

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**  
**2021 State of the University Address Script**

Introductory and Facilitation Participants (in order of appearance):

**Faye Smith**, President, Black Student Union

**William Dee Nichols**, President, University of Maine Faculty Senate; Professor of Literacy Education

**Lisa Neuman**, President, Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine; Associate Professor of Anthropology and Native American Studies

**Harrison Ransley**, President, University of Maine Student Government Association, Inc,

**Faye Smith:** Good morning! I am Faye Smith, a third-year student studying Ecology and Environmental Sciences and I'm the president of the Black Student Union. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the State of the University Address for the University of Maine and its regional campus, the University of Maine at Machias.

As we celebrate Black History Month, I encourage you to join me in recognizing the many contributions that African Americans have made to this community of scholars, the state of Maine, the United States and worldwide.

*The University of Maine recognizes that it is located on Marsh Island in the homeland of Penobscot people, where issues of water and territorial rights, and encroachment upon sacred sites, are ongoing. Penobscot homeland is connected to the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations—the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac—through kinship, alliances, and diplomacy. The university also recognizes that the Penobscot Nation and the other Wabanaki Tribal Nations are distinct, sovereign, legal and political entities with their own powers of self-governance and self-determination.*

**Dee Nichols:** Good morning. My name is William Dee Nichols, and I'm the president of the University of Maine Faculty Senate and the professor of literacy, language and culture in the School of Learning and Teaching, College of Education and Human Development. Today, I am joined by my colleague, Jamie Moreira, president of the University of Maine at Machias Faculty Assembly, who is also an associate professor of community studies. We are both delighted to be able to greet our viewing audience this morning for the State of the University Address and are equally pleased to be representing the faculty at our respective universities.

The University of Maine and the University of Maine at Machias are both fully committed to the vision and values that have been previously identified, and we look forward to learning more about the state of the university and the direction that we are heading.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

**Lisa Neuman:** Good morning UMaine and UMM. Thank you for joining us today. I am Lisa Neuman, associate professor of anthropology and Native American Studies and president of the UMaine Chapter of AFUM, the faculty union. The State of the University Address traditionally marks the beginning of a new academic year or semester and provides an opportunity for the university communities to come together to reflect on the past year, celebrate accomplishments and milestones and get a perspective look from our president about where we are heading for the future.

To foster engagement during this event, if you have questions for President Ferrini-Mundy, please email them to [umaine.alerts@maine.edu](mailto:umaine.alerts@maine.edu) or put them in the chat.

At this time, I am excited to introduce Harrison Ransley, president of the UMaine Student Government Association. Harrison.

**Harrison Ransley:** Good morning University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias students, staff, faculty, alumni and guests. I would like to extend a shoutout to all students who have worked hard to make this semester happen and thank students who have worked on COVID relief locally. Keep up the good work, everyone. For those who don't know, Student Government represents student interests to the administration and handles funding for student clubs and initiatives. To stay updated with us, follow UMSGINC on Instagram or check out our webpage on the UMaine website. Today, I am honored to introduce our president, Joan Ferrini-Mundy, who started her presidency at UMaine and UMM in July 2018.

She actively engages with policy and decision-making bodies in higher education, STEM education, research and development and that strengthens the economy on state, national and international levels. Currently, President Ferrini-Mundy is a member of the National Academies Board on Higher Education and the Workforce. She is a member of the Maine Executive Steering Committee for the 10-year statewide economic strategic plan. And President Ferrini-Mundy is an at-large member of the Association of Public Land-grant Universities (APLU) board of directors. She serves on the boards of Maine Center Ventures and Maine & Co., and is an ex officio board member of the University of Maine Foundation.

Prior to joining the UMaine and UMM communities, she held positions at the National Science Foundation, the University of New Hampshire, the National Academy of Science, and Michigan State University. She has more than 100 publications and has mentored 10 doctoral students, and has received many awards and recognitions. She is a co-PI of the new \$240 million grant to the University of Maine System from the Harold Alfond Foundation.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

At UMaine, she is focused on supporting and growing our great research mission and making it possible for all UMaine students to be a part of it, beginning in their first year. She recognizes how special UMaine's coastal campus, the University of Maine at Machias, is, and is always interested in how we can partner, learn from one another, and prepare the next generations of talented, innovative leaders for Maine and beyond.

**President Ferrini-Mundy:** Thank you, Harrison for that wonderful introduction and thanks to Lisa and Faye for joining me today for this coming together of our university communities.

Wow what a year!

There is no way in this one hour that I can possibly describe the challenges, accomplishments, and forward progress for the University of Maine and our regional campus, the University of Maine at Machias in the past 12 months. So I'm not going to try. The people who are making a difference, represented here by just a few of the many who deserve to be recognized today, will give voice to what has happened over this time.

I re-read my speech from last year's State of the University. There was no mention of pandemics, or renewed energy nationwide for racial justice, or heightened focus on our environment, and the impacts of climate change on our planet and what we can do about it. In this year though, those topics have defined us.

So here is what I can say about the state of the university today: It is healthy and sound. I am humbled by what we have accomplished this year, and at the same time more hopeful than ever,



about what the future holds for the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Machias.

I think about what we do here with a variety of images.

One image is **concentric circles**, with students in the center and all

that we all do — strengthening the core, expanding the opportunities, taking care of one another, around it.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

Here is a quick list of some of the accomplishments of our students and efforts undertaken on behalf of students:

- 88% of degree-seeking undergraduates returned from the spring '20 semester to the fall '20 semester
- In this semester and the two before it, 3,537 of our 6,391 course sections across UMaine and UMM have been offered in a modality that includes online, remote, or distance.
- 2,340 students have elected to use the extended pass/fail options, and 153 are eligible for the Make the Grade extension.
- I conducted two president's roundtables on race with students who gave us dozens of recommendations.
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, 216 faculty have worked with instructional designers in the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning on 309 courses, and have put in more than 3,000 hours on addressing the new realities of teaching during COVID.
- Our football athletes participated in a Colonial Athletics Conference video.
- The average GPA for our Black Bear Division 1 athletes this fall was an outstanding 3.59.
- 270 students displayed their research in the 2020 virtual Student Symposium last October (usually held in April but postponed due to COVID-19)
- The Black Bear Exchange reports that since September it has served 290 people, made 2,700 total visits, and distributed 49,000 pounds of food.

