



REVIEW OF

MAINE FIRE TRAINING & EDUCATION

FY 2004-2005

CONDUCTED FOR:

SOUTHERN MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

REVIEW CONDUCTED BY:

JOSEPH T. HODGES, III
FIRE SERVICE CONSULTANT
FORMER STATE FIRE TRAINING DIRECTOR
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY FIRE SERVICE EXTENSION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. OVERVIEW AND SCOPE OF THIS REVIEW	3
The Approach	3
II. PROGRAM PROFILE AND REVIEW	6
A. MFT&E Mission and Purpose	6
B. Program Goals	6
C. Centrality to the College Mission	8
D. Program Content	9
E. Facilities and Equipment	14
F. The Budget	15
G. Partnerships/Stakeholders	15
H. Program Faculty and Staff	17
I. Innovations, New Programs, and other Efforts or Recognition	18
J. Additional Findings	20
III. RECOMMENDATIONS	23

I. OVERVIEW AND SCOPE OF THIS REVIEW

The Approach

This review of the Maine Fire Training & Education (MFT&E) program of the Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) was developed and conducted according to the procedures set forth in the document *Procedure for Conducting Reviews at SMCC* (Attachment 1) provided by the Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs for Southern Maine Community College.

The document sets forth the following expectations:

- 1) A written report shall be provided;
- 2) The report shall respond to the examination of the program relative to:
 - a. the goals of the program,
 - b. the centrality of the program's goals to the institutional mission,
 - c. the context in which the activities of the program take place,
 - d. and the degree to which the program attains its goals.
- 3) The report should address
 - a. the appropriateness of the curriculum,
 - b. expertise of the faculty,
 - c. sufficiency of resources,
 - d. meeting the needs of students,
 - e. use of technologies,
 - f. college support services, and
 - g. relationships with potential employers and relevant outside agencies.

Finally, the report is expected to outline the findings as to the overall strengths and weaknesses of the program and to identify potential areas of growth and/or change. The report should clearly identify overall findings and provide appropriate recommendations.

After reviewing the *Procedure for Conducting Reviews at SMCC*, this reviewer and the College developed a document entitled *Maine Fire Training and Education Program Review Considerations/Tasks* (Attachment 2) as the Plan of Action for the review process. Primary activities of the process involved the dissemination and return of independent evaluations of the MFT&E Program (SWOT Analysis); in-depth interviews and meetings with administrative and instructional personnel, faculty, staff, and support personnel; and small and large group meetings with program stakeholders; and meetings/discussions with SMCC administrators.

This process evolved over time from just a “brief” external review of MFT&E to one that included:

1. A review of the MFT&E Operations Manual and all its related sections;
2. Two, 4-day trips to Maine for meetings at the SMCC South Portland Campus, Bangor (Eastern Maine Community College Campus – East Region Headquarters), and Augusta (Maine Community College System Headquarters – and at the Maine Municipal Association Annual Meeting).
3. Meetings were held with SMCC Administrators; MFT&E personnel; Maine Fire Chiefs Association members; Maine Fire Fighters; MFT&E State Fire Instructors, Certified Municipal Instructors; Maine forestry personnel; a Bureau of Labor Standards representative; MFT&E Advisory Committee members; and Maine Fire Protection Services Committee members.

4. Receiving and responding to emails from concerned Maine fire service personnel who provided their SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis directly for a variety of reasons (retribution, inability to respond earlier, anonymity, censorship, late notification of the process, etc.).
5. Review of the SMCC/MFT&E Fire Science Program and its related materials;
6. Review of the SMCC & MFT&E websites;
7. Review of the Maine Fire Protection Commission *Training Facilities Committee Report – May 2004*;
8. Review of the MFT&E Curriculum Committee Report and a report of the Implementation Procedure for the new Jones & Bartlett Firefighter I & II curriculum;
9. Review of the MFT&E *Evaluation of Progress for Implementation of the 1999 Strategic Plan*;
10. Review of the 1986 MFT&E Manual; and
11. Review of relevant Maine codified statutes for Higher Education, the Maine Community College System, Maine fire service, Maine Fire Training & Education, Maine Fire Commission, and Maine firefighter training.

The findings of these reviews, assessments, meetings, and research are included within this report.

II. PROGRAM PROFILE AND REVIEW

A. MFT&E Mission and Purpose

As stated on its web page (<http://www.mfte.org/about/>), the mission of Maine Fire Training & Education “is to help make Maine firefighters and citizens safe from fire through proactive prevention, protection and suppression training and education.” As stated in the 1999 *Strategic Plan*, “The mission of MFT&E is to make Maine firefighters, citizens, and visitors safe through proactive prevention, protection and response training and education.” The mission statement from 1986 is one entire page in length and is typical of statements from that time period (a gathering of goals and objectives as opposed to a defined mission supported by cognizable goals and objectives).

