



*Maine's
Public
Universities*

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

OUR STUDENTS BECOME MAINE

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CHANCELLOR

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007

OUR STUDENTS BECOME MAINE

President Edmonds, Speaker Cummings, Members of the 123rd Legislature, University System Trustees, Presidents, faculty, staff, friends, President Fitzsimmons, and—most of all—students across the state of Maine:

Thank you for this opportunity to report to you on achievements and aspirations of Maine’s public universities, all undertaken on behalf of the people of this great state.

First, I thank the University of Maine System Board of Trustees for the opportunity to return to service for these 12 months. As some of you may know, I had the honor of serving as Chancellor from 1996 to 2001. It is a pleasure to come back to work for what I regard as one of the most able Boards in the country, and to engage with faculty and staff colleagues whom I like and respect.

By the way, I should also thank Richard Pattenaude for agreeing to take over this job on July 1st. Lord willing, he will be standing here next time with sweaty palms and a pumping heart, wondering why his predecessor made all those promises!

I would like to thank Governor Baldacci for his support, both in policy and in his budget proposal. We know that he tightened the purse strings in order to fund increases in higher education. We appreciate his leadership in this and so many other areas essential to the future of our state.

But most of all, I would like to thank the members of this 123rd Maine Legislature—both the many familiar faces in the House and the Senate as well as the new members—for your work on behalf of the people of this state. I’ve had experience with legislative bodies in many other states, and I could not name one that would be superior to Maine in honesty, integrity and concern for doing the right thing. It is an honor to appear before you today, and to work with you again.

My title for these remarks today is “Our Students Become Maine.” I will describe how the Universities are working with high schools across the state and with the community colleges to create a seamless higher education network, so Maine’s students can pursue their education with focus, energy and optimism. And I will tell you how our universities are working with employers to provide opportunities for these students to stay in Maine after graduation to find rewarding careers, meaningful civic and community involvement, and a satisfying and fulfilling lifestyle.

Each September, we start the new academic year with about 34,000 students enrolled in Maine’s public universities. That number grows to about 45,000 full-time and part-time students when you factor in those individuals who start taking classes in the spring semester or in summer session.

Those 45,000 students represent the largest higher education enterprise in our state. In fact, in any one semester, three out of every four students enrolled in

public higher education in Maine—75 percent—are enrolled in the University of Maine System.

About 90 percent of our students come from Maine. The vast majority stay in the state after they graduate. And of the out-of-state students who enroll in one of our universities, about one-third of them stay in Maine after graduation to live, work, and become part of our community life.

Last year more than 5,000 of our students earned a college degree. Those numbers make the University System, annually, the largest single producer of Maine's workforce.

After those students walk across the stage at graduation time, they go on to become Maine's nurses, teachers, business leaders, entrepreneurs, engineers, farmers, foresters, software designers, inventors, doctors, judges, novelists and poets, painters and film makers, town council members, members of the armed services, legislators, and now and then a Governor, congressman, and United States senator.

This year, 75 members of the Legislature are alumni or alumnae of one or more of Maine's public universities. We believe that's the largest number of our "alums" that we've ever had serving in the Legislature at any one time. We are proud of you.

When our students first enroll, many of them do so right after high school graduation. Others join us by transferring from a community college or another college or university. Still others enroll full-time or part-time while maintaining a job or career, and are looking to improve themselves professionally or

personally. Many others enroll after raising a family, or while raising a family, when schedules allow it or because circumstances make going to college an economic necessity.

No matter what the reason or motivation, these students work hard, they persevere, and they succeed. They reflect our state's promise and potential. In fact, they become Maine. They deserve the highest quality education we can provide.

So what are we, as a State, doing to ensure that these students get a first-rate education? What are we doing to ensure that there are good jobs here for our graduates? My answer to these questions can be summarized with three words: Partnerships. Jobs. Value.

First, I will describe to you a remarkable partnership that promises to make higher education in Maine better and more affordable. Then I'll report to you on what University-based research is doing to create good, durable, high-paying jobs in Maine. And finally, I'll offer a word or two on what we are doing to improve the value of what you, the taxpayers, the students and their families, and their employers get for their investment in these universities.

Partnerships

Commissioner Sue Gendron, President John Fitzsimmons, and I like each other. And that's good, because we have been challenged by Governor Baldacci, Speaker Cummings, and, most of all, by Senate President Beth Edmonds to work as partners to create a more seamless network among the schools, the community colleges, and the universities.

To be sure, I need to acknowledge that, over the past few years, these and other leaders—especially Chancellor Westphal—stepped forward to improve the transferability of courses and, for that matter, the transfer of whole programs. But the Governor and legislative leaders have challenged us to build on this partnership and to do more.

One important example of how we are working together is our involvement in a program called “Early College.”

Early College enables Maine high school juniors and seniors who have the potential to succeed in higher education, but not necessarily the commitment or confidence to pursue it, to experience college courses right in their high school—and, ideally, to demonstrate to themselves that they are, indeed, college material.

