

University of New Hampshire  
NEASC Self-Study Report  
Committee on the Undergraduate Experience

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## Introduction

In the fall of 2003, the University of New Hampshire will undergo its decennial accreditation visit by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). In preparation for this review, the University, after consulting with a wide range of constituencies, created a self-study steering committee. Three areas—The Undergraduate Experience, Engagement through Research and Scholarship, and Institutional Effectiveness—were selected for extended analysis by subcommittees.

The Subcommittee on The Undergraduate Experience, chaired by Professor Sally Ward (Sociology), has been meeting since October 2002. Our work has been guided by the UNH Academic Plan and by a specific charge from the steering committee of the self-study. The Academic Plan states: “The University of New Hampshire will be distinguished for combining the living and learning environment of a New England liberal arts college with the breadth, spirit of discovery, and civic commitment of a land-grant research institution.” This goal challenges us to create a positive learning environment for our students while maintaining the quality and intensity of our research and engagement efforts. In addition, we need to encourage the right mix and balance of the main aspects of the undergraduate experience—academic work, campus activities, co-curricular engagement, recreational opportunities and social life. Our common goal should be to create an undergraduate experience that is “innovative, high quality, coherent, and integrated.”

The initial charge to the Committee on The Undergraduate Experience was to:

- Describe and examine current standards for academic excellence for all students and students’ goals, attitudes and behaviors as they relate to academic expectations. Recommend strategies for recruiting and retaining the highest possible quality students and for clarifying goals for all students.
- Describe and appraise how well we integrate learning across all environments from classroom to lab, dorm, playing fields, internships and beyond, from the first year to graduation. This will include identifying the key change agents at UNH. Evaluate opportunities to improve the integration of General Education, International Education, and Undergraduate Research. Develop other recommendations for better integration of learning.
- Recommend measures and a structure for assessing the integrated UG Experience, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The work of our subcommittee has been greatly aided by several recent efforts to address and improve the quality of the undergraduate experience. In particular, we have benefited from the excellent work of the General Education Study Committee and its report advocating a new general education curriculum; the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience; and the Task Force on the Integration of the University Advising Center and Career Services. Whether utilizing these works or conducting our own inquiry, we have sought to base our conclusions on documentary evidence.

The mission of the University of New Hampshire sets high expectations for our work, and there are inherent tensions in fulfilling the ambitious goals of creating the desired learning environment for students and maintaining the quality and intensity of research and engagement

of a major land-grant research university. There is much to praise in our efforts to meet the objectives implied in our mission, and yet there are areas where we can improve. To that end, the committee identified several areas for close examination, and organized working groups according to their interests and expertise. These areas (and the working groups) were:

- Advising (Judy Spiller, Kelly Black, Bill Condon)
- Undergraduate Research (Bob Mennel, Donna Brown, Val Harper)
- Internships (Sally Ward, Susi Paterson, Pam McPhee)
- International Education (Ted Howard, Mark Rubinstein, Katie Whittemore)
- Student Life (Gavin Henning, Anne Lawing, Janet Sable, Bryan Ames, Denny Byrne, Marty Scarano)

We have been guided in this effort by the Academic Plan, by our understanding of important trends in higher education, and by our collective sense of areas where we can move forward over the next several years.

The committee relied on a number of important reports, data sources, and interviews to document its analyses and conclusions. We developed a Blackboard site for the exchange of information and various reports. The committee has looked at the following reports, which are now available at <http://www.unh.edu/neasc/docs.htm>

- Student evaluations of teaching, by course level, 1996-2001
- Student evaluations of teaching AY2001-02
- Student evaluations of teaching AY 2000-01
- Special Task Force reports on the Undergraduate Experience at UNH
- UNH enrollments by college and year, fall semesters 1998-2001
- Grade distribution reports over time spring semesters
- Grade distribution reports over time fall semesters
- Final report of English 401 review committee, 2002
- UNH Academic Plan

Several additional resources were consulted and are available at <http://www.unh.edu/neasc/links.htm>

- NEASC-CIHE web site
- Northeastern University's NEASC focused self-study
- University of Vermont's focused self-study
- MIT's focused self-study
- Reinventing Undergraduate Education (Boyer Commission on Research Universities)
- Reinventing Undergraduate Education: Three Years After the Boyer Report
- UNH General Education Committee final report
- Greater Expectations - AACU report

