This is the principal reason for his decision to stay in Maine – he always wanted to start his own business, which is a software-mapping firm.

Rank was offered jobs in Boston, but he wanted to start his own business. The University business incubator played a large role in keeping him in Maine. He has 4 employees. While the incubator played an important role, the community played a more important role.

9. Patrice Putman remarked that the University of Maine is considered to provide a good quality education. She pointed out, however, that many students want greater diversity, and they want to meet more students from different cultures and nations. What is the University of Maine doing about this?

- President Hoff said that diversity is a high priority of the University of Maine System. Currently there are students at the University representing 48 states and 75 nations.

10. Bob Markey – Teacher – East Millinocket.

- Mr. Markey pointed out that his daughter graduated from the University of Maine in biology. She received an excellent incentive package.
- He said that optometry has been left out of the incentive programs, and that program should be added.
- Students in single-family households have more advantages and financial aid incentives available to them than students in married households. More assistance is needed for students in married households
- Graduate students need more financial incentives.
- He purchased two rental homes that are now empty. While the University may consider these assets, financial packages for students should take the loss of revenue from his empty apartment buildings into consideration in determining the financial incentives offered to his children.

11. Bob Stone, President of “Promising Futures Placement” firm.

- Many students want to stay in Maine, but they have to go out of state for a job
- There needs to be one place for students and parents to call to get information. School and job information is very fragmented.
- Speaker Colwell. Is there a disconnect between the school systems and colleges and between schools and the business community? Would internships for high school and college students help reduce the disconnect?
  - ❖ President Hoff. There definitely could be significantly more coordination and cooperation between the educational and business sectors.

## **F. Entrepreneurial Courses and Curricula.**

1. Joyce Hedlund, President of Eastern Maine Community College
  - Springfield Technical Community College has a student business incubator with 12 student businesses and waiting list for incubation space. One student is 12 years old and has a business specializing in personalized umbrellas.
  - This concept is based on the assumption that small businesses will be the most likely ones to develop in the future. The Springfield Technical Community College is based on this concept, and it trains and helps to promote entrepreneurial businesses.
  - The best ideas and most viable businesses are derived more from persons without formal business training than with from persons with business degrees.
  - Maine could use an entrepreneurial curriculum.
  - Eastern Maine Community College that serves Dover-Foxcroft and Millinocket also provides one-stop services to entrepreneurial businesses.
  - President Hedlund pointed out that 55% to 60% of community college graduates go on to other types of higher education.

## **G. Satellite Campuses/Business Incubators and Courses.**

1. Senator Stanley pointed out that satellite campuses are thriving. In Piscataquis County, there are two satellite campuses created cooperatively by the University of Maine and the Community College System. This system should be taken statewide. There is very strong demand for the courses and services offered by Satellite campuses. The satellite campuses promote business development. In Piscataquis County there are 1621 businesses providing 2450 jobs with \$100 million in sales. Students in High School should be required to take a business course.

2. John Simko. Should we have incubator systems in public schools?

3. Joyce Hedlund, President of Eastern Maine Community College, says there should be incubators in the high school and in lower grades. It is better/easier to incubate a business where the entrepreneur has a technical skill compared to a person with a business school education.

4. Senator Hall's question to Chris Frank

- What features of Bangor attract young professionals?
  - ❖ Bangor is where Burlington, Vermont was 25 years ago. Downtown Burlington was renovated and its waterfront enhanced, which has drawn many professionals to that city.
  - ❖ There needs to be an awareness of the University and community. Entrepreneurial courses can enhance this awareness and cooperation.
  - ❖ Business plan competitions, in which the winner gets assistance if a business results, would draw professionals and enhance the economy.

5. Joyce Hedlund, President of EMCC. It is important to support the University incubator, but it takes resources to do this. Massachusetts has a strong micro-loan program.

6. Chris Frank asserted that the University helped him get into the incubator, which got him involved in economic development and the various programs of assistance.

**H. Legislative Youth Advisory Council. [18 youth members of which 14 are high school students] Nathanael Yellis [college internet student] – spokesperson.**

- There is a transition period between high school and higher education.
- Student tracking systems in high school segregates students and discourages many students from going to college. Many students who are *not* in the college preparatory curriculum live up to the label prescribed to them.
- Guidance counselors have to deal so much with personal problems and issues that take priority over college preparation and jobs. They have too little time to work with each student.
- Personal issues could be addressed by social workers, and guidance counselors should be freed-up to help college bound students.
- Elementary guidance counselors should push college in the lower grades.
- Kents Hill has a mandatory course on college preparation, and each student goes on to college.

**I. Student Comments on High School Preparation and Higher Education**

1. What is the most important influence on students regarding higher education?
  - Most students said parents are the most important influence. A few said good guidance counselors and teachers can be very helpful. The parent-student relationship is very important. Parents must be higher education oriented to influence their children.
  - Tracking in high school does deter students from going on to college. But one student said that bright students in one class should not be hindered by slower students in that class. Some classes need to be based on student abilities.

