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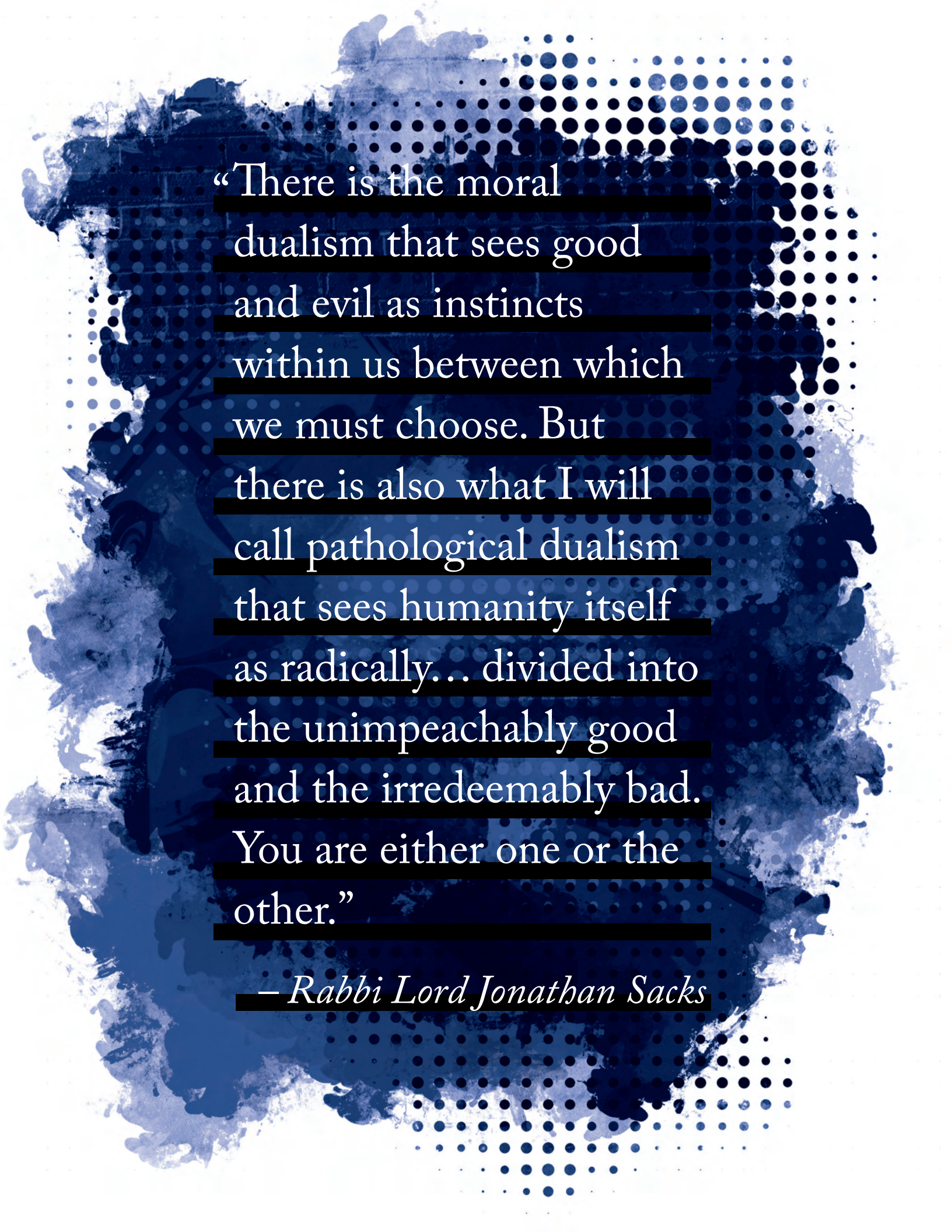


MAINE POLICY
INSTITUTE

FEBRUARY
2022

A white, torn-edge paper sign is held up by two blue hands. The sign contains the title text in a bold, hand-drawn, blue font. The background of the entire cover is a dark blue with a faint, repeating pattern of the state of Maine.

**CRITICAL
SOCIAL JUSTICE
IN MAINE
HIGHER EDUCATION**



“There is the moral dualism that sees good and evil as instincts within us between which we must choose. But there is also what I will call pathological dualism that sees humanity itself as radically... divided into the unimpeachably good and the irredeemably bad. You are either one or the other.”

— *Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Universities in the University of Maine System (UMS) have been rapidly adopting Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) goals and policies since 2020. Leaders in the UMS system itself are pushing universities toward an “anti-racist” stance. Dannel P. Malloy, Chancellor of the System, wants Maine’s universities to teach “genuine anti-racist views” and to “rebuild systems that are fair and just” according to those views. These sweet-sounding phrases may seem unobjectionable, but they represent a revolutionary redefining of words. DEI verbiage promises justice, but it promotes hatred and injustice. It promises fairness, but it undermines due process and professional standards. It promises a better country, but it yields social strife and racial hatred. DEI policies promote an ideology that undermines meritocracy, sows racial division, falsely stigmatizes Maine as a bastion of privilege and intolerance, and threatens the genuine inquiry that universities must perform if they are to serve the public good.

Chief among the important extensions of the DEI framework across the University of Maine System are the following:

- University of Maine-Orono and University of Southern Maine (USM) have each hired high-level administrators to head up DEI efforts.
- DEI is deeply integrated into Student Life.
- USM’s “President’s Five-Year Plan” has achieved ambitious Diversity and Inclusion reforms since 2020. These goals include the adoption of aggressive affirmative action plans, the hiring of a DEI hiring coordinator, substantial curricular

developments like learning-living communities and associated new programs, and a rebooting of the Intercultural Student Engagement Center.

- USM and Orono each spend in excess of half a million dollars for their DEI staff.
- Orono now insists that job candidates submit DEI statements along with their applications.
- USM has an independent committee on campus—Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Council—charged with expanding and deepening its DEI mission.
- Orono’s 2019 strategic plan, “A Framework for the University’s Future,” envisions sweeping DEI extensions, including more personnel, more events dedicated to anti-racism, curricular changes and the establishment of the President’s Council on DEI. The Council put forward an interim report with 45 proposals for expanding the DEI mission at Orono in December 2020, most of which have become or are becoming policy.
- Farmington, which had little administratively-directed DEI on its campus prior to 2020, has adopted a DEI-focused strategic plan entitled “Reimagining Farmington.”

UMS is pressuring each of its universities to build DEI structures and accompanying policies. The Board of Trustees has consistently acquiesced to these new policies. The structure is mature—and the ethos is starting to infuse student life and faculty practices state-wide. The time to stop it is now. Only the legislature has the authority to stop this mature DEI program throughout the system.

