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University System Graduate Initiative Receives Major Gift

PORTLAND, Maine – University of Maine System Chancellor James Page announced today that the Harold Alfond Foundation has approved a follow-on grant of \$500,000 to fund continued strategic development of the Maine Center for Graduate Professional Studies.

The Maine Center Initiative was [launched](#) in 2015 to bring together under one roof University of Maine System graduate programs in law, business and public service. The Center will be a model for entrepreneurial, multi-disciplinary professional education and will help drive statewide workforce and economic development.

Maine Center CEO Eliot Cutler thanked the Foundation for its continued support.

"This is an exciting vote of confidence in the hard work that the deans and faculty have been doing for nearly a year to bring this important project into being," said Cutler. "We have a long way to go, but this grant gives the University System and my office additional assurance that the Alfond Foundation understands the ground-breaking significance of this initiative and the critical contribution it will make to the Maine economy."

Chancellor Page noted that this latest grant brings the Foundation's total support for the Center to more than \$2 million.

"The Maine Center team and the faculty and deans have committed to deliver a business plan for the Center to me, the System Board of Trustees and the Foundation this September," said Chancellor Page. "These additional funds ensure that their work will continue while the overall plan for the Center is considered by our Board, by the Foundation and by other potential partners."

"We have made considerable progress already in this effort, including the formation of an [Advisory Board](#) of more than 100 leaders in Maine's business, law and public service communities. The additional support committed by the Alford Foundation speaks to the importance of continuing that progress without interruption."

With the support of University of Maine President Susan Hunter and University of Southern Maine President Glenn Cummings, an Innovation Table has been established that brings together the deans and faculty representatives from the law, MBA and public service programs at the universities.

"Working collaboratively across our two campuses, our faculty and academic leaders are considering how we can leverage our reach and resources to improve professional education for all of Maine," said President Susan Hunter of the University of Maine. "I support the shared commitment our campuses are bringing to this effort."

"The promise and the planning of the Maine Center Initiative is an illustrative example of how our public universities and leading Maine professionals can work together to address a critical state need," said President Glenn Cummings of the University of Southern Maine. "I appreciate the continued support of the Alford Foundation and support the collective belief that Maine's universities can find new ways to move Maine forward."

Last year Chancellor Page and the UMS Board of Trustees launched the [One University Initiative](#), a student and service-focused, multi-year innovation to streamline administrative functions across seven mission-

differentiated university campuses in Maine and to improve academic coordination and statewide student access to programs. Business education is one of the first programs to be part of the statewide Academic Transformation process that brings faculty and staff together from across Maine to consider how to enhance cross-campus cooperation and better leverage university resources.

The vision of university business education identified in the Academic Transformation Process includes both the establishment of a single, statewide MBA as part of the Maine Center Initiative and the development of plans across the campuses to expand curricula efficiencies and pathways into graduate education in order to ease academic advancement for students.
