September 26th, 2014
Dear USM Students, Faculty, and Staff:

USM is in the process of restructuring itself to ensure that it is a strong and capable competitor in the changing higher education environment that is now emerging. That means we will have to change and adapt. We need to be more efficient and student focused, and to reduce our costs to be as affordable as possible, without compromising quality. It’s a tall order, but in meeting these challenges USM will have a brighter future.

Earlier this week the University of Maine System Board of Trustees voted to approve the recommendation made last spring to eliminate three programs at USM - American and New England Studies, Geosciences and Arts and Humanities at LAC. As you know, USM is facing a $16 million deficit in the next fiscal year - starting July 1, 2015. There are no easy solutions to deal with this deficit and we regret having to eliminate good programs like the ones above. However, in order to assure that we provide a robust set of majors we must focus our resources more than we have in the past, and set strategic priorities that maximize the benefits to students.

As with other public higher education institutions across Maine and the country, USM is rethinking how we educate our students in more creative and cost-effective ways and better serve the changing needs of our current, and future, students. We will build on the opportunities that come from being located in Maine's most important economic centers and put our intellectual capital, our facilities and the energy and curiosity of our students, faculty, staff and alumni to work building a stronger community and university.

Over the coming weeks we will be digging into our academic offerings and putting together a plan that will both scale back the number of degrees we offer and deliver our courses and majors more efficiently and conveniently, with the optimal faculty and administrative staff to carry out the vision of becoming Maine's Metropolitan University. As of now, no decisions on program eliminations have been made, beyond the decision of the Trustees on the three programs mentioned above. I can assure you that transparency and communication are important and we will act fairly, openly, collaboratively and civilly, in the best Maine tradition, as we build a more financially sustainable public university. Furthermore, once decisions about program eliminations are made, we are committed to work with all affected students to ensure a seamless path to graduation from USM.

Maine people depend on USM. As Maine's Metropolitan University, we will be the birthplace for new careers; an incubator for applied research and economic development; a training ground for public service; and the ultimate accessible, affordable source of life-changing college education for you, our current students, and for our future students.

Thank you to all of USM’s students, present and future, who will help us lead our university forward.

David Flanagan
President
University of Southern Maine