USM Announces $1.3 Million in New Scholarships for First-Time Students

PORTLAND – USM will be awarding nearly $1.3 million in new scholarships for first-time students who enroll for the fall of 2013.

To be named a scholarship recipient, first-time students must be ranked in the top 10 to 30 percent of his or her high school class, meet score minimums on the SAT or ACT tests, and demonstrate financial need.

Certain scholarships also are reserved for minorities or first-generation college students.

USM is funding the scholarships through internal reallocations of existing university funds, hoping to ease the financial hardship on students as they enroll in college for the first time.

The scholarships, which range from $1,500 to $12,000 per year for Maine students and out-of-state students, will be awarded for up to four years as long as recipients meet academic standards.

For more information, contact the USM Office of Undergraduate Admission or call 207-780-5670.

UMS Trustees to Discuss Major Initiatives at January 28 Meeting

BANGOR – The Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System will meet on Monday, January 28, at the System Office headquarters in downtown Bangor.

Trustees will receive updates on a number of major Board-directed initiatives which are now under way, including: an academic credit transfer plan which will make it easier for students to move among Maine’s public universities and from the community colleges; a plan to enhance baccalaureate degree completion among Maine adults who have some college credits; and an update on an outcomes-based funding model and System-wide administrative review.

Chancellor James H. Page will also inform Trustees on the progress of a major public-private partnership between higher education and Maine businesses—called Project Login—which will increase the number of computer science and IT graduates in order to better meet Maine’s workforce demands.

To view information about the board meeting click here.

UMA Goes Tobacco-Free

AUGUSTA – Effective January 1, 2013, UMA became a tobacco-free institution, prohibiting the use of any tobacco or non-FDA approved nicotine product, including smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes, on both UMA campuses and at all eight University College centers. This policy applies to all full-time and part-time staff, faculty, students, contractors, vendors, and visitors. View the entire policy.

UMaine Collaborates to Open New Campus Composting Facility

ORONO – The UMaine Cooperative Extension and UMaine Dining Services are working together to establish the first facility for advanced composting of food waste in Maine.

The effort involves the purchase of an enclosed, automated composting unit called the EarthFlow 40. This unique facility has the potential to convert more than 1 ton of organic waste per day from campus dining facilities—from potato peels and lettuce leaves to meat scrap—into a rich soil amendment that will be used in UMaine landscaping, on university crop fields, and will supply the new, on-campus greenhouse where students have been growing edible greens for use in campus dining halls.

The composting facility, located off Rangeley Road on campus, also promises to save money and will continue the institutional advancement toward sustainability, while serving as a demonstration site for students, individuals and potential commercial users.

Watch a video related to the compost facility here.
UMaine Collaborates with Old Town High School to Research Mercury Contamination

ORONO – Students at Old Town High School are collaborating with UMaine researchers who are using dragonfly larvae as bio-sentinels for mercury in wetlands, stream watersheds and lakes across the Northeast.

In their classroom laboratory, the students have set up mesocosms—mini-ecosystems in the form of tanks of circulated stream water from Baker Brook in Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Milford where 300 dragonfly eggs gathered from adult dragonflies they captured have hatched.

Now that the eggs have hatched and the dragonfly larvae are eating, growing and molting, the students are collecting data to find out how—and at what rate—mercury accumulates as the dragonfly larvae grow.

The dragonflies serve as local indicators of how mercury moves up food chains. By measuring mercury in the water, zooplankton, larvae, and exoskeletons the young dragonflies shed, UMaine’s Sawyer Environmental Chemistry Lab can analyze the samples with a direct mercury analyzer.

UMFK Hosts Farmers to Participate in Biomass Grass Feasibility Study

FORT KENT – More than a dozen farmers from across the St. John Valley convened at UMFK recently to hear a presentation on the feasibility of growing biomass grasses, which can be manufactured into heating-producing pellets.