B. Program Goals

MFT&E Goals are categorized into four broad areas: Fire Training, Fire Science, Fire Safety Education, and Advocacy, with each having stated goals and objectives. The ends toward which each effort is directed are broad and mostly aspirational:

Fire Training: To prepare Maine’s 12,000 firefighters to prevent and safely mitigate fires and other emergencies in their communities.

Fire Science: To develop Maine’s fire service leaders – present and future – so they can lead efforts to make Maine safe from fire.

Fire Safety Education: To help citizens develop the knowledge and skills they need to prevent fires and protect themselves from hazards.

Advocacy: To make Maine people the safest in the nation.

Objectives for each goal appear to provide a means to measure the success or failure of MFT&E in meeting the goal.

Noteworthy for this review process are the anecdotal comments this reviewer received

from meeting participants who indicated that the 1999 Strategic Plan was developed in response to the perception that MFT&E was floundering; that MFT&E was trying to do too many things and not doing any of them well; and that MFT&E was not listening to its target audiences or its clients (consumers).

Regarding this review, one commentator noted that “here we are five years later and things are not working any better.” These observations are bolstered by the comments of others who observed that MFT&E spent a lot of money to develop the 1999 plan but this reviewer could find only one attempt to evaluate progress in meeting the goals and objectives; the one effort was mostly carried out by a deputy administrator with little support or input from others, the evaluation (from all appearances) was not critically reviewed by others. Although the review/evaluation may have been shared with others, nothing is contained in the materials this reviewer received or in the conversations this reviewer had with many people to indicate that anyone has performed a focused review or assessment of the plan to evaluate MFT&E’s success in accomplishing its goals or to develop and implement strategies for success. Other individuals interviewed have noted that the plan needs updated, that MFT&E has no short-term or long-term goals; and that MFT&E needs to focus on its mission statement and do what it is supposed to do.

This reviewer concurs generally with many of the commentators in their assessments of the MFT&E program, but it is important to note that this concurrence in no way is a negative assessment of the program or its personnel. Generally speaking, most everyone this reviewer spoke with had glowing comments about the MFT&E personnel with whom they dealt: from the way people individually interacted with them (the commentator) to the way they (MFT&E personnel) carried out their assigned tasks.

C. Centrality to the College Mission

The Mission of Southern Maine Community College, as found on its web page, is to “empower students to respond to a changing world and enhance economic and cultural development in Southern Maine by providing a variety of educational opportunities and partnerships.” MFT&E’s mission is “to help make Maine firefighters and citizens safe from fire through proactive prevention, protection and suppression training and education.”

MFT&E’s mission can be interpreted as falling within the context of SMCC’s Mission by considering that making Maine’s firefighters and citizens safe from means that target audiences are empowered to respond to changes in their “world” through proactive . . . education. Further, one may infer that that economic development is enhanced through MFT&E programs because 1) for economic development to occur, a trained fire protection service must be available and MFT&E does provide essential training opportunities for the state fire service; 2) the fire service and MFT&E draws upon the community in which it is located to acquire tools, equipment, and services it needs thus making it an end-consumer directly contributing to local economic stability; 3) and workforce development in the form of “[g]raduates of the [fire science]program becoming employed as industrial fire-protection specialists, safety technicians, fire insurance inspectors, inspection bureau representatives, state fire inspectors and municipal fire department employees,” is a form of economic development in that it helps to increase the productivity and wealth of the economy and it increases the ability of individuals to share in economic opportunity. From *this* perspective, MFT&E is a “good fit” within SMCC and should remain part of the SMCC.

D. Program Content

MFT&E is a multi-faceted state fire-training program combined with a community college fire science education program that offers fire suppression, protection, prevention, technology training and education. Additionally, MFT&E offers training in other specialized areas such as hazardous materials emergency response, terrorism/weapons of mass destruction training, and industrial fire protection. Further, MFT&E provides technical services and assistance to its clients by providing training equipment, technical consultations, and instructor and professional development opportunities

Fire training and education program statistics are reported in the quarterly delivery reports provided this reviewer and indicate the number of students trained, the number of courses offered, and a small amount of financial information associated with course offerings. Course offerings appear to occur at various fire departments statewide (e.g., a variety of fire suppression programs, some fire technology courses), fire academies (regional training programs from 5-9 days in length), special training programs (e.g., industrial), and courses offered at both SMCC and Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) through the fire science technology program, all representative of program delivery methods utilized by other fire training programs in the country.

