

Week of January 11

Trustees -

Inevitably, the pandemic looms large over everything we do, so I'll first cover some COVID-related matters.

As I previewed for you in last Sunday's message, UMS [publicly announced](#) on Friday a new COVID testing contract and partnership with Shield T3, an independent company formed to provide mobile COVID testing laboratory services using a fast-response saliva test developed by University of Illinois researchers. I won't repeat the information about this in last week's message or our public announcement Friday; the new development is that the mobile testing laboratory arrived at the University of Maine's Orono campus yesterday. I've included a picture of the lab here. If we can take full advantage of the rapid test processing the Shield T3 lab makes possible -- along with maintaining all of the public health strategies we employed through the fall -- we will have the best chance of carrying through our plan to safely maintain the same hybrid mix of in-person and online teaching, learning, research, and work this coming spring even as COVID's prevalence rates now are higher than last fall.

We remain engaged with Maine public health officials at all levels, most notably now regarding vaccine distribution. While there has not yet been any determination that UMS community members will have earlier priority to COVID vaccination than their age or personal health situation might otherwise dictate, there are some exceptions. The University of Maine at Augusta's Dental Hygiene faculty and students have been invited to participate in a COVID vaccine clinic for dental providers in the Bangor area by Northern Light EMMC in Bangor, and discussions continue about vaccinations for our faculty and students in nursing and other clinical settings.

UMS will support the vaccine distribution effort itself. Our institutions are being asked to provide personnel for hospital vaccine clinics, and discussions are under way to make our facilities available for vaccination clinics (in Bangor and Machias initially). Though early in the effort, we've also already approved hiring two additional Clinical Associate Faculty through UMaine's School of Nursing for the Spring 2021 semester to supervise UMaine nursing students who will help administer COVID vaccine at the Northernlight EMMC COVID-19 vaccination clinic two days per week. Having our nursing students support the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations accelerates the number of Mainers who will have access to the vaccine, of course; the RN Clinical Associate Faculty are necessary to supervise the nursing student vaccinators, which is required by state regulation. We expect our nursing faculty and students to have this opportunity to serve Maine in this capacity state-wide.

You may recall from last March, as the pandemic was just taking hold, that we entered into a comprehensive agreement with the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), under which we coordinated with MEMA to use our facilities, supplies, services, and even people all across the State to help however and wherever they are needed. In the early days of the

pandemic, through the coordination of Chip Gavin, our Chief General Services Officer, we stood up teams to manage myriad requests for facilities, supplies, and people, and through the MEMA agreement, we were able to deploy all of those resources through MEMA or even directly to our health care systems with the State of Maine's legal immunity in responding to the public health emergency. The agreement remains in place and we've confirmed with MEMA that it will remain in effect through the coming year as well, to be invoked, potentially, in our service and support with the State's vaccine distribution.

On the financial side, you may have seen news this week that the U.S. Department of Education [announced](#) that it would be promptly releasing the \$21 billion in new aid made available for higher education institutions across the country by the recently-passed federal COVID relief package. The share available for UMS universities is roughly \$29.5 million, of which at least \$7.2 million must go to our students who have exceptional need, with the remaining available to our universities (as shown in the table below). For context, UMS universities received slightly less than \$9 million from last spring's federal CARES Act for institutional relief, and more recently received \$8.15 million from the State of Maine's own CARES funds to reimburse our fall testing and PPE expenses. so with this new funding, total relief to-date is still far short of expenses/lost revenue.

Institution	Total Relief	Max Amount for Institution	Min. Amount to Students
UMaine (including UMM)	\$12,814,741	\$8,866,116	\$3,948,625
UMA	\$3,537,103	\$2,861,340	\$675,763
UMF	\$3,371,441	\$2,292,415	\$1,079,026
UMFK	\$1,353,803	\$1,040,784	\$313,019
UMPI	\$1,310,251	\$1,004,752	\$305,499
USM (includes Maine Law)	\$8,534,700	\$6,226,577	\$2,308,123
TOTAL	\$29,568,236	\$22,291,984 (75.3%)	\$7,276,252 (24.6%)

I'll conclude my report on pandemic-related matters with two good news stories that arise from responding to our present challenges.

The University of Southern Maine [announced earlier this week](#) that it was awarding \$1,000 scholarships to fifty students to help ease financial burdens on those who have continued working in essential jobs during their studies. Recipients are outstanding USM students who are learning while working on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic in a range of essential capacities, including, but not limited to, health care professionals, firefighters, police officers, paramedics, retail and grocery employees, child care providers, delivery services workers and transportation providers. The scholarships were funded in part by an allocation from the USM President's Office and by private donations.

In a different vein, the UMaine Collins Center for the Arts ticketing office has been picked as an [Innovation of the Year award finalist](#) by Paciolan, the university's ticketing provider. The Paciolan citation invites the public to vote to recognize among its clients the best "Pandemic Pivot" of 2020 with an inspiring and creative innovation or program in response to the pandemic. At UMaine, with no large Collins Center events requiring ticketing services, Center Director Danny Williams repurposed his ticket staff and logistical resources to use its ticketing database to issue tickets to students for COVID testing. With testing done on a random basis last fall, those students who were randomly selected by the university for COVID testing were assigned a 'seat' and sent a mobile ticket with their testing date/time. University testing leaders were able to use their ticketing access control systems to scan students as they entered the testing facility, and from that reports were developed that allowed UMaine testing officials to track those who attended and easily communicate to those who needed to be rescheduled.

I'm confident we'll see the same and even more dedication, innovation, and creative problem solving as we work through the pandemic challenges of the soon-to-begin Spring semester. And as was reported in a [MaineBiz article](#) earlier this week, our learners who complete their studies amidst the ongoing challenges of the pandemic will leave our institutions with not just a life-changing degree or credential, but also life-changing resilience.

I'll close this week's report by calling your attention to an innovative program offered to the Legislature by Maine Law this week that perfectly blended our teaching and public service missions. Lawmakers and legislative staff alike lauded the program, a "Law School for Legislators" training put on by the University of Maine School of Law in partnership with the Legislative Council. More than 100 legislators and staff attended the program, which was led by Maine Law Dean Leigh Saufley and covered topics including how lawyers and judges interpret the language enacted by the Maine Legislature, recent state and federal court decisions on the constitutionality of pandemic-related restrictions and laws, and the Legislature's role in reviewing and authorizing rules created and implemented by the Executive branch. The training also included an overview of core providers of legal aid in Maine, including Maine Law's own Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic that serves more than 600 clients annually.

After pausing tomorrow to reflect on the life and contributions of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in a year when doing so has never been more meaningful, we look ahead next week to your January 25 Board meeting and the start of our Spring semester.

Best wishes for a healthy week ahead.

Regards,
Dan