

The Presiding Officers' Advisory Task Force on Creating a Future for Youth in Maine

1st Meeting, September 5, 2003 Meeting Notes

Task Force Members in attendance: Honorable Elizabeth Mitchell (co-chair), Rep. Patrick Colwell (co-chair), Sen. Christopher Hall, Sen. Christine Savage, Rep. Jeremy Fischer, Rep. Jonathan Thomas, Megan Gean, Jeremy Pare, Joe Perry, Linda Petrie, Patrice Putman, John Simko.

1. Convening of the Task Force and Introductions

- Co-chairs Patrick Colwell and Elizabeth Mitchell opened the meeting.
- Senate President Beverly Daggett made welcoming remarks, noting that the problem of youth leaving Maine is escalating that she sees the task force as a group that will formulate a plan and come up with positive actions.
- P. Colwell concurred that the group will focus on action, and L. Mitchell cited the importance of generating pragmatic recommendations to give to Legislators to make something happen.
- Members introduced themselves and stated their interest in the task force:
 - Rep. Patrick Colwell, Co-Chair (Gardiner) is the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He noted that many parents who are sending their children to college out-of-state fear their children will not return to Maine. He stated that his goal to bring forth legislation next session as a result of this task force.
 - Elizabeth Mitchell, Co-Chair (Vassalboro) is a former Legislator and Speaker of the House who moved to Maine in 1971. She has served as director of Maine State Housing Authority and is currently working at the Muskie School of Public Service and attending the University of Maine Law School.
 - Sen. Stephen Stanley (Medway) represents portions of Penobscot and Aroostook Counties in the Senate. He noted the drain of youth from his district and the lack of job opportunities available and stated that he wants to see corrective actions come out of the task force.
 - Rep. Jeremy Fischer (Presque Isle) is currently youngest member of the House of Representatives. He noted that Aroostook County sustained significant losses of population in 1990s and expressed interest in economic development aspect of the issue
 - Sen. Christine Savage (Union) represents Knox County in the Senate. She noted that she realized the severity of the loss of youth from Northern Maine during economic tours of the state as a Senator.
 - Jeremy Pare (Augusta) recently returned to Maine and is looking for a job that will enable him to stay and settle here. He attended college in Maine, went to law school in Vermont, and then worked in Massachusetts before coming back to Maine.
 - John Simko (Greenville) is a native of Piscataquis County and is the town manager of Greenville. He noted that many of his peers have left the area.
 - Sen. Christopher Hall (Bristol) represents Lincoln County and part of Kennebec County in the Senate. He chose to migrate to Maine when he was in his 20s and is an economist by training. He noted that it is important that the task force “does not reinvent the wheel.”

- Linda Petrie (Mexico) is a retired schoolteacher, who taught for 38 years and has dedicated her life to working with youth. She noted that the Mexico/Rumford area of the state is declining.
- Joe Perry (Searsport) is originally from Nantucket, MA, and came to Maine in 1974, and has served on Maine Democratic Committee. He is concerned about the outflow of youth due to lack of employment and wages that are commensurate with their skills in state.
- Rep. Jonathan Thomas (Orono) represents part of Orono in the House. He noted that Orono is often the “last stop” for youth leaving Maine.
- Megan Gean (Alfred) is a counselor at York County Shelters. She noted a particular interest in housing-related issues.
- Patrice Putman (Winthrop) noted that she has 3 college-aged children and all of them left Maine for college and she wants to see that they have the opportunity to come back to Maine to live and work.

