Peer Identification Exercise
October 11, 2017

Over three weeks, UMF held five open sessions with members of the University Leadership Council (senior leaders plus division chair and directors) to explore the peer identification data. We first ran the list with no filters to establish how low the similarity indices would go. Notably, this generated a list with UMaine in the 19th spot with a similarity score of .08405.

Thereafter we applied filters and tested numerous models for peer identification, culminating with the following criteria to generate a final list with the lowest similarity scores:

1. Category of Institution: degree-granting, primarily baccalaureate or above
2. COPLAC: no filter (generating "All")
3. Degree of Urbanization: no filter (generating "All")
4. Carnegie Degree Classification (Basic): baccalaureate arts & sciences; baccalaureate diverse; master's small and medium
5. Carnegie Degree Classification (Size and Setting): four-year, highly and primarily residential
6. Carnegie Degree Classification (Undergraduate profile): any four-year, medium- or full-time
7. Institution size: 1-4,999 (also tested 5,000-9,999 and found potential peers with greater similarity)
8. Sector of institution: public, 4-year or above

This generated a list of peers with similarity scores *below* .10. Although UMaine did not make the cut due to enrollment size, at .08405 it would have been our fifth closest peer in the filtered list.

The initial list of potential peers, with enrollment size and similarity scores, is:
1. SUNY College at Potsdam, 3,904 (.06666)
2. Western State Colorado University, 2,722 (.07202)
3. SUNY College at Fredonia, 4,742 (.07495)
4. Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, 1,641 (.08055)*
5. Keene State University, 4,383 (.09609)*
6. Henderson State University, 3,527 (.09755)*
7. Shepherd University, 3,861 (.09820)*
8. Fort Lewis College, 3,707 (.09844)*
9. University of Montevallo, 3,031 (.09987)*

We were struck that six of these institutions are COPLAC colleges, remarkable because we did not filter for these schools.

Note that this list does not include West Liberty University (enrollment of 2,341, similarity score of .09598), a Division II football college in West Virginia featuring primarily professional programs. WLU's faculty is 2.5 times more likely to be adjunct than at UMF. The university has a 6-year graduation rate of 41% versus UMF's 56%, and its instruction expenses as a percentage of core expenses and per student FTE are roughly half that of UMF. Although it would be 5th on the list, we do not believe it has a similar feel and mission as that of UMF.

A test of peers relaxing the size criterion to include 5,000-9,999 yields two slightly larger schools (<6,000 enrollment) with similarity scores that would get them in the top ten. These are:

1. Western Oregon University, 5,445 (.07700) – would be fourth most similar peer
2. Eastern Connecticut State University, 5,261 (.09389)* – would be sixth most similar peer

Although Western Oregon University is a NCAA Division II school, with football (these characteristics would alter the financial models at least around student services), we propose to add it along with Eastern Connecticut, which is a Division III no football, COPLAC institution.

With these decisions and an arbitrary cut off of seven schools, we land at this **finalized list of schools:**

1. **SUNY College at Potsdam, 3,904 (.06666)**
2. **Western State Colorado University, 2,722 (.07202)**
3. **SUNY College at Fredonia, 4,742 (.07495)**
4. **Western Oregon University, 5,445 (.07700)**
5. **Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, 1,641 (.08055)***
6. **Eastern Connecticut State University, 5,261 (.09389)***
7. **Keene State University, 4,383 (.09609)***

*COPLAC school