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Chancellor Messages_Celebrating Commencement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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University of Maine System

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UMS Community Guidance

- For Everyone
- For Students
- For Employees **New ▲**
- For Travelers **New ▲**

UMS Campus Specific Information

- University of Maine
- University of Maine at Augusta
- University of Maine at Farmington
- University of Maine at Fort Kent
- University of Maine at Machias
- University of Maine at Presque Isle
- University of Southern Maine
- University of Maine School of Law

Public Health Resources

- Maine Center for Disease Control — Coronaviruses
- CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information

Announcements

- Chancellor Malloy: Our Continued Commitment to UMS Employees
April 3, 2020
- Student Fee Adjustment and Rebate Policy by April 15
April 1, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy: Celebrating Commencement During the COVID-19 Pandemic
March 30, 2020
- Pass/Fail Options Extended At UMS Universities
March 25, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy: We're All in This Together
March 24, 2020
- Mills Administration, Public Higher Education Systems Coordinating Response to COVID-19
March 24, 2020
- Identifying University Resources and Materials for the COVID Response Effort
March 23, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy: Full Pay Commitment to Regular Employees Through April 4
March 19, 2020
- Universities Inventorying Resources for Maine's Coronavirus Response
March 19, 2020
- Universities Transition Employees To Remote Work Thursday, March 19
March 18, 2020
- UMS To Continue Paying Federal Work Study Students
March 18, 2020
- Spring Break Extended Two Days: Classes Resume March 25th
March 18, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy: Working Remotely and March 25 Start of Classes
March 18, 2020
- Room and Board Adjustments and Rebates
March 17, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy: Focusing on Faculty and Staff Needs
March 17, 2020
- UMS Technology Resource Update
March 16, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy: Event Restrictions On Gatherings and Other Updates
March 12, 2020
- Student Room and Board Refunds: UMS posting guidance before Noon on Wednesday, March 18th
March 12, 2020
- Travel Assistance Hotline for UMS Employees and Students
March 11, 2020
- Chancellor Malloy Message on Transition to Online Instruction
March 11, 2020
- University UMS COVID-19 Directives prohibit non-essential university air travel, opens residence halls for spring break, sets March 23 deadline for continuity of instruction planning
March 10, 2020
- Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information University of Maine System
March 9, 2020
- Students and Employees Urged to Update Emergency Contact Information
March 8, 2020
- UMS COVID-19 Guidance on University Travel for Business and Personal Travel
March 5, 2020
- UMS Guidance for International Travelers
March 4, 2020
- Governor Mills Convenes Coronavirus Response Team
March 2, 2020
- Travel Monitoring and Prohibitions: University Travel to Italy Prohibited
March 1, 2020
- We're Making Plans to be Ready for Coronavirus
February 28, 2020

Chancellor Malloy: Celebrating Commencement During the COVID-19 Pandemic

30
MAR 2020

UMS Colleagues –

Our core mission is to transmit and expand knowledge through our teaching, research, and public service to the State of Maine. When our faculties confirm that a student has met the requirements to earn an academic degree in a particular field of knowledge, we joyfully celebrate with commencement exercises, caps and gowns, and colorful academic regalia, all rooted in centuries-old English academic tradition. Honoring these traditions in our own times is a noteworthy rite of passage to which our students rightfully look forward as each academic term nears its close. That these celebrations of academic achievement should occur is beyond question.

And yet, none of us could have foreseen even just a few weeks ago how the sudden onslaught of the global COVID-19 pandemic would make celebrating these traditions in the normal sense a serious threat to public health. It is with a sober sense of responsibility that our Presidents and I have therefore decided that we cannot proceed with our planned in-person commencement exercises in early May.

I want to be very clear, though: All UMS universities and the Law School will be awarding degrees on schedule and recognizing the academic achievements of our graduating students. While traditional in-person commencement exercises are not possible during the pandemic, each university will determine an appropriate alternative celebration that balances the need to protect public health with the joyful recognition of our students' academic aspirations and achievements.

Our universities will be communicating directly with their students over the next two weeks about planning for alternative commencement celebrations.

Knowing the disappointment that comes from having to communicate this difficult decision, I'd like to share, in closing, an uplifting reflection on the very best of what we do in higher education. The following poem was written by John Masefield, Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1930-1967, for the 1946 inauguration of the Chancellor of the University of Sheffield in the aftermath of World War II. To paraphrase Masefield below, our work to bring thought into the world goes on, and we will celebrate the academic achievements that come from it, pandemic or not.

There are few earthly things more splendid than a university.

In these days of broken frontiers and collapsing values, when every future looks somewhat grim and the dams are down and the floods are making misery, when every ancient foothold has become something of a quagmire, wherever a university stands, it stands and shines; wherever it exists, the free minds of all, urged on to full and fair enquiry, may still bring wisdom into human affairs.

There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university.

It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honor thought in all its finer ways, will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning, and will exact standards in these things. They give to the young in their impressionable years, the bond of a lofty purpose shared, of a great corporate life whose links will not be loosed until they die. They give young people that close companionship for which youth longs, and that chance of the endless discussion of the themes which are endless, without which youth would seem a waste of time.

There are few things more enduring than a university.

Religions may split into sect or heresy; dynasties may perish or be supplanted, but for century after century the university will continue, and the stream of life will pass through it, and the thinker and the seeker will be bound together in the undying cause of bringing thought into the world.

To be a member of these great societies must ever be a glad distinction.

Sincerely,

Dannel P. Malloy

Chancellor