# UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM

Board of Trustees Meeting

Hosted by the University of Maine at Presque Isle
September 27-28, 2026

## Board of Trustees Meeting

Present: **Trustees**: Roger Katz, Chair; Elise Baldacci, Vice Chair; Barbara Alexander, Emily Cain, Chris Gordon, Patrick Flood, Heather Johnson, Donna Loring, Emily Cain, Pender Makin, Kelly Martin, David MacMahon, Michael Michaud, Trish Riley, Heather Johnson, Blake Shepherd, Matthew Webber, and Richard Rosen. **Chancellor:** Dannel Malloy. **University Presidents**: Jenifer Cushman, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Deborah Hedeen, Joseph McDonnell, Ray Rice, and Leigh Saufley. **Faculty Representatives**: Colleen Marzilli, Timothy Surrette, Clyde Mitchell, Michael Curran, William Otto, Heather Nunez-Olmstead, and Adam Schmitt. **Student representatives**: Laura Prince, Jemima George. **System Staff**: Ryan Low, Jeffrey St. John, Carolyn Dorsey, Robert Placido, Lisa Landry, Amon Purinton, Gretchen Catlin, Ryan Whitlock, Amie Parker, and Elizabeth Stickler.

### Sunday, September 27, 2026

Trustee Katz, Chair, welcomed everyone and called the Executive Session to order.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-A to discuss the evaluation of personnel and the consideration and discussion of appointments, 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.
- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-D to discuss planning for negotiations and communications with AFUM, UMPSA, ACSUM, Police, PATFA, and Service and Maintenance Units.
- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-E to consult with its attorney concerning legal rights and duties of the university.

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

### Monday, September 28, 2026

## PUBLIC MEETING

Chair Katz called the public meeting to order and thanked President Rice and the UMPI community for hosting the Board. He announced that the meeting was streamed on YouTube with closed captioning and stated that no Trustees were participating remotely that morning. Faculty and student representatives were introduced, and Chair Katz noted the Board's interest in providing additional opportunities for their input.

## Citizen Comment

Citizen Comment is a time regularly set aside for comments from the public. The following individuals spoke during the Citizen Comment period:

Brian McGill - President of the University of Maine Faculty Senate.

## University of Maine at Presque Isle Presentation

President Rice presented “A Historical Overview of UMPI and Its Initiatives.” He traced the institution's current approach to the faculty's unanimous 2013 decision to organize the curriculum around demonstrated proficiency. He described efforts to reduce barriers of time, cost, distance, and relevance through competency-based education, tuition guarantees, Early College, Canadian recruitment, and programs aligned with workforce needs.

President Rice reported that YourPace represented just over 11% of System enrollment, with undergraduate tuition of $1,800 per session, and that more than 80% of UMPI students studied online. He described the growth of graduate programming, including 589 students in the organizational leadership master's program, and collaboration with UMA to bring dental education to the County. He also discussed career and workforce credentials, improved financial capacity, approximately $10 million in capital planning, and a 30-place improvement in the institution's social-mobility ranking. Serving Maine residents, strengthening Early College, and attracting students to live and work in the region remained priorities.

Trustees asked about academic standards, rapid completion, faculty capacity, transfer credit, and appropriate use of AI. President Rice explained that experienced adult learners often arrive with substantial prior credit and that faculty assess their work and engage directly with them to verify learning. He described growth in full-time and adjunct faculty, ongoing review of transfer-credit practices, and the work of the University's AI engagement council. He emphasized that competency-based and traditional residential education serve different needs and that UMPI and UMFK remain essential to regional health care, education, and other workforce pipelines.

Vice Chair Baldacci requested a background explanation of the infrastructure and quality-assurance arrangements supporting YourPace. President Rice identified enterprise technology and administrative processes as areas that could better support the program. Chair Katz noted that a more detailed YourPace discussion was planned for November. During the later round-robin, Professor Nunez Olmstead added that faculty had reviewed general-education transfer

courses for both content and applied competencies and would cease accepting courses that did not meet those expectations.

## Chair's Report

Chair Katz introduced an educational session on the history of the System and major initiatives.