2. Justin McBriarty, graduate of Caribou High School.

- Guidance counselors do not have the time to help college bound students. Student have to do most of the work.
- High school tracking system hurts vocational students, who are looked down upon. In his class, 50 students in his class never considered college, but 90% of them could have gone on to some form of higher education.
- A few teachers encouraged him, but they were teachers who had been there a long time. Younger teachers do not feel a responsibility to encourage and motivate students.
- All students should be required to apply to college, and all students should be required to take college preparatory classes
- McBriarty and 34 other students attended an information meeting sponsored by the University of Maine. Most went with the intention of going to the University of Maine. At the end, only 6 students attended the University. Most were offended by the presentation.
- It is far less expensive for students to start at a community college and transfer to a 4- year college, such as the University of Maine, than it is to start at a 4-year college.
- McBriarty has chosen a trade, but he wonders where he will get a job in Maine. He has had to come up with \$5,000 for tools and \$5600 for tuition.

*[Mr. David Ouellette, Principal of Caribou High School, disagrees with some of the comments of Justin McBriarty and is writing a letter to the Co-chairs. Mr. Ouellette, however, agreed that it is difficult for a vocational student to take college preparatory classes with respect to time – it is a very tight schedule for students.]*

3. James McCloud, Eastern Maine Community College.

- McCloud is interested in pursuing radiology. Competition for this training is extremely severe and it is limited to a small number of people.

4. Mark Surette.

- Surette wants to be an engineer, but the pulp and paper industry, which is the leading industry in Maine that hires chemical engineers, is downsizing. The jobs are just not there.
- Many Massachusetts colleges have cooperative programs by which students take courses and work in their field. They are just about guaranteed a job in their field when they graduate. Maine needs a similar approach.

5. Other students

- One student has chosen to go out of state to get the education she will need. She also wants new experiences. In addition, Maine does not offer the field of study that she wants to pursue.
- Student backgrounds are often the basis of making judgments about students, and some of these judgments discourage students from going to college.

- Some students select higher tracks, and some others self-select out of college preparatory classes. These students then consider themselves unqualified to go on to college.
6. John simko – Who has the most influence on deciding if and where you will go to college? **The students responded as follows:**
- Parents play the greatest role,
  - Students learn their own way as to what courses they should take,
  - One student indicated that teachers do play a role and can have a great influence,
  - A guidance counselor helped one student to decide to attend college, but her parents were very influential and pushed her to go to college,
  - Students who do not have encouraging parents are left in the dark,
  - Guidance counselors do not tell students about various job opportunities in Maine. One student was told that math and science teaching jobs are in demand in Maine
7. Linda Petrie pointed out that some students do not have family support for continuing their education. Should teachers support students in their goals and encourage their higher educational aspirations?
8. One student said it is difficult for teachers to motivate a student who is not motivated to continue with his or her education.

#### **J. High School Curricula and College Preparation**

1. James Frost, Principal of Brewer High School, asserts that all students should have core college courses so that at any time in their future they will qualify for college.
2. Senator Hall asked, “Where does decision making rest?”
- Mr. Frost responded that it lies with the school in concert with the superintendent. Brewer High school requires all students to take algebra.
  - Mr. Frost also explained that all students do not learn in the same way, and schools need to change the way they teach. Some students need a “hands-on” approach, which requires more resources for teaching. In addition, it is not possible to teach as many students using the “hands-on” approach.

#### **K. Meeting the needs of students and the private sector.**

1. Merlene Sandbourne works with the satellite campuses of the University of Maine System and the Community College System.
- Ms. Sandbourne stated that it is important to invest in programs that excite students and provide them with job opportunities. Maine needs to invest in health care and education.

- For example, there is a serious shortage of nurses in Maine. The nursing program at Eastern Maine Community College has only 24 slots, but there were 220 applications. Most of the applicants were qualified for the slots. EMCC received a grant from the Maine Hospital Association to fund 8 additional slots.
- In Piscataquis County, health care and education are the largest employers.

2. Kent Price, former assistant to the Chancellor.

- In order to foster economic development and job growth, the surest way is to invest in higher education. He noted that 34% of out-of-state students at the University stay in Maine.

3. John Simko inquired about a loan forgiveness program and a guaranteed mortgage program and the impact of these programs.

4. Nathanael Yellis of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council expressed his concerns about loan-specific forgiveness programs. He said a loan-forgiveness program should be universal.

- In regard to merit-based vs. need-based scholarships, Yellis emphasized need-based scholarships because Maine is a poor state. It is vital to get students to college.

5. Linda Petrie asked the students, "If you were to have a family, how many would want to raise the family in Maine?"

- Nearly all the students said they wanted to raise their family in Maine.
- One student doesn't want to raise a family in Maine if it means there are no jobs for her children or if they cannot accomplish their dreams.

## **L Other Presenters**

1. Yellow Light Breen, former Deputy Commissioner of Education

- Yellow Light Breen grew up in rural Waldo and Somerset Counties. He advised against stemming the outflow of Maine youth who want to leave to get new experience and see the world. The greatest bang for the buck is to attract young adults to Maine.
- Who would come to Maine? Those who have come to summer camps or who have summered in Maine. Persons who want to pursue telecommunications studies. Those who have a strong deep connection to Maine.
- It is important for Maine to market the opportunities that exist that people can appreciate or that they may not have appreciated previously, such as the quality of life and the quality of Maine people. There also is a need to promote professional opportunities in Maine.

- Financial viability is very important for students. The college that Yellow Light attended had its own loan forgiveness program.
2. William Burney, U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department.
- This agency gives the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development \$17 million a year. Housing costs play a significant role in attracting people to a state. HUD funding can be spent for several purposes, and the Legislature may want to review the current spending pattern and make changes it deems necessary.