POLICIES

We recommend the following reforms to put Maine's universities back on the right track:

Budget Cuts. The legislature controls the purse strings. It should cut the UMS budget by amounts spent or projected to be spent on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Budget Reporting. The legislature should order universities to return to their core educational missions, and they should be required to report how they have cut budgets. Then the legislature can judge whether the universities have been returned to that mission.

Reporting Requirements. Require that each institution continue with budget reduction and cost containment efforts. Where possible, priority should be placed on reducing administrative overhead and eliminating expenditures that support DEI or that are not integral to each institutions' core instructional mission. The universities shall provide a written report each year detailing these budget reductions and cost containment efforts no later than January 15, 2023.

Budget Formulas. Universities that promote DEI should be disfavored in the system's budget formula, while those that refuse to adopt this pernicious ideology should be rewarded.

Hiring Practices. Universities are public entities. The legislature should require UMS to emphasize excellence, professionalism, and contributions to the core educational mission instead of emphasizing diversity in their hiring to the exclusion of everything else. Practices inconsistent with hiring for excellence

and professionalism and the core mission should be proscribed. A **Ban on DEI Statements** in hiring would be a good start. More important would be requiring all candidates to submit a **Free Speech and Intellectual Diversity** statement.

Transparency. All faculty members and administrators should post their vitas online, updated twice a year, and all course syllabi should be available to the public online. The public has a right to know what its universities are teaching.

Governance. Trustees and Regents must require annual reports detailing how the universities are rolling back the DEI infrastructures and policies while emphasizing merit in hiring. Strategic Plans should not be approved if they emphasize diversity and inclusion and fail to emphasize race-neutral ideas of excellence, professionalism and the core educational mission.

Activism Bans. The legislature should commission a study on university-sponsored political activism with an aim of determining which departments, colleges and policies foster activism. Then the scale of the problem can be better measured. This will be a basis for future legislative efforts necessary to stop activism.

WHAT IS CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE?

America's colleges and universities have become increasingly radical over the past 50 years.¹ Academics and administrators are no longer merely pushing progressive politics but transforming universities into institutions dedicated to political activism and indoctrinating students into a hateful ideology. We call this ideological bent Critical Social Justice.²

Many today are worried about critical race theory (CRT),³ critical theory, cultural Marxism,⁴ identity politics, and multiculturalism.⁵ These are all basically the same ways of thinking. They all adopt a reigning civil rights ideology, which generally holds that all disparities in group outcomes are traceable to discrimination and would disappear through genuine liberation.⁶

CSJ begins with criticism or critical analysis, where activists unmask the supposed hidden realities of the world. America, they say, seems to be a place of equal opportunity or fair admissions, but it really is made up of various structures of oppression built by the privileged to keep victim groups weak and unequal. Under this ideology, America is said to have a patriarchal, racist, Christian, homophobic, cisgendered, and ableist culture. The "advantaged" America tries to impose its ways on allegedly disadvantaged Americans. The alleged oppressors, CSJ proponents argue, do this in sneaky ways, like passing seemingly colorblind laws that are really designed to put more blacks into jail⁷ or

having colorblind admission standards at universities that actually exclude minorities. America and all of the West are everywhere and always racist, sexist, etc. — that is the conclusion of the CSJ activists.

But activists promise a CSJ remedy to this problem. Victims, they believe, should be elevated and the supposedly privileged, demoted. This remedy is realized differently in different institutional settings. At universities specifically, students' minds will be retrained. They will be taught to identify, shame, and destroy "oppressors." Activists will teach oppressors to identify with the plight of victims and remediate activism on victims' behalf, while they encourage supposed oppressors to feel shame for their "whiteness" or "toxic masculinity." Two sets of standards — one for the alleged oppressors and one for the alleged victims — emerge.

The result of such training will be a happier, more diverse student and an environment defined by perceived inclusion. Or so we are told. But this happy vision never comes about because the CSJ activists continually identify lingering inequalities that they say must be removed before the promised land arrives. It sets about a rolling revolution in university life, where one reform always demands another. Resentment and hatred between the alleged victims and alleged oppressors reign in the meantime. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is the mechanism whereby CSJ is applied to institutions like universities.

DEI is CSJ made more palatable using sweet-sounding civic language, but the related policies represent the same critical analysis and remedy. Both CSJ and DEI emphasize how institutions like universities are irredeemably racist or sexist. Both CSJ and DEI hope for policies that might overturn the victim-oppressor framework, but instead they make the former victims the new rulers and the former oppressors the new victims. As famous critical race theorist Ibram X. Kendi writes, “The only remedy for past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy for present discrimination is future discrimination.”⁸ DEI is that present and future discrimination:

Diversity: Diversity used to mean difference or plurality but not anymore. Diversity means more members of victim groups and fewer members of the supposedly oppressive groups. When men make up 80% of engineering students, that is a lack of diversity that must be remedied. When women make up more than 80% of elementary education majors, that is diversity that should be celebrated. And in curriculum, diversity means replacing books written by white males with authors from “historically underrepresented” groups. The achievement of diversity requires retribution be taken against former oppressors. It requires that aggrieved minorities be held to lower standards than those who are privileged. The formerly marginalized get privilege, and the formerly privileged get marginalized.

Equity: Equity used to mean fairness before the law but not anymore. Equity stands for the idea that universities must aim at something like statistical group parity (e.g., since blacks make up 13% of the population, they should be 13% of engineers). Failure to achieve parity is sufficient evidence of systematic discrimination. Therefore, we must dismantle the old culture (no matter how well it seemed to work) and build a new one that will achieve parity. In short, equity is equal group outcomes.

Inclusion: Inclusion used to mean everyone was welcome but not anymore. Today’s inclusion demands

an institutional climate that elevates and supports the well-being of aggrieved minorities at the expense of the supposedly privileged. Sometimes that means special tutoring for their supposedly unique needs like a women’s center or excluding ideas and symbols that some members of underrepresented groups find objectionable (like thin blue line flags). LGBT- or Blacks-only graduations are organized in the name of inclusion. Speech codes and safe spaces arise in order to accomplish this new inclusion. In short, inclusion means excluding all that makes allegedly aggrieved minorities uncomfortable.

The ideas behind DEI require people to believe that America is on an endless treadmill of oppression and victimhood. Accordingly, all efforts to transcend group identity are thought to be lies that rationalize “privilege.” Advocates for CSJ demand ideological conformity — victims can only be seen as members of an oppressed class rather than individuals, and non-victims are stigmatized and blamed for the evils victims suffer.

