

University of Maine System
Board of Trustees

Academic and Student Affairs Committee

December 15, 2025

Zoom Meeting

Present: Committee Members: David MacMahon, Chair; Trish Riley, Barbara Alexander, Roger Katz, Elise Baldacci, Emily Cain, Kelly Martin. **Presidents:** Joseph McDonnell, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Leigh Saufley, Ray Rice, Deb Hedeon, Jacqueline Edmondson & Jenifer Cushman

Chancellor: Dannel Malloy **System Staff:** Jeffrey St. John, Ryan Low, Carolyn Dorsey, Jamie Ballinger, Heather Ball, Amie Parker & Elizabeth Stickler **Student Representatives:** Michelle Dionne **Faculty Representatives:** Timothy Surrette, Heather Nunez-Olmestead, Clyde Mitchell, Colleen Marzilli, William Otto & Joseph Staples. **Provosts:** Rusty Dolleman, Alana Margeson, Jeffrey Maine, Adam Tuchinsky, Katherine Yardley, Steven Quackenbush, & Joseph Szakas **Others:** Gabe Paquette, Megan Walsh, Amon Purinton

Members not attending: Will Kemler, Lisa Eames

Committee Chair MacMahon called the ASA Committee meeting to order and thanked everyone for participating. The clerk took the roll of committee members present.

Student Representative Discussion

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee invited student representatives to the Board of Trustees to bring forward discussion items relevant to their university communities and the University of Maine System. Due to the timing of this particular committee meeting and semester finals throughout the system, no topics were raised by the students during this meeting.

Faculty Discussion

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee invited faculty representatives to the Board of Trustees to bring forward discussion items relevant to their university communities and the University of Maine System.

Faculty raised concerns about the impending compliance with new Title II digital accessibility requirements, effective April 24th, which imposes a significant workload and cost on the system. The necessity of accessible digital materials was stressed, but faculty are apprehensive about managing the additional hours and potential financial burdens without adequate support. Discussions also highlighted risks of non-compliance, as flagged by tools like Blackboard Ally, and its broader repercussions.

The administrative response discussed the mandatory Title II Accessibility initiative, emphasizing its legality and broad impact. A working group which includes the Chief Human Resources Officer, several Vice Chancellors and other HR, system and campus representatives has been formed, whose initiative aims to facilitate a shift from reactive to proactive measures. Requests for phased introduction and expense management were considered to ease operational

transitions. Another initiative has been launched to engage professional staff and faculty in this transition and therefore create a two-pronged working group with direct impacts into this transition.

The directive, which is a new part of heightened federal compliance requirements, requires proactive accessibility, impacting institutions universally due to a shift from reactive to proactive accommodation measures. Consideration has been requested for waiver, delay, or phased implementation to manage expenses and operational impacts.

Faculty also expressed dissatisfaction over UMA's decision to relocate architecture and art programs from Handley Hall without consultation, fearing accreditation risks and inadequacy of alternative facilities. The lack of shared governance was addressed with a unanimous resolution from the UMA Faculty Senate. Faculty urged the Board of Trustees to reassess the decision, emphasizing compliance with accreditation standards and proper consultation, also raising concerns among faculty regarding accreditation under NAAB guidelines, requiring adequate physical resources for program quality assurance. Moving programs from this Hall could result in citations of deficiency and probation. Faculty also noted that the alternatives proposed were deemed insufficient, with renovations expected to cost over \$1.6 million.

Handley Hall is presumed to be sold, causing upset among faculty. A statement from the tenured faculty of architecture and art was presented to address concerns about the academic integrity, financial liability, and accreditation risks stemming from UMA's decision to vacate and potentially sell Handley Hall.

The resolution passed by the Faculty Senate requests the Board of Trustees to halt the planned sale and relocation, ensuring NAAB compliance and faculty consultation before any physical move is authorized. The faculty also requests the Board to conduct a feasibility study with an unbiased professional design firm to assess spatial needs and ensure pedagogical requirements are met as well as engaging in comprehensive consultation with program faculty regarding spatial needs, maintaining the board's policy that faculty must participate in decisions impacting program delivery.

