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News

BDN interviews President Ferrini-Mundy about possible fall opening

Published: April 21, 2020

UMaine, Maine MEP collaborating on production of aerosol shields to protect health care workers

Published: April 20, 2020

38 students in nursing to graduate early to address needs during pandemic

Published: April 16, 2020

Media report Zillman Art Museum designated by \$1.3 million naming gift

Published: April 15, 2020

UMaine Museum of Art receives naming gift

Published: April 15, 2020

Maine Memo – April 2

April 2, 2020 | [President's Messages](#)

Dear members of the University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias communities,

Welcome to April — an April that, in so many ways, is not the April 2020 that any of us anticipated. Yet, despite two days of snow flurries this week, crocuses and daffodils, unaffected by coronavirus, will soon provide us some brightness.

You need to know how much I admire and respect all in our communities for the extraordinarily compassionate and collaborative way we have come together in the face of this horrible, frightening coronavirus pandemic. Thank you to the frontline health care providers, and my thoughts are with all whose health and welfare are — and will be — affected by the virus.

What it's like right now at UMaine and UMM. At UMaine and UMM, our faculty and staff moved instruction to online and remote modes in less than three weeks. Our students are finding their own ways to learn and connect with one another, and all of us from afar — and, for a few, here on campus. And for those who have not, we are reaching out to help. The [Maine Campus](#) is back in publication. Our researchers are ramping down nonessential work and, in many cases, turning their efforts to supporting the coronavirus fight in partnership with the state.

At the end of last week, following our first three days of remote classes and labs after spring break, I put out a request to Cabinet members and deans for updates and examples of innovation and goodwill in our communities. The response was overwhelming.

Examples range from the start of weekly Zoom meetings for all UMM faculty and staff, and another for all students with Head of Campus Dan Qualls, to UMaine and UMM student-teachers instructing online in collaboration with their cooperating K-12 teachers. Our University of Maine Museum of Art launched “Fabulous Fridays” on its [website](#) — a new virtual tour or an online follow-along-at-home art class. University of Maine Cooperative Extension 4-H created a program to engage people with science with the “[QuaranTEEN Virtual Science Cafés](#).”

See our [COVID-19 website](#) for so many, many more examples, and also the University of Maine System's new [ServingU website](#), focused on how the public universities are serving the state.

This list goes on and is humbling. In some sense, a new version of normalcy is taking shape. We are learning to use Zoom amazingly well. The rhythm of meetings that occur across the campuses is getting back on track. Major shifts of activity and new processes — occurring daily — are met with resolve to meet and exceed expectations of high quality. People are adapting in ways that show our community is so much greater than the physical places we've shared.

Members of our communities are making a difference, now more than ever. Keep those kudos coming in by emailing um.umm.kudos@maine.edu. [Last week's are posted](#) on the COVID-19 website.

On a related note, we intend to reschedule our annual employee and retiree recognition events later in the year. We look forward to these and other important events being part of our return to campus.

Our students. And to our students — thank you for your patience, your resiliency and your great efforts to engage in the new modes of learning necessitated by this crisis. We miss having you here. Know that if you have challenges, anywhere — from difficulties with getting online to new stresses and anxieties — please call 207.581.1406. Our students also are stepping up in a multitude of creative and caring ways to support one another and to stay connected. There are so many examples. UMaine Student Government donated \$10,000 to the Black Bear Exchange. A number of social work students continuing in their practice are using telehealth in collaboration with providers in assisted living and mental health clinics to offer services to people experiencing anxiety, stress and depression. Again, the list goes on.

The Student Crisis Fund, established through the University of Maine Foundation, raised just over \$125,000 before we closed the process for making requests. The Division of Student Life received nearly 400 applications for funds from UMaine and UMM students. To all who contributed to help make a difference in the lives of students in need, we thank you.

For those who are not familiar with the pass/fail policy that has been put in place at UMaine and UMM this semester, I refer you to [our FAQs](#). The basic principle is that it will be the students' choice to elect the P/F option. If students have questions and wish to talk over the ramifications, we ask that they contact their professors, advisors or associate deans in their colleges. We are working to be compassionate and flexible in meeting every student's unique situation and circumstances.

A reminder: Continue to share any concerns in our communities by emailing umaine.alerts@maine.edu.

This week we received the very good news from the NCAA that spring athletes will be granted an extra year of eligibility. This is terrific for Black Bear DI athletics! And we also learned that Caleigh Charlebois, a Junior in zoology and professional writing, and an Honors student, has been awarded the Goldwater Scholarship.

Research. As a land grant university and the state's only public research university, our ongoing work to create new knowledge, build tools and solve problems is vital to our mission. During this crisis, we are doing our best, within all guidelines for safety and social distancing, to keep the research enterprise going. Some of our researchers are turning their efforts to supporting the current pandemic needs in Maine. Others are maintaining essential functions while perhaps turning their work to other functions that can be done remotely. Currently, the [Office of the Vice President for Research and the Graduate School website](#) provides a definition of “essential research and a form for completion by researchers.” Very soon, information about spring fieldwork will be available.

Commencement. It was [announced on Monday](#) that all University of Maine System universities and the Law School will be awarding degrees on schedule and recognizing the academic achievements of their graduating students, but we will not hold in-person commencement ceremonies. This point in the spring semester is normally a time of great hope and anticipation for graduating students. And, even in this awful coronavirus time, we want students to have high hopes and excitement for bright futures. I understand and share the disappointment of our graduating students and their thousands of family members, friends, colleagues and other supporters. The University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias will hold in-person Commencement celebrations for our 2020 graduates, and will announce dates for those events, hopefully to be held this fall, based on health and safety guidance from the federal and state Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the coming weeks, updates and details will be available on the [Commencement website](#).

Financial situation and budgets. There will be major, unanticipated financial consequences for the university of the coronavirus pandemic in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. We are analyzing budgets now UMS-wide. In addition, the System is working closely with our federal delegation to understand and deploy resources coming from the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Bill, and continuing our very close communications with the Governor and Legislature. We will be adjusting as time goes on to make fiscally prudent changes for this year and in planning for the future. One such change is a new requirement that all new or replacement positions must be reviewed directly by campus presidents and then submitted to the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration, and the Chancellor for final decisions. Yesterday, employees were provided with the very [latest information about the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (FFCRA) that took effect April 1, 2020.

In conclusion, I ask that we continue to communicate, connect and converge, virtually, and support each other to get through this unsettling, difficult and challenging time. Our next virtual town hall, co-hosted by Faculty Senate, will be held at 2 p.m. April 9. Watch for the announcement, which will provide a link to the live stream. You are welcome to send questions to umaine.alerts@maine.edu. In the virtual town hall, I and the panelists will answer as many questions as possible during the live broadcast. Responses to questions will be posted on the UMaine website as part of our list of [FAQs](#) related to the COVID-19 situation.

We will face together what is happening now and whatever is to come. Please take care.

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