TRUSTEES AND WESTPHAL NAME KENNEDY AS UMAINE’S NEW PRESIDENT

University of Maine System Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal has named Robert A. Kennedy as the 18th president of the University of Maine. Westphal and University System Board Chair Charles L. Johnson made the announcement in Bangor during a one-day meeting of the Board on April 15.

“Dr. Kennedy was selected from among a highly competitive pool of candidates and nominees as a result of a national search,” Westphal said. “He is an accomplished scholar and researcher. He is experienced as a senior leader at several of our nation’s top public universities,” Westphal continued. “He understands the special and distinct role and responsibilities of a land-grant university to its home state and to the nation. He is experienced working as part of a university system, here and in other states. He demonstrated that he has the confidence and support of key constituencies within and outside of the university.”

Kennedy, who has been serving as interim president since August, has been with UMaine since 2000, when he was hired to serve as provost and vice president of academic affairs. He later was named executive

MAINE’S UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES ESTABLISH GUARANTEED ADMISSION AGREEMENT

In a major act of collaboration, University of Maine System (UMS) Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal and Maine Community College System (MCCS) President John Fitzsimmons signed a Guaranteed Admission Agreement March 16 that allows MCCS students, upon completion of an associate degree in Liberal Studies, guaranteed admission to any UMS institution.

The agreement establishes AdvantageU: Maine’s Community College to University Guaranteed Admission Program, a transfer program scheduled to be available for newly admitted MCCS students beginning in the fall semester of 2005.

By enrolling in AdvantageU, MCCS students will receive the benefits of early advising, a streamlined application process, no application fee, and advanced course registration with continuing University students.

“This historic agreement between our University System and Community College System marks a milestone in Maine, and I commend the leaders of these two systems for coming together to streamline the transfer process and bring the promise of a baccalaureate degree to more Maine citizens,” said Governor John E. Baldacci. “Our planning confirms that Maine’s economic and cultural future depends on an educated workforce.”

As part of AdvantageU, an MCCS student who intends to transfer to the University System must enroll in the program prior to

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BOARD APPROVES FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

The University of Maine System’s Board of Trustees gave its approval in March to several projects related to increasing the quality and efficiency of University facilities.

The Board also approved two key appointments: Peter Pitegoff as the dean of the University of Maine Law School in Portland; and Devinder M. Malhotra, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern Maine (USM). In addition, the Board approved tenure recommendations for 43 faculty member, decisions that Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal described as “the most important and influential actions undertaken during [the Board’s] meeting.”

Trustees also granted permission to USM to acquire property adjacent to its Portland campus. Acquisition of the property is consistent with USM’s plans to expand and enhance its campus. Under the plan, the USM Foundation will purchase the property for $1.95 million, with financing assistance from the University System. The loan will be repaid through a previously approved USM fundraising campaign already underway.

The project, estimated to cost $9 million to construct, is expected to significantly reduce annual energy expenses, lessen the university’s dependence on fossil fuels, and reduce the emission of air pollutants, according to proponents. If approved, UMS would self-finance construction, with repayment made from cost-savings realized by the facility.

Trustees also approved a number of other facilities-related actions (see sidebar on page 2).
UMS TO POSTPONE UMA-USM MERGER

The University of Maine System (UMS) announced in March that it is postponing its plan to merge the Augusta campus of the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) with the University of Southern Maine (USM).

Instead, that plan—part of the UMS Board of Trustees’ long-term Strategic Planning Initiative—will be presented to the Maine Legislature’s Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs “so that we can work collaboratively to address the issues surrounding the future of public higher education in the Augusta region,” according to University System Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal.

“Board Chairman Wick Johnson and I have had extensive discussions with several legislators about our plan to align UMA’s Augusta campus with USM,” Westphal explained. “We have agreed to hold off on the implementation of this element of our strategic plan until the committee has had ample opportunity to explore the issue.”

According to State Sen. Elizabeth H. Mitchell of Kennebec County, the Senate chair of the committee, she and her committee colleagues will “examine all options related to the quality and accessibility of university education in central Maine.” Mitchell said the process will be completed no later than February, 2006.

“I look forward to working with Sen. Mitchell and her committee toward a positive outcome for higher education in central Maine,” Westphal added.

THESIS: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT INTEGRATED SERVICES

Since January, a dozen professionals from across the University of Maine System have assembled three days each week at the Augusta Civic Center. This dedicated group forms the Core Team of THESIS, a 16-week project to explore and recommend new processes for delivering student services System-wide. Providing guidance is the 12-member Executive Advisory Committee, representing UMS faculty, staff, and students, which regularly reviews the work of the Core Team.

UMS focus groups conducted in 2004 revealed that while students value information and assistance provided at the local level, they also wanted improved, 24/7 access to their records and other information via the Web. UMS is not alone in its quest to provide integrated, efficient services to students. Colleges and universities nationwide are scrambling to meet the expectations of students who increasingly demand information when they need it, preferably at the click of a mouse.

