



# Office of the President

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## News

**Media report on framework for reopening colleges, universities**  
Published: June 5, 2020

**Maine's higher education leaders propose principles for safe fall reopening**  
Published: June 4, 2020

**State partnership overcomes urgent shortage of key N95 mask testing materials**  
Published: May 15, 2020

**Press Herald article on University of Maine System enrollment, completion rates quotes President Ferrini-Mundy**  
Published: May 12, 2020

**President Ferrini-Mundy recent guest on WVOM's 'George Hale and Ric Tyler Show'**  
Published: May 12, 2020

## Maine Memo – April 29

April 29, 2020 | [President's Messages](#)

Happy Maine Day. For the first time in its 85-year history, this traditional day of service that is part of the very fabric of the UMaine experience is being held virtually because of the coronavirus pandemic. Check out the [Maine Day webpage](#) for the many ways to be involved and make a difference. The Division of Student Life has provided great leadership in how to continue to celebrate and engage in community service even though we are all away from campus.

Participating in spring events, admitting new students, celebrating the success and achievements of our graduates, planning for summer and fall, and many more observances and actions always happen this time of year at UMaine and UMM. And they still are this spring, but just a bit differently amid the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. It is part of the dedication, resilience and leadership of our university communities. We are committed to being ever-ready to serve all members of our communities and the state during this trying time — and whenever the worst is over. That includes providing the highest-quality learning experience for students in the fall and beyond.

We launched a new chapter in UMaine's future yesterday with groundbreaking for the \$78 million Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center. If you didn't get a chance to see the live virtual event, please watch the videos [online](#). Construction of the 105,000-square-foot facility will begin in May, with workers following appropriate COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. The project is expected to be completed in spring 2022. Members of the UMaine Class of 2023 will complete their senior capstone projects in the center.

We reached this milestone for UMaine and the state of Maine with the help of a record \$25 million in private support from more than 500 alumni, friends, foundations and corporate donors. Ferland EEDC is a capital priority of UMaine's \$200 million Vision for Tomorrow comprehensive campaign, led by the University of Maine Foundation. Approval of \$50 million in public support from the Legislature in July 2017 helped to catalyze the campaign for this facility that is key to advancing the College of Engineering, the university and the state.

In the run-up to our virtual groundbreaking ceremony, our thoughts have been with the family of John Lisnik, who passed away last week after a courageous battle with cancer. As noted in a [UMS news release](#), in his capacity as liaison to the Legislature for more than two decades, John was a tireless advocate for Maine students. At UMaine, we also know that he championed the state's land grant university and its leadership role in Maine.

John was foundational and fundamental in so many of the state-level underpinnings of Maine's only public research university, including creation of the Maine Economic Improvement Fund, and approval of the \$50 million in public support from the state Legislature for the Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center — the largest one-time public investment in the University of Maine System. John worked for multiple Chancellors and for all of us. In many ways, we are the research university we are today because of his efforts, and we are eternally grateful.

### Celebrating student success and faculty achievement

We are preparing for our Class of 2020 Recognition Week, May 4–9, with daily messages from community leaders, videos, virtual postcards and slideshows. Chief of Staff Kimberly Whitehead and the Commencement Committee developed the week to celebrate the success, achievements and experience of our UMaine students. Beginning May 4, new Recognition Week content will be posted daily at 10 a.m. on the [Commencement website](#).

At UMM, a virtual Recognition Ceremony will be live on YouTube on May 30. The event will include a photo slideshow of the graduates. Alondra Candelario, a senior English, creative writing and book arts major, is this year's Ivy Orator, traditionally elected by the senior class to give a speech at Honors Convocation. A traditional UMM Commencement ceremony is tentatively scheduled for Homecoming Weekend in September if it is safe to do so. UMaine also is planning an in-person Commencement based on health and safety guidance from the federal and state Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Despite our personal and professional challenges, this is the time of year when there is much to celebrate. Take a moment to read the profiles of UMaine's valedictorian [Sierra Yost](#) and salutatorian [Grace Smith](#). Profiles of our Outstanding Graduating Students are [online](#). Later this week, a story about UMM valedictorian Dawn Johnson and salutatorian Kirsten Lisee, both psychology and community studies majors, also will be online.

We have been creative in carrying on our traditional spring awards ceremonies, including the [School of Nursing Pinning Ceremony](#) and the 2020 Maine Business School Honors and Awards Ceremony. The annual Student Life Leadership Awards that recognize students, organizations and staff who have impacted our community over the past year will be [virtual at noon on May 1](#).