Aroostook County has a large land base that is underutilized and potentially could be utilized for biomass grass production should the study prove viable.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss what growing biomass grasses could mean for the county, and determine interest among area farmers.

An established biomass industry would help support farmers willing to grow the raw material (grasses) that would be harvested and compressed into pellets. The finished product would provide an alternative heat source that is sustainable, locally grown and produced, and more economical than foreign oil.

The participating farmers will next hear presentations from New York and Pennsylvania-based farmers who have been growing and producing biomass grasses for upwards of ten years. Those presentations are tentatively scheduled for early 2013.

UMA Hosts Talk on Maine Agriculture

AUGUSTA – John Piotti will present a talk entitled "Agriculture in Maine: Its Promises and its Challenges" at UMA on January 27 at 2 p.m. Piotti is Executive Director of Maine Farmland Trust and has been actively involved in the development and promotion of farming in the state for 16 years.

Piotti insists that with good moisture and good growing conditions, Maine enjoys the prospect of being the major supplier of food for New England and enlarging its importance in Maine’s economy. But because of land use practices and the aging of Maine farmers, preserving Maine farm land and making it available to younger farmers becomes critical for the State’s agricultural future. Two Maine farmers representing fruit and row crop or dairy production will join the energetic and dynamic Piotti in discussing issues in agriculture today.

UMF Civic Advancement Partnership Celebrates Collaborations

FARMINGTON – UMF’s Partnership and Internships for Civic Advancement celebrated the completion of the first year of its internship program during a recent dinner event held on the UMF campus.

UMF’s Partnership for Civic Advancement is a new initiative to engage students in meaningful community-based activities. Using internships, students gain valuable work and life experiences and develop the professional, civic and leadership skills they will need to be productive and successful employees and actively engaged and responsible citizens, while small businesses and community organizations benefit from having access to important resources they need to succeed.

New Campaign Highlights Maine’s Public Universities

BANGOR – Maine’s public universities are making an impact across the state. A campaign called Think.Maine highlights our universities working with large and small businesses, our state’s veterans, local communities, and developing innovative ways to educate our students.

To learn more about the exciting activities taking place across the state, view our series of videos and ads at Think.Maine.edu/campaign.

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UMPI Opens Nominations for Young Professionals Institute

PRESQUE ISLE – UMPI, Momentum Aroostook, and MMG Insurance are pleased to announce that nominations are now open for the sixth annual Young Professionals Institute.

The Institute provides the area’s young professionals with an 8-week professional development short course designed specifically for emerging leaders looking to refine the skills that will bring them long-term success in their careers.

This year’s institute will focus on the workplace and the skills employers are looking for in prospective employees and candidates for advancement – including innovation, teamwork, communication, decision-making, and prioritization.

Participants will take part in role-playing scenarios that refine their abilities to pitch proposals and deliver presentations, conduct mock interviews that give them experience in working with the media, and network with local officials and statewide leaders.

For more information, or to access the online nomination/application form, visit www.umpi.edu/ypi.

USM Finds Links Between Student-Centered Learning, Efficiency, and Performance

PORTLAND – A new study released by USM finds that high-performing and efficient high schools can also be student-centered to enable all learners to obtain the skills, knowledge, and supports necessary to succeed in a 21st century economy.

The report by the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research, and Evaluation at USM sampled seven of Maine’s high schools—five designated as “More Efficient” and two as “Typical Schools.”

“More Efficient” schools are defined as schools that exhibit higher student academic performance and a higher return on spending. Analysis revealed that a singular, sustained focus that places students and their intellectual development at the center of all learning was unique among the “More Efficient” high schools.

There is ample evidence of high standards and the use of multiple assessments to measure progress. In addition, teachers and leaders are actively engaged in creating a school culture that helps students acquire more responsibility for their own learning.

