

Week of January 13, 2020

Trustees -

For the second Sunday in a row, we find ourselves cleaning up from wintry weather. I'm sure the skiers among us appreciated last night's powdery snow far more than last week's freezing rain!

Conscious of the volume of materials posted for you for next week's Board meeting, I'll be brief here.

Though other important items will be before you January 26-27, the unified accreditation authorization we seek from you is truly historic. As we've noted for you in our previous reports, Maine is not the first to consider how separate universities in a state can work together more collaboratively. Three campuses of the University of South Florida are in the midst of consolidating their accreditations. The University System of Georgia, between 2012-2018, merged 18 of its universities into 9. The University of Alaska System considered unified accreditation last year in response to a System-threatening state budget cut. But for the first time in the nation, we have the opportunity to attain an institutional accreditation model that will consider how well all of our public universities work together regarding mission, planning and evaluation, organization and governance, academic programming, students, teaching, learning and scholarship, institutional resources, educational effectiveness, and integrity, transparency, and public disclosure. These are the NECHE standards that each of our universities has been required to meet on its own. With unified accreditation, we will meet them together.

You've heard me cite the number of meetings I've held with various universities constituencies since I first made my unified accreditation recommendation -- we're now at 46. It's fitting that my last two, this past week, were with faculty leaders. On Tuesday my senior staff and I met with the leaders of every university's faculty senate or assembly to invite their view on an appropriate system-level academic governance model. They determined that, initially, our Faculty Senate/Assembly presidents themselves, meeting and acting together, will develop the appropriate system-wide academic and curricular practices and policies necessary for unified accreditation, while each university will maintain its own local shared governance. And just yesterday, Jim Thelen and I met with AFUM's executive team to answer questions about the opportunities and challenges that unified accreditation will present.

We've reached the turning point for UMS with unified accreditation. I've attached here for you my summary final recommendation that will be included in your Board materials as well. As I note there, we now have an opportunity to innovate and lead in public higher education, and I hope you'll give us the charge to do so.

In closing here, I want to offer a word of thanks to not only our Board members, who've dedicated substantial time and effort to this initiative, but also my senior staff and our Presidents, who've contributed so vitally to the work and reports that have come before you, and the students, faculty, and staff at every one of our universities who've taken the time to offer

suggestions, ask important questions, and help us understand the opportunity to use unified accreditation to better meet our teaching, research, and service mission to the State.

Enjoy the holiday weekend,
Dan