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Harold Alfond Foundation Pledges \$7.5 Million to the University System to Drive Transformational Change in Professional Graduate Education in Maine

Planned investment in the University System's Maine Center to achieve unprecedented responsiveness and partnership with Maine employers, a stronger Maine workforce, and new competitive advantages for Maine businesses

PORTLAND, MAINE – The Harold Alfond Foundation has announced a \$7.5 million challenge grant to the University of Maine System to support the Maine Center for Graduate Professional Studies. The grant represents the largest private gift to a multi-campus effort in the University System's history.

The Maine Center for Graduate Professional Studies ([the Maine Center](#)) will combine the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine Masters in Business Administration (MBA) programs into a single MBA program within the new Graduate School of Business. It will also bring the University of Maine School of Law and the University of Southern Maine Muskie School of Public Service graduate programs and its Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy together as a unique consortium to maximize cross discipline opportunities for students.

The grant is a major step forward for the System's One University Initiative which aims to streamline its administrative functions and align its resources to best support all Maine families, businesses and communities. The Maine Center will attract and retain an increased number of students who seek a unique, multi-disciplinary approach to graduate education.

The Harold Alfond Foundation has now awarded a total of \$9.25 million to date for the continued development of the Maine Center. Grant payments toward the \$7.5 million commitment announced today will be staged as program benchmarks are met, including the challenge of raising an additional \$7.5 million from external sources.

“Mr. Alfond believed that teamwork and partnership were essential elements to achieve transformative change in Maine,” said Greg Powell, Chairman of the Harold Alfond Foundation. “We were inspired by the transformative vision of the Maine Center, and by the tireless efforts of the Chancellor, the System Board of Trustees, Eliot Cutler, faculty, administrators and community leaders alike from across the state, to create a model that is truly unique, of the very highest quality, and that best serves the people of Maine.”

“The Harold Alfond Foundation has shown once again why it is Maine’s premier partner in advancing opportunity,” said James H. Page, Chancellor of the University of Maine System. “The Foundation has challenged us to continue working as One University to achieve transformational innovation in professional graduate education, create new pathways to programming that can be accessed anywhere in Maine, and deliver unprecedented public higher education responsiveness to Maine employers. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the students and citizens we serve, I thank the Harold Alfond Foundation and its Board for their support and encouragement.”

Chancellor Page credited faculty, academic leaders, and Center CEO Eliot Cutler, in moving the initiative forward. “I want to thank the faculty and academic leaders at UMaine and USM for supporting, under the leadership of Presidents Hunter and Cummings, exciting new collaborations in graduate education in Maine.” said Chancellor Page. “We have been fortunate to have Eliot Cutler’s leadership as the Maine Center’s first CEO. He successfully engaged the business and nonprofit communities and developed the comprehensive Maine Center business plan.”

Maine Center CEO, Eliot Cutler, said “Today’s announcement marks a huge step forward for Maine’s economic prospects and for the University of Maine System. The bringing together of Maine’s law school, MBA programs, and school of public service demonstrates the extraordinary partnership of both Universities to create a true consortium. The Maine Center will break down the walls that already are vanishing from the real world of work; will encourage the collaboration and relationship-building that is increasingly valued in the economy; and will better meet Maine and regional employers’ needs.”

The Graduate School of Business will be led by a new Dean who will report directly to the UMaine Provost and guide curricular development with current faculties and new, full-time MBA graduate faculty, and in cooperation with law and public policy faculties. Housed within the Maine Center in Portland, the Graduate School of Business will offer onsite courses and be digitally connected to “smart classrooms” at Orono and other University System locations to enable course offerings from Orono to continue to be a key element of a statewide business curriculum.

The Maine Center initiative will feature the launch of Maine Center Ventures, a new entity led by an entrepreneurial Chief Executive Officer who will be tasked with expanding partnerships and strengthening the responsiveness of Maine Center programs to Maine’s civic, business, and legal

communities. Maine Center Ventures will focus on developing opportunities such as externships, executive education, and incubator programs which strengthen Maine's workforce and increase collaboration across disciplines.

