

Week of September 6

Trustees,

Significant work is occurring around our System as we've now finished two weeks back together safely amidst the surging COVID Delta variant. A number of us are preparing for your committee meetings this week, with your full Trustee meeting coming two weeks from tomorrow as well. I look forward to working together with you on the important matters on the agendas for these meetings.

Here this morning, however, I feel compelled to speak for UMS on the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, not merely as educational leaders, but as humans with a longing to bring historical perspective to tragic events, to continue to heal through our collective reflections. Twenty years ago today, we awoke to September 12th less sure of our security, and less certain of our country's place in the world. But though it was too soon to feel it that day, over time we became more certain than ever of the need for what we do best in higher education. To celebrate diversity. To listen critically to ideas different than our own. And to find truth, learning, and civic engagement in making the efforts.

Maine, of course, had numerous connections to the attacks, with two hijackers leaving from Portland's International Jetport that morning and 6 Maine residents dying in the planes that struck the World Trade Center towers, the towers themselves, and the Pentagon.

My own memories of the day are deep and searing, as it came six years into my time as Mayor of Stamford, Connecticut. My city lost a number of its residents in the attacks, parents of my kids' classmates in their schools, spouses of their teachers. I was numb by the time I met the first train of stunned Stamford commuters returning on the first train to leave from New York's Grand Central Station after the attacks. The invisible shock and pain of the day was as palpable as the heavy smoke visibly rising from the crumbled towers to the southwest.

I'd like to spend the remainder of my message sharing some reflections collected from colleagues around the System. Read together, you'll find in them a combination of both the shock and numbness of the day with a longing for the unity we shared following it.

Board Clerk Ellen Doughty was then the HR Assistant to former Board Clerk Tracy Bigney. They were at 107 Maine Avenue in Bangor, where the Chancellor's office was located, with support services in Auburn Hall, a two-story brick building nearby. Ellen and Tracy were in collective bargaining in an Auburn Hall conference room when news of the attacks broke. Collective bargaining was cancelled for the day so staff members could gather in a small break room to watch the news on the only TV in the building. Ellen recalls it as a "somber, shocking day."

Robert Dana, UMaine's Vice President of Student Life and Inclusive Excellence, and Rowena Clukey, Executive Director of the Chancellor's Office, were both among the sea of students, faculty, and staff gathered around TVs mounted on the wall in the Memorial Union, watching the

attacks unfold in disbelief. Rowena recalls desperate calls to friends and family and the counselors and staff brought in to help assist students and our own staff. Robert remembers a great sense of fear and sadness that was palpably evident there and in the days following. UMaine put its police on high alert and started deploying staff just to be where students were, working to help people manage their feelings while giving a sense of safety.

UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy was then at Michigan State in East Lansing, Michigan. She was driving across MSU's expansive campus to her office and heard a report on the radio about what was thought to be a small plane hitting the World Trade Center. By the time she got to her office, her colleagues were gathered in shock around a small TV watching the horror unfold together. Joan remembers her assistant Jean running to her office, trying desperately to reach her sister in Chicago, certain that other cities would be targets. The rest of the day was a blur for Joan, calling her husband (who was traveling and not aware), checking on her children, and conferring with MSU friends and colleagues. She remembers being glued in shock to the television, watching live footage of the second plane hitting the South Tower. She reflects now that only a handful of days and moments are so etched in her memory, the unparalleled tragedy of 9/11 joining the assassination of JFK and the Challenger explosion alongside happy memories like the births of her children.

Leigh Saufley, now the Maine Law Dean but then an Associate Justice on Maine's Supreme Judicial Court, recalls that the Court had just recessed following the completion of an argument. Leigh and her six colleagues were locked in the court's conference room, quietly finishing an official case conference, which was only ever interrupted in the case of an emergency. But suddenly the door flew open, and the Court's Security Officer, Harry "The Horse" Kaklegian, came in, breathless, with news that something horrible was happening in New York and Washington. He returned shortly with more details, and Leigh remembers that rumors of a full-scale attack on the entire country were rife, especially with ready access to news at work was not as ubiquitous then as it is today. Judicial branch staff were fearful that courthouses could be the next targets. With confusion and fear spreading, Leigh and her colleagues made arrangements for staff, other judges, and litigants to leave Maine's courthouses to gather and be at home with their families.