Although many of the MFT&E training programs are typical of those offered in other states, a considerable amount of negative feedback was received regarding the MFT&E basic firefighter training program. During the review process, much discussion centered around the area involving what is nationally known as the Firefighter I and II certification levels contained within the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1001 – Professional Qualifications for Fire Fighters. Firefighter I and II curriculums typically present the didactic and practical skills needed to teach laypersons how to be firefighters. Most of these training programs lead to the

ability to test for state certification as a Firefighter I or II and to national recognition/certification as a firefighter. A curriculum review process was underway when this program review process began and curriculum was specifically excluded from the scope of this review. However, the problems associated with the basic firefighter curriculum (and its prior “revision” and “implementation”) probably had as much to do with causing this program review to be conducted as any other factor affecting the program. A resounding comment from most commentators was the poorly managed/handled prior process that seemed to lead to the belief that MFT&E was no longer listening to its customers as it strove to develop and implement a program that required complete “retraining” of fire service personnel and instructors.

Many commentators were distressed that none of the training they received from MFT&E was recognized or certified by anyone other than the State of Maine. Many individuals indicated they would send their personnel to New Hampshire or other locations to receive nationally certified training and training that would be recognized by other states. Other commentators indicated that many firefighters coming into Maine had to retake training because there was no reciprocity with other states or that they were unable to get MFT&E to make “reciprocity” or equivalency recommendations for incoming firefighters.

Noteworthy is **Title 20-A, Chapter 319** of the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated, **MAINE FIRE TRAINING AND EDUCATION**, which provides that the Community College System President is the “state agent to be contacted by the United States Fire Administration about matters dealing with the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974” (a position typically referred to at the National Fire Academy as the State Fire Training Director) and that the “System” is the “state testing agency for the National Professional Qualification Board of the Joint Council of Fire Services Organizations” (now known as the National Professional

Qualifications Board, or ProBoard). Further, the statute indicates “the president may award certificates to personnel of municipal and incorporated volunteer fire departments using competency standards established by the Joint Council of Fire Services Organizations.”

This provision of Maine law seemingly places responsibility with the President of the Maine Community College System for coordinating the National Fire Academy (NFA) outreach program within Maine; serving as the Maine State Fire Training contact for all other National Fire Academy Programs (such as TraDE – the National Training Resource and Date Exchange Program of the NFA- usually attended by the state fire training directors and training officers of the metropolitan fire departments); and developing/implementing programs leading to national certification/registry/recognition of firefighters, fire officers, and other fire service personnel achieving proficiency in their specializations by attaining/mastering nationally recognized competency standards. Based upon this reviewer’s analysis of the operations of MFT&E within SMCC and the Maine Community College System, it appears that the System President has delegated his/her duties under the law to the President of Southern Maine Community College who has delegated those duties to the Administrator of Maine Fire Training & Education.

Given the comments received from participants in the review process, programs from the NFA are available in state, personnel from Maine do attend programs at the NFA, but there is not a certification testing program in place that allows the “national certification/registry/recognition of firefighters, fire officers, and other fire service personnel achieving proficiency in their specializations by attaining/mastering nationally recognized competency standards.” The lack of the latter appears to have caused tremendous dissatisfaction within much of the Maine fire service community with MFT&E.

Another area of concern regarding “program content” or program organization is the co-location of the fire science technology program within SMCC/MFT&E. Many commentators shared their concerns regarding the “close affiliation of MFT&E with SMCC” but very few thought it was detrimental; many believed the affiliation should be strengthened and that location within with SMCC should actually strengthen MFT&E. Many of these comments fail to recognize (and, indeed, some MFT&E personnel fail to realize) that MFT&E is a “program” of SMCC as opposed to being a freestanding organization that chose to affiliate with SMCC.

Review participant comments from within MFT&E indicated that it was difficult doing business because of the “affiliation” (no credit card, can’t get materials printed in time, cumbersome procurement process, can’t make “emergency” payments while on the road, etc.), although a discussion with MFT&E’s administrator indicated that many of the problems should have been and could have been solved long ago had attention been paid to the source of frustration – routinely the late payment of “close-out” contracts for field course instructors, proper planning for course offerings, budgeting meetings, procurement process instructional sessions, and finding “key personnel” at SMCC who could help demystify the process. Further, comments were received to the effect that the College fails to recognize the uniqueness of the MFT&E program in that it is a statewide program conducting activities in many places throughout the state at any given time.

Some review participant comments focused on the need to sever the two programs and provide faculty status for fire science technology personnel to allow them to participate in a different “personnel system,” to allow them to focus more on performing their program-related tasks, to allow the college to look seriously at the role of the fire science technology program,

and to cause the College to place more resources into the fire science program as opposed to MFT&E being required to subsidize SMCC.

A minority of fire service personnel (as opposed to MFT&E personnel) exists who believe that the fire science education program should be split from the fire-training program, but most persons indicated that MFT&E should not be severed from SMCC. Recognizing that fire science personnel could be brought into the faculty system is different from saying that the relationship between MFT&E and SMCC should be changed or that the fire science technology program should be eliminated from MFT&E and absorbed by SMCC.