## Educational Session on the History of the System and Major Initiatives

Vice Chancellor Ryan Low traced the System's development from the Coles Commission and its establishment in 1968 through subsequent restructuring proposals, the 2005 statutory identification of seven universities, and a shift toward operating more effectively together. He reviewed New Challenges, New Directions and the administrative integration of procurement, information technology, human resources, finance, and facilities. He described changes in budget allocation and the reinvestment of administrative savings in the mission, including more than $10.5 million over five years for research. Separate institutional accreditations had constrained some shared arrangements, helping prompt the move toward unified accreditation.

Vice Chancellor Ferrini-Mundy outlined the growth of research from UMaine's land-grant foundation to a Systemwide enterprise. She discussed MEIF, the small-campus initiative, partnerships with Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, the research reinvestment fund, the System R&D plan, and coordinated federal funding efforts. Milestones included UMaine's R1 classification and USM's recognition in Carnegie's research colleges and universities category. Trustee Alexander raised concerns about declining federal support; Vice Chancellor Ferrini-Mundy acknowledged the challenges and described adaptation to new opportunities, with further detail in her later report.

Vice Chancellor Jeff St. John reviewed distance learning from interactive television through expanded online instruction, the pandemic transition, and investments in adult degree completion. Online instruction had surpassed face-to-face instruction in fall 2026. He described unified accreditation effective July 1, 2020, subsequent reviews, the unified catalog, improved articulation and transfer arrangements, direct admission, competency-based offerings, and 90-credit programs. He outlined preparations for the 2027 interim report and a comprehensive visit scheduled for 2032. In his afternoon report, he clarified that the modern Early College initiative began at USM in 2009.

Vice Chancellor Carolyn Dorsey described YourPace's development, including its launch with 115 students, the shift to eight-week sessions in response to student and employer needs, and expansion of competency-based education to UMFK and UMF. She emphasized clearer pathways for students, employer partnerships, coordinated marketing, sustained use of UMS TRANSFORMS investments, academic collaboration, and preparation for AI's effects on education and work. Trustee Cain recommended using the presentation in Trustee orientation.

Staff described work underway to strengthen orientation and make reference materials accessible for later use.

**President's Round-Robin**

President Jenifer Cushman, University of Maine at Augusta, reported the largest incoming first-year class in UMA's history, with more than 350 new students, including over 100 attending full-time. Housing was at capacity with 157 students in Hallowell residences and hotel accommodations in Augusta and Bangor. Construction of a new 60-bed residence hall was underway for fall 2027. An NCAA campus visit supported preparations for the next stage of Division III membership, with an application planned for January. She connected housing, athletics, and student life to belonging while affirming UMA's continuing service to part-time and adult learners.

President Cushman also described the academic theme “Critical Thinking in the Age of AI,” a convocation visit by author John Warner, and faculty and leadership discussions of teaching, writing, and responsible AI use. Related work included the $400,000 Davis Educational Foundation grant, UMA's AI hub, and its immersive learning room. She marked 20 years of the prison education partnership, now serving 150 students at seven Maine Department of Corrections sites and having awarded more than 160 degrees. She reported a return-to-custody rate below 5% among graduates, compared with more than 25% statewide over a comparable period, and described plans for an anniversary celebration, donor engagement, and expanded Pell access following federal approval.

President Joan Ferrini-Mundy, University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias, described research and workforce partnerships serving Maine. UMaine researchers were selected for the Department of Energy's Genesis initiative to apply AI to microbial genetic data and underground chemical and groundwater processes, with relevance to PFAS research. She reported 278 selections nationally from more than 5,000 proposals. A Portsmouth Naval Shipyard partnership would connect students with defense-related research, engineering facilities, hands-on training, and academic credit. She highlighted a $20 million federal investment in the Maine Tech Hub for advanced forest bioproducts and manufacturing, and UMaine's role in a four-state NSF regional innovation effort supporting fisheries and aquaculture. She also reported a two-year, $1.3 million Libra Foundation investment in Maine Outdoor School for All through Cooperative Extension and a partnership with the Mark Cuban Foundation to offer a free AI boot camp for high school students.

President and Dean Leigh Saufley, University of Maine School of Law, described the school's progress following the challenges documented in 2018 and 2019. The entering class of 2029 had the strongest academic credentials in the school's history, with a median LSAT score of 160 and GPA of 3.71. Total enrollment was 295, approaching the goal of 300. She credited the Board, Chancellor, new facilities, and new programs with supporting that progress. Faculty appointments included Lisa Avalos in criminal law, Alice Farmer in property and environmental law, and visiting professor William Marshall. She also highlighted strengthened development work, a new endowed professorship, the entering students' community-service day, and the Chancellor's regular engagement with students.

