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## Remarks of Peter S. Hoff at the Annual New Academic Year News Conference

Peter S. Hoff  
*University of Maine*

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## REMARKS OF PRESIDENT PETER S. HOFF

### UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

SEPT. 5, 2000

Good morning. Thank you for joining us for the start of another exciting academic year.

Three years ago I stood before you to introduce you to the Class of 2001 -- the 1150 students we were welcoming to the University of Maine community in the fall of 1997.

It was a strong class academically but was smaller in size than we would have liked. We could have accepted more students that year; we certainly had the applications to do so. But we did not because we wanted to maintain the University's admission standards to ensure that the students we admit possessed the necessary talent, potential, and motivation to succeed at the state's premier university.

Since that news conference, we have welcomed two additional classes of students. Each applicant has been measured by the same standards of talent, potential, and motivation. But for a variety of reasons, each class has been successively larger in number. Why? Part of it is attributable to better student recruitment on our part. But a more noteworthy reason exists: the University of Maine is attracting a greater percentage of the state's college-bound students while continuing modest but significant increases in out-of-state students. Guidance counselors, principals, students, and parents mention several reasons for increased interest in UMaine: the quality of our programs; the breadth of academic and cultural opportunities we offer; and, as a state university, and the value we provide for each tuition dollar. We are pleased that our reputation has rebounded so well from where it was during the financially strapped days of the early 1990's.

I am happy to announce that the pattern of increasingly larger first-year class sizes continues. Today we welcome the Class of 2004: a group of first-year college students totaling 1707 in number -- the largest entering class since 1990. Overall, the Class of 2004 is 47 percent larger than the class I introduced to you in 1997.

Several details about the Class of 2004 stand out:

- A record number of new students are recipients of our Top Scholars Award, a full tuition scholarship offered to the valedictorian and salutatorian of each high school in Maine. This year that number is 89, or more than 40 percent of those eligible to receive the prestigious awards. We are pleased that those students chose their state's flagship university, especially given the wide range of college and universities those students could have chosen.
- 21 percent of our incoming students finished in the top ten percent of their graduating class. Forty percent finished in the top 20 percent of their graduating class.
- The average SAT score for this new cohort of students is 1085, virtually the same average as we experienced for the past few years. That average score is 76 points above the national average, and 78 points above the state average. This incoming group of new students satisfies the various measures of quality and preparedness we have maintained for the past several years.

In addition to the new first-year students, we are welcoming 451 students who are transferring to the University of Maine from other colleges and universities.

Overall, we expect to have a student body of more than 10,200 for this academic year. That's an increase of two and a half percent over last year, eight percent over 1998, and nearly eleven percent over 1997.

Aside from the percentages, the profile of our student body reflects a global perspective and offers a deep focus on the pursuit of education. We have students from 41 states and over 50 countries of the world.

Approximately three out of every four students are full-time students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs. Approximately 2200 of our students -- or 21 percent of the total student body -- are graduate students taking courses that count toward master's degrees, certificates of advanced study, or doctoral degrees. Because of the numbers we graduate from doctoral programs, UMaine was recently reclassified as a "Doctoral/Research-Extensive" university—the most advanced category in the new Carnegie classification system—the only Doctoral/Research-Extensive university in Maine. And of the thousands of colleges and universities across the country, only 148 are classified as "Doctoral/Research-Extensive."

Our students will work with, and learn from, a faculty of 650 members. This year we have 41 new faculty members, including some who are world leaders in their areas of expertise. As I am fond of saying, our faculty is, by far, the largest collection of teachers and scholars found anywhere in the state. The brainpower and talent amassed at UMaine, in our faculty and students, is one of the state's most important and valuable resources.

Our residence halls are near capacity, with over 3400 students living right on campus in single or double-occupancy rooms and suites. While on-campus housing is tight right now, in January we will add additional housing as a result of the renovation of Oak Hall. In addition, we have been given Trustee approval to proceed with the construction of a new residence hall, to be located on the east side of campus.

The addition of these residence halls will accomplish a couple of university goals: they will help satisfy growing demand for on-campus housing; and they will enhance the vitality of the campus community by expanding, to an even greater degree, its residential nature, the breadth of which distinguishes UMaine within the state.

The growth in our numbers and the continued quality of our student body are both welcomed. But they are not surprising. It's what we've been working toward since I arrived in 1997. And it's important to note that as demand grows, admission to UMaine will become more competitive. For the last few years we have accepted approximately 75 percent of all applicants, which makes UMaine moderately competitive by national standards. We have been able to accommodate those numbers because the facilities, faculty, and staff have been in place to manage the growth.

As we strive toward a university community of 11,000 students -- talented, prepared, and motivated students -- we have to be careful not to overextend the university's programs, facility, or people. We simply don't want to jeopardize our quality. That's why we need to monitor growth and quality in all aspects of our teaching, research, and outreach activities. Though this may mean that demand for admission will be greater, I believe today's high school students need to know this: if they want to take advantage of the exciting and challenging university experiences UMaine offers, they need to work hard in high school to earn a place here.

In closing, we are excited about the upcoming year and pleased with the quality of our new and returning students. Whether they are undergraduates or graduate students, they are both beneficiaries and participants in helping the University of Maine fulfill its overarching mission: to provide a world-class education, and --- through research and engagement with others -- to help create the kind of state where citizens of all ages can put their educations to work right here in Maine at the highest and most rewarding levels.

Thank you.