From an educational standpoint it makes sense to enhance the relationship between SMCC and MFT&E (i.e., increased accountability) to eliminate the source of frustration that exists between faculty, staff, administrators, state fire instructors, etc. and to enhance working relationships between the College and one of its programs. It is also incumbent upon the college to recognize that firefighters throughout the state have frequent contact with MFT&E which can and does serve as an excellent recruiting tool for the fire science education program; that firefighters can gain college level credit for training programs in which they participate which can increase the likelihood they will attend college and advance their educational levels; firefighters can attend the National Fire Academy and receive ACE (American Council on Education) equivalent credit for programs that can be transferred or recognized by the fire science education program; the fire science program's live-in program provides meaningful educational opportunities for fire science students (essentially a laboratory experience for applying their fire science education while simultaneously providing personnel to help staff fire departments for emergency response activities); and, finally, that the training program complements the community college education program completely.

E. Facilities and Equipment

MFT&E operates from two locations: its headquarters office located in South Portland (also known as the West Region Office) and a satellite location known as the East Region Office located at Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor, Maine. Wide disparity is noted between the locations in terms of staffing, equipment, office space, and classroom facilities. Further, the State lacks a centralized training facility and must operate its “academy” programs at regional facilities hosted/owned by local fire departments. Most commentators noted these disparities, some disparagingly referring to the setup as the old “north/south” problem – just renamed “east/west” to try to cure the problem without any real attention being paid to the lack of staff, equipment, office space and classroom facilities located in the north/west region as compared to the south/east region.

An inventory list of equipment owned by MFT&E leads this reviewer to believe the program has access to a several equipment trailers to support various training programs (which, based on comments received from program staff, is insufficient to meet course demand), a moderate amount of field training equipment, and a cache of instructional equipment that is probably insufficient to meet the needs of an active training program. Considering that the trend in training and education is to move towards computer-based training (CBT) materials requiring a laptop computer/LCD projector and VCR combinations, the instructional equipment list provided for review purposes (MFT&E possesses three IBM laptops (with an additional laptop listed for classroom use) eight LCD projectors, and eight projector kits) indicates only a small amount of CBT capable equipment for classroom and field use.

F. The Budget

This review addresses budget in only a cursory manner. The information provided for

review shows only budget accounts, dollar amounts, a financial accounts list and a description of those accounts as well as providing information as to who has responsibility for managing the accounts. The accounts and fund amounts appear to be consistent with information learned during the review; grant funded account descriptions indicate that MFT&E is the recipient of several grants that do not require competitive application. Given the concerns expressed about a potential change in support of MFT&E from the Fire Investigation and Prevention Tax, MFT&E may want to consider seeking additional federal funds through competitive grant opportunities available through the U.S. government in areas that support its operations. Examples would be grants from Homeland Security that supplement additional work/research/study in the areas of weapons of mass destruction/terrorism response and grants from the National Institute of Science and Technology for fire behavior research applications that may provide additional support/educational opportunities for students in the fire science technology program.

G. Partnerships/Stakeholders

In determining the scope of this review, SMCC and the reviewer identified stakeholders, or a “constituency” of MFT&E. The identified groups from whom input for this review was requested included the following:

1. Instructors (to include FDSSs, SFIs, CMIs, and fire science technology personnel)
2. Students
3. Advisory Committee
4. Regulatory Agencies who may control programmatic functions (particularly members of the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission and the Bureau of Labor Standards)
5. Maine Fire Chiefs Association (full-time, volunteer, and call)
6. Maine Federation of Firefighters (full-time, volunteer, and call)
7. Maine Municipal Association
8. Independent Insurance Agents
9. Maine Safety Council
10. Fire Marshal’s Office
11. Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and
12. Maine Forest Service

After concluding two visits to Maine and making trips to South Portland, Bangor, and Augusta and attending the Maine Municipal Association Meeting, and specifically a meeting of the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, we obtained input from nearly every identified group, either directly or indirectly, except for the Fire Marshal's Office, Independent Insurance Agents, and the Maine Safety Council. Review input was provided either in the form of comments made during face to face meetings (both individually and in groups), responses to the SWOT analyses questionnaire distributed by the Vice-President's office, MFT&E personnel, and other "instructors," and emails directed to this reviewer. That so many individuals and groups were willing to participate and be heard, especially in the case of the first Maine experience (extremely short response time between notification and arrival), should serve as both a testament and alert to MFT&E and SMCC.

From a partnership perspective, it appears that MFT&E relies upon a strong partnership with the Bureau of Labor Standards (regulatory partnership/enforcement connotations); that a partnership exists with Maine Forest Service (very positive comments in support of MFT&E were received from a Maine Forest Service representative); and that a partnership exists with MEMA (pass-through grant funds and an association for MFT&E to develop response protocols and training programs for the Weapons of Mass Destruction teams). MFT&E and the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission are "partners" in the sense that the fire-training administrator (or representative of the Community College System) is an appointed member of the Commission.

