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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 – May 27

May 27, 2020 | [President's Messages](#)

I hope everyone had a healthy and safe weekend, with an opportunity to relax, and to reflect on all that Memorial Day means and how to continue to help to shape our rapidly changing world.

With the end of the spring 2020 semester, I again offer my heartfelt thanks, appreciation and congratulations to all who made it a success in these challenging times. [Summer University](#) is in full swing, with all courses offered remotely and online. Enrollment is up more than 360 students over last year to 5,300. Of those students, nearly 470 are high school students enrolled in Early College, including an unprecedented 69 from out of state.

We look forward to welcoming the Class of 2024 and all new students planning to enter the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Machias in fall 2020. For first-year university students, we're offering the [Summer Start Program](#) — 16 courses starting June 22, July 6 and Aug. 3. Students can choose a three-credit course from a variety of topic areas, plus a one-credit course — Success in College, Exploring Innovation or STEM Concepts as a way to get started on college. The collaboration between the Division of Lifelong Learning and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to make this new initiative happen has been outstanding.

To our returning students, thank you for the success you achieved in the spring semester. Over 2,800 of you chose the pass fail option, and 99% of all UMaine and UMM students persisted through the spring courses and completed the term in the unexpected delivery formats. We are planning for future learning options that will improve on the quality of your experience as we engage you in learning in your fields. If you need academic advice this summer, be in touch with academic advisors in your departments. If you have questions and want to know about plans for fall, watch the [UMaine website](#) for the latest updates. You will hear directly from me soon about those plans.

Planning for the fall – predicting the future

Now that this both inspiring and unsettling spring 2020 semester has come to a close, we are turning our efforts fully toward planning for the future in this new world. We are learning from what we all have experienced in the past several weeks. We recognize that planning is largely now about sticking to our values and mission, using our best science, communicating constantly, and realizing that the context around us is changing so rapidly that what we really need are many plans, with variants that depend on what we know and what is fluid. Your flexibility, resilience and great ideas are essential now.

And, although we can't predict the future, we can offer a few assurances, a few constants. As an institution of higher education, our work is always about the future — about providing opportunities for learning and expanding options. And we continue to do that, as it is our core work. Together, students, faculty and staff here also generate new knowledge and create original contributions through research and scholarship, even during a pandemic. Take a look at our [Service to the State webpage](#) to learn more about our research, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and academic and cultural resources responses to the pandemic. As a land grant university, this is what we do daily in partnership with the state. With our faculty expertise and facilities, this is the capacity Maine's research university brings to help in times of greatest need.

Thanks to all who joined the virtual town hall meeting last Wednesday led by Chancellor Dan Malloy and me. A recording is [posted online](#). We are hearing that students would like to be back on campus if we can do so safely, and with thorough planning, that is our intention. That planning is underway. We have nearly a dozen committees and groups across the university applying their expertise to strategically plan and make recommendations how the University of Maine and University of Maine Machias will be in late summer and into the fall — and a dozen more at the University of Maine System level — working in accordance with all the guidance from the Governor and her administration, Maine CDC, and national guidelines for higher education. Across the university we are working together to find the best ways to create high-quality learning options for face-to-face, online, and other remote modes of learning. Those committees are discussing everything from how to manage social distancing in large lecture halls to residence halls; how to accommodate students, faculty or staff who cannot be in class because of family or other circumstances, but can continue their learning and teaching; face coverings, plexiglass shields, local health care capacity; doing field work and clinical experiences; and all of the other issues that are dominating the national conversation in higher education right now. As decisions and plans are made we will be in touch.

Fiscal challenges

We know that our students and their families face fiscal challenges, including loss of employment income with businesses closed due to the pandemic. The Student Crisis Fund was established in March by the University of Maine Foundation to help students with emergency needs and to date, more than \$161,000 has been raised. The funds were distributed as quickly as possible to students in need by the Division of Student Life.

The University of Maine System was allocated \$17.2 million in funding through the federal CARES Act, which requires that half of these dollars (\$8.63 million) go directly to students to cover emergency expenses arising from the disruption in campus operations. UMaine's more than \$2.8 million in direct payments went to 7,536 students; there are 860 applications for the Supplemental CARES Act funds. UMM's \$193,475 direct payments went to 328 students, with 70 applications for Supplemental CARES Act funds. The need is great — and ongoing.

Institutionally across our campuses, we are focused on meeting fiscal challenges by reenvisioning what's possible. That innovation is at the heart of the Define Tomorrow to Set Our Course initiative, which compiled ideas for major structural realignments as we produce a balanced budget built on our strategic vision and values. We will be providing community updates in a month and a possible phase two for FY22.

This reenvisioning continues to be front and center in the response of Maine's public research university to help meet the state's needs. Our fiscal challenges brought on by the pandemic require a keen focus on keeping the research enterprise going — from addressing immediate pandemic needs and restarting our major research centers and labs to provide opportunities for student work and learning, the infrastructure vital for the state's economic development, and national and international contributions.

Moving forward

The importance of the breadth and depth of a land grant university is iterated annually in our Presidential Awards. This year's winners are Sara Lindsay, associate professor of marine sciences, the Presidential Outstanding Teaching Award; Jean MacRae, associate professor of environmental engineering, the Presidential Public Service Achievement Award; and Bob Steneck, professor of marine sciences, the Presidential Research and Creative Achievement Award. All three are world-class teachers, mentors, researchers and engaged community members. Undergraduate and graduate students fortunate enough to learn from and collaborate with professors Lindsay, MacRae, and Steneck gain the valuable experience that comes from being at a research university with this caliber of faculty. A news release about the careers and achievements of Sara, Jean and Bob is [online](#). The three of them, along with 2020 Distinguished Maine Professor Rich Powell; Doug Allen, this year's Steve Gould Award winner; and Frederic A. Reynolds Award recipient Marcus Librizzi will join me from 4:15–5 p.m. June 1 for a virtual discussion about their work and leadership, and their reflections on the pandemic. This is the [link to the livestream](#).

In the midst of all the above activities and focus areas, the search committee seeking the University of Maine's next executive vice president for academic affairs and provost has advanced its efforts to assist me in selecting our next provost. From a very diverse and excellent field of candidates, the committee has helped me identify four finalists. Virtual campus visits, including a Faculty Forum and Open Campus Forum with each candidate via livestream, continue this week. I look forward to your feedback and participation in selecting our next Provost.

We have a great deal of critical work ahead of us. I thank you for your active participation in helping our UMaine and UMM communities persevere, remain resilient and continue to meet the needs of students and all our constituents.

Best wishes to you all as summer approaches.

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