CSJ education undermines freedom under the guise of equal laws and social harmony.⁹ It is inconsistent with the idea that individual rights should help organize political life. It is inconsistent with a dedication to scientific inquiry. There is no way to get from CSJ to a peaceful, unified, and happy nation. It also compromises family life. It promises to tarnish and alienate productive, law-abiding citizens who do not espouse CSJ philosophy both in theory and in practice. It denies there is a standard outside of group identity to which groups can be held. It denies the reality that inequality and privilege are complex social phenomena that come about in many different ways, not just from oppression. It is every bit as deadly to the American way of life as selling state secrets to a public enemy. CSJ is false and pernicious.

Others have expounded eloquently about the problems endemic to CSJ. This report is based on the idea that CSJ undermines the advancement of knowledge and the achievement of a common good. It asks: **How far has the CSJ agenda advanced across the Maine System?**

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM: ENGINE OF DEI EXPANSION

Much of the impetus for expanding the DEI mission comes from the University of Maine System (UMS) itself. It is necessary to understand how the UMS works if we are to grasp its role in affecting material change at individual schools. The UMS is, essentially, the overseer of Maine's colleges and universities. Chancellor Dannel P. Malloy, former Democratic Connecticut governor, sits atop the UMS. He is answerable, in a sense, to a Board of Trustees, who are appointed by Maine's governor for four-year terms. Trustees draw no salary. A majority of the Board of Trustees, as of late 2021, have been appointed by Governor Janet Mills.

Chancellor Malloy's Agenda. Chancellor Malloy announced his transformative agenda in a June 5, 2020 email to those working in the UMS system. This letter, released less than two weeks after the death of George Floyd, calls for action and justice on behalf of the UMS. "No less than COVID-19, racism is a virus, and it too is pandemic in nature. It insidiously attacks the bodies and souls of both marginalized and advantaged people...And we must work every single day to wipe it out."¹⁰ Most crucial, however, is Malloy's embrace of the Critical Social Justice ideology, which, when implemented, requires a transformation of many university practices. This ideology perceives that racial disparities are caused by unconscious bias or systemic racism. The system, to blame for the disparities, must

be fundamentally transformed in order to achieve equity. This can only be done through teaching, as he characterizes it, "genuine anti-racist views" and then through "rebuild[ing] systems that are fair and just."

After embracing the tenets of Critical Social Justice, Chancellor Malloy outlines what this will mean for the UMS. He calls for the academic leaders of Maine's colleges to send recommendations to the Board of Trustees Academic & Student Affairs Committee to revisit admission standards and to ensure "that our instruction, assessment, and student support practices are free from any implicit or structural bias that contributes to racial and ethnic equity gaps." He calls for a "diversity audit" of employment practices to overcome "unconscious bias or barriers" in hiring.

Board of Trustees Action. Toward achieving Chancellor Malloy's goal, the Board of Trustees organize to promote DEI at its March 1, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting.¹¹ Two items are dedicated to DEI.

- "UMS Imperative for Change" is designed to bring all DEI leaders across UMS and other key members of the UMS community together to take a DEI inventory in Maine's individual colleges and then finding "the most prudent and effective way to benefit the entire system." A finalized plan is due later in the spring.

- Reinvalidate the DEI Steering Committee. UMS had a “Commission on Pluralism” in 1989, renewed again in 1998. This committee was put in abeyance in 2016. It is now “reinvigorated and reinstated to further develop best practices and accelerate the System-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion progress.”

The “Imperative” and the Steering Committee announced their results and solution in May 2021 by introducing the “Transforms” program, funded partly through the diversion of Harold Alfond Foundation grant money. The Alfond Foundation gave about \$240 million to “help students.”¹² UMS interpreted this goal as “promoting DEI” and matched the grant

money. The Transforms program, with a budget of \$410 million, has two working principles, the second of which is “to emphasize and prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of implementing and scaling” the other initiatives. DEI serves “recruitment and retention.” DEI serves athletic recruitment. DEI infuses curriculum developments and program building. Money will flow from the top to help transform the universities and colleges in Maine. To discuss how UMS will be “Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” an open forum was held on April 23, 2021.

About 350 staff, faculty and students from around Maine participated. They heard how UMS will pursue DEI throughout the system.¹³



Source: University of Maine System

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE: LEADERSHIP BUILDS MODEL CSJ/DEI

The University of Southern Maine (USM)¹⁴ has slowly and persistently been building a university dedicated to CSJ/DEI over the past decade and a half. It has increased its CSJ/DEI profile significantly since the late 2010's. Former Maine Speaker of the House Glenn Cummings, who was hired as USM president in 2015, has spearheaded these efforts. Most prominent among Pres. Cummings' accomplishments are the following.

- Pres. Cummings announces “The President’s Five-Year Plan,” an ambitious set of Diversity and Inclusion reforms in education, campus climate, and hiring and retention (2020 academic year).
- The Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Council (IDEC) replaces the Inclusion and Diversity *Advisory* Council (IDAC) with authority “independent” of the President’s office (2020 academic year).
- USM hires Idella Glenn as first Associate Vice President for Equity (September 2020).

Pres. Cummings' recent radical expansion of CSJ/DEI efforts build on a long-standing commitment to multiculturalism and diversity at USM.

Diversity Efforts before 2015: The Boyhood of Diversity

The Establishment of University Offices.

References to diversity in the modern sense begin

in the 1995-1996 course catalogue, when USM established its Office of Multicultural Affairs.¹⁵ This Office was standard fare, “coordinating institutional program support” and “collaborating on multicultural initiatives” and assisting and consulting with a variety of offices on a variety of issues. It “sponsors diversity awareness opportunities,” for instance.

By 2015, the “Diversity & Inclusiveness” initiatives have multiplied under the Dean of Student’s authority.¹⁶ The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs is dedicated to creating “community for racially and/or ethnically underrepresented students.” The Center for Sexualities & Gender Diversity seeks to ensure a “positive, safe and supportive environment for members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning (GLBTQA) community.” The Office of Equity & Compliance is committed to making sure that “all units of the University foster a respectful, inclusive, and fair campus environment.”

Curriculum. While it had an “Other Times/Other Cultures” requirement prior to 2011-2012, USM adopted a full-fledged “diversity” requirement in its 2011-2012 catalogue.¹⁷ An “International” requirement was also added. That is where the curriculum sits today.

