

Dannel Malloy
Sun, Nov 10, 8:06 AM
Week of November 4

Trustees,

With our November 17-18 Board meeting materials posted publicly Friday afternoon, I know you have a lot of reading ahead of you, so I'll be brief here.

As has been the case of late, I call your attention once again to unified accreditation. You'll recall your charge from September was that my team and I gather input from stakeholders at every UMS university to develop a process and plan for how to successfully transition to unified accreditation, should you vote in January to continue UMS on that path.

The report you'll see in your Board materials meets your charge.

Preparing the report was a significant undertaking. Nearly two dozen people from across UMS – Presidents, Chief Academic Officers, other university academic leaders, and System staff – were consulted directly or provided content for the report, which Jim Thelen in my office compiled and polished into the final version you'll read. These same UMS leaders, as well as NECHE staff, reviewed and provided comment to the final draft before its publication Friday afternoon. I think they each deserve our thanks and gratitude for the commitment they've all shown to this effort, which will be a monumental undertaking in the history of UMS.

Before the report could be prepared though, it was critical that I hear from our university communities. Our visits to every UMS university community over the last eight weeks were not for show. The direct university community engagements I've led with my team over that time have been critical to informing and shaping the discussion and proposed plan we're presenting now in the report.

And our report is honest about the challenges and effort required if we are to be successful. We'll be forthright at the Board meeting about the concerns we've heard; much of our proposed plan includes staffing plans and strategies to address them. Some in our communities may doubt the wisdom of going down this path, or even oppose our doing so. We must acknowledge their concerns. But I firmly believe the path we're recommending is the right path forward for all of UMS. We cannot be afraid to act.

I think you know by now that I am optimistic by nature. I firmly believe UMS is poised to make great strides forward. I believe we can better meet our education, research, and service missions to the State of Maine by innovatively sharing our resources, expertise, and academic programs among and between our universities, and unified accreditation will be a powerful new tool that allows us to do so.

Perhaps to a fault, we keep coming back to what your predecessors said about the possibility of unified accreditation in 1986 - that it would be "an excellent opportunity to pioneer in the pursuit of excellence." We still believe that's the case. We can be educators, and we can be innovators. And we can better serve our students and the State by being both.

Regards,
Dan