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## Thomas Jenkins In Touch With the Human Side of Higher Education

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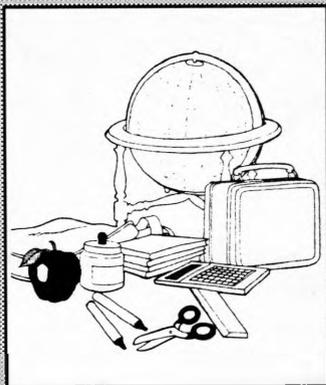
# Maine Perspective

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## In Perspective



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**Thomas Jenkins**

## In Touch With the Human Side of Higher Education

When Thomas Jenkins entered higher education almost four decades ago, he expected to be part of a process "that made this a better world." Through the years, he has seen improved access to education, greater cooperation between higher education and the public schools, and state institutions like the University of Maine come into their own.

He has also seen elitism continue to pervade higher education - just as it did when he took his first faculty position in 1953.

"At the onset, higher education meant to me that I was going to be part of the process that made this a better world," said Jenkins, associate director of admissions for minority recruiting at the University of Maine, and keynote speaker for the upcoming Honors Convocation on May 2.

"I thought we would begin to eliminate poverty and inequities in life, and begin to bring people together toward having a world in which justice prevails on a universal basis. I thought that was what we were doing. That was my naive view, predicated more on what I learned in my own home.

"(In my upbringing,) there wasn't much talk about people going to colleges and universities to make money and be wealthy," said Jenkins. "It had more to do with the service you were going to provide because you were better educated, better equipped.

"Along the way I commenced to see that many well-educated people had a genuine belief that only one out of every 10 persons should have the advantage of a superior education because they were the only ones able to take advantage of it. This elitist view meant to me that we have class distinction based on the amount of education," he said.

Jenkins, a 1946 graduate of West Virginia State College with degrees in economics and history, received a juris doctor degree from Boston University in 1950. Three years later, he was named dean and professor of law at Florida A&M University, Tallahassee. In 1965, he was tapped for the presidency of Albany State College, Albany, Ga., and was named vice president for Administrative Services at George State University, Atlanta, until 1971.

In 1971, Jenkins was named deputy commissioner of offender rehabilitation with the Georgia Department of Criminal Justice. He moved back to academia in 1975 with his appointment as dean and director of Graduate Studies, College of Community Services, and professor of criminal justice at the University of Cincinnati. Jenkins was named associate vice chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle in 1977, and, from 1984-87, president and special consultant to the Board of Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Mo.

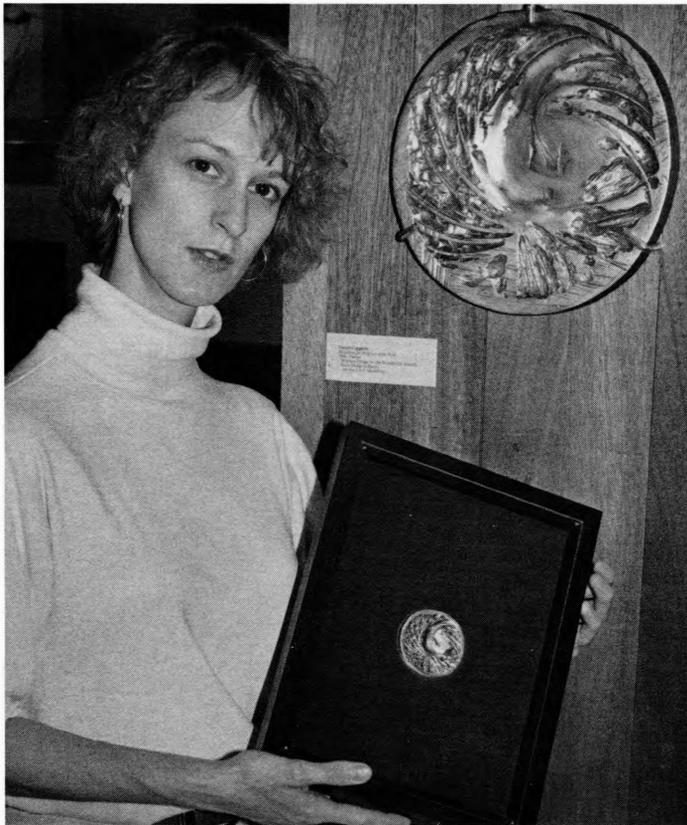
Through the years, Jenkins said he has seen more opportunities made available for people to take advantage of higher education. But the process has caused stratification - not just along racial lines but between those who are college-educated and those who are not.

