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News/Nouvelles

For Immediate Release
Monday, December 17, 2007

NR070

UMFK TO OFFER WINTER SPORTS MANAGEMENT CONCENTRATION FOR BUSINESS MAJORS BEGINNING IN FALL 2008

Fort Kent – The University of Maine at Fort Kent’s Natural and Behavioral Sciences Division will offer a business concentration in Winter Sports Management beginning with the 2008 fall semester, it was announced today by University officials.

The Winter Sports Management concentration within the business major at UMFK will be designed to prepare students to enter positions of responsibility within the community-based ski industry.

Maine currently has many small, community-based, ski areas including two in Fort Kent (10th Mountain Ski Center and Lonesome Pine Trails) and three others in Aroostook County, alone. Although there are several current college programs throughout the country in ski area management, those are geared toward ski resort management.

“The development of the Winter Sports Management concentration at UMFK fits well with the University’s mission, which embraces our proximity to Maine’s wilderness and the joys of outdoor sports,” said Dr. Richard W. Cost, president of UMFK.

The Winter Sports Management concentration will be the only program nationally, which focuses on small, non-profit, ski areas each with its own set of unique management goals and objectives.

The focus of the Winter Sports Management concentration will be on how to develop a business model that is sustainable. Areas to be covered include fundraising, event hosting and grant writing. The concentration also will focus on aspects such as coordinating volunteer activities, community-based programming, and the basic development and maintenance of ski area infrastructures.

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"Small community-based ski facilities are an important, but often overlooked, resource especially in regard to college programs, which train individuals for the ski business," said Jeff Dubis, an instructor of Forestry at UMFK who is coordinating the development of the Winter Sports Management program.

Dubis is very involved in many aspects of Nordic skiing, including ski venue management, programming, event hosting, and instructing various youth ski programs. He is an international referee with the International Biathlon Union and will be serving as Chief of Competition for the upcoming 2009 Biathlon World Cup.

"Hopefully, the Winter Sports Management program can provide people with the skills necessary to run these small facilities. UMFK has a world-class Nordic facility practically at its door. The Winter Sports Management program will help to strengthen ties between the University, 10th mountain Ski Center, and the Maine Winter Sports Center," Dubis added.

The Winter Sports Management concentration will consist of 24 credit hours within a classroom setting and 12 credit hours in an internship capacity. Ties between the University and the Maine Winter Sports Center will create ideal opportunities for internships at any of Maine Winter Sports Centers' various alpine and Nordic ski facilities throughout the state, and especially here in Aroostook County. Those 36 credit hours are in addition to general education, business management core courses, and electives totaling 128 credit hours for a Bachelor of Science in Business Management degree.

The concentration will incorporate three new classes specific to Winter Sports Management (Introduction to Winter Sports Management; Ski Area Equipment Operations; and Trail and Facility Design), in addition to using several cross-functional business, electronic commerce and public safety administration classes, as well.

"The sustainability of the ski industry - especially in Maine - depends on the sustainability of the community ski area." said Andy Shepard, president of the Maine Winter Sports Center.

"These ski facilities need leadership that is skilled in all areas of traditional ski area management, but the leaders also need to know how to tap into available state and federal grants, organize volunteers, and engage their communities in ways that resorts do not need to. I am very excited about this new degree program, because it will develop a new generation of entrepreneurial community ski area operators, prepared to handle today's issues, and that is desperately needed," Shepard added.

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“The opportunities for our students to be involved in the major national and international events hosted by the Maine Winter Sports Center at the 10th Mountain Lodge truly are extraordinary. Look at our snow – this is the perfect location of this concentration!” UMFK’s Dr. Cost concluded.

For additional information on the Winter Sports Management business concentration at UMFK, please call Jeff Dubis at 207/ 834-7543.

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