USM Since 2020: A Mature CSJ/DEI Agenda

The 2020-2025 strategic plan is called “The President’s Five-year Plan.” Pres. Cummings on other occasions

pledges to make USM an “anti-racism university.”¹⁸ The “President’s Plan” speaks to that aspiration as well, ending with the observation that since “national attention to systemic racial injustice in 2020, multiple stakeholders have led the USM community to develop a new framework of priorities and commitments.”¹⁹ As per the plan, “We seek to be a leader for the State of Maine in equity, inclusion, and belonging.” The Plan reduces this vision to several more specific commitments to change hiring practices, increase the number of offices and personnel dedicated to DEI, and expanding DEI in the curriculum and in student life more broadly. The “President’s Plan” has the following objectives:

- “achieving a more diverse and inclusive student body, faculty, and staff.”
- “fostering an organizational environment that creates a sense of belonging for students, faculty and staff.”
- “engaging students, faculty, and staff in learning varied perspectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion by offering courses, curricula, professional development and learning opportunities that achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.”

Actions to meet these objectives are underway. They are moving USM operations toward a deeper, more entrenched DEI structure and ethos.

As a side note, calling a strategic plan “The President’s Plan” is quite unusual. Normally the plans have some progressive-sounding name like Vol Vision (University of Tennessee-Knoxville) or “Re-Imagining Farmington” (University of Maine-Farmington). Here the strategic plan is connected explicitly to a man, the president, who projects ownership and responsibility for these

efforts—a seeming *argumentum ab auctoritate* sleight of hand.

Curricular Changes. USM began offering a “Women and Gender Studies: Social Justice Minor and Certificate” in 2021. This certificate teaches students “how to make social change happen” through “learning the fundamentals of feminist, anti-racist, and political economy debates about racialized capitalism,” among other things. It offers core classes in “Social Justice/ Social Change” and a required SOJ Community-based Capstone, in addition to four courses from a list that includes “Deviance and Social Control,” “Police and Prison Abolition” and “Gender, Race, and Health.”²⁰

Living Learning Communities. 2021 seems to mark when USM adopted Living Learning Communities under the auspices of the Office of Residential Life, replacing the EYE (Entry Year Experience) program more rooted in academic pursuits.²¹ As the Office of Residence Life tells the story, students choose an LLC that fits their interests and that allows students to make connections with one another around the course material. USM and Office of Residential Life make the decisions about what the topics of the LLCs will be. Their choices, while not exclusively derived from CSJ/DEI, reflect a profound bias in that direction. The menu of LLCs for Fall 2021 includes “Rainbow Floor,” which is a “queer” LLC designed to “celebrate and support divergent sexual orientations”²² and “Social Justice,” which explores topics related to “inequalities and barriers, equity and inclusion, and systemic power imbalances in our society such as racism, classism, sexism, heteronormativity, and more”; safe zone training required.²³ Not one of the LLCs is dedicated to a study in hard sciences.

Current General Education Requirements include two diversity classes (6 credits total), a requirement

that has been in place for a decade. One course is about “Diversity” and focuses on “issues of difference and diversity.” The other is about “International” and focuses on students becoming “world-minded learners” with a comparative perspective.²⁴ Among the classes that fulfill the Diversity requirement are “The Anthropology of Sex and Gender,”²⁵ “Diversity: Many Voices,” and “Rethinking Gender & Culture.” No student is required to take American government or American history courses at USM, though the courses are an option.

DEI Personnel. The most dramatic expansion of DEI efforts at USM is the expansion of its DEI administrative infrastructure. It has made key hires and has reorganized a university committee to expand DEI throughout its operations.

September 2020. USM hires Idella Glenn as an **Associate Vice President for Equity**, a new position.²⁶ Her main avenue for influence seems to be as head of USM’s Diversity Council. This means that there are now high-level personnel dedicated to expanding the DEI mission. VP Glenn also has the autonomy and resources to invigorate DEI activity. VP Glenn is paid a \$130,000 annual salary in 2020, the last year for which there is accurate salary data.²⁷

September 2020. USM also re-boots its **Intercultural Student Engagement** center. It hires William Johnson as Director of Intercultural Student Engagement.²⁸ He makes \$62,000 in annual salary.²⁹ Two staff members, Zorica Andric and Sarah Holmes, make \$35,360 and \$77,250 respectively. Holmes appears to serve as Assistant Provost for Student Affairs and Deputy Title IX Coordinator, and she appears to have been the “Coordinator of the Center for Sexualities and Gender Diversity” since Fall 2006 before ascending to her current position in 2015.³⁰

IDEC. Also in September 2020, the Intercultural and Diversity Advisory Council (IDAC became the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Council (IDEC).³¹ It “stepped out” from under the President’s office to become a stand-alone council with more autonomy to serve its mission. No longer advisory, IDEC has independent powers to carry forward policies at USM. Four members serve on IDEC directly, though there are several committees to carry out its functions.

Its Mission is as follows:

IDEC is an action-oriented council composed of students, faculty, and staff. IDEC partners with University leadership, departments, and organizations to engage our community in creating and sustaining a safe, inclusive, diverse, anti-oppressive, anti-racist university for people of all identities. IDEC works to create equitable structures, policies, practices, and programming.³²

This will involve “an active examination of privilege,” “respecting, encouraging, and fostering cultural and ethnic differences that lead to a dynamic sustainable academic society,” and “recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and student body.” It established several committees to execute these objectives. Among the committees are Hiring and Retention, Curriculum, Student Experience, Programming, Policy, and Communications & Resources.³³

What practical changes has IDEC wrought since its founding in September 2020?

DEI Hiring Coordinator. The UMS has approved the creation of a position “solely dedicated to recruitment and retention for the entire university,” presumably at the behest³⁴ of the Hiring and Retention Committee.³⁵ Soon a new staffer will do nothing other than oversee DEI hiring practices.

Curricular Changes. The Curriculum committee has a working group dedicated to “decolonizing the curriculum” and another to establish a “stronger DEI focus to the required regular departmental program review process.”³⁶

Student Experience. The committee will advocate for more gender-neutral bathrooms, among other changes that overlap with the jurisdictions of other committees.³⁷

Trainings. Right now, all of the trainings from the Office of Intercultural Student Engagement seem to be optional. These include Safe Zone Training, Privilege, and Resilience: Tell Yourself a Better Story.³⁸ Universities that adopt the CSJ/DEI ideology start with optional trainings, but these soon become

mandatory first for faculty and staff and then for students. This is something to look for, especially when the DEI Hiring Coordinator comes on line. Implicit bias trainings for faculty search committees soon follow.