G. Program Faculty and Staff

From an organizational chart provided this reviewer (see Attachment 3), it appears that the following positions exist within the MFT&E program:

1. State Fire Administrator
2. Deputy Fire Administrator (1 each - East/West regions)
3. Fire Department Services Supervisors (1 each - East/West regions)
4. Education Coordinators (1 each - East/West regions; 1 Assistant in West)
5. Field Supervisors (3 in West region – announced on 11/18/04; 4 or 5 in East region)
6. State Fire Instructors (60+ total for both regions)
7. Special Program coordinators (public fire education/industrial education/hazardous materials & terrorism/ fire officer I/ testing & certification/ curriculum development/ instructor development/ webmaster)
8. One office manager and 1 secretary/office assistant per region

During this review, input/feedback was received from each major identified position in the organization in a one-on-one or one-on-several interview that allowed each participant to provide comments to the reviewer in both written and spoken form. When participants asked to meet one-on-one with the reviewer when time was available, these requests were accommodated so that participants could speak freely.

From an organizational standpoint, the chart makes it appear that the organization is hierarchical in nature, militaristic in operation (a fire service approach to “command and control”), and that MFT&E is a freestanding body. When one digs into the structure, it begins to look relatively flat: almost all the state fire instructor positions (SFI) are part-time employees; all the named persons under the Education coordinators/assistant coordinator are part-time faculty in the community college system; and that several people fill more than one position. More disconcerting, the relationships between MFT&E, the Advisory Committee, SMCC (and College

Administrators) and Certified Municipal Instructors are not shown or reflected in any manner. This failure to recognize the relationships can lead to a blurring of responsibilities and identity, give the impression that accountability is lacking.

Job/position description and work plans are present in the materials reviewed, but discussions with personnel indicate that the work plans have not been shared, that regular evaluations of work productivity do not occur, that job descriptions are inaccurate, and that lines of responsibility/reporting are regularly ignored (particularly by the administrator). Further, of the work plans reviewed, internal measures are largely “quantitative” and focus on outputs rather than outcomes.

H. Innovations, New Programs, and other Efforts or Recognition

This reviewer located several programs or accomplishments that reflect well upon MFT&E and SMCC. Some examples include: the Fire Officer I Academy (Attachment 4); the work of the Advisory Committee in coming to a consensus on a new Firefighter I and II curriculum (Jones & Bartlett – Attachment 5); the publication of the Maine Firefighter Magazine and its related website; the work of John Beatty in coordinating/developing fire prevention education CD- ROMs in multiple languages to reach diverse groups; the work of MFT&E “field instructor” Vicki Schmidt in GIS Mapping; a training publication on thermal imaging cameras (cir. 1997), used/cited by other training programs; the work of MFT&E personnel who perform technical consultations for municipalities and their fire departments (Maine Fire Training & Education completed an ‘Aerial Apparatus Operational Needs Analysis and Evaluation’ report after meeting on two occasions with a purchasing committee and reviewed the status of the Town’s existing ladder truck for Town of Carrabassett Valley Proposed New Fire Department

Ladder Truck Purchase); recognition by Representative Maietta [Maine Fire Training & Education has utilized a new program by the State Department of Education to bring more learning avenues to communities. In a recent course four towns participated in live video feeds where they could interact simultaneously without requiring the participants to use a phone. This method of teaching is increasing the number of firefighters the agency may reach without compromising the intended education (**Representative Maietta Talks about Fire Training in Maine** *Learns about new methods to reach more students across the state January 6, 2003 South Portland, Maine*)]; and work by Bill Leighton in developing needed programs for Fire Prevention, Survival and Juvenile Fire Setter Awareness.

These are but a few examples of outstanding work found by this reviewer. Although some participants in the review process have commented negatively about MFT&E and even negatively about at least one of the cited examples (“the Fire Officer I Academy is too long”), MFT&E should receive credit and recognition for the outstanding work it accomplishes. Further, MFT&E should follow the examples it sets for itself and continue to do right things, right – a process that involves adherence to its mission and goals.

I. Additional Findings

The following additional findings are made based on conversations with MFT&E personnel; responses to direct questioning of administrators and staff on the second trip to Maine; and input/observations received from program review participants:

A. Additional space for staff, personnel, equipment and classrooms are needed for the East Region Offices;

B. It does not appear that there are adequate clerical resources to assist MFT&E personnel to accomplish the task at hand.

C. “MFT&E’s job should not be curriculum development, there are not enough people with the appropriate expertise to do this job as well as to teach courses.”

