



**CHANCELLOR PATTENAUE TELLS LEGISLATORS HIGHER EDUCATION IS KEY TO
INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MAINE**

AUGUSTA—Higher education and economic development were the themes in this morning's "State of the University" biennial address delivered by University of Maine System Chancellor Richard L. Pattenaude to a joint session of the Maine State Senate and House of Representatives.

"Historically, higher education has meant personal growth and discovery, creating and preserving knowledge, and helping our students become lifelong learners and better citizens," Pattenaude noted. "Today, however, the new 'normal' in higher ed is all about rebuilding our economy and creating opportunities for our students to live and work in Maine."

Pattenaude noted that the System has worked very hard to keep tuition affordable during challenging economic times for Maine people. "This year we have the smallest tuition increase in eight years. Affordable tuition is a key to student retention and graduation."

The Chancellor outlined three areas for improvement: remediation rates, transfer issues, and the University System's responsiveness to business needs.

In the area of improving remediation rates, UMS is partnering with the Maine Community College System and Maine Department of Education Commission Stephen Bowen to prepare a "Complete College America" grant which will focus on college preparation, remediation and retention.

Pattenaude also noted that Maine's universities and community colleges will partner to solve transfer problems between the two institutions, as well as within the universities. "We are committed to working collaboratively to make the transfer experience smooth, seamless, and effective."

In regard to responding to Maine's changing education and business needs, Pattenaude outlined the University System's plans to help address the state's need for graduates in information technology and computer science programs. He described a presentation by Michael Dubyak, chairman, president and chief executive officer, of Portland's Wright Express Corporation where he learned about industry need in this area. As a result, Pattenaude asked Dubyak to help lead a university-business partnership. "The goal of the IT and computer science partnership is very clear—in four years we will double the number of graduates from our programs. If we don't we will stifle business expansion and negatively impact business location decisions."

Pattenaude cited a report completed by the Maine Development Foundation and Maine State Chamber of Commerce which helped the University System focus its efforts to work with businesses. “Their unbiased review did two things: first, it revealed just how much is already being done by our universities; and second, it clarified what needs to be done.”

Pattenaude also described significant progress made at the University System since he last presented a biennial address to legislators in 2009 when the University’s financial situation was facing a \$43 million structural deficit in upcoming years. He noted that the ***New Challenges, New Directions*** initiative which he launched in November 2009 provided a planning framework which focused on achieving long term financial stability, keeping education affordable, and meeting Maine’s changing educational and research needs.

“We have made remarkable progress in two years by reducing expenditures by \$5 million as compared to the previous year, cutting in half our unfunded liability for retiree healthcare which is a reduction of \$185 million, and reducing our budgets—including the System Office budget which was deeply cut,” Pattenaude explained. He also said that the University System was operating with 7% fewer employees and had achieved balanced budgets at all seven universities and the System Office.

Established in 1968, the University of Maine System is the state’s largest educational enterprise. It has an annual enrollment of more than 42,000 students and serves over 500,000 individuals annually through educational and cultural offerings. Two-thirds of its alumni—approximately 120,000 people—live in Maine. The University of Maine System features seven universities—some with multiple campuses—located across the state, as well as nine University College outreach centers, a law school, and an additional 75 interactive distance learning sites. For more information, visit www.maine.edu.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: the complete text of the Chancellor’s State of the University speech may be found at: <http://www.maine.edu/news/>.