

Week of April 19

Trustees,

On a late April weekend that feels closer to summer than we are, I'd like to start with an item I'll ask you to keep confidential until the Board's Finance, Facilities, and Technology Committee considers the matter in public at its upcoming May 5 meeting.

We've talked previously in confidential executive sessions about concerns with the present condition of the building at 246 Deering Avenue in Portland occupied by the University of Maine School of Law (and a handful of other staff from the University of Southern Maine Foundation, USM, and the University of Maine Graduate and Professional Center and Maine Center Ventures). When the FFT Committee's public agenda materials are released later tomorrow, we'll also be releasing a simple statement that notes we are asking the FFT Committee (and the Board at its May 24 meeting) to authorize our execution of a lease for the law school to move to 300 Fore Street in Portland as early as this fall.

As we'll note in the FFT agenda materials, the age, design, and condition of the current law school building not only unreasonably restrict the size of Maine Law's incoming classes, but also make it functionally obsolete for current educational needs. More importantly, the building is also challenged from a core infrastructure perspective. The law building was constructed nearly 50 years ago and has not been meaningfully updated or renovated since. With a Net Asset Value of approximately 40 percent, repair and stewardship of the building to maintain a base level of ongoing habitability would likely approach \$20 million -- and that is likely a conservative estimate. Aside from the obvious responsibility we have to provide and maintain safe and functional facilities, and no matter the quality of Maine Law's program and degree, the state of the building poses a challenge for recruiting law school applicants.

Since late last fall, UMS has been exploring alternative sites for the law school to occupy for the next several years. Last November, UMS issued a public Request for Information to invite competitive proposals for lease or purchase options for suitable space in Portland that would accommodate the Law School's needs (and house additional UMS and supporting staff as space permitted). We received two responses, but neither was sufficient for the Law School's needs.

As we continued to consider options, we learned through our engagement with Portland-area real estate brokers that sufficient space at 300 Fore Street in Portland would be marketed for lease; the space is currently owned and partially occupied by CIEE, Inc. Discussions with CIEE's broker have led to a non-binding confidential Letter of Intent between UMS and CIEE, with each agreeing to seek authorization from their respective Boards to negotiate and execute a 5-year lease (with 5-year renewal, right of first refusal, and purchase options). The potential lease, if approved by Trustees, would permit the Law School to begin operating from 300 Fore Street as early as the start of the Fall 2021 semester (with some residual space likely available for USM and UMaine as well).

I want to be clear: there will be new costs. The cost of a lease for 300 Fore Street on an annual basis will exceed the current operating costs of the law school at 246 Deering Avenue; there will be some ongoing costs for 246 Deering Avenue until the building is razed. And UMS will need to make some renovations at 300 Fore Street to make the space suitable for the law school's needs. But the costs of trying to repair the current building to make it habitable even for the next five years -- anticipating a new building at that point for the Maine Center's law, graduate business, and public policy programs with Harold Alfond Foundation support -- likely far exceed the costs of moving to 300 Fore Street, and risk being far greater should beginning repairs at 246 Deering Avenue expose additional building envelope concerns.

As noted above, moving the Maine Law School and current University of Maine Graduate and Professional Center staff to leased space at 300 Fore Street is expected to be temporary until a new Maine Center building is constructed on the USM campus, as anticipated in the 2020 Harold Alfond Foundation grants that would direct up to \$40 million in new funds to UMS for that purpose (with at least an additional \$30 million secured in matching capital funds). We anticipate reporting regularly to the Board on the potential for retaining 300 Fore Street beyond that time to advance UMaine's research connections in the greater Portland region and other System priorities as well.

Given that we will ask for your approval for this lease, I wanted you to have all of this information as soon as possible, and I'll close on this by again asking that you keep the matter confidential until you are in a position to take public action through the FFT Committee and full Board. More generally, I should note that the action we'll be asking you to take here typifies the kind of bold steps necessary to begin to address the challenging state of our infrastructure system-wide -- decades in the making -- which is a drag on our long-term fiscal health and competitiveness. We simply must do so if we wish to remain relevant in the national higher education marketplace.

