

November 17, 2014

Portland, Maine.

University of Maine System Chancellor James H. Page presents findings that System-wide multidisciplinary professional and graduate programs are a link to state-wide economic growth.

Chancellor James Page and Haven Ladd, principal of the Parthenon Group, will present the Group's Report on the market opportunity and feasibility for a professional and graduate center located in Portland to the University of Maine System's Board of Trustees at its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, November 17 at the University of Southern Maine.

Chancellor Page states, "The Parthenon Group's comprehensive study of the business and legal community requirements supports expanding and combining components of our existing programs to create a model for entrepreneurial, multi-disciplinary graduate business and legal programs to drive economic development statewide." The Parthenon Group concludes that the creation of a professional and graduate center in Portland is indeed a transformative concept for the University of Maine System. The business/legal community enthusiastically endorsed the core concept of bringing graduate business and legal education under one roof concluding such a move has the potential to catalyze the growth of small to medium businesses across Maine. Haven Ladd reports, "The intersection of graduate business and legal education provides students the mix of skills, knowledge and experiences required to support the human capital needs of the Maine labor market and creates an opportunity for the System to proactively and strategically engage directly in the State's economic development." The Parthenon Group worked with University administrators and faculty, as well as business and legal community leaders to develop its findings and recommendations.

In the fall of 2013, Chancellor Page and a number of academic and business supporters developed the concept of creating a professional and graduate center and the Chancellor determined that a study of the need and feasibility was the first step. The Chancellor sought private funding for the study. The Harold Alfond Foundation agreed to support the study by providing leadership to frame the work of the study, and by identifying and financially supporting the engagement of the Parthenon Group to test the core concept with the student/business/law sectors and to develop a strategic plan for further development.

The Parthenon Report highlights that a center located in Portland would act as a hub to integrate efforts across both the University System and the distributed industries and local economies resulting in job creation state-wide. The co-location and interdisciplinary education of students will galvanize experiential learning opportunities and provide closer collaboration with the business sector resulting in graduates with the practical, hands-on experience needed to succeed in the labor market. Chancellor Page concludes, "The Report emphasizes the unmet need in the Maine labor market for our graduates from multidisciplinary programs and the strongly positive demand for practice ready professionals."

Parthenon will report that the keys to successful implementation include (1) the engagement of a strong external development committee and a dedicated entrepreneurial leader for the process, (2) the development of a cutting-edge interdisciplinary curriculum actively integrated with business needs and opportunities, and (3) the development of independent space to support new programs and delivery systems.

After reviewing the findings and recommendations, Greg Powell, on behalf of the Harold Alfond Foundation, stated, “The Foundation is encouraged by Parthenon’s findings, given the Foundation’s interest in supporting educational initiatives that improve the state’s economy and the lives of the people of Maine. Business leaders statewide have identified the need for, and economic development potential of, a consolidated center for graduate business and law programs within the University of Maine System.”

Chancellor Page requested additional private funding to increase leadership and execution capacity as the University System continues to test and develop the concept of enhanced professional and graduate programs in the context of Parthenon’s recommendations. The focus will be to develop leadership to complete the planning and program development process, build essential public/private partnerships, and test the core concepts with targeted pilot offerings. The Harold Alfond Foundation has agreed to a grant of \$1,250,000 to fund these early stage efforts.

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