But those numbers don't tell the full story. So let's hear from some of these remarkable students, and from some people who have been on the front lines of putting our students at the core.

**Paula Drewniany**, Lecturer in math

Thank you. I am Paula Drewniany and I am in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, and I would like to start by saying, first, that I feel really lucky that I am in a department with colleagues who are supportive, creative, innovative, who really care about helping each other. That has been especially nice during this past year.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

I'm going to take you through some of the challenges really fast, and some of the accomplishments. First, March. I went up to my son's bedroom and he wasn't there. I pushed all the furniture to the side, I put whiteboards on his wall. I went down to the kitchen and moved his stuff so that the chalkboard was visible so I could really use the chalkboard if I needed it for office hours. Then, I was not as technologically savvy as many of you, so I had to learn about Blackboard, Kaltura, Zoom, Brightspace. I put aside the whiteboards and this fall I was using an iPad along with my laptop so I could see my students and say, this is an important point, please put away your cell phones. And then I'd see them quickly put them away.

For me communication between myself and my students has been key. The way that has happened has evolved in some pretty surprising ways for me. I use in my classrooms, breakout rooms, and students are together in small groups, even in groups of 75 on Zoom. Students are answering questions, they are asking questions. We use polls, so those who are quieter can communicate. All of these are new to me, relatively new to me, and to some of my students. Next, I know you do not want to hear me go on, but I want to say one other thing. This year, I have been frustrated. I've been exhausted. I've been mad. I've been determined. And sometimes I have been triumphant. In all that, I am closer to my students too, because as they learn so many things so quickly, they are going through that array of emotions. And though I knew it intellectually, I now have a better feel for really what they are feeling, because I'm feeling it too. So it has been a year of tremendous growth for my students, for me, and I just want to say that I think UMaine is doing a terrific job.

**Andra Bowen**, Director of Residence Life

Good morning. My name is Andra Bowen, I use she/her pronouns, and I am the director of residence life at the University of Maine. I am here on behalf of the more than 100 residence life, student, graduate, and professional staff members who live and work in the residence halls to build a safe, strong, supportive community for our residential population. I would like to tell you a little bit about us. We are a team who is here when everyone else goes home for the day. We are a team who creates a home away from home for our students to feel safe, welcomed and included. We are a team who is first to respond to our students in crisis, the students with questions, concerns, anxieties, and the students who simply need another human to be with them as they navigate and process their individual experience under the heavy weight of a global pandemic. We are a team who teaches our students what it means to be active and engaged members of a community. We are a team who teaches students to take responsibility and care for themselves and other members of the community, and this year more than any year, that matters.

As you can imagine, the past year has been incredibly challenging for our staff and students. Building and being part of a community under the constraints of gathering limitations and physical distancing has had an impact on the way that we do our work and create a home at UMaine. We have shifted our work to balance remote engagement opportunities with the critical

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

need for students to safely and physically be near one another. We have held our residential students to a high standard of compliance with safety guidelines in defense of the well-being of our campus neighborhood, only reinforcing the community ideal that what an individual does can and does directly impacts the greater group.

Despite challenges and obstacles though, we continue to grow and expand our service to students. We've worked with many offices and colleges across campus to develop living/learning initiatives known to enhance the student residential and academic experience for this year, and are currently expanding our offerings even more for the fall. We have safely housed and supported students through shelter in place orders, quarantines and isolations. We have been here with them as they celebrate their individual wins and dream about the normalcy of a post-pandemic campus. I tell our students that they can do hard things. We all do. Individually, we do things that are hard every day. What we have done this year in keeping halls open and students safe and together, seemed virtually impossible at first. But we did it. Through teamwork, guidance from university leadership, faith in science, and a fierce commitment to this community, we did what everyone said that we couldn't do. And when our community eventually disperses, as it does at the end of every year, we will be sending individuals into the world who not only believe that they can do the impossible, they'll know it. So in these unprecedented and challenging times, I have never been prouder to be a Black Bear, and to represent the University of Maine.

I would like to congratulate and profoundly thank the staff and students I work with, particularly those like me who have chosen to call the University of Maine their home. Thank you.

**Nicole Despres**, Nursing student,

Hi, my name is Nicole Despre, and I am a senior representing the University of Maine nursing program. The School of Nursing this past year has been faced with numerous obstacles. As a student, one of the biggest challenges that we have had to face is the restrictions to our hands-on clinical hours due to COVID-19 restrictions. Over the past two semesters, myself, as well as all of the other students and the faculty, have had to learn to adapt to the ever-changing world as well as experiment with new modalities of learning. Despite the numerous restrictions, and a lot of trial and error, the biggest accomplishment, I would say, is our ability to adapt. We have adapted and been able to overcome these obstacles in order to maintain the integrity and quality of nursing education that we receive from the University of Maine.

Over the past few months, we have been granted the opportunity to serve our school and community by administering COVID vaccines. I have had the opportunity to vaccinate around 100 individuals. We partnered with, I believe, the Cross Insurance Arena, Eastern Maine Medical Center, and now PCHC to be able to administer these vaccines. This has been such a positive experience to see the impact that we are having on our community and to be able to see

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

the efforts that our community is making to help end this pandemic. Being able to help fight this pandemic hands-on has been an amazing experience and it has helped me solidify my knowledge and skills, helped me gain confidence, and given me some hope that one day we will go back to some sense of normalcy.

**Silvestre Guzman**, Admissions Counselor, Enrollment

Hello, everyone. My name is Silvestre Guzman, and I am an admissions counselor representing the Office of Admissions here at the University of Maine. Like many other departments across campus and here at UMaine and at UMaine Machias, one of the biggest challenges that the office of admissions here at UMaine face is the inability to travel to high schools and community colleges to interact with our prospective students.

