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Message from the Provost

Faye W. Gilbert
University of Maine

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Matthew Revitt <matthew.revitt@maine.edu>

Message from the Provost

1 message

Office of Human Resources <hr-um@maine.edu>
Reply-To: Office of Human Resources <hr-um@maine.edu>
To: UM-EMPLOYEES@lists.maine.edu

Wed, Jul 1, 2020 at 11:35 AM

Dear UMaine and UMM faculty and staff:

With the announcement from the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Machias that in-person classes will resume this academic year, our work continues to prepare for a safe and productive fall term. Your commitment to our community of learning through this pandemic has helped us imagine these next steps. Thank you.

Safety

As many of you know, there have been over 18 committees working to plan for varying aspects of welcoming our students back for fall. As a brief summary of some of the preparations, UMaine and UMM will be:

- Directing pedestrian foot traffic to minimize congestion in buildings and on campus
- Installing numerous hand sanitizer stations campuswide, in public spaces, rooms, and labs
- Marking spaces for 6-foot distancing, removing furniture and marking gathering spaces for appropriate occupancy
- Installing clear hygiene barriers
- Supplying face coverings to students and employees
- Cleaning shared bathrooms regularly using EPA-registered disinfectants
- Disabling air hand dryers and supplying paper towels
- Opening windows when possible to increase ventilation
- Encouraging use of totes in residence hall bathrooms rather than placing personal items directly on shared surfaces
- Providing clear messaging about the Black Bear Cares initiative to protect our community

We must continue to work together and communicate with each other during this dynamic time. We are all working to meet students where they are in learning and to assist them with progressing, despite the inherent challenges in accomplishing that right now. You can read more of the start for messaging to students on UMaine's [Return to Campus website](#), UMM's [Return to Campus website](#) and in this [video](#). Our UMaine and UMM Welcome Kits for students, faculty, and staff this fall will include [two face coverings](#), hand sanitizer, a door opener, and reminders of safety protocols.

Information

UMaine is also focused on providing information to all our publics, with:

- University of Maine: umaine.edu/return
- University of Maine System: maine.edu/together
- To sign up for emergency updates and alerts: umaine.edu/emergency
- For COVID-19 questions: umaine.alerts@maine.edu
- COVID-19 Information Line: 207.581.2681; live Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. EST; leave message for return call

People will be looking to you all for guidance and reassurance, so please make it a point to stay informed. Faculty and staff members respond to calls from constituents, support our research enterprise, and provide a critical component of the on-campus experience this fall. While the risk cannot be zero, I hope you all are confident that UMaine and UMS are working together to do [everything possible](#) to prepare to care for the people in our communities. We will all need to reinforce the messages about safety protocols as we stretch to continue to provide quality learning experiences.

Schedule

Classes will begin as scheduled on Monday, Aug. 31. Fall break has been eliminated so classes will be in session on Monday and Tuesday of that week, Oct. 12–13. All classes will be delivered remotely or online after Thanksgiving break. Wednesday, Nov. 25 will be the last in-person class day on campus for the fall semester. Final exams will be delivered remotely and the fall semester

will end on Dec. 18. We hope to finalize the schedule for course delivery modalities by Aug. 1 and to accommodate, where possible, student preferences for types of courses available. We should also know classroom changes and assignments by then, as well. Please continue to work with your chairs and deans as we consider testing options, timing, and changes to the fall time frame.

Course Delivery

Faculty are preparing for varying ways to reach students. At a minimum, we will have classes offered as:

- Online — synchronous and asynchronous, designed to be high quality as online experiences
- Remote — by Zoom or by correspondence, remote classes incorporate learning at a distance
- Hybrid — recognizing that face-to-face classes will probably not be 100% possible as social distancing will limit the number in class and illness may prevent attendance, hybrid classes include delivery of content, a means for those not present to access content, and/or perhaps a recording of content
- Face-to-Face (F2F) — in-person instruction; where classrooms have been modified to foster social distancing guidelines and many F2F classes will have hybrid components to reach students who cannot attend, must self-isolate for 14+ days, or hesitate to attend for other reasons.

At any time, all classes may have to be offered remotely or online if the situation calls for that action, so it is a particularly challenging time to prepare course materials for this fall. Within the next few days, IT will provide about 10 mobile carts that can be used to record lectures and material for classes. The carts will contain a monitor, computer, camera bar, and a microphone extension. We are all working to enhance the quality of learning during this transformative time in higher education.

Flexibility and Options

I hope that you feel that UMaine has supported faculty choice, wherever possible, as consistent with best practices and with conversations with the Faculty Senate and AFUM. The \$500 award for learning this summer asks you to choose which program(s) will best help you deliver a higher quality course in the modality you choose to develop. The hope is that you use several learning options and submit your list of accomplishments as a request to your dean for that reimbursement by Aug. 21, 2020. CITL continues to enhance its workshops, seminars, and group discussion sessions to reach a larger number of faculty. Peer groups of faculty are gathering remotely to have informal conversations about best practices and ideas to enhance learning outcomes for our students. It's an extraordinary time in higher education. Your efforts and willingness to explore options and invest time in improving course delivery are critical to our continued success and to enriched learning experiences for our students.

Welcome Black Bears!

We are very excited to see our students again — in person or virtually — this fall. Our students are the heart of our community and we want to ensure they enjoy learning and connecting with us and with their peers, safely. We will extend a Hearty Maine Hello to the Class of 2024, to our students who are transferring to us, and to our returning students. Working together, we will make this a year to remember at the University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias. Thank you for all your efforts to enrich learning here. You are a remarkable community of scholars and staff members who create an incredible space to foster progress.

Sincerely,

Faye W. Gilbert, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost