



# Maine School of Science and Mathematics

## *A Residential Community of Academic Excellence*

15 August 2019

### **MSSM STRATEGIC PLAN NARRATIVE**

*“For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past and the present are certain to miss the future.”*

*John F. Kennedy*

### **Strategic Approach**

During academic school year 2018-2019 the Maine School of Science and Mathematics undertook a deliberate strategic planning process with an objective of identifying opportunities and managing risk in the years ahead. This effort was far ranging, but much of the thinking and effort devolved itself down to two groups with overall coordination achieved through the school administration.

Group One consisted of the MSSM faculty and staff and Group Two, known as the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC), consisted of MSSM Trustees David Ferguson, David Coit, Jerome Pieh, and Catherine deLutio, current parent Sharon Frost, Limestone town representative Kathie Beaulieu, MSSM Foundation Chair Clark Copelin, MSSM Faculty and Staff Daniel Melega, Matt Grillo, David Pearson, MSSM student Charlotte McCulloh, and University of Maine Orono past president Susan Hunter.

Both groups considered Maine’s educational landscape and MSSM’s place within it - the environment; examined constraints and areas of necessary change while recognizing key school features that should be sustained; and developed objectives to be achieved by prioritized lines of effort in order to address the following question:

*Within the next five years, how can MSSM transform its academic curriculum, residential life experience, and athletic programs, rehabilitate its infrastructure, and attract and retain quality faculty and staff – while remaining true to its values, vision, and mission and acting within budgetary limitations – to attract and retain an increased number of quality students and willing donors necessary to generate the funds required to ensure MSSM solvency and fund critical improvements?*

## **MSSM Strategic Plan**

The result of these deliberations is the 2019 MSSM Strategic Plan that is organized around three key areas: (1) strengthening MSSM's on-campus program; (2) expanding MSSM's impact across Maine; and (3) enhancing MSSM's facilities and faculty / staff.

By endorsing these three initiatives, the MSSM Board of Trustees has set a confident course for the future and brought increased discipline and clarity to MSSM's planning and priority setting efforts. Importantly, while investing in new programs and capital projects are expensive propositions that will require flexible and diplomatic process management sufficient to mitigate risk, we now have an outlined path forward that will ensure that the next twenty-five years are even better than the first.

## **MSSM Strategic Plan Objectives**

The ability to realize our ambitious vision and strengthen MSSM's institutional program, outreach efforts, facilities, and overall student and faculty experience will require a multi-year integrated implementation framework based on data-driven decision making. This reality is consequent upon the deeply interconnected nature of the three strategic plan objectives and within them overlapping component parts. This approach will require deep and ongoing collaborative efforts from all MSSM constituencies, and that as a corollary will also require detailed financial linkage, cultural transformation, and a willingness to continually ask hard questions and make tough choices. The individual component parts of each strategic plan objective are listed immediately below:

### **1. Strengthen On-Campus Program**

- a. Reduce room and board fee to remove finances as a hurdle for enrollment of MSSM appropriate students.
- b. Improve the residential life program, including student and residential instructor housing.
- c. Create and implement a daily / yearly schedule that allows flexible graduation requirements, a focus on real life world problem solving, dual enrollment university credits, and long-term student research opportunities.
- d. Expand engineering and computer science courses.
- e. Quantify the MSSM experience through professional faculty and staff evaluation, and external accreditation of the program

### **2. Expand Impact Across Maine**

- a. Create and run an annual summer Maine Educator Camp with a focus on STEM teaching and learning.
- b. Grow the existing MSSM Summer Middle School STEM Camp to 600 students.

- c. Develop and deliver MSSM outreach STEM learning modules with a focus on supporting rural middle schools throughout Maine.

### 3. Enhance Facilities and Faculty / Staff

- a. Create an MSSM Campus Master Plan.
- b. Own and control all MSSM necessary facilities.
- c. Create and staff an advancement position to work with the MSSM Foundation and establish national / state-wide partnerships and raise funds in support of school operations.
- d. Grow the MSSM student body to 200 through a comprehensive marketing and admissions plan.
- e. Develop flexible and technology enabled teaching and office spaces to facilitate creative and collaborative study and work.
- f. Ensure sufficient faculty housing commensurate with planned school growth.

### **MSSM Strategic Plan Sequencing**

Causal assumptions - essentially, “if” / “then” propositions - that link environmental understanding with potential actions that influence outcomes were used to determine realistic ordering of the strategic plan objectives. The resulting sequencing is outlined at Annex A. Clearly, a number of actions can be undertaken immediately, such as introducing appropriate faculty and staff support and evaluation protocols, planning for an MSSM Summer Educator Camp, working through the existing Program Team to consider multiple pathways toward graduation. Progress toward other objectives are more dependent on additional factors, both internal and external, and will evolve in the years ahead based upon continuing networking and dialogue with a variety of constituencies and agencies. For instance, the objective of reducing the existing room and board fees commensurate with other state magnet schools will be dependent on a willingness of the Maine legislature to assume responsibility for the difference, which if successful, and results in increased student applications, triggers a follow-on conversation about the necessary infrastructure to support a growing MSSM student population. If, as a result, a decision is reached to undertake significant capital investment, then a campus master plan is necessary - the construction of which would undoubtedly lead to follow-on conversations around the ideal location of MSSM in order to best serve the whole state of Maine. Such is the interconnected, and in some cases politically tied, nature of MSSM’s future objectives.

### **Looking Forward**

We are persuaded that the recent U.S. News and World Report ranking of MSSM as the number two school in the nation, underscores the value of this institution to the state of Maine as never before. The three strategic plan objectives are designed to build upon the existing legacy of success and address key current challenges that have resulted from the somewhat haphazard way in which the school has evolved in past years consequent upon the closure of Loring AFB,

ownership of a small co-ed single dormitory building, and the renting and sharing of an academic building with another school, which coincidentally serves as landlord while MSSM historically pays the bulk of the academic building operating costs. While these are undoubted challenges as we work forward, the dangers of inaction, or of setting our sights too low, are infinitely greater and unworthy of Maine's number one school. This is MSSM's time, and together with your help, it is going to be an exciting and purposeful journey forward that will strengthen our institutional culture and program, significantly improve our student experience, and leave our reputation for excellence undiminished throughout Maine and beyond.

Annex:

A. MSSM Strategic Plan Objective Sequencing.

# ANNEX A MSSM STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE SEQUENCING

