

University of Maine System  
Board of Trustees

**AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY**

**NAME OF ITEM:** Black Bear Academy Child Care Center Expansion, UMaine

**CAMPUS PRESENTER(S):** Joan Ferrini-Mundy, President and Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation; Kelly Sparks, Vice President for Finance and Administration & Chief Business Officer

**INITIATED BY:** Roger J. Katz, Chair

**BOARD INFORMATION:**

**BOARD ACTION:** X

**BOARD POLICY:**

Section 701 Operating & Capital Budgets

**UNIFIED ACCREDITATION CONNECTION:**

The proposed Black Bear Academy Child Care Center expansion will positively impact students, community, and the state's overall economy and UMaine's R1 status in several ways. The Academy will provide childcare support for our faculty, staff, students, and the greater community. It will provide enhanced educational and training opportunities at the new center in nursing and early childcare education, giving UMaine graduates on-the-job experience on campus before entering the workforce. The Academy also helps UMaine maintain its R1 designation by providing childcare for early career faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and Ph.D. students, which is integral to the success of their job and attracting educated, workforce-ready people to the state of Maine.

**UMS STRATEGIC PLAN CONNECTION:**

The Black Bear Academy Child Care Center expansion supports Student Success Actions Commitment 1, Action 2, Goal 2.1 to increase persistence and completion rates for undergraduate students; Research Actions, Action 1, Goal 1.2 to grow external funding from government, industry, and philanthropic sponsors; Teaching Actions, Action 1, Goal 1.1 commitment to student-focused programming and outcomes-based assessments for all learners; Action 4, Goal 4.1 to provide a career-relevant experience for every student in every UMS degree program; and Service Actions, Action 1, Goal 1.1 to support initiatives by university community members that directly serve Mainers and their communities.

**BACKGROUND:**

**a. Summary of the request**

The University of Maine System, acting through the University of Maine (UMaine), requests authorization to expend up to \$4 million for the renovations of existing facilities located at University Park in Old Town to increase the number of children it serves through its campus-based childcare center by 41 slots, bringing the total number of slots to a minimum of 120 of which at least 25% reserved for the dependents of community members.

**b. Overall requested budget and funding source(s):**

The \$4 million award has been secured through Congressionally Directed Spending requested by U.S. Senator Susan Collins in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 and the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 and is administered by the the Department of Housing and Urban Development..

**c. Is the project included or reflected in the Master Plan, Long Term capital plan or 1-year capital plan most recently approved by Trustees?**

This project is included in the 1-year capital plan most recently approved by the Trustees.

**d. Detailed explanation of rationale for project and metrics for success of the project (ROI or other)**

Availability of quality childcare is critically important for retaining staff and faculty and supporting student success. UMaine provides quality childcare to the campus and broader community via its Children's Center. However, demand for on-campus childcare is nearly four times greater than the center's capacity; the current waiting list is more than 200 children, and there are only 79 slots within the program. This demand cannot be met by alternative childcare options in the local area, which are consistently also at capacity. UMaine's Children's Center is experiencing many other challenges, including not being ADA-compliant, facilities not supporting part-time enrollment, impacting available childcare for the student population, and work/education advancement inequities because of not having childcare. As Maine's land-grant institution, servicing the state and local communities is integral to our mission. Increasing UMaine's childcare program would help local communities through increased childcare slots and supports economic development through training of healthcare and education workers for Maine.

The proposed renovation of five existing facilities will be to meet modern licensing, ADA, and health standards that have arisen since the pandemic. The facilities are located on the edge of campus to facilitate community access and are designed to accommodate about 151 children, increasing capacity by about 100%. Built to modern standards as energy-efficient, it will also eliminate the older, less efficient buildings. These enhanced programs will continue to be available to UMaine faculty, staff, and students, in addition to serving the needs of Orono, Old Town, and Bangor (including the regional Northern Light Health system). The current waitlist is 75% UMaine-associated families (which can include non-UMaine parents working in the community) and 25% community members. Because of this, we are committed to reserving 25% of positions at the new center to community members with no direct UMaine affiliation.

The expanded Black Bear Academy Childcare Center will not only be serving and supporting the greater Orono community, but also the whole state through the education and work-force training of roughly 2,500 UMaine graduates. UMaine graduates are receiving workplace training integral to Maine's 10-year economic strategy of being a leader in an environmentally responsible economy and attracting 75,000 people to Maine over the next ten years.

**e. Explanation of the scope and substance of the project as needed to supplement (a) through (d) above. Note: scope includes an explanation of community impact, how the project ties to the University's mission, etc.**

Renovations will be made to existing Black Bear Academy facilities located at University Park in Old Town with addresses 21 and 27 University Park Road, 8 and 17 Massachusetts St, totaling approximately 8,000 square feet. This includes space in buildings located at 15 Massachusetts St., 6 and 8 Connecticut St. In total this project will renovate approximately 13,000 square feet with an average net asset value of approximately 50% and eliminate

approximately \$3.7 million in deferred maintenance, according to FY23 Gordian UMaine report.

There is broad support from the UMaine community, as this is integral to the success of our faculty, staff, and students. More importantly, there is also support from the local community, as there is a severe shortage of childcare in the surrounding community and this center will dedicate 25% of its child slots to the local community with no UMaine association. Aligned with the State of Maine's 10-year economic strategy to expand access to affordable, reliable childcare, it is essential to increase labor force participation of Mainers while attracting new workforce talent to the state.

**f. Changes, if any, in net square footage or ongoing operating costs resulting from the project**

This project will not increase the University's square footage. Ongoing operating costs from the project will be paid for through the expansion of childcare slots.

**g. Alternatives that were considered to meet the need being addressed by this project**

The University explored other alternatives such as new construction and the purchase of an existing facility in the town of Orono, however, costs were much higher than the project scope proposed.

**h. Project Timeline for: 1. Start 2. Occupancy and 3. Completion**

Design is anticipated to summer of 2025 with phased renovations to each facility estimated to start in the late fall of 2025, with completion and full occupancy fall of 2026 / spring of 2027.

**i. Timeline for any further consideration or action anticipated to be needed by the Board or its committees regarding this project if full authority is not being requested from the outset.**

N/A

**j. Additional information that may be useful to consideration of the item.**

The proposed UMaine Children's Center, Black Bear Academy, will provide safe and quality childcare to Penobscot County to help with the childcare shortage that is affecting Maine and increases the number of children it serves through its campus-based childcare center by at least 41 slot bringing the total number of slots to a minimum of 12 of which at least 25% reserved for the dependents of the community members.. Importantly, it will also help train UMaine nursing and education students, helping to meet the healthcare and education needs of the state.

**TEXT OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION:**

That the Finance, Facilities, and Technology Committee, approves the following resolution to be forwarded for Board of Trustee approval at the May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Board Meeting.

That the Board of Trustees accepts the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities, and Technology Committee, and authorizes the University of Maine, acting through the University of Maine, to expend up to \$4 million renovations of existing facilities located at University Park in Old Town.