

Week of December 21/28

Trustees -

In the midst of the holiday season, falling during our traditional break in the academic calendar between semesters, I write simply today with a short holiday message of gratitude, hope, and reflection.

I do not expect to send a message next Sunday, though of course I will update Board members of any urgent matters should they arise before my next regular report on Sunday, January 10.

While I'm glad that many in our UMS community are taking their first well-deserved break in months -- and for some, perhaps since before the pandemic even started early last spring -- I also want to recognize that some among us will still need to keep working through these holidays, to support students who will be living in our residence halls over the holidays, to maintain our university facilities and grounds, and to provide public safety, among others. Each of us plays an important part in carrying on our work in public service to Maine, and I hope you'll remember with gratitude those who continue working even when we take some well-deserved time off.

We have many lessons to learn from our work together over the last calendar year, chief among them shaped by unified accreditation, the pandemic, and the Harold Alfond Foundation's transformative \$240 million investment in our System of public universities that serve Maine and beyond.

In beginning that reflection now, in this holiday period, my own thinking finds context in Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. Frost, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet whose best works were influenced by the rural New England settings so little changed from his time living in New Hampshire, tells us to pause in our work, even through the darkest nights of the year, to admire the quiet beauty of the unknown woods around us. Frost reflected on the *lovely, dark, and deep-ness* around him, even with much of the journey still ahead.

So as I look forward to our work together in 2021 for our students and the people and State of Maine, I'll leave you with Frost's own words, grateful for the *lovely, dark, and deep-ness* around us from our work together through 2020.

[\*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening\*](#)

*Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer*

*To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.*

*He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

Regards,  
Dan