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Howard P. Segal  
*University of Maine*

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Image of the celebration of the University of Maine's first century. Speeches indicated an upbeat and autonomous future for the Orono campus with expectations for internal and external expansion.

# BACK TO THE FUTURE: ENVISIONING THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE'S NEXT DECADES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE 1965 CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

BY HOWARD P. SEGAL

*The University of Maine's Centennial Celebration in 1965 generated a number of speeches, editorials, planning and fundraising documents, and visions about the institution's past, present, and future. All assumed that the University would remain autonomous as it expanded both internally and externally in the face of projected growing enrollments at Orono, at the Portland campus, and at new satellite campuses elsewhere in Maine. There was no discussion of what, three years later, became the University of Maine System. Howard P. Segal is Professor of History at the University of Maine, where he has taught since 1986. He received his Ph.D. from Princeton. This special issue of Maine History previews a larger volume he is editing on the history of the University of Maine since roughly 1965. The book is to be published by the University of Maine Press in 2017. All of the articles here will be included in that book.*

AS A SCHOLAR of utopias, I always insist that the most significant part of utopian visions is not the accuracy of their predictions, but rather, what those visions reveal about the persons, movements, organizations, and cultures that project them. Composing scorecards of accuracy is invariably shortsighted, for most long-run predictions are notoriously inaccurate, as countless studies have demonstrated. To be sure, the predictions outlined here for the University of Maine's future, from the perspective of 1965, hardly constitute utopianism, for there is obviously no notion of an allegedly perfect institution—the definition of a utopia—coming about. Yet serious non-utopian forecasts must also be appreciated for what they tell us about the times in which they were composed.

Reading over materials from the 1965 celebration of the University of Maine's first century, one sees a basically upbeat future ahead. First and foremost, the University of Maine was expected to remain as an au-

onomous institution, just as it had been for the preceding hundred years. The notion of what, a mere three years later, would become the University of Maine System, was not on the radar screen—at least not in the published words and sentiments of campus leaders, trustees, legislators and other public officials, business and civic leaders, and newspaper editors. Far from it. The widespread expectation was that the University of Maine itself would expand both internally and externally. Orono would still be the center of Maine’s public higher education universe.<sup>1</sup>

The Chair of the University of Maine’s Board of Trustees was Lawrence M. Cutler, a prominent Bangor physician and the father of Eliot Cutler, the independent and unsuccessful candidate for governor in both 2010 and 2014 and currently the interim leader of the emerging Harold Alfond Business, Law, and Public Policy Center in Portland. Ironically, Lawrence Cutler’s immediate predecessor as Chair of the Board was Samuel W. Collins of Caribou, the grandfather of both current system trustee Chair Samuel Collins and his sister, United States Senator Susan Collins.

The campus population was growing: from 3,067 full-time students in 1955 to 5,652 in 1965. That 1965 first-year class was 15.3 percent larger than the one that had entered in 1963. There was a critical need for new classrooms, laboratories, and residence halls and for renovations of existing facilities. Nevertheless, in September 1967 the Trustees approved increasing the campus enrollment to about seven thousand within two years. Despite this, the state of Maine ranked last among the fifty states in the percentage of high school graduates enrolling in higher education programs. One factor might have been that the University’s tuition charges for in-state (\$400) and out of-state (\$800) students were among the highest in the nation.

In addition, enrollments in the Continuing Education Division devoted to adult, part-time students were surging, with some three thousand taking classes at night and on Saturday mornings. How, if at all, to integrate part-timers with full-timers in the same classes or to encourage the former to become the latter needed to be addressed.

Teaching ever more students was also to be addressed by the building of closed-circuit television, touted as “one of the weapons of the modern university to meet swelling enrollments.”<sup>2</sup> There were three television transmitters located in areas serving nearby Orono, Presque Isle, and Calais. The studio was located in Alumni Hall in Orono, and was deemed as modern as its commercial peers in Portland and Bangor. But nearly all of the programs originated outside of Maine, and the hope was

to change that in order to have more television programs designed for Maine students.

Back then, some wondered why the ratio of eighty percent in-state high school graduates to twenty percent out-of-state high school graduates deprived considerable numbers of Mainers from attending the University. The answers given were, first, to add to the diversity of the student body (though “diversity” itself was not a commonly used term in those days); second, to accommodate sons and daughters of loyal alumni who lived outside of Maine; and third, to participate in exchange programs with other New England states in specialized courses and programs not available at each university. The added monies derived from higher out-of-state tuition do not appear to have been an issue. But then the costs of public universities were far lower than later, so that the extra dollars from the twenty-percent non-Mainers did not amount to huge sums.

