



Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine

5/31/2024

This is my last AFUM Update as I will soon be retired from UM and my term as AFUM President ends May 31. I thank everyone for the support shown to AFUM, and to me, over the years. We have lived through some difficult times. I think we can all agree that we are significantly better off through the efforts of AFUM.

Our leadership team of Lydia Savage (President), Mellisa Clawson and Peter Precourt (Co-VP), Lisa Leduc (Secretary) and Krishna Kaphle (Treasurer), along with the AFUM leadership at each University, and with your continued support, will meet ongoing and future challenges.

AFUM continues negotiations for a successor contract. We are also working to settle the issues around distance education past practice that was the subject of a recent Fact Finding with the Maine Labor Board.

As this is my last AFUM UPDATE I am taking this opportunity to share some of my ongoing concerns:

- I remain concerned with the ethics of the System office and the failure of the Board to fully come to terms with what has transpired under their watch.
 - While we have a long standing successful collaborative approach to health insurance, UMS decided to unilaterally make significant, and poor, changes to retiree health insurance. Not only did UMS choose to not discuss the issue with AFUM, they lied about reasons for policy changes, mislead some board members & conducted bidding in secret, in violation of UMS rules.
 - As you recall, the unions, with the significant help of MEA, were victorious and we have a much better post-retirement health plan than what UMS sought to impose.
- At UM, administrators ignored an extant and successful misconduct policy, creating its own ad-hoc policy which violated faculty rights. Faculty governance was repeatedly mislead, serious violations and potential misconduct by UM officials ignored.
- UMS failing to engage with AFUM on UMM and the regional campus issue.
- Unified accreditation still is mostly smoke and mirrors with a lack of honesty of what the goals are. It appears that the true goal from the System perspective is to move faculty around like pawns, diminishing our profession, our disciplines, and the value of Universities.
- UMS continues to undermine Cooperating Departments (CD), largely I suspect, as it removes the potential value of Unified Accreditation.
- Presidential appointments without legitimate searches, violating shared governance.

- Closed room appointments with no legitimate means for feedback undermine shared governance and put accreditation at risk.
- The Board continually fails to provide critical oversight of System management.
 - While there was a commitment to hold a legitimate search, the ad hoc process used showed that there was no intent to fulfill this commitment.

These examples are evidence of administrators choosing to work in an echo chamber, with little regard for value of honest discourse (which of course is required by law). It appears to me that the big picture is ignored for foolish immediate gratification.

Some of these problems stem from leaders who are so uncomfortable with leadership that they cannot engage in honest, fact based discussion; leaders that inappropriately let System attorneys set policy instead of valuing and guarding our academic values.

The Board, with changing members, seldom gets to see the big picture, instead being shown just the part of the picture the System wants them to see. Too many times good board members are given false information by staff.

My parting advice is that we all need to step up to defend our core values. Get the facts, look at the big picture, and then take action consistent with our core values. Be wary of selfish expediency. Don't hold back from exposing what is wrong.

Governance needs to hold the administration accountable to the highest ethical standards. Obviously they should not tolerate being lied to, excluded, or reduced to merely "providing input". As my friend, mentor and past AFUM President Ron Mosley used to say, "We get the shared governance we deserve".

As a "Mission Agency", our Missions are critical to building a better future. We can best fulfil our missions when high quality administrators and faculty work collaboratively towards these goals with the highest integrity. When administrators seek to devalue the role of the faculty, or fail to insist on their own integrity, they seriously damage our Universities.

It was a privilege to get to work with, and for, so many of you throughout the years.

Jim

Jim McClymer, PhD
Soon to be former AFUM President