Conclusion. USM sees itself as an anti-racist university. The university thinks that Maine represents hidden structures of racism and sexism and thus seeks to transform itself so as to transform Maine itself. Pres. Cummings has championed these policies with a single-minded focus since the summer of 2020. His legacy will be a USM dedicated not to excellence in academia or to serving Maine, but to inculcating anti-racism and DEI philosophies in ways that undermine both academia and a common good for Mainers.

| Name | Position | Department | Salary |
|-----------------|---|---|-----------|
| Idella Glenn | Associate Vice President of Equity | | \$130,000 |
| William Johnson | Director of Intercultural Student Engagement | Intercultural Student Engagement Center | \$62,000 |
| Zorica Andric | Administrative Specialist | Intercultural Student Engagement Center | \$35,360 |
| Sarah Holmes | Assistant Provost for Student Affairs and Deputy Title IX Coordinator | Intercultural Student Engagement Center | \$77,250 |
| TBD | DEI Hiring Coordinator | | TBD |

Total DEI Staff Spending

\$304,610

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE: FROM INDUSTRIOUSNESS TO INCLUSIVENESS

The University of Maine was once dedicated to the values of hard work and academic excellence. These values were replaced by CSJ/DEI beginning in 2018 when President Joan Ferrini-Mundy was hired. The new president adopted crucial elements of the social justice agenda, transforming policies, hiring practices, curriculum and student life toward the goals of DEI. In 2018 Pres. Ferrini-Mundy sought to grow the University of Maine into “an inclusive campus,” to make diversity a “centerpiece for excellence at our university,” and prioritize “racial, ethnic and gender diversity.”³⁹ Each subsequent year has brought significant development to The University of Maine’s DEI program.

In 2019, the university’s strategic plan implemented two crucial DEI goals.

In 2020, Pres. Ferrini-Mundy made anti-racism the central focus of The University of Maine’s programming with the release in December of a report from her Council on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

2021 brought with it the implementation of the Council’s plans, a revolution in The University of Maine’s policies and procedures, including how it conducts job searches.

Pres. Ferrini-Mundy’s radical expansion of CSJ/DEI has reshaped the The University of Maine into a university that has abandoned its historical commitment to hard work and academic excellence and instead has adopted a conventional, if expansive DEI program.



Source: University of Maine

A TALE OF TWO STRATEGIC PLANS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

2012. The year 2012 serves as a baseline for understanding the transformation at The University of Maine. The University of Maine released a strategic plan in 2012, “The Blue Sky Project: Reaffirming Public Higher Education at Maine’s Flagship University.” The Plan emphasized community engagement, the centrality of a liberal arts education, rewarding hard work, and dedication to excellence in academic and research programs.⁴⁰ The term “diversity” only appears in reference to the idea that The University of Maine inherently reflects the various cultural groups comprising the state of Maine. The idea of diversity and inclusion is part of The University of Maine’s idea of public service. A few initiatives point toward the modern idea of diversity. For instance, the plan will “encourage and value diversity through our uniquely diverse community members by tangible programming of The University of Maine multicultural groups, including international programs.” It will “support the diversity of The University of Maine through improved international student recruitment and enhanced support of Franco-American studies and Native-American studies.” Additionally, the plan established a Task Group, led by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Provost to assess “Diversity and Academic Excellence at The University of Maine” and provide recommendations to the President. The plan never mentions diversity based on immutable characteristics like race or sex. It never mentions equity. It emphasizes, instead, hard work and the ability to achieve despite obstacles. “The Blue Sky Project” is almost a picture from a bygone era.

2019. A new five-year strategic plan was released in 2019.⁴¹ The plan, “A Framework for the University’s Future,” expresses commitment to civic engagement, building an inclusive community, valuing diversity as a necessity for excellence, and a newfound focus on equity. For the first time, the trio of diversity, equity and inclusion are integrated into the university’s goals and strategies. Never does this new strategic plan mention the value of hard work. Never does it mention the term “excellence” without a modifier like “inclusive.”

Many objectives of the framework reflect DEI and DEI concepts.⁴²

- Objective 1.1. We will welcome and support all learners and engage them in experiential learning.
- Objective 1.1.1.1. “First Year Student Success Initiative,” which includes establishing a Living, Learning Community working group to increase the number of CSJ/DEI themed housing units on campus.⁴³
- Objective 1.2.1.1. Research and Development plan which focuses on diversity in research and preparation of a workforce that “capitalizes” on the “multiple forms of diversity (socioeconomic status, race/national origin, ethnicity, gender, experience, family).”⁴⁴
- Objective 3.1.1. We will be a welcoming and inclusive community where every viewpoint and every person is respected and diversity embraced.
- Objective 3.1.1.1. Hire a Director of Diversity

and Inclusion to organize, manage, and expand diversity and inclusion initiatives.

- Objective 3.1.1.2. Provost’s Advisory Committee on Equity (PACE).
- Objective 3.1.3. We will ensure that our policies and practices . . . foster and facilitate a diverse workforce.

The University of Maine has already fulfilled many of these objectives.

2019.

DEI Hiring. The University of Maine hired Anila Karunakar, Director of Diversity and Inclusion and Rob Jackson, Staff Associate for Diversity and Inclusion dedicated to the Multicultural Student Center and the Diversity and Inclusion office.

PACE. The Provost’s Advisory Council on Equity (PACE) replaced the Provost’s Council on Advancing Women Faculty (PCAWF), which had been established in 2009.⁴⁵ The PCAWF had led cross-campus discussions and advised the provost on actions about equity regarding women faculty members. In 2019, Pres. Ferrini-Mundy and Provost Jeffrey Hecker asked the Council to expand its purview to include “underrepresented groups” (minorities and LGBTQ+ groups). The PCAWF became PACE to reflect its broader mission. PACE now advises the Provost on equity and inclusivity among faculty with respect to minorities, LGBTQ+ groups and women. The evolution of PACE marks a decisive change from a university that once viewed hard work and the liberal arts as central to producing excellence in academics and research, to a university that views equity and “diversity as necessary for excellence.”⁴⁶

2020.

In June Pres. Ferrini-Mundy outlined a series of actions that The University of Maine will engage in to support

the University of Maine System’s commitment to understanding “pervasive, structural racism” and the “imperative for change.”⁴⁷ These actions include:

Expanding Campus Events, including participation in “George Floyd, Anti-Black Racism and #BlackLivesMatter” virtual panel discussion.

Expanding DEI Administration, including convening a “President’s Advisory Roundtable on Race and establishing a President’s Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.”

