

10-3-2013

Moving Ahead Letter

Theodora Kalikow
University of Southern Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/direction_package

Recommended Citation

Kalikow, Theodora, "Moving Ahead Letter" (2013). *Direction Package*. 65.
https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/direction_package/65

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institutional Memory at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Direction Package by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu.

From: Theodora Kalikow <president@USM.MAINE.EDU>
To: <A-LIST@LISTS.USM.MAINE.EDU>
Date: 10/3/2013 4:23 PM
Subject: Moving Ahead

October 3, 2013

Dear Colleagues:

Your reactions to last Tuesday's launch of our process to set strategic directions for this university were heard and have resulted in an improved and more clearly defined path forward.

"What are the meaningful specifics about actions?" asked one member of the campus community. "We need to change but no clear direction given for change..." said another. Faculty and staff, wrote a colleague, "...are interested in more concrete issues." "We need a more inclusive process," said many.

It was made very clear that a segment of the USM community is suffering from planning fatigue, a segment wants inclusive input and all want to move forward with tangible next steps.

One overarching theme also struck me. Passion. There is great emotion around the issues we face. And I do believe that passion is something positive, no matter how it is stated. We are facing uncertain times and uncertainty creates anxiety. That is why I am asking you to be part of the process, part of the solution.

So, taking all that under consideration, we are transitioning to a new phase with an inclusive committee of faculty, staff, students and external partners.

I will be reaching out shortly to leadership of key constituent groups to ask for their help in establishing this committee. Once formed, I will charge the committee with taking a careful look at all the material compiled and reviewed over the summer, e.g., previous planning documents; information on perceived needs of current and prospective students; the competition we face for those students; workplace needs throughout Maine and the region; the value that USM offers; and what we can do as well, if not better, than other institutions.

All that material needs to be reviewed in the context of our budget projections, as well as the enrollment and demographic challenges facing this and many other institutions of higher learning. We are not alone. But we must act rapidly, independently and with progressive ideas.

All members of the campus community will be kept informed of the committee's progress and asked to contribute your thinking. I will expect the committee to recommend draft, tangible strategies and tactics that will guide the decisions that have to be made. These will be communicated to the USM community for review and input.

Ultimately, I will be responsible for selecting those recommendations that will set our direction forward.

This process needs to be wrapped up in time to help inform development of our budget for fiscal year '15 and beyond. Our specific process and timelines will be communicated soon.

You know as well as I the fiscal challenges facing us. And as you've heard me say more than once, each March we must submit a balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year to the System office. This budget is reviewed, incorporated with those from other campuses and then submitted to the Board of Trustees.

Some decisions will have to be made even as we're building out this process. Budget deadlines for the fiscal year are such that we have no choice.

We will be facing difficult fiscal decisions. Cutting across the board will not lead us to success or

excellence. Instead, we must make very focused, strategic choices.

Focused, strategic choices, however, must be made in the context of a framework, an accepted direction. Without that direction, we'll be just cutting, not making decisions that also nurture our strengths, plant some new ideas and grow resources for the future.

Our future depends on this. (And as a quick aside, so does the presidential search because the Chancellor has stated that he will not initiate a search until we're clear on our future direction.)

It's human nature in tough times to forget, or ignore, all we have going for us. We all know about USM's assets in terms of location, community partnerships, creative minds and inventive spirits. And because of those assets, the fundamental, life-changing work of this university goes on. I have received the message loud and clear that I have the role of leading this positive campaign and I accept that feedback. I ask for your help and guidance in doing this.

This is about making decisions so that our very valuable work is sustained into the future. Your input, dialog and creative thinking are vital to this effort.

Thank you for your commitment to this institution.

Sincerely yours,
Theo

Theodora J. Kalikow
President, University of Southern Maine
PO Box 9300
Portland, ME 04104-9300
TEL: (207)780-4480
FAX: (207)780-4561
E-Mail: kalikow@usm.maine.edu
<http://usm.maine.edu>