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\$92.4 Million in MEIF Investments Drive UMaine Research to Record Heights

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UMaine's strategic pursuit of research activity under President Joan Ferrini-Mundy and the research team pushes investments in innovation and discovery to record heights

Chancellor Dannel Malloy asks President Ferrini-Mundy to lead unified research effort, and updates existing roles in the System Office to prioritize strategic initiatives and data-driven decision-making

Orono, Maine — Research investments and expenditures at the University of Maine have increased dramatically over the year amidst a strategic pursuit of research activity being promoted by UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy and others at UMaine and the University of Maine System. More than \$92.4 million in investments in Maine and its universities are being reported in the FY 2020 draft [Maine Economic Improvement Fund Annual Report](#) presented to the University of Maine System Board of Trustees Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee at its March 3 meeting.

The Maine Economic Improvement Fund (MEIF), established by the Legislature in 1997, positions the University of Maine System as the center of statewide efforts to leverage economic development through targeted investments in university-based research and development. The FY 2020 report details how \$17.35 million in coordinated state research investments leveraged \$92.4 million in federal and private-sector grants and contracts, a 5.3 to 1 leverage ratio.

The investments and external grants and contracts support hundreds of faculty, staff and students working on MEIF-funded projects at UMaine, the University of Southern Maine and the University of Maine at Machias. MEIF is used to support research and development (R&D) in the state's [designated seven targeted sectors](#). The MEIF Small Campus Initiative awarded grants in FY 2020 to MMA, UMFK, and UMF.

In all R&D areas, including the MEIF sectors, UMaine's drive to advance as a modern 21st century research university [increased R&D expenditures in 2020 to \\$165.1 million](#), a 66% increase over four years and an all-time high. UMaine researchers also generated a record \$125.2 million total external funding during fiscal year 2020 in support of R&D activities and increased federal funding for research initiatives by 27% over the previous year.

"Our world-class scholars and researchers, and the students working with them, are among Maine's most important resources," said Ferrini-Mundy. "Every day we work with our partners in the federal delegation, state government, stakeholders and donors from across the globe to provide our faculty and research students with the resources, facilities and support they need to drive innovation for Maine and pursue discoveries that can change the world."

The University of Maine is the state's only public research university. It supports 150 research institutes, centers and labs, accounting for 86% of all university research. UMaine is pursuing Carnegie R1 status signifying very high research activity. Carnegie classifications will next be updated in 2022.

The University of Southern Maine and the University of Maine are the only two institutions in Maine conferring Ph.D.s., a type of doctoral degree.

Unified Research and Strategic Initiatives and Data

University of Maine System Chancellor Dannel Malloy has asked President Ferrini-Mundy to expand her leadership role to include an additional appointment as the UMS Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation. The appointment is not a new position, but rather formalizes the work the University of Maine President will be leading to make UMaine's research infrastructure accessible to, and supportive of, all UMS universities and faculty.

Before her July 1, 2018 appointment as the President of the University of Maine, Ferrini-Mundy was the Chief Operating Officer of the National Science Foundation.

With research one of the University of Maine System's statewide missions along with teaching and public service, supporting Maine through research and economic development is one of the priority outcomes established by the System's Board of Trustees in its 2018 Declaration of Strategic Priorities. Ferrini-Mundy led the development of the [UMS FY 20-24 Research and Development Plan](#), and more recently helped develop the State of Maine's Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029.

"Maine needs to perform beyond its size in the race for discovery and take full advantage of the transformative \$240 million investment the Harold Alfond Foundation is making in our universities," said Chancellor Malloy. "We also need to expand and better coordinate research UMS-wide. We are going to make the most of these competitive advantages to drive innovation, create jobs, and expand economic opportunity in our state."

Along with Ferrini-Mundy's additional title, Chancellor Malloy is changing his Chief of Staff and General Counsel James Thelen's title to Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Legal Officer for the University of Maine System. The new title better reflects the work Thelen does to lead Board and System leadership initiatives, including [Unified Accreditation](#) and, along with Ferrini-Mundy, [UMS TRANSFORMS](#), the collection of initiatives funded by the Harold Alfond Foundation's October 2020 \$240 million commitment to the University of Maine System.

"Jim Thelen is a talented, strategic leader who is respected throughout the University of Maine System for his commitment to our students and helping all of our universities work better together," said Malloy. "Jim's new title reflects the immense contributions he brings to our work. He has helped lead our response to the pandemic and been instrumental both in achieving our first-in-the-nation unified accreditation and securing one of the largest investments ever made in public higher education in the United States."

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Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Robert Placido's role is also being updated to reflect the responsibilities of his office to provide the Board and university leaders with actionable data to help set academic priorities, transparently assess performance, and make informed decisions.

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