D. Repeated comments were received from State Fire Instructors that they have a hard time tracking their pay for teaching classes after submitting their close-out paperwork;

E. “There needs to be more accountability: personnel have identified problems, concerns and issues; communicated them to higher-ups; those concerns move to the top but nothing is ever resolved;”

F. “Academies are taking away funds from field deliveries: a 9 day academy costs about \$1100 per person – field delivery costs significantly less, about \$75 per person;”

G. ATM sites are not used to greatest possible extent; all classroom instruction could be done through ATM locations with hands-on being performed at local departments;

H. Advisory Committee could be better utilized, given a stronger voice, allowed to exercise some oversight function;

I. There appears to be a lack of communication/communication barrier between East/West and personnel occupying similar positions in both regions; “It appears that the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing;”

J. Fire departments and MFT&E full-time staff are aware that MFT&E is a training organization but many people believe that MFT&E has become an enforcement agency for the Bureau of Labor Standards;

K. On the issue of physical assessments, the perception is “You’re going to do this because we say you have to.” There appears to be a blurring between organizations as to what it means to be the AHJ, Authority Having Jurisdiction, in this and other regards.

L. Questions abound about the Advisory Committee (AC) (but all think it is a good

idea to have the Committee): Among the common questions asked were: Who appoints the AC members? Who is eligible for appointment to the AC? Who nominates personnel for appointment to the AC? Who is responsible for sending information to the stakeholders?

M. What is the role of a Certified Municipal Instructor? They teach, but receive no pay, are not covered under workman's compensation, and they have no liability insurance, but they provide a valuable service to help MFT&E accomplish its tasks.

N. Concern exists among many people about the role of Greg Hanscom; no formal announcement has been made about the Public Service Division and how his position affects that of MFT&E personnel.

O. No formal program self study has been performed for MFT&E.

P. The East Region Deputy Administrator, Bruce Hensler, prepared the only assessment of the strategic plan.

Q. MFT&E is stretching personnel, taking on more responsibilities – some people like the challenge – others don't; is viewed as a form of "professional development."

R. The pump testing/certification program is a necessity for some departments; the program has never been completed; there may be a lack of accountability for the funds that were provided to develop the program; there is a sense that development of this program was agreed to because MFT&E tries to be all things to all people.

S. Effective implementation of programs/follow-up with requests-directives- appears to be a problem at times (the Advisory Committee supported maintenance monies for the different training centers two years ago - - but this has not been done yet and still needs to be addressed).

T. The MFT&E Operations Manual provided for this review has not been made

available to all necessary personnel. The policy and procedures manual is about twenty years old – updates are a problem.

U. An almost three-fold increase in the number of students trained has occurred over the past five years – the growth is better than MFT&E anticipated; but it appears that an administrative infrastructure to support program delivery is lacking.

V. Regarding MFT&E, generally: nearly everyone said MFT&E did some things well and others not so well; everyone identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; nearly everyone said MFT&E did not communicate well with others (from either within or without the organization); nearly everyone wants to know who is in charge of what and who reports to whom?

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

One must remember that, to the extent possible, program review is an objective process. This reviewer has attempted to be objective, open-minded, and receptive to all input from all parties to the review. Nevertheless, some subjectivity creeps into the process of making recommendations, and it must be remembered that these are merely recommendations that may be embraced, wholly or partially, or discarded as appropriate by those to whom the completion of the review process falls. This reviewer, having participated in many program reviews (both as a subject of the review and as being the reviewer) is aware that constant scrutiny is unhealthy and unnerving for program personnel. Program review then, if nothing else, is a way for programs to find out if they have done what has been asked of them in a manner that is

acceptable and helps the program look to the future, determining what it should do and how it should be done.

INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS

1. Pay attention to instructors – professional development, timely payment for work performed, good materials from which to teach, good equipment to use. Develop an orientation program for new instructors that could also be attended by older instructors, focus on the programs to be conducted, policies, procedures, operations, etc.
2. Consider allowing instructors to specialize in certain teaching areas – it is hard to be proficient in every area- in most occupations specialization is the rule, not the exception.
3. The ATM system works well- BUT SITES NOT BEING USED WELL. Consider convening meetings with client groups/stakeholders to identify positive locations for training, and identify more ways in which to use ATMs to make training more accessible and easier to obtain. Alternatively, consider developing courses for online delivery in both the Maine Fire Training Field and the Fire Science Technology programs. This system could blend with features mentioned in the following paragraph.
4. Consider developing an online training information system that allows students to view their training transcripts, order transcripts, or order duplicate certificates of training. This system should allow instructors to enter data upon course completion – which would further allow office personnel to create certificate training for students on a timely basis. Further, such a system would allow for almost instantaneous generation of up-to-date enrollment statistics. Finally, the system should allow chiefs of departments or their designees to track the status of their personnel in meeting training requirements and progress towards certification at various levels.
5. Create a Certification Team to develop a National Certification Testing Program for Firefighter I & II, Fire Officer I & II, Fire Instructor I and II, etc. This process is relatively simple and can be done with the assistance of the National Professional Qualifications Board.
6. Develop a field program evaluation tool used to measure effectiveness of the training programs in meeting the needs of the departments, use input/feedback to help plan additional training or to determine if programs should be eliminated or “scaled back.” Further, this should allow MFT&E to ascertain whether one training program conducted in one location is the same as a training program conducted in another location across the state.
7. The following is a suggestion that was contained in a SWOT analysis:
“Design a rookie class that anyone could send new hires to that would through enough of the basics to meet the standards to start running; we all have a need for an ongoing class like this that runs maybe 4 times a year and is scheduled like the