Changes to Student Life, including “turning to anti-racism as an ongoing focus in the Division of Student Life, with leadership retreats, weekly discussions, virtual town meetings” and a full complement of campus-focused initiatives through the Office for Diversity and Inclusion.

Changes to Curriculum, including examining academic areas for ways to expand DEI mission. The Higher Education Graduate Program has, for instance, “outlined action steps that include examining the curriculum to ensure that readings in all classes reflect the voices of black and other underrepresented scholars, integrating core courses with social-justice-oriented assignments directed toward creating change in higher education, and organizing a fall teach-in focused on understanding and dismantling racism/white supremacy in higher education/student affairs.”⁴⁸

Establishing Student Roundtable on Race.

Several of the objectives for the Student Roundtable on Race were already “in progress.”⁴⁹ Those objectives include: (1) hiring more minorities; (2) promoting “the Multicultural Student Center, Rainbow Resource Center and the Intersectional Feminist Resource Center with admissions, accepted days, and during student orientation” and (3) addressing “every kind of prejudice head on with action.” (The University of Maine cabinet members are designing, developing and creating programming to ensure equity across university units.)

Establishing the Council on DEI. The Council on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion has been asked to identify “structural impediments to DEI and considering what must be changed to dismantle and reform,” ensure university planning documents “focus on advancing DEI,” identify what “data should be collected and reviewed to identify DEI problems,” and examine whether current committees, offices, organizations and activities promoting DEI are prepared to transform the culture of the university.

President Ferrini-Mundy gave the charge to the council members. “The University of Maine is committed to the core values of inclusion, diversity, equity and anti-racism,” Ferrini-Mundy said. “We must further and operationalize that commitment now. Inclusive excellence is foundational at the university. This is perhaps the most important activity that the University of Maine can undertake at this time.”⁵⁰ Reflecting on her actions, the President concludes: “The pandemic I have chosen to address is racial injustice and how critical it is for the University of Maine to take part in this conversation.”

The President’s Council on DEI releases its findings and recommendations in December 2020.⁵¹ It is not unusual for universities to pursue such ambitious DEI plans outside the normal strategic planning process. This report will probably be the blueprint for an even greater expansion on campus. The Council made 45 recommendations to advance DEI at The University of Maine in four main areas: cultural integration, DEI governance, search and enrollment, and support DEI professional learning. The recommendations include:

- Advance and increase DEI programming
- Integrate DEI into university practices, narratives, dialogue and commemorations
- Create segregated identity/affiliate groups for students/faculty/staff
- Enforce and monitor equity through allocation

of resources and engagement with “diverse” populations

- Redesign physical spaces to reflect DEI (including redesigning The University of Maine logo)
- Implement Affirmative Action Plans
- Hire a Vice Provost of DEI
- Create more DEI offices
- Create more diversity training for staff⁵²

2021.

Almost immediately, the President’s Council on DEI achieved important results. Each one of these policies represents an expansion of The University of Maine’s DEI mission.

Affirmative Action in Hiring and Retention.

According to Pres. Ferrini-Mundy, search committees are making a concerted effort to achieve the goal of diversity, equity and inclusion. Search committee members are now required to undergo implicit bias training and to target minorities specifically for job hiring.⁵³ The Office of Human Resources has established search committee expectations regarding DEI. Expectations include: (1) search committee composition will “represent diversity of gender, race”; (2) mandatory implicit bias training; (3) targeted geographic outreach to increase diversity in hiring pools; and (4) using “inclusive” language in search descriptions and seeking individuals “committed to diversity and inclusion.”⁵⁴ Only time will tell whether such an emphasis on DEI will ultimately compromise academic excellence, as it has throughout much of the country.

DEI Statements. Job searches during 2021-22 often include the requirement that candidates write DEI statements to pledge their fealty to the governing ideology. An assistant professor in clinical psychology must prove “a record of involvement in activities that

enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion” and also include a “statement of contributions to diversity” that describes “experience and leadership in fostering equity and diversity and/or potential to make such contributions.”⁵⁵ Similarly, an assistant professor in mathematics must provide “evidence of active contribution to diversity and inclusivity in a higher education setting.”⁵⁶

Training and Policies. The Office for Diversity and Inclusion offers a multitude of DEI trainings for university staff, students and community members or organizations.⁵⁷ Trainings are currently optional. These include:

- Introduction to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (1.5 hours) wherein participants “explore the definitions of [DEI]” and “analyz[e] 10 social identities and wrestle with the privilege and the oppression within each of these identities.”
- Transforming Self for Racial Equity (2.5 hours) wherein participants examine race “as it pertains to systems of privilege and racism” and explore implicit bias and microaggressions.
- Self-Guided Foundational Safe Zone Training and ALLY 101: Beyond the Safe Zone (1.5 hours) wherein participants are introduced to LGBTQ+ advocacy and the “language of gender, sexuality.”

Students and faculty can expect more DEI training to soon become mandatory. The President’s Council on DEI, for example, has recommended that the university (1) “incorporate DEI efforts as a part of the documentation in promotion and tenure (P&T) packages and yearly reviews”; (2) “show the influence of DEI on research, service and teaching”; and (3) “create a professional development path and incentive structure for supervisors and professional and hourly staff and adjunct faculty to include DEI, and other foundational elements utilizing the Training Institute.”

Student Life. The Office of Student Life adopted a new focus on LGBTQ+ advancement and creates the LGBTQ Allies Council. Its new mission is “to promote a safe and inclusive environment for our campus community through education, engagement and advocacy.”⁵⁸ The office has established a policy for gender-neutral bathrooms on campus in all new and existing buildings undergoing renovations, and for the completion and promotion of policy for preferred names/pronouns for students and employees.⁵⁹ The office hired a Vice President for Student Life and Inclusive Excellence, Robert Dana, to guide CSJ advancement in student life.⁶⁰

The Office of Student Life’s future initiatives include:

- Recruiting and training Safe Zone trainers to assist Office of LGBTQ services
- Advocate for preferred pronouns usage for faculty and staff in username processes and in-class syllabi
- Create and promote policy and practice for “gender inclusive housing”
- Advocate for differentiation between sex and gender
- Create a Safe Zone training program for LGBTQ advocacy for all faculty, staff and students

The Office of Residence Life diverts significant amounts of student housing toward CSJ advocacy by creating Themed Communities, also known as Living Learning Communities.⁶¹ For example, the Mosaic community is housing only for students who are “black, indigenous, students of color, or allied peoples.” Students living in Mosaic are required to attend regular anti-racism training, mentoring, and other programming. The community is monitored by staff who are “committed to equity, social justice and inclusion.” Similarly, the Prism+ community is exclusively for “students who identify as or are allies to the LGBTQ community.” Students living in Prism+ are

required to attend programming on gender identity and sexual orientation. The community partners with the university’s Rainbow Resource Center to provide more programming on LGBTQ advocacy.⁶²

