

Taking Online or Blended Courses? Stay Connected to USM!

According to the USM Factbook, there were approximately 3,200 USM students enrolled in online or blended courses during Fall 2015. Roughly 18% of the total credit hours taken at USM in Fall 2015 were in online or blended courses, and this represents a 1.5% increase over Fall 2014. These numbers echo the five-year trend of growth in online and blended course offerings at USM, as more and more students take advantage of the variety of online delivery options in their coursework. Taking courses online provides much-needed flexibility and convenience for our students who are juggling jobs, family commitments, and a whole host of other life circumstances while pursuing their education. Often, the availability of online or blended courses ensures that both traditional students and working learners stay on-track and engaged with their academic programs, even during times of scheduling crunches and unexpected life events. While managing life, work, online courses, and other life circumstances, it may be challenging to stay connected to your classmates, academic programs, and USM community. Below, please find some useful resources to stay connected to the university even if you cannot make it to campus.

- **Academic and Faculty Advisors** – Your Professional Academic Advisor and Faculty Advisor are both fantastic resources for choosing courses, discussing professional opportunities, learning about academic options, or just about anything else you may need as you pursue your degree. Curious about an opportunity? Have an idea that you want to share to get ideas on how to develop it further? Give your advisor a call or send them an email.
- **USM's Website** – You may have noticed that USM is in the process of redesigning its web presence. The News and Events sections of our webpages, as well as Quick Links and Resources all provide information on what's new, notable, and going on in and around campus and online. www.usm.maine.edu
- **My USM Portal and Maine Street** – Find offices and services of interest via My USM Portal. Use the tabs on the top menu bar to navigate to information about Advising, Student Services, Campus Life, Library, and more! Check your Maine Street Student Center messages regularly for important announcements. my.usm.maine.edu
- **Blackboard and Online Course Platforms** – Don't forget to check the announcements on your Blackboard home screen. Your online courses provide easy access to instructors and classmates through structured and unstructured interactions. Log in and participate regularly in discussions and assignments, and encourage your professors and classmates to provide more opportunities for connection using message boards, chats, interactive recorded lectures, and video assignments.
- **Social Media** – Many offices, departments, and organizations use social media outlets such as Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter, making information and content available anytime, anywhere. Check out your academic department's websites, as well as the homepages of USM's Community Engagement and Career Development, Student and

University Life, Student Government Association, and many other offices and groups for ways to connect via social media.

- **Listserves** – USM maintains several listserv communities that students can join based on interest. Don't see one you like? Start your own! Browse the offerings here: lists.usm.maine.edu
- **Athletics** – Join the USM Huskies Fanzone and watch free broadcasts of USM's athletic events here: <http://www.southernmainehuskies.com/>
- **Volunteering and Service Learning** – Be on the lookout for ways to get involved in temporary activities such as volunteering and service learning via organized class events or one-time participation. There may even be opportunities that can be performed in your geographic location at a time and place convenient for you where you can receive course credit. The Office of Community Engagement and Career Development and your academic programs are both good resources for ways to blend your learning with community involvement.
- **Student Newspaper and Campus Radio**– Stay up to date on campus happenings, ideas, and opinions with online versions of The Free Press and by tuning into WMPG daily online: <https://usm.maine.edu/sga/student-communications-board>

The above resources are by no means comprehensive, but can serve as starting points for you to engage with your classmates, colleagues, professors, and other helpful people in and around campus and online. If you take classes online or are a distance student and want to share ways that you stay connected with the campus community, please email it to usmonline@maine.edu. If you have suggestions for future advising topics, please contact Janis Albright at janisa@maine.edu.

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