

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from electronic originals
(may include minor formatting differences from printed original)

**Board of Agriculture
Annual Report to the Maine Legislature and
Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System**

February 1, 2021

Senator Jim Dill, Chair, and Representative Maggie O’Neil, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Legislative Information Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

James R. Erwin, Chair
University of Maine System Board of Trustees
15 Estabrooke Dr.
Orono, Maine 04469

c: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Dannel Malloy, Chancellor, University of Maine System
Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President, University of Maine

Dear Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, Distinguished Committee Members, and Chair Erwin and Board of Trustees,

The Board of Agriculture (BoA) thanks you for your continued interest in its work. The Board had a somewhat limited schedule during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we did meet on March 12, 2020 just prior to the State of Maine lockdown. The following is general information about the Board, its functions, and its interests going forward.

The Board of Agriculture was established by the Maine Legislature in 1998 during a time of tight budget constraints (note the title of the legislative document that created the law An Act to Ensure Long-term Funding of the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station Research Farms Connected with Land Grant Colleges, 1997, c. 711). At the time of enactment, the fear in the agricultural community was that the University of Maine was losing track of its core mission as a land-grant university: teaching, research, and outreach related to agriculture. The Board’s duties are clearly spelled out in the legislation creating it, as is its membership. The Board is within the University of Maine System and is unique in that agriculture is the only business sector with a legislative mandate to advise the Chancellor and the President of the University on agricultural-related issues.

Though cognizant of its legislative mandate to advise the Chancellor and of the President of the University of Maine, the Board has viewed meeting with the Governor and members of the Maine Legislature as consistent with its charge. Board members met with Governor Mills along with Nancy McBrady, Director of the Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, and Emily Horton, Director of Policy & Community Engagement. Board members cited University of Maine support for critical research, workforce training and development,

conducting variety trials to identify plants best suited for growing in Maine, the collaborative faculty and staff, targeted support for specific agricultural sectors, and technical assistance. Governor Mills sees a future for Maine as the breadbasket for the Northeast, and she spoke of her support for higher education.

Chancellor Malloy joined the meeting after board members met with Governor Mills to present an update on the University of Maine System. He discussed the ranking related to research universities, mentioning that he would like the University of Maine to move to an R1: Doctoral Universities – very high research activity ranking, meaning the highest-level research activity, which would make the University more competitive in the pursuit for more research funding. Chancellor Malloy feels there needs to be strategic investments made in infrastructure at the University; nearly half of the University of Maine System’s buildings have not had meaningful updates in over fifty years. The Board brought up the need to Chancellor Malloy to have some overlap in positions between outgoing and incoming faculty to maintain research and outreach continuity.

The next section of the meeting was attended by several members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee, leading to discussions on the status of bills under consideration by the Legislature at that time.

The Cooperative Extension update was presented by Hannah Carter, Dean, Cooperative Extension. She discussed the Extension budget, her outreach to counties (county governments contribute to Cooperative Extension), and the application of the University of Maine for the Innovation and Economic Prosperity Universities designation from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities which would provide the University some funding advantages and necessitate an improvement plan to strengthen the University.

Mark Hutton from the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture and Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station informed the Board that Dean Servello was to retire in June and a search committee would be formed to find his replacement. Mark also listed some of the recent hires with the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture during the past year, and he reported that some of the modernization plans for the research farms and Clapp Greenhouses are advancing.

The Board’s November meeting was cancelled because of concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. A virtual (Zoom) meeting will be held in early 2021.

The Board of Agriculture appreciates the efforts of the Legislature and of the University and University System on behalf of Maine agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Meyerhans
Chair

Julie Ann Smith
Vice-Chair