President Deborah Hedeen, University of Maine at Fort Kent, reported on homecoming, the unveiling of a legacy wall and dedication in preparation for UMFK's September 30, 2028 sesquicentennial, and the University's Community Spirit Award in the Fort Kent Scarecrow Festival parade. Homecoming included recognition of outstanding alumni and graduates marking 50- and 25-year anniversaries, as well as soccer and volleyball contests. She welcomed Athletics Director Becky Carlson from Quinnipiac, where Carlson built the women's rugby program and won three consecutive national championships. UMFK enrollment was up 13.6% for the year and approximately 30% since 2022. Residence halls housed 162 students, compared with 146 the previous year, along with 10 pets under the pet-friendly campus program. She thanked faculty, staff, and students for their work supporting growth.

President Joseph McDonnell, University of Maine at Farmington, reported 3% enrollment growth, particularly in undergraduate, graduate, adult-completion, and early childhood education programs. He cautioned that headcount gains among part-time students did not necessarily produce credit-hour growth. He described new leadership appointments in academic affairs, education, marketing, student affairs, Early College, and philanthropy. UMF was consolidating facilities and leasing available space, including a previously vacant residence hall leased to a local school district for an international program. Nearly 700 students lived on campus following the requirement that first- and second-year students reside there. He also highlighted strong cross-country results, with men's runners taking the top five places and women's runners the top two in a recent conference meet.

Professor Adam Schmitt, reporting for President Jacqueline Edmondson, University of Southern Maine, described the second year of the Forum on American Democracy, focused on freedom of speech. The program included a recent PEN America speaker, a November 18 event with a former ACLU president, and 11 student scholars who would help lead a spring forum. He acknowledged the Pond Family Foundation's support. Three faculty members were participating in an 18-month civic-engagement institute, and USM had joined a national cohort supporting campuswide civic engagement under its student-affairs leadership. He also described the new Monday-through-Thursday community hour, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., which reserves time without classes for connection and engagement. The new College of Nursing and Health Professions and College of Education had begun operating. A proposed Center for the Humanities and Public Life was advancing through review, with an inaugural $100,000 gift supporting it if approved.

President Ray Rice, University of Maine at Presque Isle, reported approximately 10% growth in traditional on-campus students and a successful convocation. He noted the recent soccer match with USM and an anticipated October art installation by emeritus faculty artist Leo-Paul Cyr connected with the Zillman estate, subject to shipment and customs arrangements. He invited Professor Nunez Olmstead to explain the faculty's summer review of general education and transfer-course equivalencies, summarized above. Proper names associated with the installation and several other round-robin recognitions are flagged below.

## Redlined Board Policies

At the direction of Chair Riley and agreement of the Board at the January 2023 meeting, the Bylaws Working Group has completed its review of the current Bylaws and recommended the changes noted in the redline format included in meeting materials. It has been the intent of the Working Group throughout this process to clarify the current wording of the Bylaws, add necessary details to reflect ongoing Board practice, and to include content in the Bylaws derived from our Charter and other operating principles where it was determined that language was important to include.

Trustee Alexander presented policy revisions for first reading, with possible action in November. She withdrew Board Policy 404.3 for further work. She explained that the proposed revision to Policy 204.1 clarified the expectation of a comprehensive presidential evaluation every three years, including when contracts are extended annually. Trustees were invited to submit questions and recommendations to the Board Office. She acknowledged Trustees Flood and Baldacci, System staff, and general counsel for their contributions.

## Decision Criteria Work Group

Trustee Riley presented the work group's proposed framework for first reading. It would help Trustees assess new proposals for programs, buildings, technology, and related investments against university distinctiveness and the needs of the System as a whole. The framework would apply to both online and in-person proposals and was not intended to describe everything each university does or to exclude future opportunities.

The work group would further address the role of arts and humanities and coordinate with the developing online strategy. Trustee Cain emphasized that the criteria should provide a foundation without limiting future innovation. Comments were invited through October 20, with further work in early November and anticipated Board consideration in November. No approval was sought at this meeting.

