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Maine State Chamber and Maine Development Foundation unveil “Making Maine Work: The Role of Maine’s Public University System”

Recommendations for strategic investments to encourage degree attainment and build an educated, skilled workforce

AUGUSTA – Building on the priorities set forth in its July 2010 publication, [Making Maine Work](#), the **Maine State Chamber of Commerce** (MSCC) and the **Maine Development Foundation** (MDF) today released a companion report focusing on the impact of the **University of Maine System** (UMS) on the state’s economy and the value of an educated and skilled workforce. Titled [“Making Maine Work: The Role of Maine’s Public University System,”](#) the second installment of the *Making Maine Work* series contains a detailed account of current University System contributions to the state of Maine, as well as “best practices” from other states. It offers tangible recommendations for the governor and the legislature to consider as we invest in the workforce of the very near future.

“When we released *Making Maine Work* in July, it was our hope and intent to further scrutinize each of the eight issue areas contained in that report,” said Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. “Today, we begin that process with a look into higher education.”

Making Maine Work: The Role of Maine’s Public University System focuses on the role higher education plays in growing Maine’s economy and the investments necessary to support the work. Specifically, it looks at the current role of the University of Maine System in contributing to economic development, evaluates what more might be done, and provides recommendations for how best to deploy the System’s resources to reach its full potential.

“If there’s one thing that unites us – regardless of place, position or politics – it is the desire to help young people achieve their highest potential,” Connors added. “Education is the key to unlocking that potential. Education increases our job options, our earnings potential, and even our quality of life. Investing in education is an investment in a robust and stable economy.”

In February 2010, MDF conducted a Maine business leaders’ survey, garnering more than 1,000 opinions and perspectives. When asked to rank the factors that supported investment and to specifically identify the supports and barriers to investment in Maine, nearly one-half of the business respondents mentioned a loyal and skilled workforce as a strong positive factor for business investment.

Additionally, a review of Maine Department of Labor analyses showed that a majority of the high-wage, high-growth jobs will require a college degree or other post secondary training. However, Maine currently lags the region in the proportion of adults with college degrees. This places the state at a competitive disadvantage in terms of providing employers and industry with a skilled workforce now and into the future.

“This is not an education issue. It’s an economic issue,” stated Laurie Lachance, president and CEO of the Maine Development Foundation. “During the past three months, MDF has examined what the University system is now doing to serve Maine’s economy, explored best practices across the U.S., and interviewed a number of Maine’s key business leaders to better understand what they want, need and expect from their public university.”

“The good news is that the University of Maine System is already highly engaged in serving businesses and communities,” she continued. “There are, however, some important steps that the University can take to be an even better partner with Maine business.”

This sequel was commissioned at the request of the University of Maine System (UMS) in an effort to further explore the connection between education and economic growth. “As part of our recent ‘New Challenges, New Directions’ initiative, the University of Maine System has been working to better align academic programs with the needs of Maine’s business community,” explained UMS Chancellor Richard L. Pattenaude.

“To help us do that with greater accuracy, we needed to hear directly from the business community. So we partnered with the Maine State Chamber and asked Maine Development Foundation to draw on their recent collaboration, *Making Maine Work*, and prepare a report for us on what Maine businesses need from the University System. This report clearly reaffirms that higher education is economic development. We are very pleased with the result and will rely on this report heavily over the next several years to inform our work.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY...

Achieving the vision of a high quality of life for all Maine people will require a strong economy. A strong economy requires a highly educated workforce that can innovate and adapt to change. As the largest educational and research organization in the state, Maine's public University System has a large role to play in moving us forward.

Maine faces several challenges now and in the years to come. We have a slowly growing and aging workforce and an economy in transition. The jobs of the future will require education and training beyond high school and many of the highest growth and highest wage jobs will require a bachelor's degree or more. Yet, Maine's higher education attainment rates trail regional rates. Faced with this gap in qualified workers, it is imperative that every Maine person achieve their highest educational potential.

