

University of Maine System
Board of Trustees
Executive Committee

December 17, 2024
Zoom Meeting

Present: Committee Members: Trish Riley; Chair; Lisa Eames; Vice Chair, Emily Cain, Roger Katz, Patrick Flood, Kelly Martin, David MacMahon, and Barbara Alexander. **Other Trustees:** Will Kemler, Phil Hussey, Elise Baldacci, Donna Loring. **Staff:** Elizabeth Stickler, Samantha Warren.

Chair Riley called the Executive Committee meeting to order, thanked everyone for participating, and roll call was taken.

Executive Session

On a motion by Trustee Cain, which was seconded by Trustee Katz, and approved by a roll call vote of all Trustees present, the Executive Committee meeting went into Executive Session under the following provisions:

- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-A to discuss the evaluation of personnel and the consideration of appointments, evaluations, employment and duties.
- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-C to discuss the condition, acquisition or disposition of real property or economic development if premature disclosure of the information would prejudice the competitive or bargaining position of the UMS.

On a motion by Trustee Cain, which was seconded by Trustee Eames, and approved by a roll call vote of all Trustees present, the Executive Committee concluded the Executive Session.

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, the following agenda item was discussed:

Students' Petition Regarding the Middle East

Students requested UMS investment data April 8 -9, 2024 (requested during citizen comment at the public meeting April 8 and by email April 9). Chair Riley responded with a letter on April 26 2024. Students sent Trustees their list of demands October 5, 2024.

The Trustees discussed the students' petition regarding the middle east. Chair Riley met with students in April and December to discuss their concerns and At the April meeting she agreed to work with UMS staff to provide the group with the information they sought about specific investments .. The group submitted six demands for Board action including Providing information about investments; divest from those companies end all academic ties with Israel including research and study abroad; publicly acknowledge the magnitude of tragedy in Palestine; adopt the Jerusalem Declaration On Antisemitism.

In presenting the issue, the chair stated that students were provided with the investment information they requested. She noted that students asked for their six demands to be placed on the January BOT agenda. Normally agenda items go through lengthy staff and committee review in advance of being placed on the Board's agenda. In the interest of responding quickly to students, the Chair convened the Executive Committee and explained that the 9 members had the

power to act on behalf of the Board between Board meetings. The question posed to the Committee, is this an issue appropriate to advance to the Board's agenda?

The Trustees shared concern about the atrocities in the Middle East and the horrors of loss of life. They stated that the purpose of the Board is to govern the University of Maine System, not to take positions on US foreign policy. Consistent with the System's educational mission, the Board agreed it was important to reaffirm its commitment to free speech and inquiry, academic freedom, and peaceful protest. It was also noted that the Board strongly condemns all forms of violence and discrimination, including antisemitism and Islamophobia. The Board does support the students' right to debate such issues. The Executive Committee, by consensus, concluded that the Board will not take action.

Following the meeting, the Chair sent the below letter to students.

Additional information about the meeting can be found on the Board of Trustees website:
<https://www.maine.edu/board-of-trustees/meeting-agendas-materials/executive-committee/>

Adjournment

Elizabeth Stickler, Clerk



UMS Board of Trustees

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UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

December 20, 2024

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me, especially given how busy you are at the end of semester, to discuss your divestment-related demands for the University of Maine System (UMS). I found the discussion thought-provoking and your articulation of your concerns powerful and detailed. I applaud the research and organizing you have all done since our initial meeting last spring after which we shared details of UMS' investments in the companies you sought that information about.

The UMS Board of Trustees has very specific responsibilities that are clearly defined in our charter and include governing, program and policy planning, and preparing and approving operating and capital budget to most effectively serve the educational needs of Maine citizens. We support and enhance the teaching, research and service mission of the University of Maine System.

Last month you asked the Board to add your demands to the January Board agenda. Generally, matters that are taken up by the Board come through our committee process, and are put forth by university leaders, though I should note that the student and faculty representatives to the Board have a standing item on the Academic and Student Affairs Committee agenda during which they may raise issues of importance to them and those they represent. Your demands cut across several Board committees and some were beyond the scope of any committee. Given this, we convened a public meeting of the Executive Committee on December 17 to review your request for Board consideration and notified you and the public.

The Executive Committee, which has the authority to act on behalf of the full Board, carefully considered your six demands for Board action. We were in strong agreement that to act on your demands would compromise the critical role of our public universities in fostering understanding, discussion, and examination of complex issues through academic inquiry and research. Furthermore, we believe it would not promote the inclusivity that we strive to create on our campuses and in the community.

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It is not the role of the UMS Board of Trustees to take a position on matters of foreign policy, rather it is our role to ensure Maine's public universities provide a place for difficult conversations to respectfully occur among those with diverse viewpoints. There was consensus among our committee that to take a position on your demands would effectively shut down opportunities for conversation – including about the horrors of the conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere – and in doing so, undermine our educational mission.

In these polarizing times, the Board wants to reaffirm the essential role of our public universities in fostering free inquiry and challenging conversations. The Board values the engagement of students and faculty on this and other matters and will continue to aggressively promote and protect their rights to free speech and peaceful protest. We strongly condemn all forms of violence and discrimination, of course including antisemitism and Islamophobia. We also join you in mourning the loss of life in the Middle East and in conflicts around the world, as well as the loss of access to educational opportunities because of war and prejudice.

Our Board will continue its essential work to promote access to affordable, high-quality education and research that builds a strong Maine workforce and an informed and engaged citizenry prepared to shape and lead a more just and peaceful world for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trish".

Trish Riley, Chair

Maine's Public Universities

University of Maine • University of Maine at Augusta • University of Maine at
Farmington University of Maine at Fort Kent • University of Maine at Machias • University of
Maine at Presque Isle • University of Southern Maine • University of Maine School of Law