Off-campus, so to speak, the Portland commuter campus—officially the University of Maine at Portland, with its Division of Undergraduate Studies—was expected to become partly residential, yet remain as part of the University of Maine. It was not envisioned as the future rival it in fact became when the University of Southern Maine was established in 1970. Meanwhile, two-year commuter centers were intended for Lewiston-Auburn, Rockland, and the York County area. Something similar was expected for Augusta. Furthermore, “joint programs” were anticipated for the Aroostook and Gorham State Teachers Colleges. In addition, an otherwise unspecified “branch campus” might come about by September 1967 through a “merger” of some kind with Gould Academy in western Bethel to form a heavily residential branch campus of the University.<sup>3</sup>

Interesting in light of the creation of the University of Maine System three years later was the comment by then President Lloyd Elliott that “there is a good chance” that some of these new campuses—the University of Maine in Portland above all—“will be given the same autonomy as enjoyed by state colleges within the New York or California greater university systems.”<sup>4</sup> Despite this provocative comment, however, there was no notion of a separate, rival institution, as eventually happened. Also in Portland, the University of Maine Law School was expected to grow in size but also to remain as part of the University of Maine. Here, too, there was no notion of a separate future unit.

In 1965, there were four undergraduate colleges on the Orono campus: Arts and Sciences, Education, Life Sciences and Agriculture, and



The Governor of Maine, John H. Reed, signing a proclamation declaring the week of February 21 through February 27 as University of Maine Week at a ceremony in Augusta in 1965. Alongside Reed (center) are University of Maine President, Lloyd Elliott (left) and president of the University of Maine board of trustees, Lawrence Cutler (right).

Technology—plus the Graduate School. The College of Arts and Sciences was the largest of the instructional units, enrolling 48 percent of University of Maine undergraduates and being responsible for seventy percent of the teaching. There was no discussion of any changes here.

There *was* much discussion of expanding graduate programs. Indeed, President Elliott indicated that, in the years ahead, the emphasis would be on graduate programs despite the simultaneous growth of the undergraduate population. The university had awarded its first master's degree in 1881, and master's degrees had been granted since then in most of the fields in which the bachelor's degree was conferred. But not

until 1958 did the university award its first doctorate—in chemistry. In the following few years, doctoral programs were established in American history, animal nutrition, psychology, chemical engineering, and plant science and zoology. The eventual creation of graduate programs in other areas like education, clinical psychology, languages, physics, and math was taken for granted in 1965. In 1962-1963 there were 177 full-time graduate students. In 1963-1964 there were 247. And in 1964-1965 there were 317.

An unprecedented emphasis on graduate programs no doubt was tied to the poor showing of the state in the quest for federal research grants that invariably involved graduate students. In 1965, the University had received \$1.5 million in federal research grants, of which one million dollars was for agriculture and cooperative extension. Among the fifty states and the District of Columbia in that year, the state of Maine ranked 47th in allocations. Like the leaders of most other land-grant institutions, President Elliott argued that those federal funds should be distributed more equitably and not concentrated on a handful of larger and more prestigious universities ranging from Harvard, MIT, and Yale to Michigan and California.

One other area given considerable attention for both bachelor's and master's degrees—but not doctorates—was public management. There was mounting interest in expanding existing undergraduate and graduate courses for prospective town and city managers and other municipal experts. Many ordinary citizens wanted trained experts to lead their communities as opposed to lawyers and politicians.

As of 1965, there were 470 faculty members, most of them full-time. As enrollments grew, more would be hired. In order to lure or retain distinguished faculty, the university had initiated its first five endowed chairs over the prior three years. In a centennial fund of one million dollars to be raised during 1965, money for at least five more endowed chairs was to be established. These appointments would not be directly dependent upon state allocations. But there would still need to be supplementary funds from elsewhere to pay the portion of the salaries of these appointments not covered by the individual allocations of \$100,000 apiece. Yet another document from the university's own development council anticipated not five but twenty new endowed chairs.

The opening lines of an April 4, 1965 special supplement of the *Maine Sunday Telegram* put it best: "Proud But Not Satisfied. . . . It is good to have faith in the future, but faith alone won't shape it." Indeed, the Trustees' ambitious plans assumed that the Maine legislature would

approve bond issues and increased state allocations. This happened when Kenneth Curtis became governor in 1967. None of his successors have been anywhere as committed to supporting and improving public higher education as he was.

