

Week of October 18

Trustees,

While I have visited each of our university's main campuses each semester through the pandemic, compliance with our more restrictive COVID protocols last year and prudent concern for the health and safety of our faculty and staff meant that I traveled with a smaller team last year.

This year, with our vaccine compliance and ongoing face covering requirements, as well as our overall low incidence of COVID within our System -- more on that below -- I'm more comfortable going on the road with a more significant presence of our System leadership to visit each university. I think it's important to demonstrate to every university and Maine Law that System leadership is committed to their engagement and success.

With my [first visits](#) earlier this week to Fort Kent and Presque Isle, I've started my fall semester round of campus visits with my full team of Vice Chancellors (including Joan Ferrini-Mundy in her role as Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation), along with Loretta Shields, our new Chief Human Resources Officer, Jeff St. John, our Associate Vice Chancellor for Accreditation and Strategic Initiatives, Carolyn Dorsey, our Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and Kim Jenkins, our Director of Organizational Effectiveness. We're holding meetings with each President's cabinet, having interactive break-out sessions for Loretta, Joan, and Jeff St. John to discuss each campus's connections with our Human Resources, research, and unified catalog initiatives across the System, previewing our System-wide strategic planning work that's getting underway, as well as FY23 budget development and the impact of campus-level enrollment on our academic planning.

Many thanks to UMFK President and Provost Deb Hedeem and UMPI President and Provost Ray Rice, as well as numerous others on their teams at each campus, for hosting my System team for the Fort Kent and Presque Isle visits.

(And a congratulatory note to President Hedeem for [Fort Kent's inclusion](#) in the Princeton Review's "Best Colleges" list for the [Northeastern](#) region, joining UMaine with that designation; UMaine also appears in Princeton Review's "[Green Colleges](#)" list, as well as the [Best 387 Colleges](#) list nationally.)

This past week saw the first signs of future success in our efforts to obtain significant new investments for our universities through the federal earmark process. You may have seen the [announcement](#) from U.S. Senator Susan Collins's office on Tuesday that a total of \$57,537,000 to support research at the University of Maine and across the System was included in the draft Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations bills released by the Senate Appropriations Committee Monday afternoon. The appropriations requests would include a total of \$35 million for UMaine's Green Engineering & Materials (GEM) Factory of the Future (which has been previewed for the Board previously), \$1 million for Farmington's Sweatt-Winter Early Care and Education Center

Expansion, \$1 million for mobile pediatric and obstetric nursing simulators for rural Maine (supporting nursing programs at UMaine, Augusta, Fort Kent, and Presque Isle), and a number of other investments that would advance work at UMaine and across the System in forest bioproducts, aquaculture, agriculture, teacher education, and non-traditional student success programs.

These significant new investments are by no means guaranteed, as they must still be voted upon by the full Senate and House and signed by the President. But this first step is indeed promising, and we're grateful for the leadership of our U.S. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King in securing these investment proposals in the appropriations process to date.

Finally for this weekend, I'll turn back to our work with vaccine compliance and the state of the pandemic across our universities.

We've reached the deadline period for student compliance with our vaccine requirements, which, as you know, are that students must register either proof of COVID vaccination or an exemption request (for medical or religious reasons). As the media reported [yesterday](#), more than 99 percent of our students are in compliance with either proving vaccination or requesting an available exemption. Of the 217 students who had not done either as of late Friday, 106 of them -- almost half -- have not logged any activity with our Brightspace learning management system for the entire semester, suggesting they have fully disengaged and will withdraw. For the entire group, as I reported to you last week, we will continue our compliance efforts and will support any student who expresses a willingness to continue their educational progress with us.

To date, more than 25,000 individuals have confirmed vaccination, representing nearly 93 percent of our fall in-person population. We've reached out to our labor union leaders to make sure that we support all employees coming into compliance with these requirements no later than early December, which is the deadline for doing so under the federal executive orders that require proof of vaccination or medical or religious exemptions for the employees of all federal contractors (which we are). The national higher education media has [begun reporting](#) on university compliance with this aspect of President Biden's recent vaccine-oriented executive orders, and we will ensure we are in compliance as well.

It remains the case that there is only a minimal incidence of virus transition in our university communities. Over the past 14 days, we've had just 25 positive COVID tests among 4,380 tests taken, a positivity rate of just one-half of one percent (which continues to be just a fraction of the State of Maine's overall positivity rate). We were safely managing 37 cases of COVID among our population as of week's end.

Finally, I'd like to call your attention to the support we've begun to provide to a number of other state entities with respect to COVID testing. You'll recall that we partnered with [ShieldT3](#) in January of this year to bring a mobile COVID testing lab onsite to UMaine's Orono campus; it's this lab that processes results for nearly all of the COVID testing we manage across the

System. Since the UMS T3 testing lab began operations, it's processed more than 110,000 COVID test results.

Our agreement with ShieldT3 allows us to make surplus lab capacity available to others when feasible. To that end, we've agreed recently to allow the State of Maine, Maine Community College System, and Maine Public Employees Retirement System to make arrangements for COVID testing to be processed at the UMS ShieldT3 lab in Orono. Preliminary discussions are underway to determine how much surplus capacity exists, which we will make available to support the state in balance with ensuring that our own COVID testing needs are met. My thanks to Chip Gavin, our Chief General Services Officer and incident commander for the overall System pandemic response thus far, as he's led these discussions to continue supporting the state.

With a number of Board committee meetings and a special Board meeting ahead this week, as well as my campus visit to UMaine Tuesday and the State Chamber's annual meeting and dinner Thursday, it'll be a busy week. I look forward to seeing you in your committee meetings tomorrow.

Regards,
Dan