

Week of June 7

Trustees,

Let me start first with congratulations to Trustees Sven Bartholomew and Emily Cain, who were unanimously confirmed to second terms by the Maine Senate following unanimous support for their reappointments from the Education Committee. Congratulations, Sven and Emily, and thank you for your invaluable contributions to the Board's governance and leadership for the University of Maine System and State of Maine.

With June in full swing and summer activities all around us, we nevertheless remain busy on campus and in the legislature, preparing for a new budget and a new academic year, both of which we're optimistic will be less impacted by the pandemic as the COVID easing continues.

We started this past week with our twice-yearly Board of Trustees-Board of Visitors Summit, which we've conducted virtually through the pandemic. Trustees and BOV members who attended heard short updates from System and campus leaders on academic affairs, finance, budget, legislative, legal, compliance and marketing, ongoing pandemic-related operations, and specific initiatives underway for the \$240 million Harold Alfond Foundation grants, our "Repaving MaineStreet" project, unified accreditation, and at each campus. We had break-out session opportunities for deeper discussion on our infrastructure challenges, our Research Learning Experience pilot as part of the Alfond-funded student success and retention initiatives, and more on "Repaving MaineStreet" and the unified academic catalog initiative. As you can see from just my description here, it was a jam-packed agenda, flawlessly executed by the Board Office and the System's Office of Organizational Effectiveness (with thanks in particular to Ellen Doughty, Heather Massey, Kim Jenkins, and Samantha Toner, along with dozens of other staff who contributed to a successful event).

A highlight of the week was a two-day bus tour I took with our Vice Chancellors, Maine Law Dean Saufley, and our System presidents to visit UMaine's Orono campus, Maine Law's impressive new building at 300 Fore Street in Portland, and USM's Portland campus together before our regular monthly Presidents' Council meeting on Wednesday afternoon at USM. The brainchild of Dean Saufley and UMS Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Legal Officer Jim Thelen, the tour serves as an opportunity for our presidents and law dean to spend uninterrupted time together learning about the strengths of each other's campuses and programs. To put it simply, it's my hope -- and even expectation -- that the executive camaraderie fostered during this time together will inspire new and broader collaborations between our campuses in the unified accreditation environment. Perhaps more notably, our two days together this week was the first time since before the pandemic that all of our presidents and senior System leadership were together in person -- on our tours, for three meals together, and our Presidents' Council meeting. And for UMFK President Deb Hedeem, who took the helm at Fort Kent last July in the midst of the pandemic, it was the first time to meet several of her colleagues in person.

We'll do similar presidential tours of Augusta and Farmington on successive days in mid-July, again with Presque Isle and Fort Kent in mid-August, and wrap up with a visit to Machias in September.

At the Legislature, negotiations continue on the Governor's supplemental budget, which as you know includes a 3-percent increase to our base E&G appropriation in both FY22 and FY23, as well as targeted investments in Maine Law and Cooperative Extension's pest management lab. Appropriators also took up the Governor's Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan this week, which includes a \$35 million allocation for UMS. UMaine President and UMS Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation Joan Ferrini-Mundy testified in support of these federal American Rescue Plan Act investments; you can read her testimony [here](#). The Legislature is scheduled to adjourn Wednesday, but will likely need to continue at least several days beyond then. To those of you who have received requests from Sam Warren to contact key legislators, thank you for your advocacy.

In other legislative news, the Maine House narrowly voted down a bill that would have restricted our authority and ability to use a confidential hiring process and nondisclosure agreements when filling key UMS positions (such as in Chancellor or presidential searches). However, legislation to add a faculty and staff person as voting members of the Board will soon be on its way to the Governor's desk after passing the House and Senate largely on party lines. Relatedly, the Governor signed into law a bill we supported that would require at least one of the 14 Trustees appointed to five-year terms to be a member of a Wabanaki tribe. The new law does not necessitate any change to our current Board membership, but rather will be addressed through future appointments in 2022 or thereafter.

Turning back to our universities, I call your attention to several DEI matters.

The University of Maine [announced this week](#) that the UMaine School of Nursing, in partnership with Northern Light Health and Morgan State University, is the recipient of a more than \$1.7 million grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration that's focused on increasing the diversity of Maine's nursing workforce. The four-year award by HRSA, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services agency, will address the need to increase nursing education opportunities for individuals from financially disadvantaged and underrepresented ethnic and racial minorities in Maine and, ultimately, help address the state's shortage of nurses. The nursing workforce diversity initiative has three goals: increase access to nursing education for racial and ethnic minority and first-generation students; support the academic and professional success of racial and ethnic minority and first-generation nursing students in the bachelor's degree program, and increase exposure and representation of racial minorities among the School of Nursing faculty. A priority of the initiative, Promoting Diversity in Nursing Education, is to capitalize on the social, cultural, and ethnic resources for in-state student diversity.

At a System level, my team and I are reviewing a report I received at the end of last week that detailed the discussions and recommendations from a System-wide UMS TRANSFORMS DEI

summit held on April 23rd, which was developed and led by USM President Glenn Cummings and UMPI Professor Jacqui Lowman and included more than 400 participants from every university in our System. And as an example of the critical DEI work happening at the campus level, I received a report this week from UMA President Becky Wyke about the UMA DEI Council's "Fostering Inclusion" element of the UMA's developing strategic plan. UMA's DEI Council has been collaborating with the UMA Faculty Development Center to design a 2021 Faculty Institute titled "Culturally Inclusive Pedagogies: Preparing Learners to Engage Difference with Curiosity and Care." All of this work is important and necessary for our universities and System as a whole to be welcoming, supportive learning environments for all.

Finally, I thought you'd like to see the kind of outreach we're making to our adult learners and those of all ages, from all walks of life, whom we hope to engage to finish a college degree or credential. On Friday, with UMS Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Credential Attainment Rosa Redonnett in the lead, we released the first of what we expect will be a regular outreach to all adult learners to highlight the opportunities and supports available for them across UMS. I encourage you to review the message [here](#) to get a sense of the holistic approach we're taking to engage this critical and significant part of the UMS learner community.

I look forward to being together with many of you on Zoom for tomorrow's important FFT Committee meeting, and to all, best wishes for a productive week ahead.

Regards,  
Dan