Now, more than ever, businesses need Maine's University System to educate the workforce and develop ideas to help grow the economy. The good news is that the University of Maine System is already doing much of the work, but the message from Maine business is that there is room — and a need — to do more.

THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS

A quality and efficient public university system requires a sturdy foundation. Maine's public University System must:

- Foundation 1:** Operate as a true system.
- Foundation 2:** Communicate the value of the system and its parts.
- Foundation 3:** Build and maintain the necessary infrastructure to best serve Maine people.
- Foundation 4:** Ensure that tuition is affordable for all Maine people, particularly low and moderate income families.

THE EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATE PEOPLE FOR THE MAINE ECONOMY:

- Recommendation 1:** Enroll, educate and graduate more people.
- Recommendation 2:** Graduate people with the skills and knowledge that meet the current and future needs of Maine businesses.

DRIVE INNOVATION AND SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

- Recommendation 3:** Increase and expand the capacity for the University System to conduct research and development that leverages additional funding, generates marketable ideas and supports job and wealth creation in the Maine economy.
- Recommendation 4:** Develop the entrepreneurial skills of students and faculty and support technology and knowledge transfer system-wide, providing the opportunity and capacity to commercialize ideas.
- Recommendation 5:** Bring the University System's R&D and knowledge directly to the businesses that will use them.

SERVE THE PUBLIC AND SUPPORT BUSINESS:

- Recommendation 6:** Provide technical support and capacity that Maine businesses require to be competitive in the national and global markets.
- Recommendation 7:** Make regional economic development a priority and work actively with partners to achieve community and economic development goals.

EXPAND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL CENTERS:

- Recommendation 8:** Develop and market the cultural and community assets of each campus as a means of attracting and retaining people in Maine.

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ABOUT MAKING MAINE WORK: CRITICAL INVESTMENTS FOR THE MAINE ECONOMY...

Making Maine Work: Critical Investments for the Maine Economy (www.mainechamber.org/makingmainework) is a comprehensive action plan for improving productivity, growing the economy, and providing a higher quality of life for all Maine people. Released in July 2010, the original report and recommendations were the result of a joint effort between the Maine State Chamber of Commerce (MSCC) and the Maine Development Foundation (MDF). It explored the investments needed to grow the economy and the factors that influence those decisions.

Along with *Making Maine Work*, MDF published two background reports: *Maine's Investment Imperative II: Unleashing the Potential* (www.mdf.org), an in-depth review of more than 100 reports and recommendations on key issues influencing investments in Maine, and the results of the *Investment Imperative Survey* (www.mdf.org) with 1,000 Maine Businesses.

KEY CONTACT INFORMATION



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ABOUT THE MAINE STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE...

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce represents a diverse network of 5,000 businesses statewide and advocates on behalf of their interests before the Legislature and regulatory agencies and through conferences, seminars, and affiliated programs. Through its OneVoice program, the Maine State Chamber represents thousands of businesses with fewer than 10 employees. Its Grassroots Action Network works to involve members and their employees in the legislative process through outreach campaigns. For more information, visit www.mainechamber.org.

MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

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ABOUT THE MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION...

For more than 30 years, the Maine Development Foundation has supported the vision of a high quality of life for all Maine people. As a private non-profit membership organization we do this by empowering leaders, strengthening communities, and guiding public policy. Our flagship programs include Leadership Maine, Policy Leaders Academy, the Maine Downtown Center, the Maine Employers Initiative, and the Economic Growth Council/Measures of Growth. Through these programs we stimulate new ideas, develop Maine's leaders, and provide a common ground for solving problems and advancing solutions. For more information, visit www.mdf.org.



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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM...

Established in 1968, the University of Maine System is the state's largest educational enterprise. It has an annual enrollment of more than 42,000 students and serves over 500,000 individuals annually through educational and cultural offerings. More than two-thirds of its alumni—more than 117,600 people—live in Maine. The University of Maine System features seven universities—some with multiple campuses—located across the state, as well as nine University College outreach centers, a law school, and an additional 75 interactive distance learning sites. For more information, visit www.maine.edu.