UMFK Collaborates on Forum to Help Children Through Tough Times

FORT KENT – UMFK, Northern Maine Medical Center, and M.S.A.D. #27 recently sponsored a community forum entitled Talking to Children about Tragedy, Fear, and Loss. The forum offered those who have and who work with children tips and skills on how to deal with any type of tragedy or loss now and in the future.

The recent shootings that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut serve as a reminder of how vital children are to society, and how important it is to know how to best support them during difficult emotional times.

UMaine Extension Launching Online Beginning Farmer Resource Network


Developed by a group of agricultural service providers, the Beginning Farmer Resource Network (BFRN) is a collaborative online effort to address concerns among beginning Farmers about available services and provide answers to commonly asked questions. The website, which will be updated as feedback is received, will be accessible January 8 through the UMaine Extension website. The free program will expand online informational resources now available on the UMaine Extension website.

In addition, in February, UMaine Extension also is offering a four-week course, “So You Want to Farm in Maine?” on Tuesdays, February 5–26. Topics of discussion include selecting and evaluating farm enterprises, keeping production and financial records with QuickBooks, and doing market research for farm products and services.

Classes will include panel discussions about available resources for farmers.

Attendance is limited to 25 participants and preregistration is required. For more Information on the Online Beginning Farmer Resource Network, contact andrea.herr@maine.edu.
UMM Collaborates to Help Coastal Towns with State Zoning Regulations

MACHIAS – For small towns along Maine’s Downeast coast, a partnership with UMM has helped them comply with complicated state zoning regulations. Students have helped create shoreland zoning maps and related software. They have also assisted in the creation of comprehensive plans, an invaluable aid to cash-strapped communities.

UMM is the only public Environmental Liberal Arts college in the Northeast, a mission launched five years ago and one that has kept enrollment stable, despite a tough economic climate.

UMF Helps Prepare Students for the Working World

FARMINGTON – UMF recently held its seventh annual College to Corporate Symposium to help guide business-ready students as they prepare to graduate and enter the working world.

Successful Maine business professionals who graduated from UMF shared their postgraduate experiences with participating UMF students with an informative panel discussion.

Students learned about current hiring practices, future industry trends, the best way to rise to the top in a job interview, key ways to navigate today’s job landscape and meet employer’s expectations and more. Understanding what an employer looks for in an interview was of special interest to students.

USM Faculty Exhibition Opening in Portland

PORTLAND – The USM AREA Gallery in the Woodbury Campus Center presents an exhibition of work by members of USM’s art faculty from January 24 through April 3.

An opening reception will be held from 4-6 p.m. on January 24, and will feature gallery talks by the artists. The reception and exhibition are free and open to the public. AREA Gallery hours are 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., Mondays through Fridays except holidays.

The exhibit features the work of full and part-time participating faculty members articulating numerous visions through a variety of approaches.

For more information, visit USM Art Galleries.

UMPI Students Prepare for Service Learning Trip

PRESQUE ISLE – UMPI’s social work program is planning a 10-day return trip to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala on February 13, in order to take part in an international service learning project.

Service learning is an experiential method of learning that uses collaboration, service and reflection. While in Guatemala, the group will have several opportunities to do just that.

Students will spend five days working with community organizations in Quetzaltenango. The group’s assignment will be given in January and will depend on the community’s needs. The task could involve anything from taking care of children or teaching English in a classroom.

During the stay, the group will also experience the culture as much as possible. The women will visit Mayan villages to learn about weaving and pottery making and travel to the highlands where Quetzaltenango (Xela) is located.

To learn more about this service learning trip, please contact Shirley Rush at shirley.rush@umpi.edu or at 207-551-9954.

Meet the Editor

BANGOR – This issue of Making a Difference was researched, edited, and designed by Jaclyn Stevens of Boothbay Harbor, Maine. Jaclyn is a fifth-year student at UMaine, majoring in journalism with a concentration in advertising.

Jaclyn is a student employee at the University of Maine System Office for the spring semester. She graduates in May.