“Proud But Not Satisfied” also meant raising academic standards for prospective students and not being seduced by sheer increased numbers. As President Elliot observed, the institution must balance its keen desire to accommodate ever more qualified students with its equally keen desire to be more selective in its admissions decisions. As Director of Admissions James Harmon put it, “Occasionally we even have to turn down valedictorians and salutatorians” from very small Maine high schools “because they simply don’t measure up” with their counterparts in larger and more competitive high schools.<sup>5</sup>

Going further with “Proud But Not Satisfied,” back in 1965, meant that the University of Maine, like that of other college and universities, was becoming ever more studied, discussed, and polished. The term “branding,” so popular today in promoting colleges and universities, was not used back then, but its antecedents can readily be detected. A committee of one hundred, composed of prominent Maine citizens (not all of them alumni), was surveyed. The institutional image statewide was seen as “good to excellent,” while the image nationwide was seen as “good to fair.”<sup>6</sup>

If, to repeat, serious visions of the future invariably tell us more about the persons and times in which they were composed and circulated than of the era they allegedly predicted, it is consequently tempting but shortsighted to make up scorecards to determine the accuracy of those forecasts in the case of the University of Maine. To take perhaps the best example of such shortsightedness, in 1984, countless self-proclaimed professional forecasters criticized the legendary George Orwell for having failed to anticipate more of the world in that year as described in his classic *1984* (1949). In so doing, they completely misunderstood the principal purpose of his anti-utopian novel: not to predict the future but precisely to try to prevent it, given the horrors he described in his powerful book. To the extent to which he was accurate—as with the persistent relevance through today of versions of the totalitarian Big Brother and the cynical employment of terms that in reality mean the very opposite of (“War is Peace,” for example)—Orwell deserves praise for his brilliance. Indeed, his book is still a rallying cry for thousands around the world opposing the misuse of language as much as the misuse of physical force to reduce freedom of thought and expression.

“Utopian” and “anti-utopian” do not, as noted, apply to those visions of the University of Maine from 1965 outlined here. Yet the remarkable gap between what *was* expected and what actually happened over the past half-century is certainly worth noting. Former University of Maine President Peter Hoff’s extensively researched history of the administrations of three of his predecessors in the 1960s reveals a far more complicated story than has ever been presented before. As Hoff shows, there were many twists and turns—many alternatives to the current structure of seven campuses of profoundly different size, shape, and mission, with an ever larger system administrative bureaucracy imposing its will on those seven schools. Indeed, the current but still vague vision of “One University,” with the relentless centralization of academic and non-academic units alike, could not have been anticipated in the immediate post-1965 years. Yet the eventual decisions from 1965 on that led to five of America’s smallest colleges being made into “universities” and then being made into the virtual equals of one of the nation’s original land-grant schools (Orono) and the equal as well of a multi-campus urban institution (Portland/Gorman/Lewiston), were the products of many political debates, commission reports, legislative and gubernatorial votes, public hearings, and media investigations and editorials. These developments were simply not on the radar screen in 1965.

To conclude that the present system was hardly inevitable is not, of course, to say that the wrong decisions were always made or that those who made them should have known better. Rather, it is to say that the transformation of the autonomous University of Maine in 1965 into merely one of seven campuses of the University of Maine System has forever changed and undermined Orono’s “flagship” status.<sup>7</sup> True, as Hoff notes, the then President of Bowdoin College, James Coles, who played an influential role in the formation of the system by chairing an influential public commission, opposed the idea of Orono becoming the official “flagship.” But even the Coles Commission could have endorsed a *de facto* hierarchy with Orono at the top. Instead, as outgoing President Elliott had feared, “leveling” to lower common standards “was already beginning to happen.” As Hoff puts it, the concept of a “flagship” smacked of elitism, notwithstanding widely praised examples elsewhere like the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the University of Connecticut in Storrs, and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

If, to be sure, the University of Maine had been left alone, it would nevertheless have changed in many other ways having nothing to do

with the formation of the system. The other three articles illuminate changes that, over the past half-century or more, have transformed the once traditional land-grant school concentrating on agriculture and engineering into a vastly more diversified institution with many additional areas of teaching, research, and service—and with a different relationship between town and gown.