fire science classes so a person could go to a day or night session- these new recruits could take their time getting their FFI but at least could run and help start generating interest in belonging to the organization.”

This is a suggestion worth considering: it would recognize the needs some departments must meet because of limited training time, manpower, and resources. It may not be workable, but some states have training programs that are designed to do just this, while also offering longer training programs designed to meet the full NFPA standard for firefighters.

PERSONNEL

8. Accountability, accountability, accountability – with authority comes responsibility and accountability. All positions need revised position descriptions and work plans. Work plans should be developed with outcome measurements in mind (not just quantitative measurements like number of students trained- but what training was received, why it was important, what need it met, etc.)
9. Provide regular personnel evaluations to provide realistic feedback to people- let them know, in writing, how they are performing. This will require spending time and resources to develop realistic evaluation tools. It is possible that a peer review system may be a workable alternative for some Fire training positions (not just Fire Science), if able to be developed within the context of the position assignments.
10. Consider reducing the number of part-time personnel receiving regular pay; dedicate this funding to a few more full-time staff members. This will allow MFT&E to focus on its required tasks, identify some specific personnel to perform certain identified or new tasks, and provide some buffer personnel to for times when resource demand is at a peak. However, DO NOT allow a reduction in “paid” SFI positions to equate to a reduction in training. Also consider taking some of the current part-time personnel who are doing full-time work and compensating them fairly for their activity.
11. Provide additional secretarial/clerical/staff support to accomplish the mission – part-time positions increased to full-time positions may help. Consider, too, creating positions for Logistics, Finance, Travel, Field Support that are support positions with specialized knowledge – this should help eliminate comments that the Community College System is unworkable for MFT&E. Consider too, that providing training for key personnel (and sample, up-to-date guidelines) may help eliminate some of the problems.
12. Find appropriate positions/work assignments that may be augmented by community college students (work-study positions); service learning is a tremendous tool, plus it gives students real-life work experience. Make provisions to provide adequate supervision for these work-study students.
13. The director needs a time management system and needs to establish specific goals and objectives for himself- two years is too long to allow the distribution of training center maintenance funds to lag behind; failure to develop a pump test

certification program after agreeing to do so, is unacceptable. Further, the director needs to be held accountable for following through/failing to follow through on tasks.

14. Provide professional development opportunities to all personnel (and incorporate into work plans), particularly to upper level management, that emphasize listening skills, communications skills, time management, interpersonal relations, and management skill sets.
15. Revise the policies and procedures manual in a timely fashion; disseminate the information to all affected personnel in a timely manner; hold meetings to bring personnel up to date and gain input/feedback from affected parties.
16. Provide training from the College to MFT&E core staff and field staff, as appropriate, on administrative procedures used by the College that are, in turn, to be followed by MFT&E.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

17. Revise the Organizational Chart contained within the Operating Procedures Manual to reflect the true linkages between the College, Advisory Committee, MFT&E (and its component parts) and show only full-time positions to obtain an accurate picture of the entire program. A variation showing just MFT&E with its full and part-time positions is also important, but the way the diagram is now, it gives the reader an impression that a very large organization exists, this is inaccurate and misleading in that it leads readers to believe that a large number of resources are available when in fact, resources are stretched exceedingly thin. (This reviewer believes that this is just one of the reasons that those in management positions believe that more can be done than possible.)
18. Consider fully incorporating the fire science program into SMCC and making the program personnel “faculty” within the context of the College community with faculty peer review and faculty responsibilities, but maintain a working linkage between the two programs (Fire Training and Fire Science). Of necessity, this means that fire science faculty/staff will have different reporting lines, goals, and objectives.
19. A person or management group needs to meet periodically with MFT&E management (director, deputies, FDSSs) to review goals, objectives, develop task lists, progress reports. All of this information needs to be communicated to stakeholders on a timely basis.
20. Provide increased oversight of the activities of the Director and require the Director to meet on a regular basis with the Vice-President, Dean for Academic Affairs or other individual to develop goals and objectives, action plan, progress report, and provide appropriate mentoring in management philosophy.

