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Week of September 16

Trustees,

We started the week together at the Board meeting in Fort Kent. I'm proud of the decisive actions we've now taken together, both to support Maine's only Law School and to start a more comprehensive discussion with our university communities about how, by following our Guiding Principles, the University of Maine System can better serve students and the State with a unified accreditation.

I'll speak more to those issues in my conclusion below, but first wanted to share some news directly from our universities over the last week.

Although national and regional media report top national rankings for better known institutions in the annual US News & World Report Best Colleges Rankings, only sporadic regional or local media attention is given to our institutions when they fare well in lesser-watched regional rankings. In the "Regional Colleges in the North" category, I'm proud to report that our universities in Farmington, Presque Isle, Fort Kent, and Augusta all received notable rankings in the new Social Mobility category, which measures how well an institution supports Pell-eligible students from low-income families to graduation. UMA was ranked 7th for Best Undergraduate Teaching, while UMF, UMPI, and UMFK were all in the top half of the rankings for Best Overall in the category. UMF received particular note as Best for Veterans (2nd overall) and Best Value (3rd overall), while UMPI was the only Maine institution to be lauded for graduates with the least debt (coming in at 13th in the 11-state North region).

Since I don't think we've done a good enough job in the past telling the story of our quality and affordability, I thought you should know of these positive markers - and I encourage you to boast about them publicly!

Both UMA and UMaine held academic convocations on Friday afternoon, with UMaine reinstating its convocation after a 12-year gap. In academia, convocation is the event that officially welcomes students to their academic careers, conveying to them the importance of their educational work and showing the institution's support for students as they start and continue their education. At the Orono event, President Ferrini-Mundy used convocation to launch a year-long focus on fostering learner success to a full house in Hauck Auditorium, while President Wyke announced on the UMA Campus Green that *Dirigo* is the academic theme at UMA through the 2019-2020 academic year.

Finally, given Friday's news of student-led marches around the globe to call attention to climate concerns, it's only fitting that I note for you this week other work and initiatives underway that have climate connections.

USM President Cummings traveled to Stockholm, Sweden to accept USM's membership in the University of the Arctic Council and present USM's work in the High North Atlantic through the Maine-North Atlantic Institute. The European Union-led UArctic network is a collaborating association of over 200 universities across the world engaged in the Arctic and High North Atlantic, coordinating research, education, funding, and student mobility in the form of internships, study abroad opportunities, and semester work. The Maine-North Atlantic Institute's focus is on market access, environmental and

community health, and cultural connections, contributing to innovative solutions for communities and economies impacted by changes in the Arctic and North Atlantic region.

UMaine and UMM announced this week that several of their professors were tapped for service on the Maine Climate Council and its subcommittees and working groups. The Climate Council, proposed by Governor Mills and passed by the Legislature, is charged with establishing strategies and initiatives to help the state meet its greenhouse gas reductions and renewable energy generation targets as it works to combat climate change, and to make sure our communities, industries and people are resilient to the changes our state is facing. UMaine Professor Ivan Fernandez will serve on the Climate Council itself, while more than a dozen of his colleagues from UMaine and UMM have been named to the Council's Science and Technical Subcommittee, as well as the Transportation, Coastal and Marine, and other working groups.

As you can see from the above examples from just this past week, our universities are recognized for and do important work in their teaching, research, and public service, and their reach extends beyond their local communities.

Turning back now to where I started, you've charged me to start conversations with our university communities about how we can carry forward the best of what they each do, preserving their uniqueness, as we explore how to transition successfully to a unified accreditation. Our communities are learning by now that I will be talking with them on a regular basis about these and other matters, and I've reached out to our colleagues Systemwide already to invite their active participation in the coming conversations. You can see my most recent message here: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/From-Your-University-of-Maine-System-Office-of-the-Chancellor.html?soid=1124872474891&aid=8QKczTfcoz8>

Our work has only just begun, and as you heard in our review of the history of System-level accreditation, our forward progress now is the culmination of years, even decades, of previous debate and effort.

It's good work for our students, and thus good for Maine.

Regards,  
Dan