A good example of how Early College opens doors is Desiree Wuthenow, a senior at Lewiston High School. Desiree’s teachers and guidance counselor thought that the Early College program would help her prove to herself that she is clearly capable of college-level academics.

Taking courses in high school through the University of Southern Maine, Desiree did very well in her college writing course last semester and is taking college-level statistics this semester. She is, indeed, planning to go to college—she will be the first in her family to do so—and she will take with her the six college credits she’ll have already accumulated through the Early College program.

Desiree is here today; Desiree, congratulations for your hard work and success.

The idea of Early College complements other opportunities for high school students to get an early start on a college program. One of those is Advanced Placement, or “AP.” Students may take these more rigorous AP courses in high school and earn college credit for doing so. We also offer a program called “Academ-e” – the “e” stands for electronic. Academ-e offers college-level courses—and course credit—to qualifying high school students. It’s taught by university faculty and is offered over the Internet and through other distance education technologies.

Early College, AP courses, and Academ-e symbolize the partnership between our high schools, universities and colleges. And good things come out of this partnership:

- Students make better use of their junior and senior high school years
- They get a jump start on their college careers so they can graduate in a timely way
- It helps them turn their anxiety about the future into confident anticipation and aspirations
- And it saves money. Students who complete a college degree in four years instead of five, for example, can realize substantial savings and can also get into the workforce that much sooner.

With your support, we can expand these programs to enable more students like Desiree, no matter where they live, to reap the benefits of these early college programs.

Jobs

Another element of this partnership involves helping grow Maine's economy. For us, the key is to turn university ideas into Maine jobs. It's a formula that works.

A few weeks ago each of you received a report on the Maine Economic Improvement Fund, also known as MEIF. The Legislature created MEIF in 1997 to enable researchers at the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine to work on research and development projects consistent with the state's economic growth strategies—areas such as high-tech wood composites, sensors, biotechnology, information technologies, and agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry.

MEIF money helps faculty win federal grants to engage in research that has commercial potential, and to work with Maine businesses to bring to market the ideas born from the fertile imaginations of University scientists and students.

Since its inception in 1997, the Legislature has invested \$80 million in University based research—a very sizeable sum, to be sure, though not large compared to what most other states invest. Using your investment as match or seed money, our university researchers generated an additional \$305 million in research investment right here in Maine.

Most of that money came from federal research grants, money that otherwise would have been awarded to researchers in other states, and invested in their states' economies. But it wasn't, because our State Legislature and universities partnered to provide

the two key ingredients necessary to bring it to Maine: seed money and brainpower.

And what do our researchers do with all that money?

They hire people—lots of people—to work with them as researchers, lab technicians, and assistants. They buy goods and services necessary to conduct their work. Last year alone those research funds—mostly from out-of-state sources—funded 717 full-time positions within Maine, generating employment, additional economic activity, and tax revenues for local and state coffers.

The partnership is paying off—in jobs, economic activity, and new opportunities. This is welcome news at a time when plant closings and layoffs are occurring very close to home.

In fact, the success of our universities in converting ideas into marketable products has helped elevate our state's standing nationally. Maine is now ranked second in the nation for the rate of growth of spin-offs of businesses resulting from R & D. That's according to the Washington, D.C.-based Corporation for Enterprise Development.

A lot of those efforts are helped through our university-based economic development teams—people like Jake Ward, Deb Neuman, and Jim McConnon at UMaine, and Valarie Lamont, Rita Heimes, and Leonard Agneta at USM. These people help bring together the brainpower and the resources to make successful partnerships possible.

I'd like to give you a concrete and poignant example of how this process of converting ideas into jobs actually works. Each of you has on your desk a small piece of laminate carved in the shape of our state. This remarkable material, crafted in Orono, Maine, out of wood products and composites, is used in the production of a "modular ballistic protective system."

It was developed for a specific purpose: to protect lives in combat. Here's how. Panels of this material can be placed within a field tent, the way you might hang sheetrock at home. Though this material is portable and fairly lightweight, it is strong enough to protect a soldier from an explosive, be it a mortar shell or a buried bomb, even if it explodes just a few yards away. It's been tested and it works.

With hundreds of Maine men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan today, and thousands more from across our country serving there and elsewhere, this product establishes a new type of defense that protects our soldiers from those who would do them harm.

But there is another dimension to this story. A talented professor at the University of Maine invested a small amount of the MEIF seed funds I mentioned earlier to garner over \$6 million in federal support to create this near miraculous material. If the Pentagon chooses to order large supplies of it, a business here in Maine will tool up to mass produce it. That business will need to hire scores of Maine workers. Those workers will produce a product that will protect our service men and women. And the technology they use will likely open up new opportunities and product possibilities over time.

It's my honor—no other word for it—to introduce you to the man who created, along with his team of faculty, staff, and students from across the state, this life saving material, and much more, out of the natural wood resources of Maine: Dr. Habib Dagher.

Dr. Dagher lives in Veazie with his family. Through innovation and leadership, Dr. Dagher becomes Maine, and so do his students.

