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State of the University address delivered by President Ferrini-Mundy

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On Feb. 4, President Joan Ferrini-Mundy delivered the State of the University address to a crowd of community members, faculty and alumni. Dr. Eric Wilmot, a professor in mathematics and statistics, introduced the University of Maine Orono and Machias' president.

During the address, Ferrini-Mundy touched upon a number of different successes that the two campuses had celebrated in the past year. Additionally, she described the challenges that the universities are expected to face this coming year and what the plans are to address the foreseen problems.

Ferrini-Mundy acknowledged the beginning of Black History Month, which is celebrated during the month of February. Feb. 26 will mark the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment, which gave African-American men the right to vote. The president shared that on Feb. 1, Washington Monthly released an honor roll of national colleges that show a high dedication to voter mobilization, and noted that UMaine had made the honor roll. She believes that this is largely due to the UVote initiative on UMaine Orono's campus, which encourages students to participate in voting.

The president also reported that a large goal across both campuses is to define inclusive excellence.

"Through the Office of Student Life and Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Dr. Robert Dana's assistance, as well as the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, the Rainbow Resource Center, the Intersectional Feminist Resource Center and the Multicultural Student Center, the university is working to support students while bringing the critically important realities of inclusive excellence to our community," Ferrini-Mundy noted.

Ferrini-Mundy also reported that Dana's title would officially be expanded to reflect this goal and his position would be referred to as the "Vice President for Student Life and Inclusive Excellence" moving forward.

Maine's leadership strives to make sure that the values of diversity, equity and inclusion are being upheld through all the actions of the universities.

The president reported that she felt as though the greatest collective accomplishment of the last academic year was the completion of the Strategic Vision and Values Initiative, which is the universities' new strategic plan to create more connections with students, faculty and businesses across Maine. The three strategic values for the plan are fostering learner success, discovering and innovating, and growing and advancing partnerships. The universities will conduct their actions to practice these values.

Ferrini-Mundy also shared that she is pleased to assure everyone that the University of Maine and the Orono campus is strong.



"That is because we model convergence, we value connections and we demonstrate commitment," Ferrini-Mundy noted.

She then stated that, this fall, UMaine's Orono and Machias campuses welcomed 10,089 undergrads and 2,131 graduate students that hailed from 50 states and 79 nations. 66% of these students were from Maine.

The challenges that the universities should expect to see will relate to the universities' goal of fostering learner success. Ferrini-Mundy shared that student credit hours and retention rates are decreasing. UMaine Orono's average retention rate from students' first to second-year over the past three years is 76%, while UMaine Machias' is 56%. The president stated that she and the faculty feel as though they need to act convergently for the future of the university and to enable more students to have the chance to succeed here.

However, she also shared that the number of first-year applicants for both campuses have increased a combined total of 4%.

The Student Success Initiative was launched this past fall to increase retention rates. This initiative changes the monetary threshold that blocks students from registering for classes. In the past, students with an unpaid balance of \$100 or more couldn't register for classes. Now, that limit is being raised to \$1,000. Additionally, the "Make the Grade" initiative has been implemented for first-year students that failed a course during their first semester in the fall of 2019. Approximately 70 students are taking advantage of this opportunity.

Another success for the university has been UMaine's MBA that was just ranked as a "Top 50 Online Program" by U.S. News and World Report rankings.

UMaine's research has seen great success in the past year.

"Our research expenditures ... rose by 6% to [\$137 million]," Ferrini-Mundy shared.

UMaine is embarking on the process of receiving an R1 designation in the coming years, which recognizes the amount of doctoral research that is being done at an institution. Currently, UMaine is considered to be an R2 university.

Ferrini-Mundy concluded the address by congratulating everyone on the hard work in the past year and urged people to continue to strive for work that demonstrates the quality of the institution.

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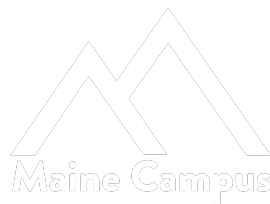
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