2. University of Maine Presentation – Maine’s Changing Population

Deirdre Mageean, Vice President of Research and Dean of the Graduate School, University of Maine

- Stated that her goal is to set the scene for the task force
- Provided a historical overview of population trends in the state of Maine:
 - 1910-1960 period of outmigration
 - 1980-2000 loss of 50,000 young people (age 18-31)
 - 1995-2000 net balance of 5% in-migration, but losses among youth cohorts and certain counties including Aroostook and Washington; Aroostook county losses are among people ages 0-39 years; Washington county losses are among people ages 8-19
 - Consistent decline in the birth date, in-part a consequence of the outmigration of young adults in childbearing years (double loss: the individual and the children they will have in the future)
 - Showed how the age/sex pyramid is changing – population is becoming older (modal age of 39 in 1999, predicted to be mid-60s in 2025)
- Suggested that the group should be equally concerned with attracting young people to Maine as keeping young people in Maine

Philip Trostel, Associate Professor, University of Maine

- Provided an overview of statistics relating to population and education:
 - Shrinking age groups: 5-17 years and 18-24 years
 - Number of K-12 students declining, projected to hit minimum in 2010
 - Cited research by Maine Development Foundation showing that 77% of Maine citizens and 70% of Maine businesses reported that an educated work force was the 1st or 2nd most important factor for long-term economic growth; nearly 50% of Maine businesses said that an educated workforce was the most important factor
 - Approximately 50% of college-bound students leave Maine
- Cited three reasons for the relatively low level of higher education attainment in Maine
 - Lower rate of college entry
 - Net outmigration of college graduates
 - Net outmigration of college freshmen – stated that this is the biggest factor

- Believes that creating college graduates/educated workforce will attract businesses and create job opportunities, that there is a substantial advantage to businesses in high tech industries to locate near supply of college graduates
- Believes that high tuition and fees are a key factor in the net out-migration of college students from Maine due to the following:
 - Students are looking for the “best value” when selecting a college
 - As a percentage of per capita income Maine tuition and fees are higher than the New England average and the U.S. average
 - Maine ranks in the 40s among the 50 states on several different measures of spending on higher education

Questions and Comments of Task Force Members

- Sen. Hall: Should the task force look at promoting in-migration of other students from outside Maine? Could this be done without lowering admission standards?
- P. Putman: What factors besides tuition affect decisions about where to attend college? (*See 3.*)
- L. Mitchell: What policy changes did Georgia make that resulted in the increase in students staying in Georgia for college?
- P. Putman: At what point does tuition become the driving force in college decisions?
 - Trostel noted that this would be different for each family depending on their income/resources.
 - Mageean suggested that the Vice President of Enrollment Management at the University of Maine would be a good resource for information on tuition and marketing issues.
- Rep. Colwell: Where do students who leave Maine go to college (*See 3.*)
- L. Petrie: How can we build the reputation of Maine colleges and universities? Students are looking for a prestigious college name to have on their resume after graduation.
- Sen. Hall: What are the migration figures for students who do not go onto college?
- J. Simko: Reported on a survey of high school seniors conducted in Piscataquis county; indicated that first and foremost they want to “get out of here” and explore new places
- L. Mitchell: To what extent do graduates create new jobs, for example through entrepreneurship?
- Sen. Hall: Identified three key decision points relevant to the task force and suggested them as a structure for the group to consider:
 1. Whether and where to go to college
 2. Where to take the first job out of college
 3. Where to buy a house / raise a family

3. Retaining and Attracting Youth – Overview

Lucia Nixon, Office of Policy and Legal Analysis

- Summarized survey research on reasons for choosing to attend a particular college:
 - Recent study of 1998 college graduates from Maine, found that the top three reasons for college choice were: (1) academic program, (2) reputation, and (3) school size. (Study by FAME and Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation, USM)
 - Recent study by Mitchell Institute of college students in Maine found that the top three reasons were: (1) financial aid/cost, (2) location, and (3) academic program.
- Summarized data on the migration of college students to and from Maine.

