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Division of Marketing and Communications, "UM Renews Commitment to Franco-American Studies" (1992). *Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion*. 297.

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UM Renews Commitment to Franco-American Studies

University of Maine President Frederick Hutchinson has renewed the commitment of the state's land grant institution to the study and service of the Franco-American heritage and culture during a visit by the French ambassador to the United States.

Hutchinson told Jacques Andreani, Ambassador of France, and guests attending a recent reception that the University is embarking on a new effort to establish the campus as a regional research and resource center for the study of the Franco-American experience. Although much has been accomplished in the past 20 years, Hutchinson acknowledged more work is needed to fully recognize the social, economic and political contributions of Franco-Americans.

The renewed dedication to the study and recognition of the contribution of the nation's Franco-Americans reflects the University's continuing commitment to increase cultural diversity, understanding and appreciation in all aspects of campus life and learning, Hutchinson said.

Twenty years ago, President Winthrop Libby made the commitment that the University of Maine would pursue the study and service of the Franco-American culture and heritage, shared by about one-third of the state's population. In establishing a Franco-American Center at UM, Libby wrote that the University has a responsibility to "understand and explain the cultural and economic contributions of Franco-Americans in making us what we are today."

Hutchinson recently announced formation of a plan to strengthen and expand programs and resources to increase understanding of the region's cultural identity and diversity.

"Awareness of cultural diversity is much greater than it was 20 years ago," Hutchinson said. "We must grasp the opportunity."

Hutchinson said that over the next few months, UM will develop a specific program to realize this goal, even at a time of limited resources. Programs and services will be identified, and private and public funding will be sought to support the endeavor. Individuals and institutions will be asked to contribute time, expertise and other resources to help turn the plan into reality, according to Hutchinson. The new effort will complement the University commitment to become more culturally diverse, he said. ▲



Among the University of Maine dignitaries on hand to meet Ambassador of France Jacques Andreani were, left to right, Judith Bailey, interim vice president for Research and Public Service, John Halstead, vice president for Student Affairs, and MarSue Pickering, associate vice president for Academic Affairs.

Photo by Damon Kiesow