



CHANCELLOR PAGE DELIVERS STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS, PROMISES MOST RESPONSIVE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN THE COUNTRY IN MEETING STATE NEEDS

AUGUSTA—Keeping public education affordable and meeting education and economic development needs and opportunities in the state were the themes in this morning’s “State of the University” biennial address delivered by University of Maine System Chancellor James H. Page to a joint session of the Maine State Senate and House of Representatives.

“We must have a strong economy that will sustain businesses small and large, attract investment and, most importantly, offer real opportunities for our citizens, especially our young people and their families,” Page said. “The University of Maine System must be a partner and leader in this task.”

Page spoke of the need to keep education affordable, accessible, best quality and relevant. He said the System froze tuition and mandatory fees for the current academic year, and hopes the Legislature can assist the System in keeping tuition at its current rate for the next two years.

“We are ready to keep this freeze in place for the next two years, but to do that we need your help,” Page said. “If you hold appropriations for the University System flat for this next budget cycle, we will have three years with no tuition increases, the longest such period in over 25 years. We deeply appreciate the Governor’s support in this matter and, working with you, we can send an unmistakable signal that we are united in keeping higher education affordable.”

The Chancellor also spoke of the need to engage adult and non-traditional learners who have completed some college, but never finished a degree program. He cited a Maine Development Foundation study that says 230,000 of Maine citizens 18 years and older are in this category. “They may have taken one course, they may be one course shy of a degree, but they did not complete what they set out to do. The financial cost of this stranded investment is in the hundreds of millions of dollars,” Page said.

Throughout the speech, Page outlined how the System has taken steps to increase access through its centers and distance education sites.

Page noted one of the most important steps the System has taken to ease access to higher education, which is to fix the credit transfer issue. “This fall we will have the administrative and technical infrastructure in place to support this program and to transfer general education credits,” he said. “Soon after, we will be able to transfer within majors and we will have prior learning assessment tools and policies in place to accommodate adult and transfer students.”

Achieving this goal, Page stated, is an indication that the UMS is acting as a System as it was intended to be. The Chancellor made a commitment that the System “will be the most responsive public university system in the country in meeting education and economic development needs and opportunities for our students, families, businesses and communities.” He said this year the UMS has and will continue “building an integrated system of public higher education to a level never before seen in Maine.”

Established in 1968, the University of Maine System is the state’s largest educational enterprise. It has an annual enrollment of more than 40,000 students and serves over 500,000 individuals annually through educational and cultural offerings. Two-thirds of its alumni—approximately 120,000 people—live in Maine. The University of Maine System features seven universities—some with multiple campuses—located across the state, as well as eight University College outreach centers, a law school, and an additional 31 course sites. For more information, visit www.maine.edu.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The complete text of the Chancellor’s State of the University speech may be found at <http://www.maine.edu/news/>.