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College of Education & Human Development, University of Maine

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Selected News Releases

New Director at UMaine Research Center

ORONO, Maine -- The Center for Research and Evaluation at the University of Maine's College of Education and Human Development has a new director. Walter Harris of Orono, veteran faculty member and administrator in the College, succeeds Walter McIntire, who retired after a long career at UMaine.

The Center is the primary research arm of the College and its various inquiry units and serves as a public resource for providing and explaining educational data, analysis and trends at the state and national levels. Center staff conduct qualitative and quantitative research, develop custom-designed studies and program evaluations, and generate comparative data to inform decisions and help policymakers forecast and more effectively address challenges and opportunities.

Harris also serves as co-director of the Maine Education Policy Research Institute. The Institute was established by the State Legislature in 1995 as a joint effort of the UMaine and University of Southern Maine educational research units to provide an unbiased source of research, assessment and projections regarding Pre-K-12 education. In addition, he is responsible for overseeing the College's externally funded projects representing more than \$5 million in federal and state grants and contracts.

“Research and data hold up a mirror that reflects a reality,” says Harris. “It can confirm what we know or present a totally new picture, and nearly always offers a different way of looking at and using information.”

Among his goals, Harris wants to better use technology in conducting and presenting the Center's work, including electronic surveying to gather information and making data and publications more fully available on the Internet. School leaders and policymakers around the country regularly request copies of the Center's research on controversial educational issues such as weighted grades, challenging behaviors and commercialization of public schools, in addition to in-depth statistical analyses of policy and factors influencing educational equity and student achievement.

“The data we have and constantly produce is highly relevant to the contemporary scene,” says Harris. “Information is a valuable product that helps people find solutions, make research-based decisions and to understand what's happening in education in Maine and nationally.”

Harris' broad view of educational issues and policy, his collaborative leadership style and grant-procurement and technology skills will continue and build the Center's extensive connections and high credibility, according to Robert Cobb, dean of the College of Education and Human Development. “His genuine caring about Maine schools, children and families will strengthen the research that influences policy and practice,” says Cobb.

Harris joined the UMaine faculty after receiving his Ph.D. in special education and behavioral disorders from Syracuse University in 1973. As the College of Education and Human Development's Associate Dean of Instruction from 1985 to January 2000, he has helped shape its academic mission and steer the faculty's teaching, scholarship and service during an era of intense challenge and change in K-12 and higher education.

For more information about the Center for Research and Evaluation, Harris can be reached at (207) 581-2467; e-mail: wharris@maine.edu

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Contact: Kay Hyatt, (207) 581-2761

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