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Week of July 29

Trustees -

This weekend I'm pausing to relish in the role of grandfather for the second time. My namesake, Dannel Patrick Malloy, was born late Friday morning in Connecticut to my son Dannel and his wife. Baby, parents, and grandparents are all doing fine and couldn't be happier.

You may have seen by now my Friday afternoon "all System" message, titled "Tackling Challenges Together." Although I was proud to report that I met my goal of visiting all seven main UMS campuses in July, the more important message -- and challenge -- came later in my text.

As we work diligently and openly with the Presidents to develop the recommendations you asked me to bring forward in September about what accreditation structure will best realize the promise of One University, I wanted our entire UMS community to understand the true nature of that challenge. The challenge isn't picking one accreditation plan over another. Rather, it's to clarify what we want One University to be, and more importantly, how it will benefit our students and the State. It's easy to say we want to make our universities more attractive to more students, that we need to make better use of our far-too-limited resources, or that we need to coordinate our academic programs more strategically across the state -- and of course we need to do all three!

It's proven harder, I'm learning, for our universities to come together and declare what specific benefits One University has to offer for students. Accreditation matters in that discussion, of course, and our September recommendation to you will address it, but ultimately we need to improve student experience and opportunity if our System and each of its universities are to survive and thrive. More market-relevant academic programs need to be available, in a better coordinated fashion across the state, accessible no matter where our students are. With my Friday message, I wanted everyone in our UMS community to know that that's our challenge. And it needs to be communicated clearly and often so that all of our students, faculty, and staff can understand and buy in to the work we'll be doing.

We need to appreciate too that our work goes on in the midst of national attention focused on Alaska this week, where our counterparts there are working feverishly to manage a \$135 million cut to their system's state appropriation. As the week ended there, the Alaska System's Board voted overwhelmingly to pursue a transition from three separately-accredited universities to a single accredited institution with three locations. The story you'll find at this link is as succinct a summary as I've seen, explaining both what Alaska hopes to achieve with their move to a single accreditation as well as why alternatives to that plan were rejected. Much of what you'll read on that, I suspect, will sound familiar to debates here at UMS that I think have gone on for long enough.

<https://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/whats-next-for-the-university-of-alaska/>

I share with you this context from Alaska because I think it makes the point for why we need to clearly define the benefits to our students if we are to follow a similar path. No one should misunderstand that our journey down this path was started in immediate reaction to a catastrophic budget crisis. All of us in higher education, I suspect, regret that such is the impetus for this move in Alaska. Here, if we are to do

this, I want all of our stakeholders to know that we did it not out of desperation, but to improve our student experience.

More programs, with more relevance. More access, from more access points. More value, both to our students and for the Maine citizens whose tax dollars support us. Those will be the impetus for our work, and I hope the entire UMS community can see from my first month that I will push relentlessly to realize them.

While the above looms large, other work goes on.

On Wednesday, UMaine Athletics Director Ken Ralph led me and UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy on a tour of UMaine's athletics complex. As is the case throughout our System, Ken and his team do well with aging facilities and limited resources, and he has impressive plans for improvement. We closed with a review of a developing master plan that can inform our priorities as we consider pursuing philanthropic support later this fall ... You know well, of course, of the importance of prioritizing our needs across the entire System, most notably at UMaine, USM, and their collaborative work with the Maine Center's graduate programs in business, law, and public policy.

I met too with Dave Daigler, my counterpart at the Maine Community College System. I'm pleased with our developing relationship. We discussed a preliminary agenda for a meeting we'll have together tomorrow with our Board chairs, another in the series of meetings of the Higher Education Coordinating Council we're required by the Legislature to hold to discuss how we can better work together. I'll report more on that next week.

Finally, I spent Friday at USM in Portland, where I had productive discussions with both President Glenn Cummings and Interim Dean Dmitry Bam at Maine Law. Dean Bam will be working closely with me, Vice Chancellor Ryan Low, and Trustee Lisa Eames in the coming weeks to revitalize the Law School as we consider what portions of the Law School Advisory Committee report can be implemented responsibly now.

A month in, I'm more energized than ever to lead UMS forward.

Regards,  
Dan