As Catherine Schmitt and Shelby Hartin put it in their opening lines, “The development of marine science research, teaching, and service at the University of Maine paralleled the ascendance of oceanography that began in the 1960s” across the country. Maine’s extensive coastline was “naturally . . . well-suited to follow these trends and pursue marine science and education.”

Other academic areas that have become integral parts of the University of Maine since the centennial are explored in the book that will be published in 2017 by the University of Maine Press. It will be a sequel of sorts to *The First Century: A History of the University of Maine* (1979) by the late University of Maine historian David C. Smith.

A central component of these new courses, programs, and departments has been the library. Fogler Library Special Collections Archivist Desiree Butterfield-Nagy explores the evolution of the University of Maine Libraries in terms of patronage, services to university students, staff, and faculty—plus the general public—storage space, computerization, and the literal “knowledge explosion.” Without citing what might be called “false prophets,” she shows how especially the campus libraries have *not* become the ghost towns predicted by so many “experts” in the past half-century. Anything but that.

Finally, Orono Town Manager Sophia Wilson and Orono Town Planner Evan Richert illuminate the changing relationship between town and gown as, in their words, “the forest products industries upon which the town was founded had largely disappeared” by 1965. Relations between the town and the university have not always been smooth, and the university has not invested heavily in the town. Moreover, increasing numbers of new faculty and staff have chosen to live outside of Orono, where in earlier times, living close to the university was a priority for many, though by no means all, newcomers. But things may be changing, as they put it a “knowledge-based economy anchored by the presence of the university and its growing research and development enterprise . . . slowly [takes] shape in Orono.”

Years from now, the visions of UMaine’s future that have appeared in recent years will likely be subject to scrutiny akin to that provided

here for their 1965 predecessors. Nowadays, however, the language is far more technocratic, with “strategic plans,” “metrics,” and “outcome assessments” pervading and often shaping the analyses and predictions. By comparison, the 1965 centennial forecasts and speculations discussed here are almost primitive in tone. Whether the twenty-first century visions will ultimately prove more accurate than the 1965 ones remains to be seen.

## NOTES

1. Both the perspectives discussed in this article and the facts and figures supporting them come from items found in Fogler Library’s Special Collections. See University of Maine Centennial Celebration Materials, 1934-1965, SpC MS 0529, Box 1, Folder 7, Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department, University of Maine, Orono; also available as <http://ursus.maine.edu/record=b5306715-S1>. I am indebted to Special Collections Archivist Desiree Butterfield-Nagy for locating and photocopying them. Some of my specific principal sources are “The Development Program at the University of Maine,” January 1964; Lloyd H. Elliott, letter to the University of Maine Board of Trustees, Development Council, and Alumni Council, September 28, 1964; Elliott, letter to the Committee of One Hundred, September 28, 1964; “Dean Libby Emphasizes U-M Service To All, As Centennial Unit Meets,” *Bangor Daily News*, October 17, 1964, 3 (no author given); Committee of One Hundred, “Suggested Discussion Outline for Small Group Meetings,” October 17, 1964; Elliott, “To the University of Maine Committee of One Hundred,” January 29, 1965; Director of Admissions James A. Harmon et al., *Background Material About the University of Maine* (1965); “The University Sets a Signpost on the Road to the Future—To Opportunity and a Better Life” (no author given), *The Maine Teacher* (March 1965), 31-43; also MS 0529, Box 1, Folder 26; also available as [http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/univ\\_publications/50/](http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/univ_publications/50/) accessed 12 July 2016.

The rest of my specific principal sources are Howard Keyo, Press Release, University of Maine, February 24, 1965; Centennial Issue, *Maine Alumnus*, 46 (February-March 1965) (no author given but Dr. T. Russell Woolley, editor); MS 0529, Box 1, Folder 25; and “University of Maine Centennial, 1865-1965,” *Maine Sunday Telegram*, April 4, 1965 (no authors given), Special Insert, E section, 2E-23E; also MS 0529, Box 2, Folder 5.

2. *Maine Teacher*, no page number.

3. *Maine Alumnus*, 4.

4. *Maine Sunday Telegram*, 2E.

5. *Ibid.*, 8E.

6. “Dean Libby.”

7. See Karl Turner, "UMaine's Orono Campus Not First Among Equals," *Maine Voices*, *Maine Sunday Telegram*, February 15, 2015, D2. Turner is a powerful member of the System Board of Trustees, the System's sole representative on Maine Public Broadcasting's Board of Directors, and a former State Senator. His viewpoint reflects at least implicit System policy about One University. Ironically, he is an Orono alumnus in engineering.