



2017 UMS Boards of Visitors Talking Points for Legislator and Community Leader Contacts

Maine's Public Universities Are Important to Me

Why are you on the Board of Visitors? Share your personal connection and commitment to your university and the value you see it has in your life and the vibrancy of your workplace and community.

Maine's Public Universities Are Important to the State

We are the state's strongest, most responsive partner in prosperity:

Thanks to the System's continued production of prepared, quality graduates in fields relevant to Maine businesses and industry, engagement of world-class faculty, and investment in robust research and development, we help businesses stay or start up, innovate, grow and create more jobs in Maine.

We are expanding affordable access: This fall, 2,385 Maine high school students are earning college credit at little or no cost to their families through our early college programs, a 20 percent increase from last year. This helps these students earn their diploma more quickly and at less cost so they can enter the workforce prepared for success and with less debt.

We are strengthening the workforce by credentialing adult learners: 200,000 Mainers have earned some college credit but are short of earning a degree. Since 2014, we have awarded up to \$4,000 a year to adults from 132 Maine communities to complete the coursework needed to earn a door-opening college credential or degree.

We are growing enrollment: For the first time since 2003, System-wide enrollment has increased thanks to a nearly 10 percent jump this year in out-of-state students who help keep tuition costs low for Maine families and create lasting connections to the state that help reverse our demographic challenges.

Maine's Public Universities Are the State's Best Investment Now

We have achieved \$82 million in annual savings and are on track to close UMS' \$90M structural deficit: After years of financial struggles, through painful position cuts and strategic reforms including UMS' One University initiative to better integrate our seven campuses academically and administratively, our universities have realized \$82 million in annual savings.

We are keeping tuition affordable: Nationally the real cost of tuition at a four-year public university has increased 9 percent over the last five years, during which Maine is one of only three states where the real cost of tuition has gone down. For the sixth straight year, the System has not increased the cost of tuition for in-state students. Increased State investment will ensure we continue to keep quality public higher education affordable and accessible for all Maine families.

State funding has not kept pace with increased costs: In the past decade, the System's total State appropriation has increased just 2.34 percent. To maintain affordability for Maine families, accelerate job-creating research and strengthen the state's workforce by expanding access to students of all ages, we are requesting the Legislature and Governor LePage increase funding for Maine's public universities.

Our infrastructure is failing and we have a data-driven plan to fix it: The System has 550 buildings, nearly half of which have not been adequately renovated in at least 50 years. Historically, we have made difficult decisions to delay needed improvements to keep tuition affordable for Maine families and invest in quality academic programming. For the success and safety of our students and our regional competitiveness, Maine simply cannot ignore the failing infrastructure at its public universities any longer. The System has evaluated every single facility and developed its first-ever System-wide strategic Capital Investment Plan, for which it will seek public and private funding starting this year. The targeted plan focuses largely on renovations to existing facilities at all seven campuses that are critical to their mission and the local community.

Maine's public universities are the state's best investment now because we are:

- Keeping quality public higher education accessible and affordable for students of all ages
- Developing a highly skilled workforce and helping reverse Maine demographic challenges
- Strengthening our economy through responsive programming and partnerships that increase the prosperity of every Maine community
- Improving our stewardship of taxpayer dollars, including by achieving \$82M in annual savings