

To: Jeffrey Hecker, Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Provost

From: Emily Haddad, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences 

Date: February 15, 2019

Subject: CLAS response to draft "Values" statements

The draft strategic value statements were discussed at the January meeting of the CLAS Administrative Group (chairs and directors). Subsequently, the enclosed comments were gathered from CLAS units. To summarize the response of the College to the questions posed:

1. How well do these statements capture a strategic value that should guide the university's development?
 - The statements reflect fundamental and deeply held values associated with teaching, research, and service.
2. Are there additional strategic values that should be considered?
 - Greater emphasis on diversity, sustainability, and humanistic learning should be considered, whether as separate value statements or (more likely) in association with the three basic values presented.
3. Are there alternative ways of articulating the university's strategic values?
 - Yes.

Common concerns spanning all three value statements were:

- Specificity. The lists of activities, sites, participants, etc., encourage readers to try to locate themselves within the lists, often unsuccessfully. Fewer, more inclusive terms could encompass the range more effectively.
- Tone. We believe that UMaine's values be stated affirmatively, without defensiveness. Language such as "not limited to," "do not easily fit," "not obvious," etc., can invite doubt. We hope instead to inspire confidence in the University as a leading institution that aspires to even greater achievement.
- Audience. Some elements seem directed to the legislature and the Board of Trustees, some to the greater community, and fewer to the campus. We recognize that statements such as these have many audiences, but the result can feel unfocused and/or misdirected. An emphasis on the state need not divert attention from a more global perspective nor minimize the totality of the university's contributions.
- Style. Some words—"create," "impact," "community," "committed," "fulfil," "success"—are overused. The statements could be written more succinctly. Jargon-like language such as "pathways," "leverage . . . assets," etc., could be avoided.

I provided you earlier with an alternate text that sought to address these issues. That text was based on AG feedback alone. The slightly revised version below incorporates some of the departmental input received afterward.

Most departmental and AG suggestions on the individual statements offered additions and refinements, as the drafts already reflected widely accepted values of the institution. Specifically:

Fostering Learner Success

- The University should improve diversity/inclusivity, whereas the draft implies that we are satisfied now.
- The “safe and respectful environment” should also be an intellectually challenging one that excites and inspires learners. These values are not well represented in the draft statement.
- The final sentence could be misread as referring to “non-traditional students,” but we think it meant to include Cooperative Extension clients, community members at public lectures, and the like.
- Learning should promote engagement in civic life. This aim could be more directly expressed.

Creating and Innovating for Maine and Beyond

- UMaine’s identity as a research university should be explicit. Its participation and ambition as a research institution with national and international standing is underplayed in the draft, whereas it should be represented prominently and with pride.
- The statement should value basic research as well as research that has an immediate application or benefit to the state. The pursuit of knowledge is an essential value, independent of its economic results.
- Research often repurposes existing knowledge for new audiences or new situations. Research can also preserve knowledge (for example, the various UMaine projects involving Wabanaki languages). The emphasis on “new knowledge” seems to exclude such activity.
- The value statements as a group could express more fully both the foundational role of research and the integration of teaching, research, and service.

Growing and Stewarding Partnerships

- Partnerships with other entities, as important as they are, do not encompass many of the University’s important contributions to people in Maine or beyond.
- “Good stewardship” is a low bar. This statement also implies that the University’s resources are “entrusted to us by the people of Maine”—an oversimplification that makes us seem more like dependents than leaders or fellow travelers.

Alternate Text Based on AG Guidance – REVISED 2/15/19

Learning

The University of Maine fosters learning for all of its members. We recognize, honor, and promote diversity within our campus community, and we create environments where every learner can flourish. Our faculty and staff value life-long learning—for students, for themselves, and for members of the broader community. Through experiences in the classroom and beyond, our students prepare for successful careers and for lives inspired by curiosity, imagination, and a commitment to seeking truth.

Creating and Innovating

The University of Maine exists to produce, extend, and share knowledge. As Maine’s Land Grant and Sea Grant University, we support social, cultural, and economic well-being through innovation and by applying, preserving, and advancing knowledge. As Maine’s research university, we stand with pride

among our peers nationally and internationally, contributing to solutions to humanity's greatest challenges.

Cultivating Partnerships

The University of Maine fulfills its mission through transformative collaborations with partners in Maine and across the world. University faculty, staff, and students help communities prosper, furthering their cultural, economic, and civic interests. The University's thriving partnerships—from local to international—deepen the impact of our work.