Trustees agreed that localized issues like Handley Hall should not be discussed in the current meeting, recommending reviews by the system office. Highlighting cost and accreditation concerns, trustees emphasized the significance of collective board positions and appropriate committee assignments, ensuring adherence to campus planning norms.

Academic Program Proposal Review

A new process was announced to enable trustees to review academic program proposals through Google Drive before committee discussions. This process will align proposals with accreditation and strategic goals, prompting feedback from trustees to be channeled to the provost.

Additionally, concerns about program reviews outside formal meetings were raised, with an upcoming January meeting planned to refine this approach. Trustees will be provided with considerations to help evaluate proposals, ensuring alignment with accreditation, strategic

objectives, and avoiding duplication of existing programs. Feedback from trustees on proposals is sought in advance, shared with the provost, and then directed on campus.

Trustees did raise concern about trustees commenting on proposals outside of formal meetings, preferring public discussion and committee review of substantial or controversial items. A change to this process was proposed that trustees within this committee would be invited to provide feedback on this proposal review plan. Trustees were reminded that part of this proposal plan would be to allow provosts to share updates on newly approved academic programs one year post approval or implementation, integrating these into the annual academic program review process.

An evaluation plan for 90-credit programs will be presented at the January board meeting, though some components will be provisional due to lack of data from graduating students and employers. Trustees are being asked to provide feedback on the evaluation plan for 90-credit programs when it is presented in January.

Three of the five proposed 90-credit pilot programs received approval for launch in summer 2026, anticipating increased educational opportunities across multiple fields. Programs awaiting further action were deferred, with trustees informed of pending updates. Marketing initiatives will commence in January after incorporating further feedback.

After discussion of this proposal review plan, a meeting planned for early January with the chair of the board and trustees to discuss program proposals process will be scheduled in anticipation of several coming proposals as soon as the ASA February committee meeting.

Program Name Change: A.A. in Liberal Studies to A.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies, UMA

The University of Maine at Augusta proposes changing the name of the A.A. Liberal Studies to the A.A. Interdisciplinary Studies, beginning Fall 2026:

- Current Program/CIP: A.A. Liberal Studies, 24.0101
- Proposed Program/CIP: A.A. Interdisciplinary Studies, 30.0000

The rationale for this change is to eliminate the BA Liberal Studies and make significant changes to their BA Interdisciplinary Studies to become UMA's degree completion program. Therefore, they now need to align their associated A.A. degree to align with the B.A. INT rather than the old BA Liberal Studies.

UMA has basically restructured the A.A. to look more like an AA version of the BA in INT, with General Education in its own section in addition to program requirements.

The main changes are a change to the title, structure, names of sections, replacing 'General Electives' with 'Interdisciplinary Coursework', adding an option to the COL 123 requirement, reducing humanities courses from 3 to 2, adding the requirement of CIS 100 or 101 to gen ed requirements and eliminating the WGS concentration option.

A.A. Interdisciplinary Studies curriculum changes have been approved through UMA's Curriculum Committee, and now the last step is to request a name change for this degree from an

A.A. Liberal Studies to an A.A. Interdisciplinary Studies, before the provost signs off and it is updated in the catalog.

There are currently 218 active students pursuing this program. They will be to opt into the new A.A. INT curriculum requirements or permitted to complete their program through a teach-out plan (complete the AA Liberal Studies curriculum checklist/requirements in which they enrolled). Re-entry students will be required to follow this same plan for teach-out or they can opt for the new A.A. INT curriculum. We will work with Financial Aid and Registrar's Office to avoid negative implications for our international students, veterans, scholarship recipients, or others.

Substantive change: M.S. in Spatial Computing, UM

The School of Computing and Information Sciences in the Maine College of Engineering and Computing proposes to integrate the Master of Science in Spatial Information Science and Engineering (SIE-MS) and the Master of Science in Spatial Informatics (MSSI) into a 30-credit hour MS in Spatial Computing. The new unified degree is designed to provide students with advanced expertise in spatial computing, including skills in geographic information systems, database management, formal foundations, artificial intelligence, and spatial human-computer interaction. The program's flexibility allows students to pursue coursework, projects, or thesis options, enabling them to align their studies with individual academic and professional goals. This proposal streamlines curriculum, enhances alignment with industry standards, and prepares Maine's workforce for evolving technological demands.