"The University of Maine has a 150-year tradition of supporting Maine employers and the Maine economy through scholarship, research, and service," said University of Maine President Susan J. Hunter. "Cross-disciplinary engagement is the expectation in today's professional world. The Maine Center consortium of programs and the resources pledged by our friends at the Harold Alfond Foundation creates new opportunities for our talented faculty to engage their expertise to strengthen our workforce and economy."

President Glenn Cummings of the University of Southern Maine praised the faculty and academic leadership teams for their support and willingness to partner. "Partnership, responsive programming, and place are among the many institutional characteristics that make the University of Southern Maine such a key player in creating opportunity in Maine. Our team, led by a faculty committed to student success and collaboration with Maine's professional community, is ready to help leverage this generous investment from the Harold Alfond Foundation into advantage for Maine."

"Addressing the critical need for responsive graduate business programming in Southern Maine, the state's largest and most dynamic economic region, is important for all of Maine," said Jay Cromarty, (UMaine '78) Chair of the Advisory Board of the Maine School of Business. "Collaboration among the faculty of the Maine School of Business and the USM Business School will expand access to programming and help meet the ever-evolving workforce and competitive demands facing businesses across the State."

"Through innovation and partnership the Maine Center will create educational programming and cross-disciplinary collaborations that can compete globally for attention, talent, and resources," said Owen McCarthy (UMaine '10), Chair of the UMaine Board of Visitors. "As a UMaine graduate who has had the good fortune to return home to a Maine community and career, I am pleased that the resources and talent of Maine's flagship university are playing such a vital role in this important statewide economic initiative."

Background

The Maine Center, as approved for strategic staged development by the University of Maine System Board of Trustees, needs to be a place with law, business and public service programs that are so well-integrated, exciting and compelling that students from across America will say, "I want to go *there!*"

To reach these ambitious goals, the Maine Center will make innovative changes in the University

System's graduate professional education programs with. . .

- 1) Integrated curricula and collaborative, experiential education;
- 2) Incentives that drive the development of new skill sets for graduates to be competitive in more markets;
- 3) Focused branding, marketing and recruiting that will leverage the Center's competitive advantage and attract a larger number and wider range of graduate professional students from within Maine and beyond our borders; and,
- 4) Continuing and increased connections with Maine's business, legal and public service communities through externships and apprenticing programs and executive education and employee training programs.

In the fall of 2013, Chancellor Page, the Foundation, and numerous academic and business supporters conceptualized the creation of a professional graduate center. The proposed center would be a model and home for entrepreneurial, multi-disciplinary business and legal programs with statewide delivery and impact. The Chancellor secured private funding from the Alford Foundation to study the need and feasibility of such a center and engaged The Parthenon Group to test the core concept with the education, business, and law sectors.

Following Parthenon's market analysis, which supported the need for enhanced multi-disciplinary graduate programs, the Maine Center was established under the leadership of CEO Eliot Cutler with the charge of developing an aspirational blueprint for advancing professional graduate education in Maine.

Working with an advisory group of more than one hundred Maine professional leaders and an innovation table of faculty and academic administrators, the Maine Center Team presented their [business plan](#) to the University of Maine System Board of Trustees in October of 2016. The Board [supported the plan](#) and approved moving forward with a staged implementation plan funded with new grant and foundation support. The Maine Center Business Plan forecasts eventual self-sufficiency and sustainability for the expanding academic and service programs.

Founded in 1950, the Harold Alford Foundation furthers the philanthropic legacy of Harold Alford, the founder of Dexter Shoe Company and a longtime supporter of Maine communities in which he and his family worked and resided. He ensured that his philanthropy would live on by committing nearly all of his wealth to the Foundation, which continues to support charitable causes in the State of Maine. Consistent with Harold Alford's own giving pattern and philanthropic principles, the Foundation favors education, healthcare, youth development, and other selected charitable causes.