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Editor's Letter

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Dear Readers,

Ovid in the first century A.D. said, “Nothing is stronger than habit.” And what is the opposite of habit? *Innovation*, which is the subject of this special issue of *Maine Policy Review*. The overall thrust of this issue, as expressed in the introductory Margaret Chase Smith Essay authored by David Kappos, is to highlight the many ways that Maine is poised to strengthen its innovation policies and potential. Guest editors Linda Silka, Renee Kelly, and James S. (Jake) Ward have assembled a group of authors who present different aspects of and varied perspectives on innovation.

As you will learn from the articles here, innovation should not be equated with invention, the creation of a new thing. Innovation can also involve new ways of thinking or new ways of doing something. Innovation is not necessarily the result of a single person working on his or her own, or of a “eureka” moment, as Linda Silka points out in her overview article on the lessons to be learned from the innovation literature. Innovation is also not something new in Maine. Howard Segal shares examples of Maine’s long history of innovation.

The “innovation ecosystem” can and should be supported by state and private research and development funding and through university research, described here in articles by Renee Kelly, James S. (Jake) Ward, Kris Burton, Evan Richert, and Catherine S. Renault. These authors also point out the close linkages between innovation, economic development, and per capita income.

Innovation and economic development require a trained and educated workforce, discussed here by John Dorrer. Doug Hall, in his interview with Margo Lukens, stresses education’s role in stimulating and supporting innovative thinking, exemplified by his Innovation Engineering program. Students Brianna Hughes and Katie Smith reflect on their Innovation Engineering experiences at the University of Maine. In Linda Silka’s discussion with McArthur “genius grant” recipient Ted Ames, Ames gives his thoughts on the importance of education, and discusses the impact of receiving the prestigious McArthur award.

Shorter articles describe examples of innovation and processes to encourage it: forests (Linda Silka); agriculture (John Piotti); rural development (Sheila Jans); and Maine’s culture of innovation (Jean Maginnis). Kerem Durdag’s commentary presents what innovation means to him.

We hope you will find the articles in this issue to be informative and thought-provoking. We also hope you will see that innovation is not just the province of universities, think tanks, businesses, and inventors, but can and should be incorporated into our everyday lives and supported by policymakers.

Best,