There will be no new added costs to implementing this combined degree program.

Currently, one student in the SIE-MS is expected to graduate in May 2026. There are 10 students in the MSSI program; two will graduate this Fall and are therefore not affected. Four students either started Fall 2025 or will start Spring 2026 and will have the option to be grandfathered into the new program. Four others who began Fall 2024 or earlier are expected to complete their current degree but may also transition to the new program. In summary, eight students that are enrolled in the current MS Spatial Informatics may either graduate in their existing degree or opt into the new program. All students admitted Spring 26 or later will be matriculated in the spatial computing major.

Substantive Change:

- **Ph.D. in Oceanography and Ph.D. in Marine Biology combined and renamed Ph.D. in Marine Science, UM**
- **M.S in Oceanography, M.S. in Marine Biology, and M.S. in Marine Policy combined and renamed M.S. in Marine Science, UM**

The University of Maine (UM) has made two substantive changes to the M.S. and Ph.D. programs in the School of Marine Sciences effective Fall 2026. The changes reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the field, strengthen the program identity, and align national trends, workforce terminology, and funding opportunities. This restructuring of degree titles and academic tracks will not require new courses, faculty, or resources.

- **M.S. programs in Oceanography, Marine Biology and Marine Policy combine to become the M.S. in Marine Science**

Current students in the M.S. in Marine Biology, M.S. in Oceanography, and M.S. in Marine Policy programs may proceed with their academic pathway under their existing degree name or the new name. New and re-entering students will enter under the new program name. The Marine Science degree will offer multiple concentrations, allowing students to emphasize areas of specific expertise.

- **Ph.D. programs in Oceanography and Marine Biology combine to become the Ph.D. in Marine Science**

Current students in the Ph.D. in Marine Biology and Ph.D. in Oceanography programs may proceed with their academic pathway under their existing degree name or the new name. New and re-entering students will enter under the new program name. The degree will offer concentrations in Marine Biology and Oceanography, allowing students to emphasize specific expertise.

ASA Work Plan: Pathways to Learning Report

Vice Chancellor St. John and Jamie Ballinger, Director of Enrollment and Academic Initiatives, updated the trustees on non-traditional pathways to learning that are available in UMS, including information about online program availability, certificates, micro credential and competency-based education. A comprehensive report detailing these items was also included in the materials.

The annual report highlighted alternative educational pathways within the University of Maine system, emphasizing micro-credentials, certificates, and online growth. Although significant growth in certificates has been observed, discussions highlighted the potential demographic data inclusion and expansion in digital learning initiatives. Considerations for increasing revenue generation opportunities and systemic development accompanied acknowledgments of micro-credentialing's role in professional development. The current portfolio includes 52 micro-credentials with 12 additional ones under development, expected to launch soon. Approximately 10,000 badges have been provided to professionals throughout the state via micro-credentials.

Currently, around 148 undergraduate and graduate certificates are offered, with 43 developed since 2021, serving about 1,300 students annually. Online learning programs grew by 35% since 2021, with a goal of 50% growth outlined by the strategic plan.

Trustees asked about providing demographic information of participants in these programs to better analyze the students and workforce partners who are utilizing these programs.

It was also discussed that micro-credentials and certificates do not generate credit hours, but certificate programs have experienced growth following strategic initiatives such as stacking certificates. Trustees also requested additional data on credit hours generated by certificates and micro-credentials requested, with commitments to send accurate information.

There are ongoing discussions around offering micro-credentials as credit for prior learning, potentially involving collaboration with Job for Maine's Graduates (JMG) and engaging faculty for support. Trustees brought forth possible consideration of written policy statements for micro-credentialing to guide system development and revenue generation.

It was suggested that this topic be allocated more time at board meetings for discussion on significant issues like online learning pedagogy for undergraduate education.

Executive Session

On a motion by Trustee Cain, which was seconded by Trustee Alexander, 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.

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

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

Adjournment

Kayla Flewelling for
Elizabeth Stickler, Clerk