

Week of December 2, 2019

Trustees -

Criss-crossing Maine through the fall for our unified accreditation engagement prepared me somewhat for my travel schedule this week, which took me to New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and Knoxville, Tennessee before I returned back home late Friday night.

After enjoying the sights, sounds, and tastes of New Orleans with my wife Cathy at the beginning of the week, I gave a keynote presentation at the 2019 Higher Education Government Relations conference. Coordinated and sponsored by several national higher education associations -- the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education -- the conference is an annual educational forum for those who work in governmental and community relations on behalf of public colleges and universities. A nod to our own Samantha Warren here for identifying the opportunity for me to speak and helping develop my presentation with conference staff. The conference theme -- "Making the Case for Higher Education Amid Scarcity and Division" -- addressed the dual challenges of funding and political polarization in an era in which the country is experiencing economic expansion while a greater percentage of state revenues are dedicated to areas other than education. As you well know from our own experiences in Maine, and I appreciate acutely from my prior experiences in Connecticut, this has led to intense competition for new funding, requiring our higher education government relations professionals more than ever before to be effective advocates for higher education to state lawmakers. I appreciate the work that Sam, Ryan Low, and others do for UMS in this area, and we're gearing up for more as we look forward to the Governor's supplemental budget and the short legislative session that begins in January.

Let me turn from my travels briefly to address a related legislative point: You should have received a message from USM President Glenn Cummings ahead of the public announcement that USM leadership and State Senator Nate Libby, who had sponsored the name change legislation that you authorized last month, decided to withdraw the bill from consideration at the upcoming session. I respect President Cummings's pragmatic decision, as it became clear that there was not enough time to address public concerns about the bill when all of our attention will need to be on securing additional FY21 supplemental appropriations should those be proposed in the Governor's budget. Whether the proper legislative case for a name change in USM's future can be made is an issue for another day, after we see the impact of new residential units on the Portland campus and, if you authorize unified accreditation in January, how naming uniformity across UMS might better align with the increased coordinated multi-university academic programming unified accreditation would be expected to make possible.

From New Orleans, I traveled to Washington, D.C., where I met UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy and her Chief of Staff Kimberly Whitehead for several meetings there. I attended in a supporting role, as I welcome and support Joan's plan to lead and bring more intentionality to

our federal engagement to advance UMaine's land-grant research mission in Maine and nationally. In our meetings with National Science Foundation Director France Cordova (Joan's former NSF colleague who keynoted her presidential installation in late March this year), as well as later with Senators Angus King and Susan Collins and their staffs, the respect, confidence, and high regard in which Joan is held was clearly evident, leaving no doubt that she is perfectly positioned to take these proactive steps at the federal level. And with all Joan brings to the UMaine presidency across its myriad responsibilities, not least of which is its critical and leading role in academic collaboration and research advancement within UMS as a whole and across Maine, I'm reminded of how important it is to find the right person for our presidencies. UMS certainly did with Joan.

Joan and Kimberly and I traveled together Friday morning from Washington to Knoxville, Tennessee, where we met Senator King and UMaine Professor and Director of UMaine's Advanced Structures and Composites Center Habib Dagher at Oak Ridge National Laboratory for a tour, including of the U.S. Department of Energy's Manufacturing Demonstration Facility there. You'll recall that UMaine's partnership with Oak Ridge is behind the unveiling and demonstration earlier this fall of the world's largest 3D printer now housed and working at UMaine. The \$20 million multi-year research collaboration announced earlier this year between UMaine and Oak Ridge launched the first large-scale bio-based additive manufacturing program in the country, connecting regional industry and university clusters with national lab resources, and more importantly for our state, advances efforts to 3D print with wood products, creating a new market for additive manufacturing and Maine's forest products industry. This is exactly the kind of partnership that will position UMaine -- and Maine itself -- for further research and economic development advancements that will drive Maine forward to meet the 21st century's challenges.

Amidst my travels, I purposely choose this week to reach out again to all faculty and staff across our System to call attention to what this time is to our students. This is the time when the anxiety of finals and semester's end is upon them. Financial pressures may build as they think about incurring another semester's worth of fees, tuition, housing, and other expenses. Their experiences right now, managing these stresses, will weigh heavily on their desire to continue their academic journey. I wanted to remind everyone that every interaction they have with our students impacts the student experience and the likelihood that students will have the wherewithal to keep going. All of us -- not only students, but faculty, staff, and campus and UMS administrators too -- share a mutual interest in our students' success, and the extent to which we support them will pay off in improved retention and student outcomes. You'll see my December 3 message attached, and I include too the first response back I got, which by itself demonstrates the worth of my communication.

Finally, unified accreditation. Putting into action your latest charge that we begin planning in anticipation of the Board's late January 2020 vote on whether to pursue unified accreditation, I have formed the following two primary planning committees:

Academics and Student Affairs/Advising

Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Co-Chair (President, UMaine/UMM)
Ray Rice, Co-Chair (President/Provost, UMPI)
Robert Placido (UMS Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs)
Jeannine Uzzi (VP for Academic Affairs and Provost, USM)
Jeff St. John (Senior Associate Provost, UMaine)
Greg Fahy (Dean of College of Arts and Sciences, UMA)
Kathy Yardley (Associate Provost and Dean of College of Education, Health, and Rehabilitation, UMF)
Dan Qualls (VP and Head of Campus, UMM)

Finance, Administration, and Student Support Services

Becky Wyke, Co-Chair (President, UMA)
Ryan Low, Co-Chair (UMS Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration)
David Demers (UMS Chief Information Officer)
Alec Porteous (Chief Business Officer, USM)
Sheri Fraser (Dean of Students, UMA)
Robert Dana (Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students, UMaine)
Laurie Gardner (Chief Business Officer, UMF)
Leslie Kelly (Associate Dean of Information Services and Distance Ed, UMFK)

You'll note that every UMS university is represented, with appropriate UMS staff serving each as well. These planning committees will begin discussions starting as early as tomorrow about how we would organize the work to submit the necessary substantive change application to NECHE to pursue unified accreditation should your January vote be affirmative. My initial thinking is that the work of the two committees themselves will be organized overall by the following coordinating council, which will take responsibility for overall System planning for the effort.

Unified Accreditation Coordinating Council

Dan Malloy (Co-Convenor)
Jim Thelen (Co-Convenor)
Joan Ferrini-Mundy (President, UMaine/UMM)
Ray Rice (President/Provost, UMPI)
Becky Wyke (President, UMA)
Glenn Cummings (President, USM)
Ryan Low (UMS Vice Chancellor)
Robert Placido (UMS Vice Chancellor)
Kay Kimball (UMS Deputy Vice Chancellor)
Rosa Redonnett (UMS Associate Vice Chancellor)
Kim Jenkins (UMS Director of Organizational Effectiveness)

Finally, I will be discussing with our Presidents tomorrow how best to continue engaging our faculty senates and assemblies to determine their role in this important work.

While attention appropriately focuses now on helping our students finish this fall semester successfully, we continue to drive your strategic initiatives forward for UMS and Maine.

Regards,
Dan