

# HOULTON HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER

*Celebrating 20 years of educational opportunity*



University of Maine at  
**PRESQUE ISLE**  
*North of Ordinary*

(207) 521-3100  
houlton-hhec@maine.edu

# Welcome to the Houlton Higher Education Center

The Houlton Higher Education Center, a University of Maine at Presque Isle facility, has worked for the last 20 years to provide students with the very best in educational experiences and services. The Center brings a wide variety of educational programs under one roof, giving residents a chance to prepare for college, earn their associate's and bachelor's degrees, take refresher courses, or participate in lifelong learning activities.

UMPI's partners at the Center include: the University of Maine System Student Success Center; University of Maine at Augusta; University of Maine Cooperative Extension/4-H; Northern Maine Community College; RSU 29 and MSAD 70 Adult & Community Education; and TRIO Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, and Maine Educational Opportunity Center. The Houlton Center also serves as a resource location for the Maine Military and Community Network, a community effort that works to understand, prevent, and help address the challenges faced by current and former military members and their families, as well as their communities.

*"The Houlton Higher Education Center has helped to change so many lives since its doors opened in 2001. We are so pleased to mark this special anniversary and to showcase the partners, the people, and the work they do every day to support local learners and help them on their diverse academic journeys."*

- UMPI PRESIDENT RAY RICE

# "The Opportunity" and the History

## The Opportunity

This fall marks the 20th anniversary of a very special place that serves the community in so many unique ways. The University of Maine at Presque Isle's Houlton Higher Education Center provides a wide range of educational opportunities to the residents of southern Aroostook, western New Brunswick, and northern Washington and Penobscot counties. In fact, "opportunity" is at the core of everything that happens at the Houlton Higher Education Center.

When someone walks through the doors of the Houlton Center, it's not a one-size-fits-all education experience; instead, staffers meet with each person to learn more about their unique educational journeys and ensure that they're able to take advantage of every single opportunity available to them at the Center. A student involved in TRIO Upward Bound, for example, would be made aware of other services offered by other partners at the Center that would benefit them, whether it be a math or writing class through Adult Ed programs, or an UMPI or NMCC class they can take through the College Aspirations program, or programs like MEOC that can help them apply for financial aid and search for scholarships.

That kind of customized educational plan saves students time and money and sets

them up for long-term success. And the support students receive while using the Center as a resource helps them to achieve their educational goals. Houlton Center staff work with students through class completion, services rendered, graduation, and beyond. Assistance in areas such as academic advising and planning, admission requirements, financial aid, and computer applications are part of the package.

"The Houlton Center is here for people no matter where they are on their educational journey," Tracy Rockwell, Director of the Houlton Center, said.

## The History

The vision of many local citizens and educators, the Center first took shape in 1999 as the result of a grassroots community effort to re-establish a formal home for higher education in the southern Aroostook area. At the time, UMPI maintained a modest education center in Houlton, and then-Northern Maine Technical College also had a presence there, but the Houlton community was looking to fill a larger void left after Ricker College closed in 1979. The community group worked collaboratively with the University of Maine System, the then-Maine Technical College System, and other educational entities to bring the Center to fruition.



Photo credit: Daniel Dobbs

The idea was to transform a 15,500-square-foot building, formerly a Shop 'n Save grocery store, into a one-of-a-kind educational facility. When approached by the University of Maine System, Hannaford Brothers graciously agreed to donate the Military Street building to the University. In order to pay for the \$2 million renovation, officials received strong support from County legislators, and critical leadership from then Maine State Senator Michael Michaud in securing state funding for the Center.

Architectural firm Oak Point Associates was hired to redesign the building and Houlton company Buildings Etcetera was signed on as general contractor. Construction on the

Center began in December 2000 with an official groundbreaking. The project was completed ahead of schedule and under budget, and in Fall 2001, the Center welcomed its first students.

Since that opening day, the Houlton Higher Education Center has played a significant role in assisting many with their educational pathways and in making community connections.

But whatever the changes, one constant remains: every partner and team member at the Houlton Center works hard to ensure students have the very best educational experiences possible.