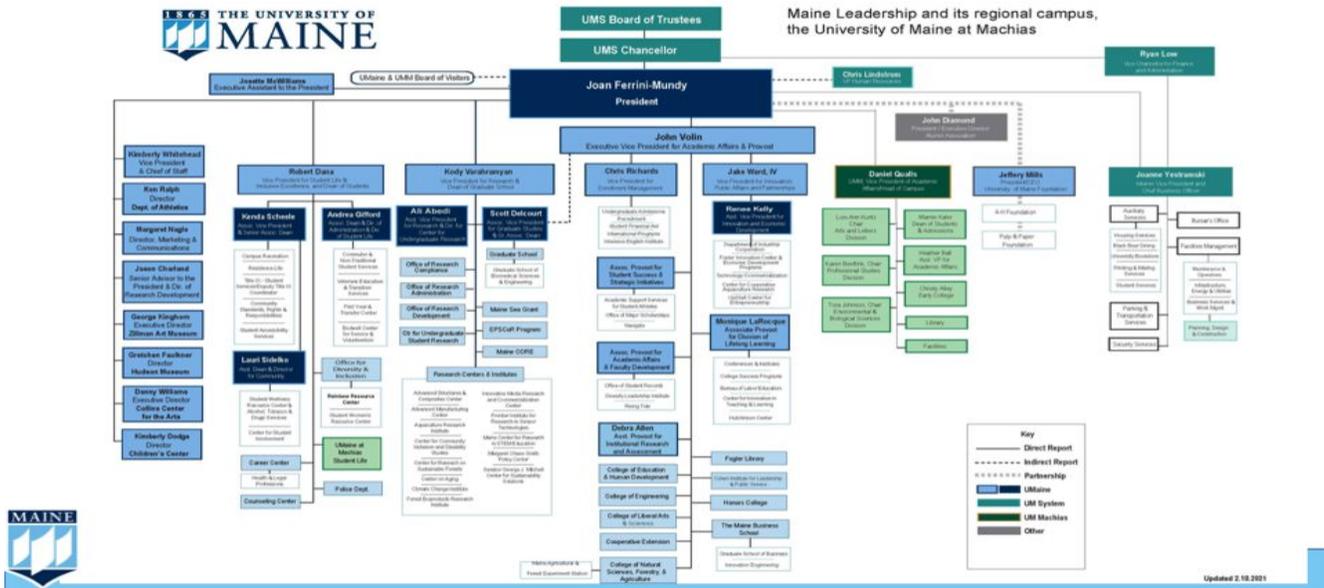
However, this challenge has created opportunities for innovation. For instance, we have created opportunities to interact with our students virtually, one-on-one, utilizing Zoom meetings. We assemble the appropriate departments offering virtual open houses and information sessions. We developed virtual campus stores, enhanced social media engagement, and restructured the merit-based scholarships to be more inclusive.

On a personal level, I do believe that these challenges have generated new opportunities to reach more diverse populations. Because of these virtual meetings, we have been able to reach students across the country in every state and thus diversifying the student population here at the University of Maine and at UMaine Machias.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for contributing to the recruitment efforts for the Admissions Office, and we at the Admissions Office have a highly dedicated team, guided by the core values of diversity, equity and inclusion, ready to assist our students. So should anyone have a question or concern, by all means, do not hesitate to reach out to the Admissions Office, and we will do all we can to answer those questions. Gracias.

**President Ferrini-Mundy:** Thank you Paula, Andi, Nicole, and Silvestre.

# President Ferrini-Mundy State of the University Address February 11, 2021



And now for a second image — an **organizational** chart, flattened down and stretched horizontally.

Beginning almost a year ago, we faced a pandemic and realized that our response needed to be rapid, dynamic, and focused. We had to make decisions by bringing together those who could inform those decisions, those who would need to be involved in implementing them, and those we could count on to put students first and be compassionate and caring above all else. And getting all of those folks together in the Zoom room where it would happen meant setting aside our organizational charts and traditional communication pathways. We all had to be humble enough to listen to one another, and to science, as we weighed options, adjusted, changed direction, and continuously improved. Since March 12, we have held 101 8 a.m. meetings (initially every day) of a group of up to 50 people, including the cabinet, deans, faculty, facilities management personnel, auxiliary enterprises staff, AFUM leaders, senate and assembly leaders, and more, to talk over what we are facing, share perspectives, and inform decisions. Now we meet twice a week.

I hope we can continue some of that “flattening” it in creative ways going forward. It helped me see that, when we are working to solve complex problems, the inclusion of diverse expertise, life experiences, and points of view is vital in getting to good solutions.

And we stretched horizontally too, to borrow language from my friend Joseph Aoun, the president of Northeastern University (and our new neighbors in Maine through the Roux Institute in Portland, another project that is new in the past year.)

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

Individuals have stretched to take on new responsibilities (think about those incredible 175 student workers in our testing sites who can tell us exactly how to drool in the tube so that our samples will be acceptable — and so much more.) In fact, think about the universities’ staff who have become expert in Maine CDC’s detailed guidance about everything from mask wearing to distancing and gathering size protocols. Think about faculty who have learned to teach in completely new ways – and have conferred with their colleagues across the university to get tips and support. Think about a president who has been challenged to reach back to what she can remember about her eighth-grade science project on viruses and now reads anything she can find about vaccines.

Scientists have kept their own research going while simultaneously becoming experts on the wastewater flow and infrastructure of our campus. Or engineers who have partnered with Maine companies to help them rethink their operations during the pandemic.

And most of all, think about the students, whose resilience, willingness to adapt, efforts to help their faculty find the mute button, and commitment to stick with this education under some extremely challenging personal circumstances — all learning and expanding.

Here are a few highlights:

- Since August 2019, 31,871 COVID tests have been administered at UMaine and UMM, with a total of 167 positive cases.
- 119.7 gallons of wastewater sampled and analyzed in our labs here on campus
- Dozens of faculty and staff from UMaine and UMM participated in Governor Mills’ “Maine Can’t Wait” climate action plan, the Economic Recovery Committee, and multiple committees and working groups across the state promoting science and engineering for economic health, talent development, and attraction and expansion of businesses
- We partnered with 100 Maine companies to help with everything from repurposing distillery equipment to facilitating production with robots.
- And UMaine faculty and staff made 3,000 gallons of hand sanitizer for Maine health care facilities.
- Athletics and Cooperative Extension partnered to set up an antigen testing facility for our athletes.
- Faculty and staff generated dozens of great ideas in the Define Tomorrow activity.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

- Now I'd like you to meet some of the people to tell you about what it was like to work in new areas and expand their interactions with others, sometimes with unexpected partners from all corners of the university and the state.