## Consent Agenda

On a motion by Trustee Baldacci, seconded by Trustee Cain, and approved by all Trustees present, the items on the Consent Agenda were approved by the Board of Trustees as follows:

- Tab 5 - Acceptance of Minutes.
- Tab 6 - New Program: M.S. in Healthcare Administration, UMPI.
- Tab 7 - New Program: M.S. in Digital Forensics and Cyber Investigation, UMA.
- Tab 8 - Mahaney Diamond Renovations, UM.
- Tab 9 - Teamworks Athletics Software - Consolidated Multi-Year Agreements, UM.
- Tab 10 - Bailey Hall Façade Replacement Budget Increase, USM.

Chair Katz described the vote as unanimous and noted the prior committee review of these items.

## Chancellor's Report

Chancellor Malloy reported a ninth consecutive semester of enrollment growth and the highest headcount in more than a decade. He emphasized that many adult degree completers study part-time, affecting the relationship between headcount and credit hours. He described additional direct-admission agreements with private schools in Maine and plans for campus visits beginning at UMPI that day and UMFK the next day.

At the Chancellor's invitation, President Ferrini-Mundy addressed UMaine's budget planning and the September 17 communication about a projected $19 million gap in preparing the FY2028 budget. She emphasized student needs, long-term sustainability, established budget procedures, the President's Budget Advisory Committee, Faculty Senate, and bargaining-unit consultation. Chair Katz noted that the challenge had been discussed previously and underscored opportunities for participation in the budget process.

## Action Items

### Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement with PATFA

Vice Chancellor Dorsey presented the tentative three-year agreement covering compensation, workload, academic matters, and retiree provisions. She thanked the bargaining participants and explained that union ratification was still underway.

On a motion by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Cain and approved by all Trustees present, the Board of Trustees authorized the Chancellor to execute the collective bargaining agreement, with PATFA (Part-Time Faculty Association), once voted upon and ratified by the members of that bargaining unit.

## Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation Report

Vice Chancellor Ferrini-Mundy described the Grants Academy's eighth cohort. Its first seven cohorts had served 165 System researchers, including 79 from universities other than UMaine; the new cohort included at least 16 participants, eight from other System institutions. She reported support for three USM NSF CAREER proposals and UMF participation in an NSF collaboration led by the University of Vermont.

She described visits involving USDA and FEMA, PFAS research and mitigation, and work with the Department of Energy on graduate training combining AI and scientific disciplines. Federal award numbers and dollars had declined, with implications for indirect-cost recovery. The System was supporting proposal development, monitoring federal policy changes, and

encouraging MEIF proposals that both served Maine's designated sectors and could position researchers for future federal opportunities. She also discussed statewide innovation planning, the medical education task force, and continuing biomedical partnerships.

President Rice described UMPI's place-based research, including geological and rare-earth mineral work with UMaine, wildlife and tidal-marsh research, machine-learning diagnostics, PFAS-related chemistry, and tick management. These projects engage undergraduates in laboratory and field research early in their studies. He also reported federal support for TRIO programming and health-care training equipment serving nursing, medical laboratory technology, physical therapy, and planned dental education. Vice Chancellor Ferrini-Mundy emphasized distinctive research identities and undergraduate participation across the System. In response to Trustee Johnson, she discussed work to better distinguish competitive research awards, educational awards, and infrastructure funding when assessing trends.

## Vice Chancellor for Finance and Strategic AI Integration Report

Vice Chancellor Low reported July market values of approximately $432 million for the Managed Investment Pool, $14.2 million for the Pension Fund, and $313 million for the Operating Fund. He reported a 0.3% July loss for the Managed Investment Pool and NEPC estimates of August gains of 1.9% for that pool, 1.3% for the Pension Fund, and 0.7% for the Operating Fund. The captioned July pension return, operating return, and income-versus-budget figures require confirmation against the written report and are not stated as settled figures here.

Three weeks into the ChatGPT Edu rollout, more than 3,300 users had enrolled, including approximately 2,000 students, almost 900 staff, and fewer than 400 faculty. Participation was voluntary. Vice Chancellor Low reported nearly 2,500 training registrations over the preceding year and 177 registrations for the first two newly announced staff and faculty sessions. Advanced training and collaboration with state agencies were also planned.