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on your 20<sup>th</sup> year  
of providing higher education  
to students in the  
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# The Partners

Twenty years of professional partnerships under one roof has allowed for growth, development, and unique opportunities for all those who call the Houlton Higher Education Center home.

Working with building colleagues brings a level of service many other educational programs in the state aren't able to offer. Whether students are seeking training, education, or assistance, a "warm hand off" can easily happen in the Houlton Center; one program can quickly guide a student to another program or agency, while providing the individualized support needed.

## Anchoring entities: UMPI, UMA, NMCC, HHACE

There are four anchoring entities that have been located at the Houlton Center since its inception--the University of Maine at Presque Isle, University of Maine at Augusta, Northern Maine Community College, and Houlton Hodgdon Adult & Community Education. All of these entities provide credentialing opportunities that can change students' lives and career paths. Other Center partners support student and community needs and provide specific resources. These include the University of Maine System Student Success Center; University of Maine Cooperative Extension/4-H; and TRIO Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, and Maine Educational Opportunity Center.



### University of Maine at Presque Isle

UMPI serves as the head and the heart of the Center, providing administrative oversight and facilitating the connections that make it such a unique place. As Jean Henderson, UMPI Professional Academic Advisor, puts it, "We welcome them in taking the first step on their educational journey." Henderson is often the first person a student meets when they enter the building. She sits them down and talks with them about their goals and helps them identify in which direction they want to grow. She guides them through the Admissions and Financial Aid process and registration, and checks in with them every semester to ensure their forward progress.

UMPI offers classes for the bachelor's degree in Business, Elementary Education, Liberal Studies, and the associate's degree in Liberal Arts and Criminal Justice, as well as online courses for bachelor's degrees in English, History and Psychology. The University also hosts the Native Education Center, established to better serve Native American students and provide them with support as they complete their college educations, and High

School Aspirations, aimed at increasing the number of students who access and succeed in college. UMPI staff also provide career preparation, coordinate internships, and facilitate community connections.

But there's another important element the UMPI team brings. Center Director Tracy Rockwell and Henderson help to create a supportive and fun environment for students, and a real sense of belonging. It's not just the frequent check-ins, the conversations about life and family; it's the ways they make daily life special at the Center. It's the celebration of occasions like National Pizza Day, the new electric s'mores maker in the lobby, and the efforts they make to meet real needs--like helping to find reliable tires--that stays with students.

"We're part of students' lives, at least this part of their story," Henderson said. "And our goal is to make it memorable."



Photo credit: Michael Dobbs Taking part in the Houlton Center graduation celebration in 2018 are, from left, UMPI faculty and staff members Carolyn Dorsey, Barbara Blackstone, Tracy Rockwell, Nicole Fournier, and Vanessa Pearson, and UMPI President Ray Rice.



### University of Maine at Augusta

The University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) is the third largest public university in Maine, with approximately 5,600 students. In addition to its main campus in the state's capital, UMA also serves students at its campus in Bangor (UMA Bangor) and through UMA Centers around the state. With its multiple locations and long-term expertise in online and distance learning, UMA is generally considered a university of choice for Mainers of all ages who want to attend college without uprooting their lives.

Since 2001, UMA, in partnership with the University of Maine at Presque Isle's Houlton Higher Education Center, has been providing educational opportunities to the people of southern Aroostook County, northern Penobscot County, eastern Washington County, western New Brunswick, Canada, and beyond.

UMA at the Houlton Higher Education Center is one of eight UMA Centers around Maine where people can take courses, pursue degrees, and receive all the support they need to earn a degree close to home and on schedules that fit into their family and work lives. Courses are taught by faculty on-site, online, and via two-way videoconferencing.

UMA at the Houlton Higher Education Center has served the southern Aroostook County area for more than 20 years. The Center provides local access to more than 30 full degree and certificate programs, with small class size, personalized services in the areas of advising and financial aid which includes numerous scholarships. Onsite, students can choose from 20+ university courses offered each fall and spring semester, morning, afternoon and evening. Approximately 500 courses are offered online, or via videoconferencing.