**Dr. Sarah Stewart D.O.**, Lead Physician for Campus; Team Physician, Men's Basketball; Testing

Good morning. I am Sarah Stewart, I'm the lead physician at Cutler Health Center on the University of Maine campus. I am also a native Mainer, having grown up two hours north of here, and a proud UMaine alum who is rapidly stepping up on my 20-year reunion year. I have been here and associated with the university for a long time. Cutler Health Center's responsibilities and how we participated in the COVID pandemic was when this first came out and all the students went away last March and we were talking about what we were going to do when they come back in the fall. The greater healthcare system's answer was, you know what, we are setting this up at Bass Park, we're going to have respiratory centers, send your students there, that's where we're going to do it, you take care of the other stuff. And our team here felt really strongly that that was not what was best for our students. We take responsibility for them. We know them best, and we want to take care of them here because we can give them the education, the support, and what they need. And so all of our employees bought into that. They wanted to take care of the students, they wanted to do what we had. Couldn't do that by ourselves, so we found ourselves interacting with a lot of other organizations and places on campus that we really hadn't had a lot of interaction with before. The Student Advisory Board and Dick Young were both really instrumental in helping us figure out, this is what we need to do for testing. We had to find testing, what's going to be the best. And it was a huge challenge for testing, because every time we thought we found the right one — not available anymore. It has been sold. It is somewhere else.

We've worked really hard together and I think we have come up with a really great plan for our students who are symptomatic, how are we going to get you tested, how are we going to get fast results, how are we going to get you taken care of, back to your classes and back to as normal as possible. Other challenges we came up with, because me being pessimistic by nature, the students would come back, October, we will be gone. So we set up our original, we divided up our office into two sections, non-COVID symptoms, COVID symptoms. COVID symptoms in the fall. We were meeting them outside in the tent. Facilities would set up the tent. Facilities built us a ramp. We would ask for something and there it was because they wanted the students taken care of. Students prove me wrong. They did what they had to do to be safe. The first snow was flying and we were like, where are we going to go with this? Within 48 hours, we had a whole second section set up in the Cutler Health Center. Two separate entrances, basically two clinics now. Facilities worked with us, Dick Young again was really instrumental with that, UVAC gave up space for us, so we have really had this opportunity through all this to work with a lot of people we hadn't worked with on this campus, and I think it has opened new relationships that

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

we will be able to utilize in the future to offer even more resources and services for our students. The other thing is the faculty and staff here have been amazingly supportive of what we have had to do. Our patients were like, we cannot keep you safe and do a mass flu clinic here. What are we going to do? Our staff was like, we will work extra, we will come in on a weekend, on our time off, and we'll do a mass vaccinating clinic. I will be honest, I didn't sleep the whole week, because I'm like, this is going to be an epic failure or it's going to be amazingly awesome.

I think it was one of the most successful collaborations we have done with the university all semester. Three hundred vaccines, three hours. UMaine nursing students worked with us, athletic training students worked with us, UMaine PD was down here, Facilities came at the drop of a hat when we needed something changed to make it more efficient. I will say, every faculty and staff member that came through, everybody was smiling, everybody had their mask on. Everybody was thankful. I feel like it just bridged a lot of gaps with people, maybe that we had not seen before in other ways. I think it was really uplifting for all of us, those that were working and those that received their vaccines. I hope it gives us directions to go in the future. I feel really fortunate that in my role I have had a way to participate in helping this COVID pandemic and not just stand on the sidelines.

Maine is really important to me, it's where I grew up, this university is really important to me, and I think I am very appreciative, because anytime I have said to somebody on this campus, "This is what I think we need to do for our students and our staff to keep them safe, how are we going to do it," I have never heard the word "no." It's always been like how can we do this together to make this work. A lot of my colleagues don't have that and they're feeling very isolated and alone now, and I've never felt that way in this response. I know you will hear a lot of people behind me, Bob Norman, Dr. Maginnis, they will probably be like, I hope I don't have to talk to her anytime soon after the pandemic is over, but I really appreciate the relationships and I'm really thankful for everybody and everything that everybody is doing for our students and for us. Thank you very much.

**Bob Norman**, Training and Development Manager, EOC and Testing Operations

I can guarantee you it's always a pleasure to talk to Sarah. Thank you for that invitation, Sarah. I'm Bob Norman. I work for the University of Maine Police Department. Lucky or unlucky, I also happen to be the lead for the University of Maine Emergency Operations Center operation section. Over a year ago, our Emergency Operations Center was charged with the development and implementation of safety procedures while operating in our current pandemic environment. Since that time, think of what we have done. Since that time, we have depopulated campus on an emergency basis. We have repopulated campus, and we are currently maintaining one of the safest, I'm going to call them bubbles, in the state of Maine. All of this hasn't happened in a vacuum. Consistently throughout and, hopefully, you all are picking up on it now, we didn't know what our speeches were before we talked. But the team is working together. I mean,

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

there's an amazing synergy that's happening right now. I have to admit, I've been here for over 40 years, and I've been through a few things. I have never seen this level of synergy and cooperation in the university before, so thank you for your leadership, President Ferrini-Mundy.

But how does all of this happen? The logistics team has been responsible for the acquisition and distribution of literally tens of thousands of pieces of protective gear and face coverings and some of the Plexiglas that you all have to look through now when you teach, cleaning materials. I mean, just imagine that currently that team has reached the point where currently we are acting as a distribution point for all of the rest of the university system and testing materials. So that is something to be said for that. Throughout the time of COVID, MEMA have reached out to us and said OK, what can you do to help us? MEMA is the Maine Emergency Management Agency. While we depopulated campus and we are making plans to repopulate campus, in the middle of that, the state of Maine reached out and was projecting that we were going to have, I'm going to call it a mass casualty incident, and we actually readied our residence halls to take on some of the influx of people that may have to be quarantined. So nothing happens in a vacuum.