MISSION & GOALS

21. As reported, the STRATEGIC PLAN was developed in 1999 because of problems perceived with MFT&E: “customer service was an issue, 1999 plan needs to be reviewed, revised, and updated as necessary.” Consider undergoing a renewed

strategic planning process with the development of realistic goals and objectives in a redeveloped strategic plan.

22. MFT&E needs to assess differences between career, call, and volunteer departments and determine what it can do to help accommodate each department's very real and pressing needs. MFT&E should investigate whether that assistance might be available from or in conjunction with the Maine Fire Protection Services Commissions, especially since an MFT&E member appears to be a member of the Commission.

Part of the Commission's statutorily prescribed duties includes:

An evaluation of existing fire prevention, fire suppression, fire safety and fire training strategies and programs, including recommendations for improvements, new programs and strategies, funding options for training and oversight and administration of any training funds; (ii). making recommendations for effective management of resources within the State's fire protection services system; and (iii) Assisting all governmental agencies with firefighter training and education responsibilities to enhance their delivery of services to fire prevention, protection and life safety professionals, including paid, call and volunteer fire service members.

Further, from an organizational perspective, MFT&E must always remember that the fire chief (under Title 5 M.R.S.A §3371) is required to "provide a training program for firefighters within the municipality in cooperation with appropriate governmental agencies." Seemingly, this language makes the fire chief the arbiter of all training to be provided to his/her firefighters, ultimately the authority in determining the content of the training program, and the "customer to be listened to when training decisions are being made.

As much as possible, the training needs to conform to National Fire Protection Association Standards and should be designed to lead to certifications that are nationally recognized and available to all on a voluntary basis.

23. MFT&E needs to recognize that it cannot be all things to all people: some noteworthy comments made in other SWOTs recognize that: "smaller departments/ regions are successfully creating and implementing training programs that surpass the quality offered by MFT&E" and "We are moving to the IFSTA curriculum and so are many other departments- it surpasses the requirements of MFT&E; it is reviewed on a regular basis and materials are readily available." Instead of feeling threatened by these comments/insights, MFT&E should embrace change and differences in programs and find ways to give credit to the work being done in those departments. This may be a large task, but in the end will help rebuild burned bridges.

INTERNAL PROCESSES

24. Consider developing an electronic forms database with forms capable of being completed online and printed for submission. Consider whether electronic signatures may be acceptable under current state law to allow the online filing of completed forms.
25. Provide MFT&E budget in a college acceptable format that can be used to explain to partners/stakeholders a true financial picture. Consider providing explanatory information that will help budget information to be interpreted easily.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

26. Make a commitment to meet with stakeholders on a regular basis; rotate the meetings around the state; require all MFTE managers to attend (no excuses accepted); set an agenda that can be freely added to; take minutes and share the results with all.
27. Perform a series of needs assessments with all fire departments/ clients- attempt to learn what training needs exist, find out which ones are being met, learn/develop a plan to meet specified percentages of the needs over time. Communicate this process to stakeholders- allow stakeholder involvement in needs assessment tool development process.
28. Formalize the Advisory Committee – if written documentation that answers the questions posed earlier does not exist (Who appoints the AC members? Who is eligible for appointment to the AC? Who nominates personnel for appointment to the AC? Who is responsible for sending information to the stakeholders?) then create that documentation.
29. Formalize the Advisory Committee meeting process – assure that a College Administrator is present for the meetings – formalize the agenda call process, work to assure that a quorum of members will be present.
30. MFT&E, if it is not already doing so, needs to make sure that its director and deputies are always in attendance at state, regional, and local meetings of fire chiefs and firefighters. Not only will this make those individuals recognizable on sight, but also it will let the groups know they are important and that their input matters. As often as possible, the director and deputies should attend the functions together so as to provide a unified front and to also assure that all parts of the state (for training purposes) are represented.
31. Finally, in this day and age when volunteer recruitment is so critical, many states are taking advantage of the captive high school audience by creating articulation agreements between high schools and fire training programs. If Maine law allows “junior firefighters” to be trained, or if current school law provides protection for students engaging in fire training, this may be a solution for one problem that also helps recruit students for future training and certification programs. (An insightful responder included this suggestion in a SWOT analysis.

While many recommendations have been made, none call for the termination of any individual or the elimination of any full-time position. The changes and recommendations herein will require some effort and some reorganization to implement; resources in terms of people and money will have to be found or made to make everything work.

More importantly, this report suggests that MFT&E become “honest” with itself: recognize your potential and recognize your limitations. Only by recognizing limitations can you truly reach your full potential. Do not forget the basics: treat people with respect, listen to and pay attention to them, and be honest with them. If you can’t do something, admit it. If it is truly important, you will find a way to accomplish the task at hand but also do what you are required to do it well and then consider putting the icing on the cake.