With campuses in Augusta and Bangor, as well as UMA Centers located across the state, UMA is truly statewide providing Mainers with the opportunity to start or complete their college degree close to home. Students can take part in distance education or onsite classes that fit their schedules.

For more information, contact the UMA Houlton Center at (207) 521-3100, or visit [uma.edu/Houlton](http://uma.edu/Houlton).



### Houlton Hodgdon Adult & Community Education/ Northern Maine Community College

Contributed by Joe Fagnant, HHACE Director

A lot has happened In the past 20 years and HHACE has taken full advantage of being under one roof with NMCC, UMPI, UMA, MEOC, and other agencies that enter our facility. We have adjusted to student and community needs and have ridden the wave of change. In 2014 the State of Maine changed from the GED to the HISET (High School Equivalency Test) to earn an equivalency diploma. Open learning classrooms replaced predetermined scheduled classes, allowing our welcoming teachers to deliver high school completion and college transitions in a more flexible and individualized format. A 2016 federal law change has brought adult education to the table in workforce development, combining educational entities, employers, and agencies under regionalized workforce boards. The State of Maine Adult Education also combined individual programs into Hubs that aligned with our workforce boards. Aroostook County Adult & Community Education (Hub 2) is an example of a region that shares opportunities, staff, funding, and programs. By working together, we continue to help learners of all ages gain the skills they need to enter the workforce.

Throughout the years, HHACE has continued to offer traditional enrichment programs including arts, technology, woodworking, and welding, and created more courses for our aging population. NMCC saw the resurgence of students looking to better themselves through education, while also adding a much needed practical nursing program focused in the Southern Aroostook Region, the first of its kind in Maine. In 2022, the Maine Community College System is investing \$60 million dollars into workforce development and training programs. Our adult education workforce programs at Region Two CTE focused on healthcare while also including a multifaceted welding course. As we grew, we also faced a challenge. How do you deliver education in a pandemic? Everyone struggled with this monumental challenge and education has now changed forever.

To survive, you adapt, and this will lead us into the future. Multiple ways to deliver programming to students includes face to face instruction, online learning, multiple formats for education including packets that can go home, work that can be done on a phone, or a Zoom meeting with an instructor. Our Hub 2 Aroostook partners shared instructors through technology to deliver courses and even a CNA class generated in Houlton was delivered throughout Aroostook County. These changes are not going away. We saw more NMCC online courses and know we still must develop opportunities to offer face to face classes to benefit students' learning styles. Learning by yourself may be convenient, but we look forward to meeting in traditional modes, allowing for open discussions in a classroom setting. We want to prepare learners to solve the next set of challenges that will face us in the future.

Education is a constant evolution. Being a part of the Houlton Higher Education Center will bring us through the challenges and triumphs. We are ready to partner and share our learners, our innovations, and the community spirit of collaboration to bring our learners through the next twenty years.

**Other Center Partners: UMS Student Success Center, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, TRIO**



**University of Maine System Student Success Center**

Launched during the pandemic, the UMS Student Success Center is concentrated on connecting with students interested in coming to one of the institutions of the University of Maine System, even if they're not sure which one or how to do it. The center has full-time success coaches who help students start the process of getting a degree by helping them find a program that best fits their needs. One of these coaches is based at the Houlton Center. Tessa Winship is an Adult Credential and Degree Completion Success Coach and she works with students at the Center and throughout the state. By representing all of the UMS campuses, she assists prospective students in finding the right program and UMS campus for them. She also helps students find resources (financial, academic, career, etc.) that allow them to be successful in their college journey. Winship supports students statewide and also connects students with important contacts on the UMS campuses. For more information, visit [www.maine.edu/learn](http://www.maine.edu/learn).



**University of Maine Cooperative Extension**

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension provides local residents access to the resources and expertise of the University of Maine right here in Aroostook County, and specifically the greater Houlton area. Through educational programs, publications, news, and events, the Cooperative Extension delivers unbiased, research-based information--from nutrition and agriculture to natural resources for homes, businesses, and farms. The Cooperative Extension also conducts the state's most successful 4-H program. The 4-H program has been a leader in positive youth development providing hands-on educational and leadership programs for nearly 30,000 youths in Maine. Mari Glatter, Emily Dow and Christine Finemore are at the local office located in the Houlton Center to assist with community needs and questions.



