Statement from USM Foundation Board on the Proposed Name Change of the University of Southern Maine to the University of Maine at Portland

At its meeting on Friday, March 22, 2019, the USM Foundation Board of Directors, led by Board Chair Cyrus Hagge ’83, ’85, ’18H, voted 18-0 in favor of changing the name of the University of Southern Maine to the proposed University of Maine at Portland.

Leading up to the vote, Board members had an opportunity to review and discuss the conclusions of an extensive market analysis conducted over the past year, including the results of many internal and external stakeholder meetings on the topic of the name change.

At the March 22 meeting, President Cummings summarized the research and rationale for making the change, emphasizing demographic trends in Maine that will lead to a steady decrease in projected in-state enrollment. To grow and better meet the needs of its Maine students, the University must increase its competitiveness by attracting more out-of-state students. The market research shows that a name change would significantly move the needle in successfully recruiting such students.

Attracting out-of-state students will also help with much-needed in-migration to Maine. Over 70% of USM graduates remain within 100 miles of the University, bringing highly valued skilled employees into the state’s future workforce.

The Board agreed that a change to the proposed University of Maine at Portland would be in the best long-term interest of USM. From a marketing perspective, it will more clearly identify the University as part of Maine’s public university system and also minimize current confusion that exists between USM and Southern Maine Community College. Further, it will eliminate online search confusion with University of Mississippi (usm.edu).

After careful consideration, the Board voted to support the name-change measure 18-0.