



August 28, 2015

Colleagues,

You may recall last spring the Presidents Council and I engaged the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), our accreditor, in a preliminary discussion as to whether moving from seven separate institutional accreditations to one accreditation for all would be possible under NEASC standards. We have received a response from NEASC that I wish to share with you, but before I do so, some background.

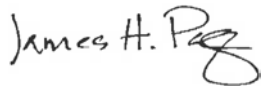
In July 2014 the UMS Board of Trustees approved our Strategic Outcomes to improve service to our students and the state. The eventual result of this work will be a fully integrated university with seven mission differentiated campuses focused on our core mission of education, research, and public service. As we advance these efforts, both administratively and academically, we wanted to be sure to involve our accreditation partners. It was important to our planning efforts to know a single accreditation is possible if we decided that it would advance the transition to One University. Furthermore, we reasoned that the NEASC Standards could help guide us through key aspects of this work. Hence we requested an advisory opinion on this matter.

In its response to us, the Commission indicated that it is "open in principle" to accrediting what are now the seven Universities in the University of Maine System as a single institution if the single institution meets the Commission's Accreditation Standards. Other key points include:

- o The Commission wants to make sure it is understood that its feedback and advice is not characterized as "pre-approval."
- o The Commission regards the information we submitted as background, noting it was helpful in making clear demographic and financial conditions facing the universities, and it commends us for facing these challenges directly.
- o The current schedule of reports and visits to the seven University of Maine System institutions will remain in place so that the Commission can continue to monitor our separately accredited institutions for as long as that structure continues.
- o In order to facilitate planning and promote communication between the System, the Universities, and the Commission, a report updating the status of the integration and planning is to be provided to the Commission in Spring 2016.

Should you want to read these communications in their entirety, they are available at <http://www.maine.edu/single-accreditation-communications/>.

This fall, I along with members of the Presidents Council, and other senior system officers will be visiting the campuses to share the emerging vision of One University, its evolving plans and implementation progress, and to discuss what role single accreditation might play. After you review the communications referenced in this letter, please talk with your colleagues and campus leadership about any questions, concerns, or ideas you may have. Again, the outcome of service to our students and the state is paramount. We seek the best collective wisdom on this topic, which may or may not lead to single accreditation. We look forward to a robust and constructive discussion.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James H. Page". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "P" at the end.

James H. Page, Chancellor  
for the Presidents Council