If you invest more in Dr. Dagher and the many other university faculty, students, and staff involved in research and development, you will accelerate this work of converting university ideas into Maine jobs.

Value

In a sense, I have been talking about value all along. The value of young people like Desiree Wuthenow. The value of brilliant faculty like Habib Dagher. The value of Maine's public universities to the future of our state.

Maine people deserve no less than the highest quality, the highest value we can provide in their colleges and universities.

It matters little how well we think of ourselves, but our reputation in the world matters a lot. Fortunately, Maine's universities are already rated pretty high.

- For 10 years in a row, the University of Maine at Farmington has been ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the nation's top public liberal arts colleges.
- That same magazine rated the University of Maine at Machias as the fourth-best comprehensive college in the northeast.

- The *Princeton Review* included the University of Southern Maine and the University of Maine at Fort Kent in its list of top colleges in the northeast.
- *Downbeat Magazine* listed the University of Maine at Augusta as having one of the 50 best college jazz programs in the country.
- The University of Maine at Presque Isle has earned national recognition for its impressive social work program.
- And, of course, the University of Maine in Orono is on its way to becoming one of the top public universities in the country, with internationally renowned programs in engineering, business, natural sciences, and many other academic areas.

If you read the *New York Times*, listen to *National Public Radio*, or watch *60 Minutes*, you know that our faculty certainly garner national recognition for their expertise and achievements. Our students gain national attention as well.

One such student is Kelly Dorgan. Kelly lives in Bristol, Maine, and is a graduate student at UMaine working on her Ph.D. in oceanography. Last fall, *Popular Science* magazine named her one of the “Brilliant 10” in its annual list of up-and-coming scientists in the United States. Kelly is here today; Kelly, please accept our congratulations on this outstanding honor.

We are proud of the quality and value found among our universities. But we have to do better. In the globally competitive economy, it is not just the educated who prevail, it is the best educated.

If we can raise the quality and the reputation for quality even further, a lot of good things will happen.

First, more Maine students will stay here to pursue their higher education goals. To be sure, some of our excellent high school graduates head south or west because they want to experience life in a large city or a new state. We all respect and understand that desire to see more of the world.

But some leave for the wrong reasons. They think they can find better quality and value for the money in another state. If we work together to educate them about the quality and value that exists right here at home—and if we protect that quality and value—they will be more likely to give more serious and reasoned thought to the benefits of staying in Maine for their education.

This is not just speculation. Just over ten years ago the University of Connecticut was a solid, but not greatly distinguished university. At the same time, Connecticut was the largest net exporter of students in the country, second only to Alaska. Thanks to State investment and university fundraising to improve laboratories, classrooms and libraries, UConn has changed its image from being a solid institution to an excellent institution.

And Connecticut has cut its brain drain in half. We can do it here, too.

Second, in addition to retaining more of Maine’s college-bound youth and adults, we will attract more good students from other states. You all know what’s happening with Maine’s demographics—our

population is aging and the number of students graduating from our high schools is dropping.

If we sit on our hands, we won't have the workforce that Maine needs to sustain its economy. Schools will close. Towns will wither, and the lights will dim in too many of our rural communities. But again, we can turn the brain drain into a brain gain by attracting more students from other states, and retaining more of our home-grown students.

This fact came home to me personally a few months ago. I spoke to a group of 30 students in an engineering class at the University of Maine. Ten of the students were from away; the rest represented the face of Maine. I asked them all what they planned to do after graduation. All ten of the students from away—from other New England states, the far west and around the world—all ten planned to stay in Maine, to build their careers and families here. We need to keep Maine's talented students here, to be sure, but we also need to attract energetic, bright students from away who choose Maine for all the reasons we appreciate it so much.

So how do we establish a stronger reputation for excellence? It takes hard work and hard choices. It takes brilliant teaching and research faculty. It takes energetic, persistent, creative students like so many of the 45,000 who enroll each year in your public universities.

It also takes your support. We have to pay the faculty what they would command in the open market for talent. We need to invest in classrooms and laboratories, too.

Your investment in the base budget of your Maine universities will help us attract and keep those able teaching and research faculty. Your investment in the laboratories and classrooms—the kinds of investments outlined in our bond request—will improve quality. In fact, those facilities are the bedrock of educational quality. Our students become Maine, and they deserve the best education we can give them.

Ten years ago I asked a wise Maine political leader, former state Senator Bennett Katz, what Maine people valued most. He thought a bit, then answered: "Terry," he said, "we are concerned about our taxes, but we value our kids most."

In the end, it is all about Maine values and Maine's kids. It's about giving those kids—and often, their parents—a good future here in Maine, about getting them through some of the best high schools in the country. It is about making Maine's colleges and universities the finest of their kind, because those kids deserve no less. It is about each student graduating with a first-rate degree and the tools for a successful career and a satisfying life. It is about expanding Maine's knowledge-based economy so these graduates and their families can live and work here in Maine.

We can do it. With the hard work of great faculty and staff, with leaders like the presidents here today, with my friend and colleague Rich Pattenau taking the helm in a few short months, and with your leadership and support, yes, we can do it.

Thank you.