At USM, Rosa Redonnett, now our Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Credential Attainment but then USM's VP for Enrollment Management, was meeting with her department heads in the conference room on the 7th floor of the law school building when she learned of the attacks. Kim Jenkins, now UMS's Director of Organizational Effectiveness but then working in Advising Services in Upton Hall on USM's Gorham campus, learned of the first plane hitting the North Tower when a colleague came by her office to tell her. Kim recalls going next door to the Health and Counseling Center's waiting room to watch a television on a wheel cart with other staff and students, horrified to see the second plane hit the South Tower and watch both towers later collapse live on TV as news of the events in Washington and Pennsylvania came in too. Rosa has particular memories of a wonderful student employee in her office who was an immigrant from Nigeria and then-new US citizen who was particularly moved by the day's events but kept working to support Rosa's staff despite many entreaties for

her to go home. In the uncertainty of the day, those gathered on the top floor of the law school building felt an uneasy anxiety, knowing they were in one of the tallest buildings in Portland. There was worry too for the USM president's daughter, who everyone knew was a student at NYU with classes and a residence hall near Ground Zero. USM would close at 4:00 p.m. that day, and there was relief later when news spread that the president's daughter was OK. For Rosa, it was a sad and dramatic day; for Kim, she recalls feeling numb and incredulous.

Joe Szakas, now UMA's Interim President, was then an Assistant Professor of Computer Information Systems in his second full year at UMA. Joe's wife Kathleen, a 10-year officer in the US Air Force, was slated for promotion to Major in the US Air Force Reserves a month hence. Joe and Kathleen left their house in Monmouth in separate cars around 8:40 that morning, with Kathleen turning right and driving south down to Boston to Hanscom AFB for a few days of reserve duty as Joe turned north to the Augusta campus to teach. Within minutes, NPR interrupted the morning news as reports of the attack began trickling in. By the time Joe arrived on campus, news of the ongoing attacks had spread quickly. Joe recalls someone wheeling a TV on an AV cart into the office so they could watch a local news program; Joe looked online for news as well, but the internet of 20 years ago was bogged down by the nation's desperate desire to find information about the attacks. Joe was soon to find out that his wife Kathleen, who had planned for just a few days' reservist duty while being six months pregnant with their first child, arrived to Hanscom AFB to be put immediately on 24-hour support duty for the next 2 weeks, and she was to be called up for active duty a few times in the ensuing years. Joe has since used the September 11 attacks in class as a basis to discuss the impact of the failure of information sharing and the challenges in multi-media intelligence gathering and merging from different sources.

UMPI President Ray Rice was then an Assistant Professor of English, teaching composition and literature. On September 11, 2001, Ray was doing what our faculty and staff did then and still do -- teaching and working on campus. That September morning was bright and clear in Aroostook County. Ray's memory then and now still was of the realization that September 11 brought: that no one, not a teacher or student or staff member, at any institution, whether it be a large state university or a small private college, and whether it be situated in a metropolitan area or in a rural county, could any longer imagine themselves as insulated from a larger world. Ray put his reflections on paper at the time, writing then that "only through a new way of thinking about our relationship with the rest of our world—and a new way of thinking about the world—can we hope to avoid repeating a tragedy like that of September 11, 2001."

As Ray told the UMPI community in a campus message yesterday afternoon, an endearing lesson of September 11 must be that we listen to and welcome people to our universities unlike ourselves. It must be that we condemn acts of hate and radicalism that lead to violence. It must be that we simultaneously embrace diversity and inclusion and respect all members of our communities for all of their differences. And it must be that we engage with each other respectfully about these differences, valuing them as strengths and ensuring that our dialogue makes our university communities stronger together.

Regards,
Dan