We were no exception in helping the state of Maine. The president has already mentioned the manufacture of hand sanitizer. There is a little bit more to that story that you have to understand. Literally, the state of Maine, and Sarah can back me up on this, was very close to running out of hand sanitizer. What do you do? We were able to get our labs, and they volunteered to get our labs, to manufacture the hand sanitizer. OK, where would we get the raw materials? Maine Brewery stepped up and said throughout the state to give us what we needed and what our labs needed for raw materials to manufacture that hand sanitizer. It was our logistics teams that were able to go to the breweries, pick up what they needed to do, or needed to transport back. Our labs manufactured the hand sanitizer, and then we had the distinct pleasure of delivering that hand sanitizer to the medical facilities, and to the long-term care facilities, that in some cases were on the verge of running out. Just the fact that we were able to receive their gratefulness, I think is the best way of words, was rewarding in itself. Also, during that time, as you all are well aware, our classrooms and other spaces were redesigned to comply with social distancing and population density guidelines.

Our research and instructional processes were also modified with the whole goal of ensuring that everybody that worked and learned on this campus is going to do so in a safe environment. This wasn't done just by the EOC or any one or two individuals. This was an entire community mobilization and commitment. And we couldn't have done it without the community and everybody on this call. By the way, in addition to the 30,000 plus tests that the president referred to that we have already done, it's projected that we are going to do another 85,000 tests before the semester ends. We are going to accomplish that by the lab that we have acquired that is actually sitting on our campus. So we will be combining tests from all across the university system, including the University of Maine Machias, and processing those issues right here with

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

less than a 10-hour turnaround. When we get the tests, as far as community collaboration, so say a positive test does come in, the positive test is detected and then our contact tracing team, made up of members of the university community, make sure that everybody involved with that is identified so that we can contain the virus, and then we have a care management team made up mainly of all those folks at residential life that Andra was talking about. It's what I call a concierge service where our students are taken care of on a one-by-one basis so they have everything they need to be successful throughout. It's been planning, it's been consistency, and it's been the community involvement that really have been the pillars of our success. I gauge our success simply by the fact that our positivity rate for the virus has consistently stayed well under the state's average. That is our goal, to keep it that way. What that means in the long-term, the direct medical impact of COVID-19 has been minimal to our knowledge, and I see every case coming across our desk. We have not had a university committee member hospitalized due to COVID-19. That is due to the efforts of everybody. So if there is a lighter side of this whole bad thing that is happening to us, it is simply this: It's amazing what we can do when we put our minds together and put our efforts together. I really hope that we carry this forward into the future. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**Melissa Maginnis**, Lead, Science Advisory Board; Associate Director of the Center for Undergraduate Research (CUGR); Associate Professor of Microbiology

Good morning. My name is Melissa Maginnis. I'm an associate professor in the Department of Molecular and Biomedical Sciences, and I'm the lead scientist of the UMaine System COVID-19 Science Advisory Board. The Science Advisory Board is chaired by President Ferrini-Mundy and comprises faculty from the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine with expertise in virology, immunology, biomedical sciences and engineering and statistics. It has been inspiring to work alongside my colleagues to provide science-based evidence to the university leadership throughout this pandemic. In addition to moonlighting on the SAB, we are all continuing to run our research programs, teach, and support our students. The members of our team have been willing to lose sleep and do whatever it takes to keep our communities safe. Over this past year, we have followed the science, established comprehensive COVID testing strategies, and partnered with The Jackson Laboratory and Vault Health for individual testing this fall. For this spring, we advocated for a more robust testing strategy to meet the rising demands of the pandemic and partnered with Shield T3 to implement weekly testing. In addition, we provided guidance on public health strategies such as the critical use of face coverings and distancing, and providing updates on treatments and vaccines. Remarkably, we also established a wastewater testing program on our campus that Claudia will speak about shortly.

While the university developed a multilayered approach to reduce the spread of the virus, the success of this plan was in the hands of our students, faculty, and staff. It required everyone to look out for one another and themselves. When I walked across campus this fall and saw students studying alone on the mall wearing their face coverings and heading into the testing site,

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

I was incredibly proud of how our community was coming together with tenacity and compassion. It's a reminder of the reason that I chose a career at the University of Maine. The people. I feel very fortunate to be in Maine during this time and to be a part of this community which when challenged over this past year, continues to roll up their sleeves and say, "What can we do to help?" Our collective efforts have helped to keep the COVID prevalence on our campuses very low throughout the fall and keep our communities safe. This reflects the commitment we have to one another and the willingness of our community to make personal sacrifices and support of continuing our education and research activities on our campuses. I have been very grateful for the opportunity to utilize my expertise as a virologist to work across the teams on our campus and within our University of Maine System and our state. It has been a delight to work with people like Bob and Dr. Stewart. I have been so proud of the University of Maine communities and most of all our students. Thank you.

**Kate Yerxa**, Extension Professor & EFNEP Coordinator, Cooperative Extension

Thank you. I'm Kate Yerxa, Extension professor and EFNEP coordinator with Cooperative Extension. I'm here today to share the accomplishments over the past year of Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, or EFNEP. Our challenge has been how to develop effective, remote programming that is relevant and accessible to the EFNEP audience. A little background about EFNEP: EFNEP is the first federal nutrition education program for limited-income audiences, and it is delivered by over 70 Cooperative Extension programs across the nation. The rapid change in program delivery format has been significant as EFNEP is required to use a paraprofessional educational model to deliver food and nutrition education to low-income families, young adults, and youth to improve their diet quality and improve household food security. COVID-19 has affected all income levels and now more than ever, more people are newly experiencing food insecurity, in addition to those who were experiencing food insecurity before March 2020. To respond to the educational needs of Maine's expanding low-income population, EFNEP staff worked quickly to learn best practices to adapt curriculum for remote delivery. EFNEP educators consistently worked to build the same sense of community in remote EFNEP classes as they would create with in-person programs. A cornerstone of EFNEP education focuses on planning, shopping for, and cooking healthy inexpensive meals for the household. Without hands-on experiential activities like learning knife skills or cooking techniques, Alex Gayton, a registered dietitian and EFNEP social media coordinator, developed the "Mainely Dish" recipe video series that demonstrates how to make healthy, quick, inexpensive and tasty recipes. These videos have helped meet and identify program needs and have been used by multiple programs and Cooperative Extension and other community programs.

Development of web-based promotional materials, use of QR codes, and an online registration platform created by Cooperative Extension's communication and marketing team now allows EFNEP to more effectively promote and enroll participants in educational programs. While the

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

program delivery format has changed for EFNEP, our participants' positive self-report of behavior change has been similar to, and did many times actually better than, when education was delivered in person.

