

Week of March 29

Trustees -

With respect for those participating in religious observance and celebration this Passover and Easter weekend, I'll provide just an abbreviated report this morning. Cathy and I wish you a happy Easter and Passover (Chag Pesach sameach!), as well as a good weekend.

A good deal of our strategic focus this week and recently has been spent using the promise of unified accreditation -- primarily being the opportunity to share academic resources and programs among and between our universities to use our limited resources more efficiently at the same time we broaden access to our programs all across the State -- to change how we think about developing new academic programs.

For context, particularly for our newest Trustees, recall that your last significant program approval actions took place last September, when the Board's Academic and Student Affairs Committee and, later in the month, the full Board approved:

- Bachelor of Science degrees in Elementary Education at the University of Southern Maine and University of Maine at Augusta, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education at the University of Maine at Augusta;
- a Bachelor of Science in School Health Education: Physical Education Concentration and a Masters of Science Education in Mathematics Education at the University of Maine at Farmington; and
- a Masters of Science in Data Science and Engineering at the University of Maine.

You can review the discussion of these actions from the minutes of the September 14, 2020 ASA Committee meeting, as well as the Board's September 28, 2020 consent agenda approval, at these links: [September 14 ASA minutes](#), [September 28 BOT minutes](#).

Immediately following the Board's program approval actions last September, I sent a memo to our Presidents and Chief Academic Officers on September 29 titled *Unified Accreditation Principles in Academic Program Review and Approval* (which I've attached for your reference). In the memo, I asked our universities' academic leaders to "infuse" the academic program review and approval process with the principles of unified accreditation so that proposals for new, revised, or expanded academic program would expressly address the following issues:

o whether resources that could support the program – e.g., faculty expertise, existing courses or programs, or even department-, school-, or college-level facilities, administrative support, relevant research expertise and capacity, and/or infrastructure – already exist, in whole or in part, at other System universities;

o the views of any other System university that already has such resources, or similar programs, as to how resource sharing and collaboration with the university seeking to offer,

modify, or expand the program can enhance program depth, quality, efficiency, affordability, and access System-wide; and

o how the program or program area proposal at issue aligns with any applicable Statewide Strategic Program Plans that have already been developed.

Recently, following separate reviews at our Chief Academic Officers Council of new program proposals for an M.S. in Data Science at USM and, separately, for a B.S. in Business Administration with a major in Sport Management at UMaine, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Robert Placido and I asked each university, through each's Chief Academic Officer, to address each of my points above (from the September memo) to ensure that each new program would maximize efficiency, collaboration, and resource-sharing where appropriate, while minimizing the potential for resource-draining competition between our universities.

I met this week on Thursday with our Chief Academic Officers Council to further discuss our expectations on how to consider the collaborative opportunities for program collaboration that unified accreditation makes possible. As I've been saying to our faculty and academic leaders at the spring campus visits I've made already to USM, UMaine, and UMA over the last several weeks, I want the collaboration and program sharing that's possible with unified accreditation to become so embedded in our thinking about program development that it becomes second nature and we don't even talk about it as an innovation any longer -- it simply becomes the way we go about our work to serve our students and the State.

I promised to be brief, so I'll wrap up here with just a few more notes.

As I alluded to above, I'm in the midst of my spring campus visits. I had several productive meetings with faculty, students, and campus leaders in Orono this past Wednesday, and I'll head to Fort Kent and Presque Isle this coming week with Jim Thelen, Kim Jenkins, and Jeff St. John to continue our discussions with our faculty and campus communities about the opportunities and challenges of academic collaboration, as well as our work to unify our academic catalogs across the System by Fall 2022.

Our prudence and caution with COVID continue, and we're managing our testing and positive cases sufficiently to continue our academic operations as we planned them. After the Governor's announcement Thursday that all adult Mainers would become eligible for COVID vaccines on April 7, I sent out [a short message](#) to the entire UMS community on Friday to preview an intensive vaccine education campaign that we'll launch this coming Tuesday, with the goal of encouraging all UMS students, faculty, and staff who can do so to get a vaccine before the end of the semester. We are fortunate in Maine that our public health officials will extend vaccine eligibility to our entire university system community, including our out-of-state and international students.

It's been a beautiful sunny weekend thus far. I hope you've been able to enjoy it, and again, Happy Easter and Passover.

Regards,
Dan