The committee invited several key informants to meetings to report on key issue areas as follows:

- Lee Seidel, Director of UNH's Teaching Excellence Center, to discuss evaluation of teaching
- Neil Vroman, Associate Dean of HHS, to discuss the work of ASAC and academic standards

- Mary Rhiel, Professor of German, to discuss the work of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education
- Tom Davis, Professor of Plant Biology, to discuss the work of the Faculty Senate's Ad-hoc Committee on the Discovery Program

We sent a survey to all department chairs to learn about internship activities, advising, and capstone courses. The Undergraduate Research working group sent out a separate survey regarding undergraduate research. We organized two student focus groups to increase student input (December 5 and December 10). In addition to these data sources, each working group has relied on its own set of resources and interviews.

In early March 2003, the draft of the self-study was made available on the self-study website, and it was discussed with a number of groups on campus, including the Faculty Senate, the Academic Standards and Advising Committee, the Advising network (at the Annual Awards luncheon), and the Deans and Chairs group. These discussions were in addition to four open forums held to discuss the self-study process and various reports (three in Durham and one in Manchester). The final report includes many of the suggestions and recommendations we heard throughout the spring semester at these meetings and forums.

In the narrative that follows, we first describe the “overall” goals and ideals that we are trying to achieve in the undergraduate experience, followed by an analysis of the gaps between the goals and the realities -- the appraisal of areas where we need more effort and attention. Then we turn to a presentation of the analyses of the five working groups, in which we include a discussion of description, appraisal, and projections for each study area. Finally, we conclude with a presentation of the general themes that have emerged in our self-study and the general projections and recommendations that follow from these.

## The Overall Undergraduate Experience

### **Description**

As an institution we expect that students will give first priority to their academic work and that this will become the centerpiece of their time at UNH. While there is variation across course level and across faculty members, in general, we expect that students will devote considerable time to their course work outside of class time – the rule of thumb of 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class is a common faculty expectation. We also expect students to become active, engaged members of the campus community and to participate in the wide range of co-curricular activities available. We expect students to seek out and establish relationships with faculty members as part of their development as active, engaged community members. We expect students to understand the importance of academic integrity and civility in their work and in their dealings with other students, with faculty, and with staff. And, perhaps most importantly, we expect students to come to campus ready to learn and to take advantage of the resources available at a research university.

Of course, we have parallel expectations of the institution in its mission of educating the undergraduate student. We expect that faculty will maintain rigorous standards in their evaluation of student progress and work and that they will provide a stimulating learning environment in the classroom. We expect that faculty will be available outside of class to students during posted office hours and that they will provide advice to students on their

academic progress and links between their academic work and their educational goals. We expect that faculty and staff will communicate their expectations to students in their written and spoken words and in their actions, promoting an open and welcoming environment to all students, and treating students with respect. We expect staff to help students negotiate the complexities of the university and point them in the direction of needed services or beneficial co-curricular activities. And we expect faculty and staff to work together to enhance the undergraduate experience and to speak with one voice about the centrality of academics to our work.

There are two important aspects of integration that we have considered in the self-study. First, there is the integration of the student's academic curriculum with the balance of the undergraduate experience. Ideally, students are able to develop the connections between what they do inside and outside the classroom, in co-curricular activities, recreational endeavors, athletics, practical experiences, and their social life. We have deliberately structured most of our courses as four-credit courses, and in many cases these courses have three contact hours. The rationale for this system is to allow students time outside of class to pursue activities that will enhance their course work. The second aspect of integration is on the part of the institution; the ideal is for academic and student affairs to work closely together, integrating their efforts to provide the student's education.

We value coherence in the academic experience and have articulated this in the Academic Plan. Linkages across courses and across the years of study characterize the learning environment of a liberal arts college, the environment we are striving to provide. Ideally, the student will see the connections between the general education curriculum and the curriculum of the major, between the lower level and upper level courses, and between courses in the different disciplines. The curriculum should be designed to enhance these aspects of coherence.