He explained that the competitively procured two-year agreement cost slightly less than $700,000 annually, approximately $22 per user per year, and was funded for the first two years with temporary investment income from the prior fiscal year. The approach followed objections to an earlier proposed per-credit-hour fee. Existing individual subscriptions had represented substantial campus spending, which could now be retained locally. Surveys were planned to inform assessment and a future renewal decision. He described the task-force, Board, committee, and procurement communications supporting the rollout and thanked the implementation team.

## Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Report

Vice Chancellor St. John presented refreshed fall enrollment data distinguishing YourPace from other enrollment. Excluding YourPace, undergraduate headcount was down 2.0%, graduate headcount down 0.2%, and overall headcount down 1.6%. Including YourPace, undergraduate headcount was up 5.6%, graduate headcount up 2.9%, and overall headcount up 5.0%. He

reported undergraduate and graduate credit hours excluding YourPace each down 0.7%; including YourPace, undergraduate credit hours were up 8.7%, graduate credit hours up 4.7%, and overall credit hours up 8.2%.

He placed these results in the context of declining high-school graduate populations and highlighted campus gains: UMA's incoming Maine students, UMFK's fourth consecutive year of growth, UMF's largest entering class since the onset of COVID, stronger in-state first-year enrollment at UMaine and UMM, USM's second-largest entering class in five years, and Maine Law applications increasing by more than 50% with an approximately 28% acceptance rate. UMPI had its second-highest traditional enrollment in five years and students from every continent except Antarctica. A transfer report was planned for January, followed by discussion at the February ASA meeting. He described peer and family networks as contributing to YourPace's international enrollment.

**Commemorative Renaming at the University of Maine**

President Ferrini-Mundy described the task-force review initiated in February following release of federal records containing allegations involving Senator George Mitchell. President and Dean Saufley emphasized that the task force's charge was to apply the Board's commemorative-naming policy concerning public trust and institutional reputation, rather than adjudicate allegations. She described the review process and the difficulty of its work.

Trustee Webber emphasized students' concerns and the effect of retaining the name on their relationship with the University. Trustees Riley, Loring, and Michaud expressed opposition based on the absence of adjudicated findings, due-process concerns, the precedent involved, and Senator Mitchell's contributions. Trustee Alexander questioned the treatment of his public denials. Trustee Cain and Chair Katz distinguished the reputational decision under Board policy from a determination of wrongdoing and expressed support for the recommendation. Trustee Johnson emphasized consistent standards. The discussion acknowledged the seriousness of the allegations, Senator Mitchell's denials and accomplishments, and the difficulty of the decision.

On a motion by Trustee Webber, which was seconded by Trustee Flood, and approved by nine trustees in favor, five against, and one abstention, the Board accepted the recommendation of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, and approved the renaming of the Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions as the University of Maine Center for Sustainability Solutions.

**Elimination of the Bachelor of Arts in Romance Languages at the University of Maine**

Vice Chancellor St. John stated that both program-elimination proposals had followed the required consultation and governance processes. President Ferrini-Mundy described persistently low enrollment and degree production in Romance Languages. UMaine would continue the separate French and Spanish majors and minors.

On a motion by Trustee Cain, seconded by Trustee Webber, and approved by all Trustees present, the Board That the Board accepted the recommendation to eliminate the Bachelor of Arts in Romance Languages at the University of Maine.

**Elimination of the Associate of Science in Dental Hygiene at the University of Maine at Augusta**

President Cushman described a faculty-led transition to the accredited Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene, with the final associate-degree cohort expected to graduate in spring 2030. A teach-out plan would allow enrolled students to complete current requirements. Full-time faculty would transition to the bachelor's program without retrenchments or layoffs, and the change was intended to maintain graduate volume while expanding clinical and leadership preparation.

On a motion by Trustee Cain, seconded by Trustee Webber, and approved by all Trustees present the Board accepted the recommendation to eliminate the Associate of Science in Dental Hygiene at the University of Maine at Augusta.

## Adjournment

Chair Katz thanked Elizabeth Stickler and recognized Trustee Martin's service. He announced that the next Board meeting would be November 15-16, 2026 at the University of Southern Maine.

Meeting materials are available at https://www.maine.edu/board-of-trustees/meeting-agendas-materials/board-of-trustees/.

Elizabeth Stickler

Clerk of the Board of Trustees