

Week of June 14

Trustees -

Happy Father's Day to our Trustees who are fathers, and to their fathers and families. With today's family focus and the brilliant summer weather upon us, I'll keep this weekend's update brief.

I shared a [message](#) at midweek with the UMS community that builds on the announcement we first made [earlier this spring](#) -- that our UMS universities will return to normal as much as possible this fall, with in-person, on campus teaching, learning, work, and research (with whatever remaining pandemic protocols remain necessary to ensure the health and safety of our campus communities). The traditional in person, on campus college experiences for which our students yearn lead to new learning and discoveries and rich life experiences that cannot be had remotely and that will shape the next generation of Maine's citizens, leaders, and workforce -- and we need a critical mass of our world-class faculty and dedicated staff present on campus, in their classrooms, offices, and research labs, to make these experiences possible.

That said, with the necessities of remote work and evolving work-life balances through the pandemic still fresh in our minds, we must be open to the same type of critical inquiry and discovery we expect of our students as we think about new ways to work after the pandemic. Although UMS has existing "telecommuting" work-from-home/remote work policies, they were written long before the pandemic and could be updated with what we've learned about work and the evolving work-life balance needs of our faculty and staff through and after the pandemic. Much of our work simply must be done on campus, in person, of course, and we will likely still have some pandemic protocols in place to ensure we can be together safely. But we will also be working with our HR partners and labor partners in the coming months to review employment and workplace policies and practices to ensure public and workplace health and safety, productivity, and positive morale across our UMS and university workforces. The national higher education media [report](#) that faculty and staff will need this kind of flexibility after the pandemic, so we'll be doing our best to meet their needs at the same time we put our students and their needs first.

I'll close by sharing as well the [UMS community message](#) I sent on Friday to recognize the declaration of Juneteenth as both a state and federal holiday. The Juneteenth holiday designation is an important step in the long journey to understand and commemorate the country's long and difficult history with slavery. And it serves as a good reminder that our universities must be living laboratories for diverse and inclusive communities of learners and scholars if we are to ensure the civic and social health of Maine and its people in the generations to come.

Have a good weekend and week to come.

Regards,

Dan