- The top 5 states sending students to Maine are MA, NH, CT, NY, and VT.
- The top 5 states attracting Maine students for college: MA, NY, NH, VT, and RI.
- Outlined a sampling of potential strategies to retain and attract youth, using the following structure:
 - Where to go to college? Making Maine colleges more attractive to youth:
 - Increasing information and changing perceptions (e.g. ensuring that high school students are well-informed about Maine colleges and universities)
 - Increasing opportunity (e.g. expanding academic programs targeted to areas of occupational shortages in the economy)
 - Reducing cost (e.g. increasing financial aid, grants, scholarships)
 - Where to live/work after college? Making Maine more attractive as a place to live/work:
 - Increasing information and changing perceptions (e.g. “Come Home” campaigns)
 - Increasing opportunity (e.g. internship and co-op programs to connect students with Maine employers)
 - Reducing cost (e.g. loan forgiveness or tuition tax credits)
- Provided overview of existing tuition waiver, scholarships and loan forgiveness programs in Maine
- Provided example of recent initiative to attract research dollars and opportunities – graduate program in genetics, coordinated effort of University of Maine, Jackson Laboratory, and Maine Medical Research Center
- Handout on case studies – examples of youth who have left Maine (prepared by Ted Potter)

4. Reversing the Trend – A Business Relocates from New York City to Portland

Molly Donovan, Director, Enrollment Management

The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)

- Relocated to Portland in 2003, had been in New York City since 1947
- Reasons to leave New York
 - High cost of doing business
 - High turnover of staff, lack of institutional knowledge
 - Stressful to function at location (particularly after 9/11)
- Approach: identified 4 potential locations, including Portland, and ran blind ads in newspapers
- Portland ad generated resumes from highly educated people in Maine / wanting to move to Maine

Questions and Comments of Task Force Members

- Rep. Colwell / Rep. Thomas: What put Portland on the list for CIEE?
 - Educated, committed workforce
 - Cost of doing business
 - Available infrastructure to communicate with staff worldwide
 - Quality of life
- Sen. Hall: What are drawbacks to doing business in Portland?
 - Difficult to get anywhere from Portland Jetport
 - Lack of cultural opportunities (relative to NYC)
- J. Simko: Noted that blind ad approach has worked in Piscataquis County
- Rep. Fischer: Can see how businesses would relocate to Portland, but how can we get businesses to relocate to rural Maine?
- M. Gean: Noted importance of employers using imagination in looking at resumes

5. Department of Labor Presentation: Maine's Labor Market

Ken Bridges, Senior Economic Research Analyst

Vanessa Duquette, Assistant to the Commissioner

- Noted that they will provide members with informational packets before the next meeting
- Described some of the resources published by the Department
 - “Hot Jobs in Maine”
 - “Careers in Maine for College Graduates”
 - Maine Fringe Benefits Study
 - Maine Occupations and Wages
 - Upcoming product will list skills needed for top growth occupations in the state
- Noted importance of Research and Development to thriving labor market; cited examples of Route 128 in MA, the Research Triangle in NC, and Silicon Valley in CA

Questions and Comments of Task Force Members

- L. Mitchell: How does DOL work with the high schools?
 - Career exploration software is provided to the high schools
 - Provide training to guidance counselors on career decision making
- Rep. Fischer: Noted the need to bring together Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), Department of Labor (DOL), and Department of Education (DOE)
- L. Mitchell: Where are the labor market shortages? What occupations/sectors of the labor market are experiencing shortages of workers?
- L. Mitchell: Requested copy of Commissioner Fortman's presentation to the Maine Jobs Council
- L. Mitchell: How does DOL communicate with youth?
- J. Simko: The next wave of technology is yet to emerge. Is investing in “incubators” enough?
- L. Mitchell: What are the barriers for people wanting to live and work in Maine?
 - Sen. Hall: Lack of rural broadband is one problem (insufficient infrastructure)
- J. Pare: Noted that the question of whether to go to college is relevant to the task force
- J. Simko: Importance of getting information on areas of job growth to high school and college students; cited the need to identify opportunities specific to education level; requested information from DOL on the top employment opportunities by education level.
- Sen. Hall: Noted that “high-end” employers do not want workers only from Maine; need to promote the attraction and integration of youth from out-of-state as much as retention; need to encourage youth to move out of Maine, get experience, and then come back
- Sen. Hall: Requested information on where migrants are coming into Maine from and where they are going within Maine
- L. Mitchell: Requested article by Jim Tierney on Diversity in Maine
- P. Putman: What are we doing now as a state to attract young people from other states to Maine?
- L. Mitchell: Noted the importance of technology infrastructure / internet.
- P. Colwell: Would like to see a formalization of the intersection of business, education and labor in a “SWAT Team” approach to create future for youth, match education with jobs and reach out to high schools and colleges.

