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Week of July 8

Trustees -

I'm sending an abbreviated message this weekend since we'll be together all day tomorrow in Orono for our regular Board meeting - my first as Chancellor. I'll save mention of the many issues on the meeting agenda for then.

Continuing my travels to visit the System's campuses through my first month, I spent the day Tuesday at the University of Maine at Farmington, hosted by our new President there, Edward Serna. President Serna's challenges to revitalize UMF's public liberal arts curriculum in alignment with System and State needs are well-known to you, and my first impression is that he brings the right level of focus to meet them. He and his campus leadership were good hosts - I left with a good but realistic sense of UMF's infrastructure and curricular challenges, but also with realistic confidence that the campus, faculty, BOV, and community leaders I met can make real progress there under President Serna's leadership.

I traveled to Bar Harbor later in the week to attend Jackson Laboratory's Forum for Discovery, an annual showcase of the critical biomedical research undertaken there. The JAX mantra is "Predictive biology for a disease-free life," and after seeing a number of presentations on cutting-edge genomic research targeting the causes, treatments, and even potential cures for diseases like cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, immune disorders and more, it's easy to share JAX's optimism that they'll someday realize their mantra.

Interesting as the JAX presentations were, though, I had a more ambitious purpose for spending my time there. I was accompanied by UM President Joan Ferrini-Mundy ... We had a number of good discussions with Jackson Laboratory's President and CEO Edison Liu to talk frankly about ... expanding and improving JAX's existing relationships with UM's graduate biomedical science and engineering programs ...

More generally, I'd like to share my initial observation that there seems to be a pent-up eagerness among many campus and System leaders to act, and act boldly. My first impressions are that the System has not lacked for ideas and reports on how to work more collaboratively, or what initiatives might be pursued to truly advance the State's interests. But it seems too few felt empowered to act boldly. I want to be very clear that I intend to change that, and change it quickly.

I look forward to our Board meeting discussions tomorrow.

Dan