

Week of October 5

Trustees -

This week's news of the Harold Alfond Foundation's historic \$240 million investment in the University of Maine System merits some reflection on how far we've come in just over a year -- even as we've operated under what are essentially emergency conditions for more than 6 months, and successfully so far, amidst the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

A reminder, first, though, of the details of the HAF gifts.

- **\$90 million** over 10 years, with an additional \$20 million raised by UMaine in matching funds, will support the buildout of a significant portion of UMaine's athletics facilities master plan, leading to significant gender equity improvements and opportunities for UMaine to become a preferred destination to host high school sports championships and school and community events that enhance recruitment efforts by drawing tens of thousands of people to campus annually.

- **\$75 million** over 12 years to UMS (with an additional \$75 million in matching grants and other public and private dollars) will support the development of a collaborative System-wide College of Engineering led cooperatively by UMaine, with undergraduate engineering programs from USM and UMaine brought together collaboratively and UMaine graduate engineering programs expanded to Portland, expanded pathways from all System universities into engineering fields, new scholarships and faculty, and further renovations to modernize Orono's engineering infrastructure alongside the Ferland Education and Design Center, which is already under construction.

- **\$55 million** over 12 years (with an additional \$50 million in matching grants and other public and private dollars) will support the further development and expansion of the [University of Maine Graduate & Professional Center](#), further broken down as follows:

- o **\$15 million** over 12 years (with an additional \$20 million in match over 10 years) for new scholarships and further faculty and program development; and

- o **\$40 million** over 12 years (with an additional \$30 million in match over 10 years) for the construction of a new building in Portland at USM to house Maine Center programs and the potential for graduate engineering.

- **\$20 million** over 12 years (with an additional \$25 million in match over 10 years) will support the development of three student success and retention initiatives that will be piloted at UMaine and expanded System-wide as soon as possible, broken down among the three initiatives as follows:

- o **Research Learning:** \$10 million over 12 years (with an additional \$15 million in match over 10 years) – the Research Learning program will provide meaningful research experiences for 1st and 2nd year undergraduates in both general education and other academic programs around the System

- o **Gateways to Success:** \$5 million over 12 years (with an additional \$5 million in match over 10 years) – the Gateways to Success program will provide learning assistants and curricular redesign to reduce the failure rates and improve retention in "gateway" STEM courses around the System

- o **Pathways to Careers:** \$5 million over 12 years (with an additional \$5 million in match over 10 years) – the Pathways to Careers program will improve coordination and expand access to credit-bearing internships and other experiential learning opportunities System-wide

As the Bangor Daily News reported [yesterday](#), and as we've known for some time from our own discussions with the Harold Alfond Foundation over the last year about their interest in making significant investments in our work and future, our resolve to achieve unified accreditation demonstrated both our leadership and our commitment to working together across the System to serve our students and improve Maine's civic and economic life. And it gave the Harold Alfond Foundation the confidence -- as HAF Board Chair Greg Powell has publicly said -- [to bet big on our success](#).

We have always spoken of unified accreditation as not an answer, but *an opportunity* -- an opportunity to build market-relevant academic programs, expand our ground-breaking research, and serve Maine better by strategically coordinating and deploying the strongest of our resources wherever they exist in our System. It's an opportunity to rethink how we organize ourselves to become not only far more efficient in our academic operations, but at the same time far more responsive to Maine's civic and economic health.

And now we've been challenged to make these opportunities realities with bold new initiatives that can transform both UMS and Maine.

While the Maine MBA offered by UMaine and USM working together in the Maine Center (with the Law School and USM's Muskie School) has been a precursor to what can be achieved under unified accreditation, the Maine College of Engineering, Computing and Information Science initiative supported by these HAF grants is an even bolder step forward. It challenges us to work with our faculties and university leadership to strengthen and expand our engineering reach statewide by joining UMaine's engineering breadth, scope, and graduate engineering strength in complement with USM's Portland-based undergraduate programs, all the while expanding the pathways to engineering degrees from all of our universities. It will require us to work together in ways that have not yet become habit within UMS, but that are vitally necessary for the initiative to succeed.

Similarly, while the HAF-supported student success and retention initiatives described above will be piloted at UMaine, I will challenge our universities to begin work immediately to plan for expanding the efforts to support their students in these ways as soon as possible. Every student at UMS, no matter where they matriculate, deserves the opportunity and support the HAF gifts make possible.

The fact that these new HAF commitments to UMS are paid over 12 years does not mean that we will be operating on a similar timeline to implement them. Quite to the contrary, I'll be working with our Presidents and Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Ryan Low and his talented team to see how we can leverage the HAF's 12-year commitment to allocate appropriate resources to these efforts as soon as prudently possible.

There is tremendous work ahead. For this week, I hope you rightly take great pride with us in being deemed worthy of these historic investments.

Regards,
Dan