6. Task Force Work Session

- Rep. Colwell: “This is an action group.” Wants to keep focus on action and solutions. Want to hear from members, their ideas for concrete proposals.
- Rep. Thomas: Expressed apprehension about emphasizing the attraction of young people from out of state; agree that we are lacking diversity but believes we have responsibility to create opportunities for people from Maine
- Sen. Hall: Believes that task force should look at each of the 3 decision points mentioned earlier (college, first job, settle/buy home)
- L. Mitchell: Commented that by encouraging people to come in and people to stay in Maine, resources are expanded; people from away may start companies that create jobs
- P. Putman: Agree on 3 decision points identified by Sen. Hall as a good framework for the task force; noted that different proposals make sense for different decision points
- Sen. Stanley: Commented that certain educated professionals, e.g. chemical engineers, currently do not stay in Maine due to lack of jobs; suggests that task force should assess the available workforce; need to attract business to employ the graduates that we do have in certain fields
- Sen. Stanley: Recommends bringing college opportunities to local communities; cited cooperation between University of Maine, Community Colleges and municipalities
- Rep. Colwell: Summarized comments, noting the importance of:
 - Training people for jobs that are going unfilled and
 - Bringing jobs to Maine for the trained workforce that is hear
- J. Simko: Noted some economic development / job creation initiatives that are already in place, including Pine Tree Development Zones, technology centers, incubators, Maine Community College System; noted that the lack of the population base is a challenge to attracting business to rural Maine
- Rep. Colwell: Suggested the state needs to do a better job of getting information out about scholarship programs and existing efforts/initiatives
- L. Petrie: Noted a concern about the loss of teachers, many will retire in 5-10 years, knows that youth going into teaching find that wages in Maine are not competitive
- Rep. Fischer: Commented on the importance of the task force being specific in making recommendations to the Legislature.
- Rep. Fischer: Suggested DOL, DECD, DOE, UMS need to identify key priorities and coordinate.
- Sen. Hall: Noted potential for this task force to “balloon” and urged members to develop a structure for the work. He suggested a structure revolving around:
 - *3 Decision points:*
 1. Whether and where to go to college,
 2. Where to take first job out of college,
 3. Where to settle/buy home
 - *3 Areas of Intervention:*
 1. Educational System: College entry and college exit/first job
 2. Economic Development: Attracting and growing businesses to employ youth
 3. Quality of Life: Attracting people to the state after the have completed college and taken a first job elsewhere
- Sen. Hall: What does the University System do in terms of career counseling? How can we create a better match between academic programs and job opportunities?
- J. Simko: Commented on the importance of attracting and retaining young families

- Sen. Stanley: noted the residents of his area are telling their own children to get an education and leave the state; noted the importance of focusing on diversifying the state economy in order to have sustained opportunities for youth
- J. Pare: Noted the importance of bringing larger companies to the state because they will offer a wide range of job opportunities
- L. Mitchell:
 - Stated belief that there is agreement in the importance of economic development and job creation but expressed discomfort with focusing too much on economic issues; suggested importance of complementing the economic development initiatives that are underway
 - Stated the importance of narrowing the focus of the group's efforts
- P. Putman: Expressed interested in 3 decision points suggested by Sen. Hall as a structure
- Chairs Rep. Colwell and L. Mitchell: Closed the meeting by:
 - Requesting that each task force member come up with several concrete suggestions to address one or more of the 3 decision points
 - Requesting suggestions of groups/individuals/information that members want to hear at upcoming meetings
 - P. Putman requested someone from the arts community
 - M. Gean requested someone from Maine State Housing Authority / information on programs for first time home buyers