### Service and leadership to our state

I continue to be inspired and appreciative of the many ways our community continues to be responsive to the needs of our community and the state. Another case in point: The UMaine Center on Aging and UMaine Medicine Initiative, which are hosting a weekly call-in program called UMaine Health Connection Chats. These specialized discussions feature UMaine and community experts speakers who share practical tips and information for older adults and those most at-risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sessions are recorded and available on the Center on Aging [website](#).

Good Shepherd Food Bank received 10,000 meals for local distribution through the efforts of students and staff in the Honors College, and community members. The story is [online](#). The Maine Day Meal Packout, now in its fourth year, has contributed a total of more than 275,000 meals to food pantries in Maine.

Congratulations to UMM service group Omicron Delta Pi, which has been awarded a President's Campus Leadership Award by Maine Campus Compact. The award is given biannually to a student organization or campus department in recognition of their contributions to community service and civic engagement. Dawn Johnson, a senior psychology and community studies major who is a member of the Clippers soccer team, received a PILLARS Award.

Congratulations, too, to Susan Pinette and Jacob Albert of Franco American Programs for a National Endowment for the Humanities award that will advance the Franco American Portal project. The bilingual portal to Franco American heritage records from archives in the United States and Canada received a nearly \$60,000 NEH grant. The project involves the University of Southern Maine, University of Maine at Fort Kent, Assumption College and Saint Anselm College. A news release about the project is [online](#).

Word came last week that UMaine is in the top 25 safest U.S. colleges campuses with 5,000 or more students, according to the annual ranking compiled by the security company ADT. UMaine is ranked No. 11. The [announcement](#) noted that UMaine "deserves praise for its above-average safety." Data for the rankings come from the U.S. Department of Education Campus Safety and Security and the FBI 2018 Uniform Crime Report.

Last week we had a virtual coffee break, co-hosted by the UMaine Alumni Association, with more than 130 alumni. A recording of that session is [online](#). Tonight, we will field questions from admitted students and their parents as part of a virtual town hall. Interest in and support of UMaine and UMM are unwavering — and critical as we move forward.

### The end of the semester, and what's ahead for summer and fall

The University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias faculty, students and staff have done heroic work these past six weeks to complete the semester. We maintained our student-centered focus, aware of the compassion and flexibility we all need during this challenging time. And our students rose to the occasion, made the very best of the changed circumstances for their learning, and let us know how we can meet their needs and challenges.

We are daily working to make the best decisions possible regarding summer and fall at UMaine and UMM, all with an eye on what constitutes a safe return to campus. The safety and welfare of students and all in our university communities are our top priority. We need to foster learner success, wherever our students are — literally and figuratively, going forward — and use what we have learned this semester to inform our next steps — and our future. With leadership at the University of Maine System we are reviewing all guidance and announcements from Governor Mills and her team.

University of Maine System Chancellor Dan Malloy's [April 27 message](#) included information about two advisory groups essential to helping UMS campuses plan to resume safe and as-normal-as-possible operations in the fall.

The Fall 2020 Safe Return Planning Committee is co-led by Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Robert Placido and Chief General Services Officer Chip Gavin. Members represent each university's key constituencies (HR, IT, student life, security, academic affairs, etc.) and are engaged in fall scenario planning. A chief consideration is what modes of instruction will be possible and, most importantly, safe in the dynamic and ever-changing public health environment. The Chancellor has asked Presidents and Chief Academic Officers to brainstorm a number of approaches for fall courses and scheduling.

A related element of the preparedness work is a Scientific Advisory Board, established by Chancellor Malloy with a charge to stay fully abreast of fast-breaking scientific developments in areas relevant for universities and the pandemic, including vaccine development, diagnostic and serology testing, antiviral treatments, contact tracing and others. The team also would be prepared to brief the Chancellor and serve as an expert resource to the 2020 Safe Return Planning Committee to discuss science-based approaches to safely welcome students, faculty, staff and the public back to our universities. UMaine professors Melissa Maginnis (lead), assistant professor of microbiology; Kristy Townsend, associate professor of neurobiology; Caitlin Howell, assistant professor of bioengineering; and Rob Wheeler, professor of microbiology, are the core scientific members of the advisory group, along with a soon-to-be named USM faculty member. Other researchers in the System will be engaged in task groups and subcommittees. In my role as President of the state's public research university, I chair this advisory board.

The talent, vision and commitment of UMaine and UMM faculty, students and staff make me so incredibly proud to be president of these two great universities. The inspiration you provide is second to none.

Our thoughts are with our faculty and students going into finals week. Our heartfelt congratulations go out to all our newest graduates. To all in Black Bear Nation — be healthy and safe.

Share this:

Office of the President  
5703 Alumni Hall, Suite 200  
Orono, ME 04469

Tel: 207.581.1512  
Fax: 207.581.1517  
umpresident@maine.edu

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