

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 20, 2006

Contact: John Diamond 973-3224 or 949-4904
or Peggy Markson 973-3245



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM TRUSTEES VOTE TO MAINTAIN UMA AS A SEPARATE UNIVERSITY

Vote Abandons Plan To Merge Augusta Campus With USM Trustees' Vote Also Maintains the Bangor Campus As Part Of UMA

PRESQUE ISLE – The University of Maine System Board of Trustees voted Monday to abandon its previous plan to merge the Augusta campus of the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) with the University of Southern Maine, and to commit to building UMA into primarily a baccalaureate-degree granting institution.

The action follows a recent recommendation by the Board's strategic planning subcommittee to amend the Board's 2004 strategic plan by abandoning plans to merge UMA with USM. The intent of the merger was to expand the Augusta campus's baccalaureate-degree offerings, phase out its associate-degree programs, and reduce administrative costs. Under the revised proposal, the shift in academic focus will proceed but the proposed UMA-USM merger will not.

Board Chair Charles L. Johnson III praised the work of the subcommittee and System staff to develop a resolution of the issue. He specifically cited the leadership of UMA's interim president, Richard Randall, whom Johnson said "demonstrated great leadership in his ability to reunite the UMA communities" after a period of uncertainty.

In a related vote, trustees also voted to maintain University College of Bangor as a campus of UMA. Under previous Board action, UCB would have been realigned administratively with the University of Maine in Orono.

-more-

System Chancellor Joseph W. Westphal emphasized that the commitment to UCB should also include a commitment to providing the Bangor campus with adequate financial support.

“Over time there has been relatively little investment made in that campus,” Westphal explained. “It’s important that we not ask UMA to maintain UCB without helping them acquire the proper resources to do so.”

In addition, the Board received a presentation on cost-savings, cost-avoidances, and efficiencies realized so far as a result of the Board’s strategic plan. Chief Financial Officer Joanne Yestramski presented a long list of items that have produced efficiencies related to collaboration and consolidation of System-wide functions; maximizing use of new and existing technological capabilities; and modernization.

In other business, the Board:

- approved a proposal to establish the Center for Research on Sustainable Forests at the University of Maine (UMaine)
- approved tenure for 47 faculty members across the university system
- approved a new collective bargaining agreement with public safety employees, one of six employee bargaining units within the University System
- received a status report on the System's marketing and advocacy initiatives, which are designed to improve student recruitment and public awareness of Maine's public universities
- accepted reports on spring enrollment, student financial aid, and grants and contracts
- adopted revisions to the procedures for recruiting and selecting university presidents

Established in 1968, the University of Maine System is the state's largest educational entity. It features seven universities – some with multiple campuses – located across the state, as well as 11 University College outreach centers and more than 100 interactive distance education sites. For more information, log onto www.maine.edu.