As part of the land grant institution, it's important for Cooperative Extension to meet its mission for outreach and provide education using research-based knowledge to the people of Maine. Now that UMaine Extension's EFNEP program is being delivered remotely, staff are able to offer EFNEP programs statewide, which we were not able to do a year ago. EFNEP staff have developed new community partnerships that now view Cooperative Extension as a valued educational resource. It has been incredibly rewarding to work as part of an effective EFNEP team to meet the unique needs of Maine's low-income families, but it has also been rewarding to be part of Cooperative Extension's innovative and responsive educational resources and programs that have been developed over the past year.

**Heather Leslie**, Director, Darling Marine Center; Associate Professor, School of Marine Sciences; Faculty Fellow, Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions; Co-Lead Maine Climate Council Coastal and Marine Working Group

Good morning. My name is Heather Leslie and I am Director of the Darling Marine Center and faculty in the School of Marine Sciences. I am honored to be here to represent the UMaine faculty, staff and students who have participated in the work of the Maine Climate Council over the last year and a half.

The Maine Climate Council was launched by Governor Mills in September 2019. The Council's 39 members, together with more than 200 people involved in six working groups and the Science and Technical subcommittee, worked together throughout 2020 to develop a plan to achieve the ambitious emissions reductions goals laid out in Maine's climate law — a 45% reduction by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050.

Beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the plan also focuses on several other key goals: economic opportunity, adaptation, and equity.

I co-led the Coastal and Marine Working Group, which involved more than 35 experts from across the state. We also had robust participation from members of the public, including UMaine students and alumni.

Knowing that we had to meet the December deadline to deliver the Maine Climate Action Plan to the legislature, while challenging, also was comforting. That deadline was one of the few certain and unchanging things about 2020.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

And we did it! We delivered the plan to the legislature in December. Just as significantly, we listened to one another and shared our experiences and knowledge of how Maine's climate is changing and the importance of those changes for people here and around the world. That listening and learning will be crucial in achieving our climate goals over the next several years in particular.

When I was asked to co-lead this group, I said yes, for future generations of people and other life, here in Maine and beyond. I knew that there was more than I could do – as a citizen and as a scientist and as a mother – to fight climate change. I am grateful that the Governor and her staff invited me to participate. I also am grateful to President Ferrini-Mundy and the University of Maine community for encouraging and supporting publicly engaged science like mine.

It has been a difficult year, in so many ways. But one of the bright spots for me has been my engagement with the Maine Climate Council and the opportunities that I have had to share what we are learning and doing through this statewide effort with my students and colleagues here at UMaine.

**Claudia Desjardins**, UMaine COVID-19 Wastewater Monitoring Team

Hello, I am Claudia Desjardins and I'm honored to be here today as the laboratory assistant for the UMaine COVID-19 wastewater monitoring team. I conducted the initial processing, testing and data analysis for wastewater samples to detect SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent for COVID-19. I'd like to give a shout out to the entire wastewater team and acknowledge the great efforts that we have made together as a group. One significant accomplishment that we as a team have been able to achieve has been really stepping up our game from last semester by expanding our testing to include more universities, municipalities, as well as increasing the frequency of our testing each week. This means that we can potentially predict COVID outbreaks in our communities before they even happen. Because people will shed the virus before they start showing symptoms, wastewater testing can tell us a lot about disease prevalence before we even have the chance to test individuals. That way we can see if further precautions need to be taken in order to prevent further spread of the virus. For me it has been incredibly rewarding to be part of a team that is working toward keeping the community safe and healthy. This pandemic has impacted all of our lives in so many different ways, and I have faced a lot of challenges over the past year as a result of the pandemic. However, this opportunity has helped me discover my passion to study and prevent infectious disease. Thank you.

**President Ferrini-Mundy:** Thank you so much Sarah, Bob, Melissa, Kate, Heather, and Claudia.

And the final image I want to convey is one of celebration of so much that has happened this year as a result of the efforts of a very talented and committed University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias faculty, staff, and student body.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**



The examples I want to give I believe are truly transformational for us, and will be foundational to the future of the University of Maine.

In early October 2020, a gift of \$240 million for the University of Maine System was announced by the Harold Alfond

Foundation. This extraordinary award is historic – it is the ninth largest gift ever, anywhere, to a public institution of higher education. UMaine is at the center of the work, which will transform UMaine Athletics; create powerful new approaches to student success and retention; enable a statewide college, anchored at UMaine and in partnership with USM, in engineering, computing, and information science; and expand the interdisciplinary efforts of the Portland-based Maine Graduate and Professional Center, home of our rapidly growing MBA program.

And in June 2020, the University of Maine System achieved another historic landmark, when our request for unified accreditation was approved by our regional accrediting body. This opens up new possibilities for students across our system, for expansion and partnership of UMaine programs statewide.

In August, we announced a partnership between the University of Maine and New England Aqua Ventus, a joint venture between the Diamond Offshore Wind (a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Corporation), and RWE Renewables, to develop UMaine’s floating offshore wind technologies off the coast of Maine. The developer is investing \$100 million in this project that was born at UMaine.

In July, I established the President’s Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to advise us and make recommendations for how to operationalize our commitment to inclusive excellence, address systemic racism and structural impediments to DEI.

Our external funding numbers are at an all-time high, and our National Science Foundation-based Research and Development ranking at an all-time low (a good thing! We have moved up to No.146 from No. 154). Our research enterprise is thriving.

And so much more.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

And I'd like you to meet some of the people who exemplify this progress, who are part of what brings this kind of good fortune to UMaine, and who make a difference.

**Danielle Gabrielli**, President's Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Intern; Doctoral Student, Literacy Education

Thank you. I am Danielle Gabrielli and I want to thank you today for allowing me to speak with you. I'm here representing the President's DEI Council, and I'm a proud first-year education doctoral student at the University of Maine. I very much love this university. I'm also someone who identifies proudly as black, female and LGBTQ, and I am elated this year to serve as a proud TA to my inspiring class full of future educators who have already given me a run for my money. They have taught me from their eyes about the absolute need for diversity to grow at UMaine, work which involves this very important council. I have served as a graduate intern to the Council since October 2020 under the inspiring direction of both Susan McKay and Kimberly Whitehead and given the passion of approximately 30 faculty staff and students involved, I am in a state of awe. I am in awe because we are in the midst of such a difficult time, given the current divisive political climate, and intensely challenging ways to meet the obstacles of running a university under COVID-19, and yet we rise. I have been exhilarated about experiencing firsthand the brilliant intellect and raw passion that exists around the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion of the members of this council. So far we have been able to meet several times as a council, exchanging in dialogues about ways to improve the university through the implementation of the work of committees.