"There is still only a tiny group of people - 10 percent or less, who are exposed to the best of all higher education experiences. There is a gap there," Jenkins said, "and as in giving across-the-board raises, the gap keeps widening.

"The difference is in whether you look down on those people you've separated yourself from as opposed to realizing it does not make them less intelligent, only less informed." *continued on page 3*

## Convocation *continued from page 1*

It is long-since time to "back up in education," and examine the simple precepts that "would allow us to have a more peaceful world," he said. They are the same precepts, Jenkins is convinced, that would narrow the gap between the have and the have-nots when it comes to a higher education.



**Dianne Cappiello said she had in mind the professors "who made such an impact on me" when designing the winning medallion. The design, she said, represents the "organic energy" that comes from being taught by outstanding faculty.**

"We ought to be thinking about the fundamental issues in the world - love, peace and harmony between and among people is what we're talking about, the reality of saving our world," Jenkins said. "The reality to me is, unless human beings develop tolerance and love, and develop a sense of oneness in terms of life itself, we probably will be headed for absolute disaster. People need to address the whole business of having an appreciation for and understanding of each other.

"We need more good people - good in a sense of kind, understanding and compassionate with a general concern for the well-being of all persons. Many of our truly intelligent people have a tendency to divorce themselves from the issues that face people. Then, when the decisions are made, they complain that things were not done well, in fairness or equitably, yet they were the ones that abandoned their posts.

"We divorce ourselves from these battles, looking out for ourselves and our research without taking in the whole picture. Somehow we don't see how we're part of that. Yet we in higher education are the ones to educate people and develop these theories that would allow for this compatibility."

The key, said Jenkins, is not only in listening to what others have to say but believing that everyone has a part to play. In essence, "everything is not yet learned."

"If weapons of destruction are so readily available, and if those with the weapons are our enemies, we are destined for destruction. How much better it would be if we attempted to have friendship, tolerance and love. It is for our common survival," Jenkins said.

"The same is true if you are not contributing anything to society, counting on the contributions of others and thinking your non-contribution means nothing. As more and more contribute less and less, the burden shifts to those who have sought to separate themselves from the masses.

"The solution is friendship, tolerance and compassion. When you have these things in control of your life you tend to come to solutions that serve the vast majority."

## Medallions Symbolize High Achievement

On May 2 at 3:30 p.m., the annual Honors Convocation will be held in the Hutchins Concert Hall, Maine Center for the Arts. Part of this celebration of teaching and scholarship will be the presentation of three Presidential Awards - the Presidential Public Service Achievement Award, the Presidential Research and Creative Achievement Award and the Presidential Outstanding Teaching Award. This year for the first time, recipients of these Presidential Awards will be presented a medallion symbolizing high achievement in the respective areas. The design for the medallion representing each award is identical. Each is 2 1/2 inches in diameter and is cast in pewter, forming an active, energetic design. The awards will be differentiated by the color of the ribbon suspending the medallion - silver and gold for public service, silver and green for research and creative achievement, silver and blue for outstanding teaching.

At the invitation of John Hitt, vice president for Academic Affairs, Deborah de Moulpied, professor of art, and many

University of Maine students in her classes spent several months discussing and designing medallions. A competition among the students in de Moulpied's classes produced a variety of designs representing these students' thoughts and feelings about the importance and significance of these prestigious awards. Delighted with the results of the competition, Michael Lewis, chair of the Art Department, says the student energy generated from this competition was phenomenal, resulting in many excellent designs. This high quality made choosing a winner especially difficult. The winning medallion design can be seen in the Student Art Exhibition in the University of Maine Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall. The winner of the competition was Dianne Cappiello, a junior art major from Bangor.

Medallions will be presented to this year's award winners during the Honors Convocation. Prior to the Honors Convocation, medallions will be awarded to the 28 previous winners of the Presidential Awards in a ceremony beginning at 2:30 p.m. in the Bodwell Dining Area of the Maine Center for the Arts.