General Education requirements include a three-credit course on cultural diversity and international

perspectives. Students can expect more infusion of CSJ/ DEI content into general education as the President has directed the university to take action to examine academic areas and ensure core courses are integrated with social justice-oriented assignments and antiracism advocacy.

| Name | Position | Department | Salary |
|---------------------------------|--|---|------------------|
| Anila Karunakar | Director of Diversity and Inclusion | Multicultural Student Center and the Diversity and Inclusion Office | \$69,525 |
| Rob Jackson | Staff Associate for Diversity and Inclusion | Multicultural Student Center and the Diversity and Inclusion Office | \$37,344 |
| Robert Dana | Vice President for Student Life and Inclusive Excellence | | \$191,033 |
| Total DEI Staff Spending | | | \$297,902 |

Free Speech at The University of Maine. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) ranks colleges according to their free speech policies and the actual experience of students on campus. The University of Maine is in the Yellow or Caution category because its policies on bias and hate speech and sexual harassment are so ambiguous that one doubts what one can and cannot say. It also has a bias response team ready to investigate and punish students for violations of the ambiguous code.⁶³ FIRE’s survey of The University of Maine students shows that these policies, together with the ideological hegemony on campus, has had a chilling effect on campus free speech.⁶⁴ Generally,

conservative students are constrained to say what they would like or write what they would like in their classes or on campus. Open, honest conversations are hard to come by according to the data.

Conclusion: The University of Maine is rapidly becoming an anti-racist university. It has developed extensive plans to transform university practices away from academic excellence, and rewarding hard work, and toward equity and social justice. President Ferrini-Mundy has championed these policies since 2018, and with greater zeal since the summer of 2020.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE- FARMINGTON (UMF) IN TRANSITION

UMF has long been the liberal arts and teacher college in the UMS. It has thought of itself as a regional college, serving the people of Maine and offering a unique emphasis. Perhaps that was indeed true. Prior to its current strategic planning process (underway in 2020), UMF had none of the hallmarks of a woke university. No personnel were dedicated to DEI. Few policies or objectives pointed in that direction. The general education did not have diversity requirements. Even campus events mostly concerned sports, not an ideologically-skewed speaker series. Student orientation did not browbeat whites about their privilege or celebrate diversity as a great good. Its personnel concerned with DEI were mostly in Human Resources and, arguably, were necessary to follow federal law.⁶⁵ Some DEI themed communities, such as “optional gender-inclusive room placements” in its residence life, were present.

All of that is changing. The 2020 strategic planning process, “Reimagining Farmington,” looks at its pre-DEI history as a shameful caving to the majority culture. The “reimagined” Farmington is going to undertake hiring in DEI, reimagine the curriculum toward DEI requirements, and adopt racially explicit policies in student recruitment and retention. Generally, “Reimagining Farmington” means rejecting its past and moving toward the vision of a DEI future.

Farmington Strategic Plans. University of Maine-Farmington (UMF) released a strategic plan in 2014 emphasizing its regional focus and a sincere embrace of liberal education.⁶⁶ The essence of the plan is in its

title, “Experience Farmington.” Those who wrote the plan thought of UMF as a good place that more people should experience. The word “diversity” appears only twice in the document, once emphasizing the “exciting diversity” of extra-curricular life. “Liberal learning,” according to the strategic plan, helps to realize the “collective duty to foster positive change” in the community, but its overall goals and strategies do not emphasize anything like a built-out DEI infrastructure. There is no talk of engineering a diverse student body or a more diverse faculty or of “implicit bias” training or LGBTQ rights. The emphasis is mostly on transfer credits, recruiting non-traditional students, and increasing certificates in other areas. There is a hope that by 2016 all majors will require some “engaged, experiential learning” (Strategy 2.2).

A new strategic plan appeared in 2020, “Reimagining the University.”⁶⁷ It is only a three-year strategic plan (an oddity in higher education strategic planning, where five-year plans are the norm). Unlike “Experience Farmington,” now the university itself must be “reimagined,” must be changed fundamentally, due to an insolvency problem and due to the “cultural imperative” of DEI. “Reimagining” begins with the bold words: “The Plan you are holding marks a new beginning for our University.” Much of the impetus is the budget crunch (caused, as the report says, from declining enrollment and a loss of state funding), but also a lack of alignment with the UMS as a whole. Greater integration and subordination to the system is necessary if UMF is to be experienced at all.

As UMF faces a supposed budget crunch, it is odd, in a sense, that it chooses such a time to introduce expensive DEI aspirations into its planning. But it does. For the first time, UMF embraces DEI as its Core Value and into its goals and strategies. Its “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” statement is as follows: “We value all our people and embrace our differences as we remove barriers, promote equity, and respect, and provide resources to think critically and make us stronger.” For the first time, UMF announces a goal to move beyond serving the region to serving the globe (“Reimagining,” p. 8). For the first time, UMF announces an intention to engineer a student body that reflects diverse “race, gender, ethnic backgrounds,” among other things (“Reimagining,” p. 8).

The objectives of “Reimagining Farmington” are now suffused with DEI, conceptually and practically.

- Objective 1.2. “Experiential Learning.”
- Objective 1.5. “Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.”
- Objective 3.1. “Increase Enrollment” by achieving a more “diverse enrollment portfolio.”
- Objective 3.4. “System Alignment,” which means subordination to curricula of other universities and a loss of the distinctive UMF liberal learning emphasis. Submission to DEI specifically.

UMF Organizes to Achieve These Objectives.

During Fall 2021–Spring 2022, UMF will create a “University-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan” to be implemented in Fall 2022 and other “programs that are geared towards fostering an inclusive environment” (“Reimagining,” p. 16). It will also be creating “recruitment, retention and diversity goals” for all programs (p. 18).

While campus life, curriculum, and hiring practices are mostly immune from CSJ/DEI, the revolution at the strategic level will be brought to bear on these elements of university life.

General Education. The 2021/2022 catalogue contains no required classes specifically reflecting the CSJ/DEI ideology (this is a rarity, today).⁶⁸

However, “Reimagining Farmington” promises to “draw on decades of work to reimagine the curriculum” in ways that presage adding a significant number of requirements that reflect CSJ/DEI aspirations (see “Reimagining,” p. 6). This process of “reimagining program curriculum” is designed to bring UMF into line with her “sister universities” who have already added such requirements. The budget crunch at UMF coincides with bringing its uniquely non-CSJ/DEI curriculum into line with its more woke sisters. The UMS itself seems to be demanding this of UMF in its policies.

