**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

**Faculty push for UM observance**

By Kathryn Ritchie  
**Maine Campus staff**

Members of Faculty Senate will decide today whether University of Maine students will spend future Martin Luther King Jr. Days in the classroom or in celebration of the civil rights leader. According to UM's president, a vote to recognize the day as a school holiday would correct a "glaring discrepancy."

"I think it's much overdue," UM President Peter Hoff said recently. "I think the campus should be behind it."  

If recognition of the holiday is passed today it's up to the President to decide how soon it is fit into the academic calendar. James Varner, the president of the Bangor NAACP, is hoping the holiday will be celebrated this Jan. 19.

"I don't think (King) personally would want to see black people miss education," Varner said. "But I think the good of taking that day off will far outweigh missing education."  

Most campuses in the University Maine System do recognize Labor Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving.

The last time the senate reviewed Martin Luther King Jr. Day was in December 1994. At the day off the academic calendar or by delaying the start of the semester until Jan. 20. The only two campuses which do not are the University of Maine at Fort Kent and the University of Maine. The University of Maine does recognize Labor Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving.

See KING on page 7

**Yearbook**

Professor of Civil Engineering Dana Humphrey. (File photo.)
that time, a resolution passed to support the ideals of King but not take the day off on the academic calendar.

The General Student Senate took a similar stance last night, passing a proclama-
tion to support Martin Luther King Jr. Day and other holidays, but not asking to
have them off.

"I feel that it's a good compromise," Sen. Melissa Williams Paradis said.

While the 1994 resolution passed by a close vote, the current Faculty Senate
President is optimistic about the holiday's passage this time.

"I would say that I think there's a large number of faculty members that
really support this," said Dana Humphrey, professor of civil engineering. "On the
other side, there are faculty members that
are really jealous of their class time."

Hoff suggested that instead of focusing on the amount of time students spend
in class, faculty should examine the real
time on task issue, such as the amount of
time a student puts into their work out-
side the classroom walls.

"It's my view that the accomplish-
ments of Dr. King and the ideals for which
he fought are important enough for a uni-
versity holiday and that we use the day to
further his ideals," Humphrey said.

Proposed ways to further King's ide-
als include holding seminars with off-
campus speakers, discussion groups with
people already on campus and other
events to celebrate minority culture. Humphrey said it's tough for students to at-
tend any of these activities if they are
supposed to be in class.

Special events have been held in the
past to honor the holiday. Varner said
he's expecting more than 400 people at
this year's second annual Martin Luther
King Jr. Day breakfast. He said he hopes
people will walk away from the meal
with ideas to keep King's dream alive all
year long.

If the senate does not pass recognition of the holiday, Varner said that sends the
message that the university is not willing
to "join the real world."

"It's the thing to do in 1997," he said.
"I'm not saying take the day off. I'm saying
take the day off and do something."

Varner said black students have been
effected for the last three or four years
to skip classes that day and instead watch
films about King's life. He said as a 1957
UMaine alumni, it makes him feel good
that the holiday looks like it will be adopt-
ed by the university.

"I hate to use the word force, but this
is going to force us to talk to one anoth-
er," Varner said.

Hoff saw the passage as an excellent
start toward the goal of diversity. When
he came for his interview in May, he said
inevitably someone in every campus ses-
sion asked him about his commitment to
diversity.

"I think the time has come to ask the
campus what's its commitment is," Hoff
said. "The president can't do it alone."

While she supports having Martin Luther King Jr. Day off, Student Body
President Jenn Nelson would also like to see President's Day, Veterans Day and
Patriots Day off.

"For me it's just as important to have
all these things passed," Nelson said. She
said she thought a good percentage of
students would do something to cele-
brate the holidays if they had the days off
from school. This past Veterans Day, she
had wanted to go place flowers and a flag
on her grandfather's grave, but couldn't
because she had to be in school.

"I was very upset I couldn't go honor
my grandfather who served in three wars," she said.

Humphrey said each holiday will be
weighed on its own individual merits.
The passage of one won't guarantee the
passage of others.

"I certainly do not see the senate agree-
ting to a tidal wave of days off," Humphrey said.

Sen. Jerry Graffam said he brought
the idea supporting Martin Luther King
Jr. Day holiday to the public relations
committee in GSS, of which he is chair,
and received a lot of negative feedback.

"A lot of people thought it was bad for
the public relations committee to support
students not going to classes," Graffam,
who disagreed with his groups consen-
sus, said. "It's not just because the banks
are closed, it's why they're closed."

Graffam said as a public institution
receiving government funds the universi-
ity should recognize that the govern-
ment deems the day important enough to
celebrate.

"Let's face it, kids are going to skip
that day anyway. They should do it for a
reason," Graffam said.

The public is welcome to attend the
3:15 p.m. meeting in the Dexter Lounge,
located in the Alfond Arena, and voice
any concerns.