

Maine Universities Extend Tuition Freeze for Historic Sixth Year

Prompted by pledge of additional funding from Governor LePage, UMS Board of Trustees vote to extend the tuition freeze for a historic sixth year at Maine's public universities

FARMINGTON, MAINE – The University of Maine System Board of Trustees unanimously voted to extend the tuition freeze at Maine's public universities into the 2016-2017 academic year. The decision by the Board will hold instate tuition rates at all seven of Maine's public universities flat ensuring that the tuition paid for a four-year, public higher education in Maine will remain unchanged for a historic sixth year (FY 12-FY 17)

Maine is the only state in the country to reduce the inflation-adjusted cost of four-year, public higher education over the last five years. Maine has reduced the real cost of public higher education by 2 percent while the national average has increased by 13 percent over the last half decade.

Maine's commitment to affordability leads the nation for a second year in a row.

While holding tuition flat Maine's universities have increased investments in financial aid (tuition adjustments and scholarships) by 33 percent since the start of the decade. Increasing at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent during this period, \$18.9 million was added to University aid bringing the total to \$75.7 million in aid spending in the 2014-2015 academic year; 24,409 students across the University of Maine System received an average of \$11,622 in financial aid from all sources in the 2014-2015 academic year, an increase of \$963 (9 percent) over the last five years.

Maine Governor Paul R. LePage recently wrote University of Maine System Board of Trustees Chair Samuel Collins, urging a continuation of the tuition freeze that has been in place at Maine's public universities for half a decade. In exchange for maintaining the freeze for a sixth year the Governor proposed requesting additional state support of \$4.65 million for the universities in an FY 2017 Supplemental Budget Proposal next January to offset the revenue

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Written by Administrator

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that would have been generated by an inflation-based adjustment to instate tuition. The Governor's letter also includes proposed funding for One University Initiatives that are strengthening access to public higher education in communities throughout Maine.

"On behalf of our students and their families, I want to thank my colleagues on the Board of Trustees, Chancellor Page, and the entire university community for maintaining Maine's tuition freeze for a sixth year in a row," said Paul Nelson, Student Trustee to the University of Maine System. "Our commitment to providing Maine students with affordable access to a quality, career-advancing education leads the nation and is a great service for the people we serve."

"I am a proud student of the University of Maine at Farmington," said Jamie Austin, a junior political science major from Springvale, Maine. "Thanks to Governor LePage and the Board of Trustees I will graduate next year without a single increase in what my family and I pay for tuition over my four years in college. Maine's commitment to affordably has made a big difference to me and to students across Maine. We are grateful."

"Governor LePage's support for higher education has yet again shone through," said Dominic J. DeLuca, a junior from Gorham, Maine studying environmental studies with a game warden focus at the University of Maine at Fort Kent. "By supporting the affordability of Maine's Public Universities, the Governor is providing a catalyst for developing a stronger future for Maine's students and businesses, as well as the communities that drive them."

"It has meant a great deal to me and to many of my peers, non-traditional and traditional students alike, that the University of Maine System has fought long and hard, contentiously at times, to keep higher education an affordable opportunity for all of Maine's learners," said Brad O'Brien of Milford, Maine who is senior liberal studies major at the University of Maine at Augusta. "I see the Governor's recent pledge in support of the goal of keeping tuition down, while acknowledging much needed investments in Maine's Universities, as a landmark moment of recognition of the public good, and long-term investment Maine's economy, that higher education represents."

"We are achieving savings and extending access to high quality programming as part of our One University reforms," said Samuel Collins, Chair of the UMS Board of Trustees. "We appreciate Governor LePage's support of our efforts and for sharing the Board's view that affordable access to public higher education is essential to Maine's future."

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“We have come far in a few short years thanks to the ingenuity and resolve of our faculty, staff and presidents,” said James H. Page, Chancellor of the University of Maine System. “With the support and leadership of Governor LePage and the Legislature, we will continue our work to ensure public higher education remains affordable and focused on providing transformation leadership for our students and our state.

The University of Maine System Board of Trustees will finalize the FY 2017 Budget at its next meeting scheduled for May 22 & 23, 2016.

– *From a press release issued by news@meltwaterpress.com*