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Week of September 23

Trustees -

With Fall in full swing, I'd like to report on select matters from this past week that are indicative of the important work we do to advance inter-institutional collaboration and research within our state and region.

First, a brief note of exciting news coming this week from Presque Isle. President Ray Rice will be announcing that UMPI will be the recipient of a significant U.S. Department of Education grant. The grant announcement isn't public yet, so we are unable to share details, but I wanted you to know to be watching for this news.

On Tuesday evening, a few members of my staff and I attended a dinner program at Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor that was hosted by Maine Community College System President Dave Daigler. Dinner followed a MCCS Presidents' Council meeting earlier in the day and included MCCS Board members, senior staff, Maine Department of Education Commissioner and UMS Trustee Pender Makin. In the pre-dinner hour, Dave and I led a discussion about raising awareness of the importance of credential attainment and how our two Systems drive that message in Maine, as well as raising awareness of the barriers Mainers face in pursuing credentialing and the critical role of public policy decisions in removing those barriers (e.g., child care, broadband availability, transportation, safety net benefits to enable Mainers to go to school, etc.). Our own Rosa Redonnett, from her new perspective as Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Credential Attainment, and her MCCS counterpart Janet Sorter contributed significantly to the conversation, as they do with their work together every day.

I shared a System-wide message late this week to call attention again to the UMS Research and Development Plan (<https://umaine.edu/researchplan/>) that UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy presented to you in March. You might recall that the Plan recommends that the System launch a series of grand challenges over the next decade. Grand challenges are problems of global, national, and regional significance that require interdisciplinary teams to work together to develop and implement innovative solutions. Research universities across the country are launching grand challenges to focus their research, education, and outreach efforts to promote discovery, develop the workforce, and engage the public in solving intractable societal problems.

We aim to do the same for Maine. My message called attention to the point that it's time to start putting our R&D Plan into action, and in the way we do best -- by inviting and incentivizing research proposals to solve real challenges that Mainers face. Funded by current year Research Reinvestment Funds that you have set aside over the last several years, the first Grand Challenge pilot invites concept papers from UMS faculty, staff, and students that address the theme "Rural Health and Well-Being." To be considered for further investment, proposals must be submitted by November 14 and, among other things:

- include at least five team members from at least three academic disciplines and at least two UMS campuses, and external partner(s) from the private and nonprofit sectors, community colleges, or high school districts;

- describe the research to be carried out and how the team will integrate two or more of the following activities: education, outreach, workforce development, technical assistance, training, commercialization, and economic development;
- ensure the concept is innovative, novel, and builds upon existing assets and expertise across UMS;
- ensure the proposal is sustainable with growth and potential for scaling up to other rural states, and articulate a detailed plan to attract new funding to the System, such as follow-on grants, philanthropic gifts, industrial partnerships, and commercialization revenue, as applicable; and
- integrate student research experiences and workforce development into projects.

You can read more about the pilot here: <https://umaine.edu/researchplan/university-of-maine-system-grand-challenge-pilot-initiative-launch/>. And as you can see, by including requirements for student research experiences and workforce and economic development impacts in Maine, we are advancing the strategic priorities you've set for us to improve the lives of all Mainers.

I closed the week in Woodstock, Vermont, where I attended the two-day Fall 2019 Board meeting of the New England Board of Higher Education (also known as NEBHE, or colloquially as "NEH'-bee"). For those not familiar with NEBHE, it is a 6-state compact created in 1955 by the state legislatures in Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont to promote collaboration and public policy among the higher education institutions in those states. As Chancellor, I am a Maine delegate to NEBHE's Board, along with Maine Department of Education Commissioner and UMS Trustee Pender Makin, State Representative Mattie Daughtry, and State Senator Rebecca Millett (who is likely familiar to you as co-chair of the Maine Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs). NEBHE has long been most known for its Tuition Break program, started in 1957 to provide tuition discounts to students from resident states who enrolled in programs at an institution in another member state if that program was not available in the student's home state. With recently relaxed standards by which programs can be offered through NEBHE's tuition discount programs, there are now more than 1,200 programs offered at reduced rates throughout the 6-state region.

NEBHE's most recent statement of priorities, adopted in March of this year, echo our own. NEBHE's priorities call for action in four key areas:

- Enhance and expand postsecondary opportunities for adult learners through increased access, affordability, and targeted programs and policies to promote successful completion;
- Develop new cost-saving collaborations to help institutions, systems and states change business models, lower operating costs and contain student tuition and fees;
- Advance PreK-16+ alignment to promote college and career readiness and the successful transition from PreK-12 to postsecondary opportunities and success; and
- Demonstrate the public value of postsecondary education to New England and its residents through expanded advocacy and outreach to key stakeholders.

The focus of this particular NEBHE Board meeting was Open Educational Resources (OER). The U.S. Department of Education defines OER as "teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the

public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or repurposing by others.” I think it's fair to say that the national trend toward using OER portends another front in the battle to reduce the costs of higher education, as students struggle to bear the ever-increasing costs of traditional textbooks and faculty look for new ways to incorporate real-world material into the learning environment without increasing the cost to students for doing so.

NEBHE is an important partner in UMS's work in New England, and I'm glad to build relationships with its members and stakeholders through my seat on its board.

Our work should always reflect the most important priorities that you establish for higher education to have a meaningful impact in the lives of all Mainers, and I think this week has been a particularly good reflection of that.

In closing, while my weekend updates typically look back over the week past, today I also look ahead. You'll recall my pledge to visit all UMS campuses at least three times this semester and next to discuss unified accreditation and our other priorities. At our last Board meeting, you charged me to begin these discussions in advance of our November implementation plan proposal. Tomorrow we start that journey, heading north to begin our work at UMFK and UMPI, just as I did on my first day as Chancellor nearly three months ago.

I'm proud of our work together since then, and ever optimistic about what lies ahead.

Regards,
Dan