UMPI Faculty member Dave Putnam teaches in the Houlton Center Science/Art Room.

# TRIO

**TRIO (Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, Maine Educational Opportunity Center)**

The mission of TRIO's Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search (ETS) programs are to generate, in eligible participants, the skills and motivation needed for success in school and beyond. The services include academic advising, tutoring, college visits, cultural events and a residential summer program on the UMPI campus. TRIO serves students in all 16 Aroostook County high schools and is present in most County middle schools. The Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) is also a part of the TRIO program, and has a mission to increase awareness of the post-secondary educational opportunities available to Maine's low income, first generation adults who desire to pursue a post-secondary education. MEOC also assists eligible adults in successfully matching career goals to education pathways with the goal of ultimately earning a college degree. Representatives from each program of TRIO at HHEC include: Michelle Richards, Upward Bound; Kenneth Ervin; ETS Advisor; and Teri Mann, MEOC Coordinator.

*"The Houlton Higher Education Center is a vital part of this community, providing educational opportunities to many who may not have the opportunity otherwise. We are a true access point for those looking for an educational pathway."*

- TRACY ROCKWELL, DIRECTOR  
HOULTON HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER



Members of the HHACE team. Front row: Instructors Lynn Brown, Deb Melvin, Maryann Sylvain; Back row: Joe Fagnant, Director; Melanie Greaves, Program Coordinator; Patti Sloat, Administrative Assistant; Ken Ervin, Data Coordinator.

**Happy 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
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Group photos in the Houlton Center main lobby are a regular occurrence. Snapping a photo together are, from left, Kerri Spellman, Jillian Moran, Anna Neher, Tessa Winship, Amanda Cosme, and Rachelle Dickey.



UMPI graduates pause for a photo during the Houlton Center's 2010 graduation celebration. From left to right are Reanna King, Marjorie Carton, Korene Lord, Kathryn Scott, Bonnie Henderson with Lilie, Crystal Folsom with Emma and Colton, and Natasha McCrum with Lettie.



Graduates (from left) Jessica Bouley, Theresa Long, and Alyssa Tidd are all smiles during the 2011 graduation celebration at the Houlton Center.

## Alumni Spotlight: Chelsea Henderson

Chelsea Henderson began working for the F. A. Peabody Company as a receptionist in 2004. She was promoted to Administrative Assistant to the President in 2006 and, in 2008, she was promoted to Human Resources Manager. At that time, she was also appointed as Corporate Secretary and Clerk for the corporation and its subsidiaries. In 2010, she was promoted to her current position of Vice President of Human Resources.

Henderson is a graduate of Hodgdon High School. Attending classes at the Houlton Higher Education Center, she received her Associate of Arts degree in Business from the University of Maine at Presque Isle

in 2007. She completed her Human Resource Management Certificate in 2009 from the University of Maine at Augusta and, in 2010, received her Professional in Human Resources (PHR) designation from the HR Certificate Institute. She went on to complete her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration in 2012, magna cum laude, from the University of Maine at Augusta through HHEC. She recently completed her Retirement Plan Associate (RPA) designation from the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans and is currently pursuing her Master of Science in Human Resource Management (MSHRM) from Troy University.

"The Houlton Higher Education Center was pivotal in allowing me to pursue my educational goals close to home, while affording me the ability to start a career at a young age," Henderson said. "The opportunities I gained personally and professionally from using the Center have been substantial and the facility has proven to be an essential part of our community. I look forward to the continued success and positive impact the Center has and will continue to have in our community."

Henderson is a former President of the Insurance Association of Greater Houlton and a current member of the Northeast Society for Human Resource Management (NESHRM).



She resides in Hodgdon with her husband, Josh, and their daughter, Kinsley.



Jason Anderson, then music director at Houlton High School, hosts a session with local children during the Houlton Center's summer reading program.

