

Week of July 5

Trustees -

With the holiday-shortened week, we remain briefly in the midst of a period where many in the UMS community are taking breaks to vacation and relax with family and friends. I know we all appreciate that these are well-deserved respites from work and vitally important to the health and well-being of our colleagues. I hope all of you as Trustees are finding similar opportunities for enjoyment and relaxation away from all of the work you do.

Still, there's much to consider and work on as we look ahead now to the coming fall semester. I'll report on a few of those items here.

COVID remains with us. The science on this is clear, even as we all yearn for more normalcy with the freedom of outdoor activities now and the protection of the readily available vaccines. We'll be pushing our vaccine messaging strategies into high gear in the coming week, making clear that we expect to require a fully approved vaccine this fall for those eligible and able to get them and continued enhanced health and safety protocols, including regular testing, for those who cannot. So far, I'm pleased to report that more than 5,000 UMS community members -- faculty, staff, and students -- have voluntarily submitted proof of vaccination. We hope to increase that number substantially in the coming weeks as we communicate new incentives to be vaccinated and provide proof of vaccination. We are reviewing strategies for varying our protocols between universities depending on COVID incidence and vaccination rates at the county level, a practice that was endorsed in [US CDC guidance released this week](#) for K-12 schools planning to return in person this fall. At first blush, these strategies seem to make sense given the local variance of COVID and vaccination rates, which are [tracked at the county level](#). In Maine, for example, fully two-thirds of the population age 12 and up -- which represents the population eligible to receive a vaccine -- is fully vaccinated. There's significant variance at the county level, however, with nearly 80 percent of the eligible population in Cumberland County vaccinated, while that number hovers at just over or under 60 percent in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties, respectively. (You can see the Maine CDC vaccination dashboard [at this link](#).)

With [news reports](#) that the Delta variant remains serious, including among younger people, we will work as hard as we can to achieve the highest vaccination rates possible. We have no more urgent task to help us return to normalcy.

We noted the [announcement](#) this week of UMA President Rebecca Wyke's departure from UMS to serve as the next Chief Executive Officer of the Maine Public Employees Retirement System. As many of you know, Becky has served UMS at the highest levels of System and university leadership, serving as Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration for a number of years before moving into the UMA presidency. As I said in my public remarks when Becky's news was announced earlier this week, we've benefited greatly from Becky's leadership over many years.

I will miss her wise, steady, and honest counsel in our Presidents' Council, and I know UMA will miss her caring commitment to its students, faculty, staff, and university mission.

Early this coming week I will be reaching out to various constituencies at UMA -- the BOV, Faculty Senate, and President's Cabinet among them -- to schedule meetings where I'll ask for input on what UMA should aspire to under successor leadership. And I'll be reporting back to the Board in due time with my plans for Becky's successor.

I'll close this abbreviated report with a mix of good and interesting news.

First, to Maine Law. Dean Saufley has advised me that the incoming class for Maine Law has hit 100 admittees who have double deposited. This is a strong indication that all among them fully intend to matriculate to Maine Law this fall. This level of new enrollment would be a high in recent years, and it would also represent an academically stronger, more diverse class than we've seen too, with a median LSAT score of 158, GPA of 3.55, and diversity at sixteen percent. All the best to Dean Saufley and the Maine Law faculty and staff who will be working in the coming weeks to fully enroll the entire class.

Second, and finally, I thought you might enjoy a time-lapse video showing the transformation of the playing surface at UMaine's Harold Alfond Athletic Stadium football field. The old turf, which had been in place since 2008, was removed at the beginning of June. The installation of a new turf surface -- the first manifestation of UMaine's investments in the Athletic Facilities Master Plan that is also generously supported by the Harold Alfond Foundation's \$90 million commitment to UMaine Division 1 athletics and gender equity -- began in mid June and took around three weeks to complete. UMaine athletics staff compiled [this time lapse video](#) of the installation, which I offer to you as an entertaining way to bring this message to a close.

I'll see many of you in Board committee meetings tomorrow. I hope you have a good start to your week.

Regards,
Dan