Looking back over the past week, I want to thank you for our thought-provoking time together on Thursday morning. I think I speak for our Presidents and System leaders alike in embracing the need to identify a common set of goals that are relevant to confronting the state and national challenges facing higher education at this time. We've been successful thus far in our drive to achieve unified accreditation and learn, research, and work through the pandemic because our universities are working together far more than at any time in our System's history. Within the framework of the goals you are discussing, we'll continue to do so in evermore significant ways, strategically collaborating in our teaching, research, and public service to serve our students and state, attaining the greatest possible educational efficiencies while we expand the accessibility of our academic program throughout the System. I look forward to the work to come in that regard.

You'll recall from your last meeting (on March 22) that you charged me to launch a UMS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee. As this past Friday saw nearly 400 university and System colleagues come together to discuss the critical role DEI must have

throughout UMS, I wanted close here for the weekend by providing an update on both our thinking and work to date as well as Friday's three-hour session, *UMS Transforms: Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*.

In a large and complex organization like the University of Maine System, where responsibility and accountability for our DEI efforts lies at both the university and System level, it's critically important that we organize our work thoughtfully. The UMS DEI Steering Committee I've launched is an interdisciplinary team of university and System-based leaders charged with mapping out UMS's path to inclusive excellence, opportunity, and justice. The Committee will provide a structure and plan for change that is accountable for real progress. The Committee will build on and broaden the work that we must do as public educators to address injustice, build stronger, more welcoming communities, and provide equity and opportunity to those who face obstacles because of their diversity and marginalization.

Before the end of this academic year, we'll be adopting a charter and adding students, faculty, and staff from each of our universities to the Steering Committee's work. The Committee will also include leaders from our shared service functions to ensure that Finance, HR, IT, and the many other operations that support our work share the same commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence that we expect in our teaching, research, and public service. The Steering Committee will establish objectives and key results, outline resource needs, and develop a timeline for deliverables to bring new hope, understanding, and opportunity to our communities.

As I reported to our university communities when I first launched this work last month, in our daily work, we count every student enrolled and every credit hour taken. We track every dollar earned and spent. Through the pandemic, we've reported daily updates on every asymptomatic COVID-19 test taken, calculating positivity rates and prevalence rates to inform our decision-making. There's no disputing that the data we glean is crucial to successfully managing our universities and best serving our students and the State.

To hold ourselves accountable, we're going to strive to measure and track the diversity, equity, inclusiveness, anti-oppression, and social justice of our university communities with the same detail.

This past Friday, I had the honor of kicking off a three-hour listening session with nearly 350 colleagues from around the System -- and there was a lot to hear about the barriers and challenges, both real and perceived, that our students, colleagues, and universities face in creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive experiences in our activities, teaching and learning, research, and work. Most directly, we want to embed DEI principles in everything we do, including the work to successfully carry out the projects funded by the Harold Alfond Foundation's \$240 million grants over the next decade.

Thanks go to USM President Glenn Cummings and UMPI Associate Professor of Professional Journalism and Communication Jacquelyn Lowman for co-leading Friday's event, with support

from a system-wide planning committee and UMS's Office of Organizational Effectiveness. The team will use the findings from Friday's event to inform future work to focus on how we overcome barriers, meet our goals, and hold ourselves accountable. We're already looking ahead to a follow-up system-wide DEI event in the fall.

Finally, I want to thank University of Maine at Machias Vice President of Academic Affairs and Head of Campus Dan Qualls for hosting me and members of my System staff for a visit to the Machias campus this past Tuesday. It was a day filled with beautiful weather and robust conversations with a number of faculty and staff in the UMM community, who are so passionately committed to retaining all that is good about UMM in Washington County as its relationship with the University of Maine evolves.

Best wishes for a productive and healthy week ahead.

Regards,
Dan