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**Clockwise from top left:** Bradley Lefay, Brandon Switter, Michael Jewel and Ivy Neher celebrate World Compliment Day; Shelly Crandall bumps elbows with UMPI President Ray Rice during a graduation celebration; Deana Bailey hosts an FYS party; Aimee Gellerson and Janelle Horten enjoy a holiday moment together.

## Congratulations on your 20th Anniversary!

Thank you for offering exceptional educational opportunities and making a positive difference in the lives of the students in our community and region.



## CONGRATULATIONS to the Houlton Higher Education Center on its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

~ from the Houlton Rotary Club



## HHEC Milestones

|                |   |                |   |
|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| August 2001    | The Houlton Higher Education Center opens its doors   | Summer 2011    | Online Maine goes live  |
| May 2002       | The Center marks the end of its first full academic year  | August 2011    | The Houlton Higher Education Center celebrates its 10th anniversary   |
| June 2002      | The Center hosts its first annual graduation recognition celebration  | September 2013 | Friends & Needles Quilters Guild hosts first annual Quilt Show in the building                                      |
| February 2003  | Officials host a celebration and unveiling of paintings installed in the Center's lobby as part of the State of Maine's Percent for Art program | Fall 2014      | MM&CN-Aroostook (Maine Military & Community Network) establishes new space in the Houlton Center                    |
| August 2003    | NMCC begins offering its Nursing program at the Center  | October 2014   | The first Veterans Open House is held   |
| Fall 2004      | The Center begins offering Wabanaki culture and language courses  | July 2015      | The Center hosts Community Covenant signing, deeming Houlton as a Military-Friendly Community                       |
| May 2005       | Octogenarian Avis Connors, who took courses at the Center, graduates from UMPI  | September 2016 | Community members enjoy the Zany Majestic Bard event (UMA sponsored) in a transformed café-style setting            |
| Fall 2005      | Carleton Project begins a program at the Houlton Higher Education Center  | July 2019      | The Center celebrates the 30th anniversary of UMA's Distance Education  |
| April 2006     | The first HHEC College Transitions class begins   | September 2019 | University of Maine Cooperative Extension relocates to the Center   |
| September 2007 | UMPI Upward Bound opens an office at the Center   | November 2020  | The new University of Maine System Student Success Coach joins the higher education team at the Center              |
| October 2007   | The Center begins serving as the meeting site for local educators seeking Education Master's degrees through USM                                | August 2021    | Renovations to the Science and Art Room are completed   |
| March 2010     | The Native Education Center is dedicated  | September 2021 | UMPI's TRIO Educational Talent Search Advisor begins offering full-time services out of the Houlton Center building |
| May 2010       | BDN columnist Sarah Smiley delivers the keynote address during the Center's graduation celebration  | September 2021 | The Houlton Higher Education Center celebrates its 20th anniversary   |
| Fall 2010      | Partnering efforts with Career Services gets underway   |                |   |
| Spring 2011    | The first cohort of local educators earn their Master's degrees in Education  |                |   |



Happy Anniversary from the team at Daigle Oil & DOC's Place



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HOULTON *Higher Education* CENTER  
established 2001

*“One of the reasons why the Houlton Higher Education Center has been such a success, is because of the dedicated staff that worked there, who also had the support from the administration at UMPI over the years. This truly is an investment in our future.”*

~MICHAEL H. MICHAUD  
FORMER U.S. CONGRESSMAN &  
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM  
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**From top, left to right:** Ivy Neher, Sarah Scott, Anna Neher, Michael Dobbs, Center Director Tracy Rockwell, and Otis Smith celebrate World Polio Day by participating in the Purple Pinkie Project; Jeff Salisbury, Derrick Ellis, Valerie Estabrook, Aaron Fazio-Rathbun, and Tracy Crone take part in a Motivational Monday event; Michael Dobbs bumps elbows with Tracy Rockwell as Tessa Winship and UMPI President Ray Rice look on; Houlton Center staff include Tessa Winship, Dawn Brusco, John Crane, Tracy Rockwell, Yvonne Henderson, and Jean Henderson; Grace Malone consults with Jean Henderson; and Shelly Crandall and Laura Beals celebrate graduation.

