

Dannel Malloy
Sun, Nov 3, 11:32 AM
Week of October 28

Trustees -

Falling back an hour today is yet another sign that time and the seasons are marching on - just as we are with our work to position every UMS university for a healthier, more collaborative future.

Let me start simply with one of my hallmarks as Chancellor: transparency. Tomorrow my office will be posting another month's worth of my weekly messages to you (from September 9 - October 7) on the Chancellor's Office webpage, which you can see here: <http://www.maine.edu/about-the-system/chancellors-office/recent-publications-information-chancellors-office/>. And this past week, as Trustees who attended Monday's Academic and Student Affairs Board Committee meeting heard me pledge, we posted to our Unified Accreditation website both the complete list of faculty questions and concerns compiled by the Board's faculty representatives as well as an "FAQ" document, reviewed by NECHE, that responds to the issues and questions raised by our faculty. You can see those documents here: <https://sites.google.com/maine.edu/unified-accreditation/feedback-and-faqs?authuser=0>

As we push ahead with the unified accreditation planning you charged me and my team to do in coordination with our universities' leaders, we need to be honest about the challenge and need for trust-building in that effort. As I spend more time with our university communities, on their campuses, I see varying levels of trust, as well as varying levels of readiness for real cooperation and collaboration. I'm working hard to build trust both by listening to everyone's questions and concerns, doing my best to answer every question honestly, and by being transparent about our historical and current work.

Since this is my last weekly update before you'll see our next report on unified accreditation, which we will post publicly next Friday, November 8, along with the rest of your agenda materials for the upcoming Board meeting in Farmington, I want to briefly preview what you'll see in the report. But before I do, a quick note about a few other of this past week's activities:

At the invitation of University of Maine Prof. Mark Brewer, I joined his class Thursday morning in Orono on Interest Groups and American Politics for a discussion with his students. As you know, it's a topic with which I have some experience. I enjoy engaging with our students, something I started earlier in my career in Connecticut. Although I was not able to do so the last eight years in Connecticut given my state-wide responsibilities, I hope to visit more classes across our System now, by invitation and as time permits.

Following a day on campus at the University of Maine at Augusta, Jim Thelen and I ended the day Tuesday with Augusta area State Senator Matt Pouliot, a UMA grad and former BOV member who now runs a successful real estate business in Augusta. Senator Pouliot, in his first Senate term, is serving on the Education and Taxation committees, and he's shown great interest in and commitment to higher education issues, serving on state-level commissions related to student debt, traveling to several Complete College America national events, and being a strong advocate for investment, including in UMS. He shares my belief that UMS needs to invest more in marketing to tell our story, and he's passionate about expanding financial literacy into Maine schools. We're fortunate to count a public servant like Senator Pouliot among our legislative supporters.

Back to unified accreditation.

In accepting my report and recommendation for unified accreditation at your September meeting, you asked that we provide a report for the November meeting that proposed a plan and framework by which we would successfully transition to a state-wide unified accreditation model. You also asked that I engage with our university communities to ensure not only that we develop the transition plan together, but also to gather input and hear questions and concerns from our university communities that we could incorporate into our plan. I think we're meeting your charge. Along with several members of my team, driving thousands of miles around the state in the effort, we've conducted 27 meetings devoted to unified accreditation in just the last 5 weeks, with 6 more meetings scheduled in the week ahead before we publish our report Friday. We've been on every campus, many more than once. We've heard from all 7 Boards of Visitors. Ten of our meetings have been exclusively with faculty, including with our four largest faculty senate bodies. The dialogue is broad and honest, sometimes challenging, always constructive. We've been in regular contact with NECHE President Barbara Brittingham throughout to make sure that our developing plans align with her expectations for what NECHE will approve - indeed, President Brittingham helped finalize our public "FAQs" document that addresses the concerns our Board faculty representatives shared with us just last week. (A somewhat lighthearted aside: President Brittingham takes every opportunity to work with us on developing our unified accreditation plan as part of what she likes to call her "surprise reduction plan." In all seriousness, it's critical that we have alignment with NECHE if we are to undertake this effort, and our ongoing communications with President Brittingham ensures that will be the case.)

Our report will describe in some detail the process we expect to follow in the near and longer term with NECHE, as well as our preliminary thinking about how our current separately accredited universities can lead that effort. Just as a unified accreditation transition will be a System-wide collaborative effort, so too is our report, to which nearly a dozen of our colleagues are making substantive contributions, with many more reviewing and providing comment before publication next Friday.

Finally, as we've done with my previous work and report, I will be sending a message to all System faculty and staff Friday to call their attention to our next unified accreditation report for you. Given the significant focus on both transparency and unified accreditation in my message here this weekend, I intend to share this message earlier than normal, and will send it to our System colleagues at the same time we publish our report to you. In doing so, I want to stress transparency every chance I get.

I'd like to close with a note of thanks - to you as Trustees. Several of you devoted an entire day Wednesday to attend Board committee meetings in Orono (FFT and FFT/Audit) before a full special meeting in the afternoon to approve our annual financial statements. Many of you traveled from Orono to Augusta for the Maine State Chamber dinner that evening, again representing UMS. I know that service on our Board is a heavy time commitment, and more is ahead with our upcoming meeting in Farmington later this month. The people of Maine owe you all a debt of gratitude for your work to ensure Maine's public higher education system meets the educational, research, and service needs of not only its citizens, but also those who come to Maine seeking the opportunities that meeting our mission provides.

I'm grateful to be part of that work too.

Regards,
Dan