The goal of the THESIS project is to empower students by giving them more access to information and by simplifying services, such as registration, bill paying, admissions, or financial aid assistance. The project will encourage the use of self-service, Web-based tools while at the same time maintaining the affiliation that students have with their local universities. Front-line staff will have new tools and the ability to make better informed decisions when working with students.

The THESIS team has held work groups to obtain feedback on the initial redesigned processes with more than 350 students, faculty, and staff from across the System. The team has also held informational sessions at the universities and plans to do so for the remainder of the project.

The team presented their interim report in March to the UMS Presidents, who approved the proposed processes and encouraged the group to proceed to the next eight-week phase of the project: student services organizational design. In May, the team will produce its final report, including an initial plan for student services implementation. The first phase of implementation is targeted for completion in June 2006.

For more information, please visit the THESIS website: www.maine.edu/thesis
The University of Maine
UMaine recently announced the winners of its first Maine Academic Prominence Initiative (MAPI) research awards, for faculty members and disciplines that do not have access to targeted state research and development funds. Awards were given to Stephen Hornsby (Canadian-American Center), Francois Amar and Susan McKay (chemistry), Alan Cobo-Lewis (psychology) and Brian Robinson and Lisa Neuman (anthropology) … A group of 40 UMaine Honors College students spent Spring Break in Washington, D.C. They were hosted by UMaine graduate Charles Stanhope, director of development at the Library of Congress … UMaine engineering students finished fourth in the recent national Clean Snowmobile Challenge Competition in Michigan.

University of Maine at Augusta
UMA hosted the third annual Terry Plunkett Maine Poetry Festival in April, featuring a mix of poetry, music, dance and a panel discussion. The theme for the two-day event was the class system in the U.S. Participants included some of the state’s best-known poets, including Maine’s Poet Laureate Baron Wormser. The festival is named in honor of Terry Plunkett, a published poet and critic who taught American literature and a variety of humanities courses at UMA from 1969 to 1997.

University of Maine at Farmington
UMF’s Education Matters! campaign for the new Education Center has passed the $3 million mark. Ground breaking for the facility, which will house the College of Education, Health and Rehabilitation, is slated for this summer. … Gov. Baldacci honored UMF’s Dirigo Gear UP college aspiration program’s success in inspiring students of Dirigo High School in Dixfield to pursue college. The result of the six-year program: 84% of the Dirigo Class of 2005 indicated they intend to pursue post-secondary education, up from the 37% who went on to college prior to the start of the UMF/Dirigo Gear UP Partnership.

University of Maine at Augusta
The campus and community came alive in March with numerous events. … UMF played a pivotal role in helping the town of Fort Kent host the Can-Am Crown Sled Dog Race and IPC Nordic Skiing World Championship Games. … More than 400 people were drawn to UMF for the annual “Sucrerie,” or maple sugar day, a celebration of spring that highlights the Acadian and Franco-American culture in the St. John Valley. … A record number of graduates—nearly 300—earned degrees during May 7 commencement. President Richard Cost presided over the ceremony, which featured an address by the Right Honorable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

University of Maine at Machias
There’s nothing like getting wet and muddy for a good cause. Each fall semester, students enrolled in the “Atlantic Salmon Conservation Projects” course at UMM work with state and federal agencies charged with the restoration of Atlantic salmon to five local rivers. Students also participate in a long-term study of the effects of beaver and beaver dams on the Venture Brook salmon stream. The class also travels to the Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, where the captive brood stock for the entire state of Maine—and therefore, the nation—are spawned and raised for re-entry into local waters.

University of Maine at Presque Isle
For the fifth consecutive year, UMPI students presented their work at the National Undergraduate Literature Conference in Ogden, Utah in early April. Based on a competitive selection process, six UMPI students were chosen among 250 college students from across the nation to participate in the training. Students from UMPI were the first students in the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., for training focused on the potential for abuse of power in policing. Originally created for the D.C. police force, police agencies from around the country send officers for this training. The students from UMPI were the first students in the nation to participate in the training.

University of Southern Maine
USM’s purchase agreement with Portland Plastic Pipe enables planning for University Commons, expansion of the Osher Map Library and buildings for the Muskie School, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. … USM’s Women’s Studies Program, the first of its kind in Maine and established during Robert Woodbury’s presidency, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. … Andy Pelletier, a School of Music alumnus and horn player, won a Grammy Award for his performance on the Southwest Chamber Ensemble CD ‘Carols Chavez Complete Chamber Music, Vol. 2’.

University College Outreach Centers
Susan Lowe, Assistant Dean for Off-Campus Library Programs, has been awarded the fourth John N. Olsgaard Distinguished Service Award by the University of South Carolina’s School of Library and Information Science. Lowe is the state coordinator for USC’s Master of Library and Information Science degree program in Maine. USC has been delivering courses in the program via ITV since 1984. In that time, 218 Maine students have graduated from the program.
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