Trainings and Policies. Efforts to access UMF hiring policies are compromised. Links to UMF’s Human Resources department take the reader to the UMS. This is true across the board. Title IX reporting, trainings, and such contain links to the UMS rather than discrete UMF activities. As a bonus, the link to EEO complaints on the UMF site was actually dead when we tried to access it (September 2021)! And as an extra bonus, nobody probably knew because there were no complaints!

However, “Reimagining Farmington” insists that UMF will “implement programs that are geared towards fostering an inclusive environment.” Many things follow from this: trainings, a transformation in student orientation, an expansion of “themed communities” or the introduction of “living-learning communities” in the dorms.

Conclusion: UMF sits at the precipice. It is saying “goodbye” to the old UMF, a regional liberal arts school without much DEI imprint. And it is becoming a DEI factory like all other Maine schools, probably at the behest of the UMS.

CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

The entire University of Maine System is at an inflection point. DEI administration is being built out, with high level administrations either hired or in the process of being hired at these three main campuses. Academic hires are now being required to pledge fealty to the reigning DEI ideology. Student Life is infused with programs intended to bring DEI into the private lives of students. Curriculum now requires multiple courses in DEI as part of the General Education. Many more departments are no doubt as committed to DEI as the administration.

This trend, more obvious in higher education than in K-12, will cause many problems in the medium- and long- term. It compromises cherished American values like due process and free speech. It undermines meritocracy. It stigmatizes productive citizens and saps their ambition. It undermines the blessings of civil liberty, including the stability at the root of the rule of law and equal protection of the laws. It is a threat to national unity, since it provides no pathway to a nation at peace with itself. We should consider this a threat to our states and our country.

What can be done about public institutions that adopt this false and pernicious ideology? They do not deserve the unqualified support of the people; therefore, a free people should not support them. The legislature is central to registering the public's displeasure at Maine's partisan universities. The state legislature itself must condition continued public support on a reversal of

course. The legislature must demand transparency. It must require universities to report on how they are changing course. It should ban pernicious practices like DEI statements and discriminatory hiring. More radical measures will be necessary if universities do not change course.

There is some hope that UMS will change course. The DEI infrastructure is relatively new and not yet sown into the fabric of most university administrations. But they will not change without prodding from the outside. Mainers must rally against this pernicious ideology before it reshapes its universities past recognition and beyond their core educational mission.

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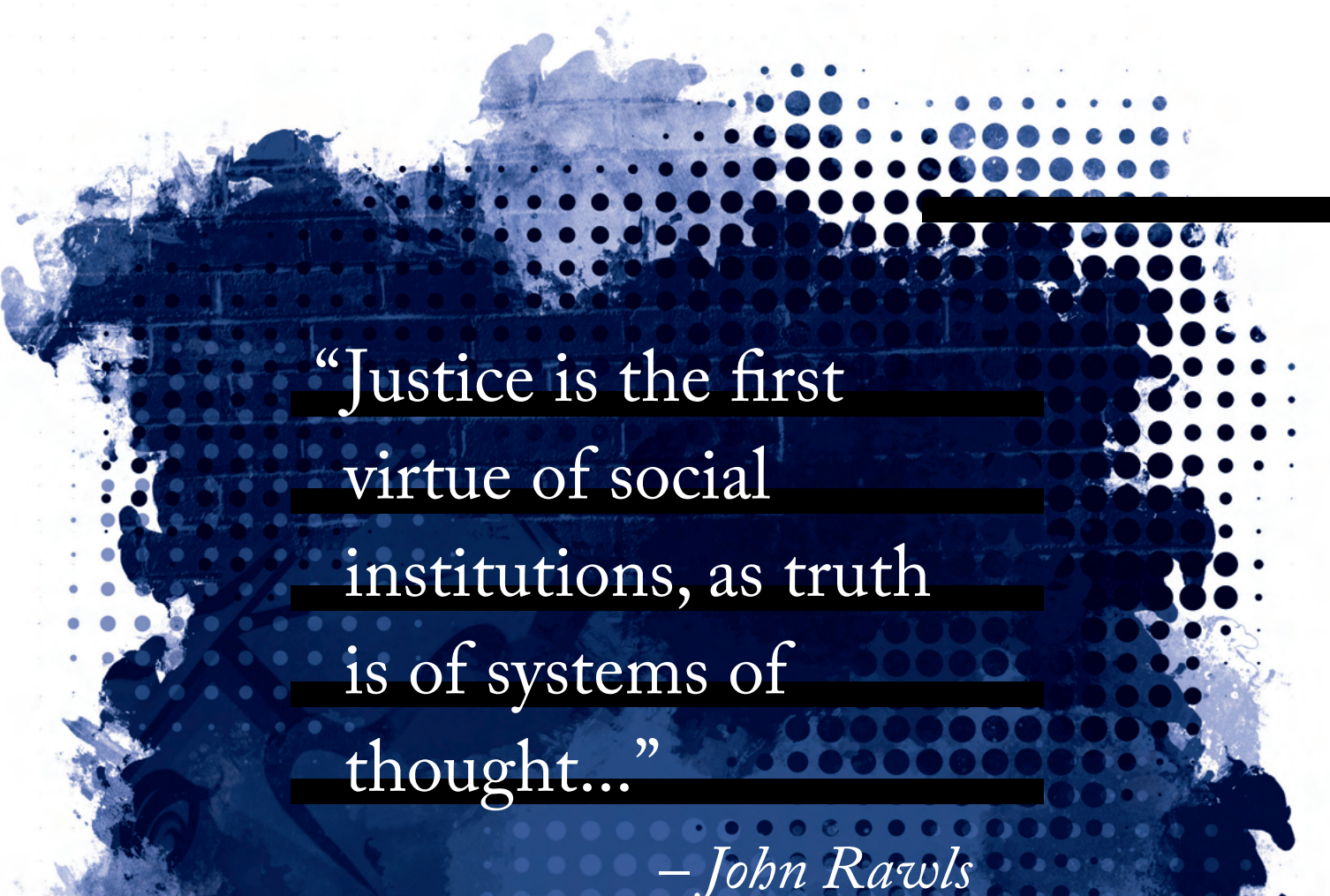
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“Justice is the first
virtue of social
institutions, as truth
is of systems of
thought...”

— *John Rawls*



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