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Chancellor Messages_Continuing Together As We Started

Dannel P. Malloy

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Matthew Revitt <matthew.revitt@maine.edu>

Continuing Together As We Started

1 message

Chancellor Dannel Malloy <chancelloroffice@maine.edu>

Reply-To: chancelloroffice@maine.edu

To: matthew.revitt@maine.edu

Mon, Sep 14, 2020 at 6:21 PM



September 14, 2020



UMS Students, Faculty and Staff,

Let me start with a well-deserved "Thank you."

We are starting our third week of classes together confirming that our students could be counted on to participate in our unprecedented public health campaign and that our months-long safe-return planning efforts were not in vain.

Student Leadership and Participation: Through adherence and example you have stepped up and are living the safety practices we know limit the spread of infection. Your participation in our screening and isolation strategies also identified 13 cases of COVID-19 that otherwise could have gone undetected were it not for our 15,000 tests.

We asked for your leadership and you delivered. As of today only two of our students remain in isolation and we are eagerly awaiting Maine CDC clearance to welcome these students safely into our communities.

Faculty and Staff: Throughout the spring and summer you've gone above and beyond the call of duty to help plan and manage our Safe Return and Together for Maine safety and testing protocols so that we could return to campus and the



classroom without undue risk to our communities.

I especially appreciate how faculty have kept student-learning front-and-center throughout the pandemic. The work you have done to rethink instruction in a COVID-safe environment has us back together this fall and will be important to our future as a provider of relevant, efficient, and accessible higher education.

Coming together safely was just the start. We must remain vigilant to our safety practices and respond quickly to pandemic developments to stay together for the semester.

COVID-19 Is Still In Charge

We remain fortunate in Maine that our public health authorities have largely contained and limited the spread of the stealthy COVID virus while outbreaks have forced universities in other parts of the country and [here in Maine](#) to quickly suspend all in-person activities and issue shelter-in-place orders.

Keeping these very-close-to-campus examples in mind we must remember that adherence to commonsense safety guidelines remains literally a matter of life and death and failure to stick to the rules can change everything:

- [The Millinocket Wedding now linked to 5 deaths](#)
- [The outbreak at the York County Jail](#)
- [The 10 cases connected to a Southern Maine funeral](#)

Campus Vigilance

We [announced last Thursday](#) that we will begin several rounds of required random sampling today based on a screening strategy developed with input from the UMS Scientific Advisory Board and university statisticians. Here is what you need to know:

- Each testing round will include 2,000 asymptomatic tests apportioned based on each university's percentage of students, faculty, and staff engaged in on-campus activities this fall;
- Testing rounds occur every 10 days until the Thanksgiving break; and the results from this testing will be used to isolate infection, to model virus prevalence rates across the System, and, considering the numerous additional local and state data and metrics we track on a daily basis, adjust our health and safety strategies as necessary.

- Wastewater testing also will be used to monitor public health conditions throughout the semester on campuses that are home to 78% of the System's resident hall student population. Campuses with the infrastructure necessary to support wastewater testing include UMaine, UMFK and USM.

Public Health Leadership -- Responding to the York County Outbreaks

York County is a hot spot in the pandemic by Maine standards with higher positivity rates, higher case counts, and multiple outbreaks. In the face of these realities the University of Maine System and our universities are altering our plans and amplifying responses to protect our students and employees and to help Southern Maine communities limit the spread of infection. Doing our part involves these steps:

- **Amplified Containment:** We are increasing our own screening in Southern Maine, conducting 700 additional asymptomatic tests and making sure our students and employees from the region know about [state-sponsored testing opportunities](#) available to them;
- **Enhanced Safety Measures and Messaging:** Southern Maine facilities and campuses are coordinating efforts to ensure existing safe return plans and practices are followed and safety supplies such as hand sanitizer stations are properly stocked. Members of the facilities teams will be conducting site inspections to ensure that furniture placement and other measures taken at the start of the semester are still in place; and,
- **Outreach and Empathy:** We are making sure we are ready to meet students and employees in Southern Maine where they are with the accommodations and support they need to safely continue their work and learning despite the epidemiological concerns in the region.

I know we can count on our faculty, academic leaders, and student life teams to consider how our students in Southern Maine may be impacted and provide reasonable accommodations to those in need.

The same can be said for our HR leaders and supervisors. Our work should continue safely, and I hope you'll refer often to the [Return to Work Safety Guide](#) for employees, which was developed as part of the Together for Maine planning.

Continuing Together As We Started

Together for Maine is more than a slogan. It's a sobering fact of life in an ongoing pandemic, where our collective choices and actions determine community health and personal safety. Our ability to limit virus spread as we've done thus far will dictate whether

we can continue with our on-campus plans for the semester.

I hope we can.

Thank you for continuing to do your part. Thank you for wearing your masks, and washing your hands. Thank you for respecting the need for physical distancing. Thank you for undergoing testing when called upon. And consider getting a flu shot this fall too.

Everything you do now helps keep us together, and I hope you'll keep doing what's necessary for us to stay Together for Maine through the semester.

Sincerely,



Dannel P. Malloy

Chancellor

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