We have produced an initial report with 45 recommendations to address structural impediments to the president, by the end of December. We've received funding through [a]proposal to create a lecture series that is sensitive to the need of addressing diversity for our students, faculty and staff population. In addition, we have had the opportunity to address the board in conjunction with the efforts of the other universities of Maine about the trajectory for the council's work.

The challenge for this council remains in addressing the systemic obstacles that must be overcome and holding current systems of inequity accountable. As I reflect today about what this means for the University of Maine, I think about the wise words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of difficulties and frustrations at the moment, I still have a dream." It is well-known that Dr. Martin Luther King had this dream of societal transformation, and although he has left the physical world, his spirit of transformation remains alive and well in the very work of this council, despite any difficulties and frustration. Whether it is through addressing our need for improved recruitment practices, lack of diverse faculty staff and students who stay, or structural impediments that must be given more attention, a stark reality exists that change can and must occur, and is needed in this moment, and more importantly now is the time. The ability to take part in such a council and to offer my time makes

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

me feel empowered as we are not just making progress, we are progress. And that a part of this progress I'm aware just how impactful this council will be.

I look forward to our future, the same future that begins with the dream that is built tirelessly day in and day out, despite the difficulties and frustrations of the moment. It takes us all, every single one of us, to address these issues as the president has spoken about, and if you think you do not need to be part of this process, then you are part of the problem and not the solution. I want to make sure that students take these issues very seriously and that we focus on diversity, a diversity that is not only measured by skintone but also touches ability, religion, issues of gender inequality and transgender rights, sexuality, age, culture and all shades in between. I will tell you that this is possible and I know that as a proud student faculty [member] at the University of Maine that I will not stop until the work is done, which means I might need to stick around for a little while longer. We must gather and make this world a better place and the University of Maine and University of Maine Machias a better place. Starting with the continuing work of the president's council, we can. The future is in my hands, your hands, our hands, and it's called upon by the president as an enlightened people. We must act. Thank you.

**Darren Ranco**, Chair of Native American Programs; Associate Professor of Anthropology;  
Coordinator of Native American Research

Good morning, everyone. I am Darren Ranco and I am chair of Native American Programs at the University of Maine. Thank you so much, President Ferrini-Mundy, for including me and Lois-Ann, who I think will talk a little bit at the end as we go through one of the exciting initiatives that is connecting the UMaine Orono campus with the UMaine Machias campus. Our programs, Native American Programs, which are responsible for the minor, Native American Studies, and the Wabanaki Center, which is a student development and community outreach center at UMaine, have faced a lot of challenges this year, as you can all imagine. We also had some great successes over the last year thanks to the amazing staff. I'm here to talk about one of our newest initiatives. It makes those linkages between the campuses really possible and really focuses on the Passamaquoddy tribal communities in Washington County, so close to the University of Maine Machias campus.

So, this new program is called the New Beginnings for Wabanaki Students. It was funded this past October by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The goals for today are including discussing why this program is needed, as well as the infrastructure we have built through the Wabanaki Youth in Science program that it will be using, and highlight the specific goals of the grant.

I'm sure everyone knows where all of our tribes are located in the state, but in case you don't, please review this slide. I always have to do this. I ask everyone I meet on the street, "Can you tell me who we all are as tribal citizens and where we're from?"

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

So just a little bit about why this program is needed. If you look at — this is in 2016, but if you look at Passamaquoddy Indian Township, the enrollments from that community and across the University of Maine System fell quite a bit in that time period. The numbers have not recovered in the way that we would really like. So we are really focusing there. Pleasant Point community has stayed relatively stable in that time, but we really wanted to focus on Washington County and the Passamaquoddy tribes.

If you look at the numbers also at UMaine Machias, UMM, down halfway through the screen there, those numbers also over that time period kind of stayed the same. They haven't gone in the direction we really want. We just know that it is such a great resource, the UMaine Machias community, so we really wanted to focus on especially Indian Township, University of Maine Machias, for a program.

One of the great accomplishments we have made over the last decade is the establishment of the Wabanaki Youth in Science program, which has developed place-based educational opportunities across all of the tribes in STEM education. It engages Wabanaki youth in the sciences. It brings together different science traditions so Wabanaki students see themselves in the curriculum and in the classroom and it builds future leaders and graduates more Wabanaki students, and we've had about a 15% increase in Wabanaki graduates in STEM fields since the establishment of this program.

So what does this new program do, New Beginnings for Wabanaki Students? It is a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and it establishes a Native American student support infrastructure at the University of Maine Machias, with support from the Wabanaki Center and the WaYS program. It will develop 10 Wabanaki youth, Wabanaki undergraduate Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences (FANH) and Education ambassadors per year to connect Washington County Native American students and communities to UMaine and UMaine Machias programs, and you can see our goal is to increase levels of enrollment and graduation, which I think are very, very possible in these next three to four years. None of this would be possible, of course, without this new grant. We are very close to hiring a half-time position that will really, for the very first time, have a dedicated presence at the UMaine Machias campus for Native American student retention and recruitment.

**Lois Ann-Kuntz**, Professor of Psychology; Chair of the Arts and Letters Division (UMM)  
Thank you, Darren. I'm Lois-Ann Kuntz, chair of our arts and letters division at UMM, and I teach psychology courses for the Psychology and Community Studies program. UMM is thrilled and honored to be part of this important work. It is a privilege to work at UMM supporting the careers and dreams of our neighbors. Having the Native American and the WaYS programs share their important work at UMM helps us offer new beginnings for our Passamaquoddy neighbors. Thank you.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

**Sandra DeUrioste-Stone**, Associate Professor, School of Forest Resources

Thank you, Madam President. Good morning. My name is Sandra De Urioste-Stone, I'm a faculty member in the School of Forest Resources, and I am honored to be here today representing the UMaine/National Science Foundation Research Traineeship in Conservation Science and Practice. These programs that received funding in 2018 are aimed at training the next generation of conservation leaders that contribute to understanding and enhancing resilience of natural systems, rural communities and organizations in our state. We have been fortunate to be able to attract a diverse group of students, very enthusiastic students from across the country, who are interested in leading efforts that make a difference in our communities. We have faculty from multiple academic units and research centers that are represented and leading most of the work that we are conducting through our program. We include coursework, research, outreach to be able to train these graduate students in interdisciplinary research, teamwork and practice. Our program also includes a close collaboration with private and public partners in Maine to ensure that our work and research make a difference to the residents of our state.

