



For Immediate Release

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#### **FOCUSMAINE INTERN EXPERIENCE KICKS OFF AND EXPANDS UNDER NEW NAME**

***Maine Career Compass will include a variety of experiential learning opportunities that reflect the diverse needs of Maine's key industries***

PORTLAND, Maine (February 11, 2021)— To keep pace with employer needs and expanding opportunities for employment training in the state, FocusMaine, in partnership with Educate Maine, is relaunching its FocusMaine Intern Experience under a new banner.

The program organizers have adopted a more inclusive brand, **Maine Career Compass**, that recognizes the many pathways to a successful career in Maine. Going forward, participants in internships, co-ops and apprenticeships will be introduced to professional training programs, to Maine business leaders and employers, and to Maine experiences that demonstrate why Maine is the best place to both live and build a career.

This expansion builds on the successful flagship summer intern program launched in 2017 that has, to date, served more than 2,000 students and over 80 Maine employers across the state. Interns who have participated in this program are more likely to stay in Maine and have a more positive outlook on the opportunities in the state.

“FocusMaine’s Intern Experience arose out of a need to attract more people to the state and to provide young people from Maine with even more reasons to stay. As we’ve listened to employers, to people entering the workforce, and to our partners in higher education, we knew we could have an even bigger impact if we expanded the reach of the program,” said Dr. Kimberly Hamilton, President of FocusMaine. “By expanding the opportunities to learn on the job from high quality programs and continuing to connect this work to all that Maine has to offer, we are an important partner to industry and to the state alike.”

“We’ve heard from employers over the last few years that their experiential learners are not only interns but also include co-ops and apprentices,” said Kate Howell, Program Director of Educate Maine, which oversees the program in partnership with FocusMaine. “This new approach reflects and supports the broad range of students who are hoping to find their first job in our state or prepare for the next step.”

Rebecca Dawley of Provincetown, Massachusetts is a senior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and participated in the FocusMaine Intern Experience this summer at Enviroligix in Portland.

“FocusMaine gave me such a well-rounded experience. I got hands-on opportunities to learn about Maine industries that I wouldn’t have known about otherwise. As a product development intern, I worked on optimizing lateral flow devices for corn. This valuable experience allowed me to develop and refine skills that I had acquired from other internships to a larger scale company.”

While the summer internship program will continue to be an important part of the program, Maine Career Compass will increase opportunities to partner with employers that offer job shadowing, apprenticeships and cooperative education in order to meet the needs of Maine’s different economic sectors.

“Our recent analysis of Maine’s aquaculture workforce needs revealed high industry demand for workers with on-the-job experience,” said Chris Vonderweidt, Aquaculture Program Manager at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, another partner in FocusMaine’s efforts. “We’re excited to work with Maine Career Compass to introduce new aquaculturists to opportunities to get that experience on working farms.”

“One of Maine’s biggest challenges continues to be keeping and attracting skilled talent,” said David Pease, Senior Vice President/Director of Talent, Diversity & Inclusion at Bangor Savings Bank. Thanks to the FocusMaine Intern Experience, hundreds of Maine students have been introduced to employers like Bangor Savings Bank and have learned that they can stay in Maine and have fulfilling career. “

Pease added, this program has shown students from across the United States and elsewhere in the world that Maine isn’t just a vacation destination. It’s a place to live and work happily. “I am excited

about the new Maine Career Compass approach. It reflects an appreciation for the changing face of workforce training and opens up more opportunities for business and workforce partnerships. Bangor Savings Bank has been a partner in FMIE since its inception.”

Ilija Stojiljkovic, a business management student at the University of Maine and an Operations Intern at Bangor Savings Bank through FMIE, says his internship expanded his view of career opportunities and pushed him out of his comfort zone in positive ways. “I learned there are so many things I can do if I learn to use my resources. That pushed me to give my all.” He added, “consider Maine a place to intern or look for a career, especially for remote working. The whole Maine community is super supportive and collaborative.”

For more information on Maine Career Compass and its programs along with video stories from interns please visit [www.mainecareercompass.org](http://www.mainecareercompass.org) .

#### **About FocusMaine:**

FocusMaine is a private sector-led initiative to accelerate the creation of quality jobs in Maine by investing in three of Maine’s globally competitive and high-growth fields--agriculture, aquaculture, and biopharmaceuticals—and by strengthening Maine’s workforce capacity. FocusMaine partners with a number of Maine organizations to spur business growth within those sectors. Together with its partners, FocusMaine catalyzes sustainable growth and business confidence that energizes Maine’s economy. For more information, visit [www.focusmaine.org](http://www.focusmaine.org).

#### **About Educate Maine:**

Educate Maine champions career readiness by increasing the educational attainment of Maine people, enabling all students to succeed in postsecondary education and in the workplace. As a business-led education advocacy organization, Educate Maine administers four signature programs with key partners: Maine Teacher of the Year Program, Project>Login, Education Leaders Experience, and Maine Career Compass.