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Contacts:
UMS – John Diamond 973-3224 or 949-4904; Peggy Markson 973-3240
JAX – Joyce Peterson 288-6058
Mid-ME Comm – Tim King, Ethos Marketing 856-2610

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, JACKSON LAB, AND MID-MAINE COMMUNICATIONS TO ESTABLISH HIGH-SPEED "CYBER-CONNECTIONS"

New Agreements Will Greatly Enhance Maine's Research Capacity and Foster Economic Growth

ORONO—A new set of agreements, announced today in Orono, will result in dramatic expansion of Maine's capacity to conduct research and development within Maine and throughout the world.

The agreements involve the University of Maine System, The Jackson Laboratory, and Mid-Maine Communications. One of the agreements, between the University System and Mid-Maine Communications, establishes the first phase of a two-part "cyber-connection" to Internet2, the highly advanced worldwide network consortium dedicated exclusively to scientific research and education.

The connection will run between Orono and Portland and will provide high-speed fiber-optic network capabilities between the University of Maine in Orono and the University of Southern Maine and to their research and development partners throughout Maine.

Phase Two, which will extend the connection beyond Portland to Boston, is slated to be established by the end of next year.

The agreement between the two entities was made possible through a $3 million state appropriation, made earlier this year, designed to boost economic growth in Maine through research and development, one of the state's fastest growing economic sectors.

The second agreement, between the University System and The Jackson Laboratory, extends similar connectivity between Orono and Bar Harbor, and would serve other not-for-profit research facilities such as Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory. The Jackson Laboratory would provide $1.9 million to fund the connection.

"These agreements will improve enormously the capability of faculty and students to collaborate with researchers in Maine and around the world," explained Dr. Richard L. Pattenaude, University of Maine System chancellor. "By itself, the use of the expanded cyber-connection will greatly enhance Maine's economy and potential. But even more important, it also will greatly increase Maine's appeal and potential as a high-tech center of research, development, and commercialization of products, technologies, and ideas."

Since 1999, Mid-Maine Communications has made significant infrastructure investments by installing hundreds of miles of fiber-optic cable throughout Maine. Fiber-optic cable is different from traditional

communication wires, which are made of metal, because information is transmitted at the speed of light through a fiber made of silica glass. Because of its virtually limitless capacity, fiber-optic cable can easily transmit huge amounts of voice, data and video communications, sometimes all on the same optical fiber, at the same time.

“We are thrilled to see our long term strategy of providing state of the art networking technologies to Maine beginning to pay off. Mid-Maine has been setting the standard for business networking solutions for years,” said Nick Winchester, president of Mid-Maine Communications. “By providing the same critical bandwidth needed to fuel research and development, the University of Maine System is now better equipped to both contribute and compete in the global marketplace.”

Just how powerful will the new connection be?

“To put this in perspective, the entire National Archives of Britain—a massive compilation of information which hold 900 years of written material—could be transferred to or from Maine in just 26 minutes,” Pattenaude explained. “With the current capability, we couldn’t accomplish a fraction of that without crashing our system.

“In research, speed and volume of material are critical ingredients,” he continued. “Collaboration with others is extremely difficult without those essential ingredients.”

Jackson Laboratory Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Charles Hewett, Ph.D., said, "Access to greater and more competitive bandwidth is absolutely essential to Maine's future research success. Until now some Jackson scientists were literally driving their files to Orono in order to share their data with colleagues around the world. Now the Lab can collaborate seamlessly with other scientists from our ideal research setting here in Maine."

SUM IT UP—EXPRESS THANKS TO GOVERNOR AND KEY LEGISLATORS WHO HELPED MAKE THE FUNDING POSSIBLE

About the University of Maine System
Established in 1968, the 44,000-student University of Maine System is the state’s largest educational enterprise. It features seven universities – some with multiple campuses – located across the state, as well as 10 University College outreach centers, a law school, and an additional 75 interactive distance learning sites. For more information, log onto www.maine.edu.

Jackson Laboratory
The Jackson Laboratory (www.jax.org), founded in 1929, is one of the world’s leading genetics research institutions. Its research staff of more than 450 investigates the genetic basis of cancers, heart disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, glaucoma, diabetes and many other human diseases and disorders. The Laboratory is also the world's source for more than 3,000 strains of genetically defined mice, home of the Mouse Genome Database and many other publicly available information resources, and an international hub for scientific courses, conferences, training and education.

Mid Maine Communications
Mid-Maine Communications is a true facilities-based Maine telecommunications provider. In over 10 years of operation, Mid-Maine Communications has become a local telecommunications company that both residential and business customers count on for reliable Internet and Telephony services and superior customer support. For more information, visit www.midmaine.com or call 877-MIDMAINE.

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