The pandemic has presented numerous challenges for everyone in the program, including challenges with distance learning, inability to meet in person to collaborate with practicing professionals and partners, the stress, and many things that we all have experienced. However, we have turned these challenges into opportunities to be creative on how to continue our collaborative work through online webinars, remote meetings with our partners, understanding the importance of resilience which is the central focus of our research. We're trying to utilize this concept also to demonstrate how useful it is to us as persons to be able to be resilient and respond to uncertainty and challenges. We're working closely with our partners to shift our internship opportunities from in-person to remote modalities while still centering on student and partner needs. It also has provided opportunities to practice adaptive management, flexible thinking, and effectively change plans. To me this experience has allowed us to increase our collaborative capacity at UMaine, not only as faculty and students but also with our partners. It has allowed us to form strong student cohorts and teams that enhance the ability to respond to uncertainty now and in the future, appreciate and learn to use tools to allow for prompt feedback like the use of reflective journals with our students, and realize that although our structures may seem rigid when a crisis hits, we have shown we can respond effectively and promptly while being compassionate. To me it has been a humbling experience to observe and experience the camaraderie and support from our students, faculty and partners. Now more than ever, I see the value and strength of collaboration. When we work together toward a common goal, we can more effectively and efficiently overcome adversity, and I'm appreciative for being part of this amazing community and look forward to our continued work. Thank you and be well.

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

**Caitlin Howell**, Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering; Science Advisory Board  
Thank you, President Ferrini-Mundy. Hello, everyone. My name is Caitlin Howell, and I am an assistant professor in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering as well as a proud UMaine alum. I am also very proud to be here today representing two dedicated cross-college collaborative teams who have come together here at the University of Maine to help our communities deal with some of the challenges of COVID-19 through research. So in the first, I am working together with Dr. Melissa Maginnis, our very own Science Advisory Board lead and talented virologist of the Department of Molecular and Biomedical Sciences, from whom we heard earlier; Dr. Debbie Bouchard and Dr. Andy Holmes of the UMaine Cooperative Extension; our external collaborator, Dr. Jessica Schiffman of UMass at Amherst; and of course, our dedicated students who are the ones doing the actual science in the labs every day. Together we have recently received a National Science Foundation grant to build a bio-inspired filtration system that will capture virus laden aerosols from the air and allow us to test them for infectivity. Our goal is to build a system that could help monitor airborne viruses or other pathogens in every hospital, travel hub, elder care facility, student union, or any other place where people congregate. In addition, by doing this work we are also building the capacity at the state-of-the-art high containment biosafety labs at the UMaine Cooperative Extension to be able to perform research on human pathogens such as SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, as well as any other highly transmissible disease agents that may disrupt our communities in the future. Building this expertise here at the University of Maine will allow us to better serve our purpose as the state's premier research university and position us to offer even more assistance to our larger Maine community going forward.

In addition to this, I am working with Dr. Salimeh Sekeh, of the School of Computing and Information Science, Dr. Sheila Edalatpour of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. Richard Corey, Dr. Nicholas Giudice and R.J. Perry of the VEMI Lab, as well as a Maine-based paper company and, critically, a team of undergraduate and graduate students that are the glue between us all.

Our mission is to build a mass producible system that will allow anyone with a smartphone to be able to easily and accurately detect if a high risk, shared touched surface has been contaminated with a sneeze, a cough, or dirty fingers. The events of the past year have made us hyper aware of how easily disease can spread from one person to another in our shared spaces and have shared touched surfaces such as information kiosks or door handles can be hidden reservoirs of infectious materials. Funded by UMaine's own AI initiative, our interdisciplinary team is working to shed light on this problem quite literally by using surface patterns and machine learning to identify changes in the way that light interacts with surfaces when they are contaminated.

Again, our mission is to be able to create new tools through high level convergent research to help keep our classrooms, airports, grocery stores and community gathering places safer, while

**President Ferrini-Mundy**  
**State of the University Address**  
**February 11, 2021**

also providing new opportunities for Maine businesses. Both of these projects are only possible because the University of Maine is a place that brings together scholars and thinkers of different disciplines and of all different levels, from undergraduate to graduate students, to professors, through research staff, and supports them as they work to create the solutions of the future. I am grateful to be a part of this effort, and am looking forward to participating and celebrating many more years of high impact community centered science right here in Maine. Thank you.

**President Ferrini-Mundy:**

Thank you Danielle, Darren, Lois-Ann, and Caitlin.

Let me conclude my remarks by saying that this year has proved that we at UMaine and UMM can meet challenges, take care of one another, and make progress for a bright and new future.

I have asked UMM Vice President and Head of Campus Dan Qualls, UMM leaders, and his UMaine partners to accelerate our work to solidify and give clarity to the UMaine–UMM Primary pPartnership. The goal is to have in place all of the major elements of the integration of UMM as a regional campus of UMaine by fall 2021. The exciting, mutualistic synergies of these two campuses will take on new shape and more definition in the coming months, to the benefit of our students and the state.

Today I am announcing that we have formed a President’s Commission on Excellence and Equity at the University of Maine: UMaine 2025, co-chaired by Kirsten Jacobson, chair of the UMaine Department of Philosophy; and Matt Rodrigue, UMaine Class of 2004, currently a managing director of the investment bank Miller Buckfire. This group is charged to develop a suite of visions for what and how this university might be in 2025 — the graduation year of the class that will enter in 2021. UMaine 2025 will take the view that there is no “returning to pre-pandemic ways.” Rather, we embrace that we are experiencing a pandemic, a racial justice renaissance, and vigorous commitment to protecting our environment. What is UMaine’s role in educating the future generations who are experiencing all of this and who will lead for tomorrow. Stay tuned for more on this great work.

Thank you to all of my co-presenters and to all of you.

Question-and-Answer session followed.