

Week of May 3

Trustees,

On this Mother's Day, countless mothers (and fathers) across Maine are basking in the glory of their children's college graduations. I'm delighted to acknowledge that fact, and I join them in applauding the years of hard work and sustained achievement that have culminated in this special moment. Given the many celebrations taking place this weekend, I will make today's message a brief one.

As you know, later this month the Investment Committee and the Audit Committee will each meet, followed shortly by a meeting of the full Board. First, however, we will welcome a visit by an accreditation team.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, a two-person team appointed by our regional accreditor, the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), will join us via Zoom for more than a dozen meetings with faculty, staff, students, and campus and UMS leaders, including my senior officers and me. The team will meet with the Presidents' Council, the Faculty Governance Council, Vice Chancellor Low's finance and university service leaders group, our campus accreditation officers, four different groups of faculty from across our institutions, and two groups of students. The team will also meet with Trustees Erwin, Eames, and Donnelly in their respective Board leadership roles. The team's task, derived from NECHE's July 17, 2020 letter to me granting our request for unified accreditation, is twofold: to review our ongoing implementation of unified accreditation, and to assess the University of Maine at Presque Isle's competency-based education programs.

This virtual visit is an important step in our continuing work of aligning and maximizing resources for students, faculty, and staff; and, in our ongoing preparations for the Fall 2022 comprehensive evaluation. In April, we shared progress reports on unified accreditation and UMPI's competency-based programs with the evaluation team and NECHE. The team and NECHE will use those reports, in tandem with this week's meetings, to appraise our current state and recommend to us how best to move forward. And regarding our comprehensive evaluation: as you may recall, more than 100 faculty and administrators across UMS have worked diligently since February to draft sections of the self study we will submit to NECHE next year in advance of the Fall 2022 visit. Our nine writing teams will complete their drafts at the end of May, and a small editorial group will stitch those drafts together this summer. (The resulting narrative will be extensively revised, added to, and sharpened in the coming year over multiple rounds of edits.) Corresponding preparation of the voluminous data required for the self study will be managed collaboratively by campus and UMS institutional research staff. The data team will get underway later this month.

You can find detailed information about all facets of unified accreditation and our NECHE reporting on the [UMS unified accreditation website](#). I encourage you to explore the site at your convenience.

Following this week's visit, we will use formal feedback from the evaluation team and NECHE to strengthen our work, and to guide the self study as it takes shape. Every interaction with our accreditor is an opportunity for UMS to learn and to improve. Be assured we will use this evaluation to do both.

Best wishes to you for a good and productive week ahead.

Regards,
Dan