We have invested considerable time and effort over the past three years in studying the curriculum and in proposing revisions in the general education program to enhance the overall curriculum. The Report of the General Education Study Committee (<http://www.unh.edu/gesc/>) specifically notes that the changes proposed aim to make UNH "a more engaging and exciting learning community." (p. 3). Indeed, the entire report reflects the goals of integration and coherence to which we are committed as an institution. Similarly, the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience (<http://www.unh.edu/neasc/docs/taskforcefacultygroup.doc>; <http://www.unh.edu/neasc/docs/taskforceacademicplan.rtf>) has worked long and hard over the past year and a half to advance the planning effort and to identify the core values and priorities for the undergraduate experience.

To measure our performance in reaching these goals, it is important that we develop mechanisms and strategies for evaluation and assessment. We have, for many years, used a standardized instrument to assess students' views of their courses. In addition, the Student Affairs Assessment office conducts regular surveys of the student population on an annual or bi-annual basis. These provide valuable information about how students view the courses they take and how they are engaged with and view the campus community. We have relied extensively on these reports throughout our work.

It is also important for individual programs and departments to develop mechanisms for assessing if and how well they are achieving the goals they have articulated for the curriculum.

Are students learning what the program is intending? Over the past year and a half, a group of “assessment fellows”, faculty and staff from each school and college, have been meeting to help programs and departments develop assessment strategies. (<http://www.unh.edu/academic-affairs/assessment/index.htm>) They have developed a website as a campus resource, including case studies of effective assessments on campus. Several programs have developed working relationships with the Student Affairs Assessment office to coordinate programmatic assessment efforts with the on-going data collection work of that office. We are committed to efforts to improve and further assessment work throughout the various facets of the undergraduate experience.

### **Appraisal**

While we are quite successful in reaching some of our goals, there are gaps between the ideals and the reality. We turn now to an analysis of the gaps. We will then present the description and appraisal of our five working group reports, before turning to recommendations for future work.

To begin the appraisal effort, we have relied on several sources of data describing the undergraduate students. Because UNH is a complex institution, there is no “typical” undergraduate student, and this complicates our efforts to describe the population. Some of the most consistent data come from only partial segments of students. Nonetheless, these data are informative. Specifically, as of fall 2002, there were 10768 undergraduate students in Durham; 4228 of these lived in residence halls; 971 lived in on-campus apartments (Gables and Woodside); the remaining 5569 lived off-campus (in Durham and surrounding towns). In addition, there were approximately 700 undergraduate students on the UNH-Manchester campus (763 headcount; 653 FTE). Most of the consistent data we have describe only one of these segments -- the students living in residence halls. Since most of these students are first and second year students, and since the first years of the undergraduate experience are so important in establishing the students on campus and in their programs of study, we have chosen to rely on these data for revealing generalizations about the student population. It should be emphasized, however, that the data are much more accurate in describing the “traditional” students than the non-traditional students who are a major part of the UNH-Manchester student body.

The evidence we have from students is that they have a positive academic experience, that they are engaged in the community outside class, and that their overall experience at UNH is positive. On the standard student evaluation of teaching for 2000-2001, for example, the average score for all courses on question 14 (“Overall, how would you rate this instructor?) was 4.41 (standard deviation of .526).<sup>1</sup> Several items on the annual Student Profile Survey<sup>2</sup>, administered each fall in the residence halls, also indicate a positive, effective experience among students. A large majority of the students surveyed feel they have had a positive experience at UNH (78%), and that they feel “positively connected” to enough other people on campus (59%) and know at least one faculty or staff member they can go to for help (62%). A sizable minority of the students feel they know about events on campus and can get involved in campus organizations (45% and 48%). While one could argue that there is room for improvement in these two figures, in general, there is good news in these figures about the perception of the student experience and feelings of connection. The picture is more troubling for the results that deal specifically with academics. Given the importance of relationships with faculty for a high quality undergraduate

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<sup>1</sup> UNH Teaching Excellence Program, “Student Reactions to Teaching at the University of New Hampshire for Academic Year 2000-2001, August 2001, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Administered by the Division of Student Affairs Office of Assessment.

experience, it is disappointing that only 42% of the students have experienced a meaningful connection with a faculty member.<sup>3</sup> Even more troubling is the percentage of students who are NOT challenged by the faculty's academic expectations (only 63% report being challenged, while 37% report being neutral or not challenged). Given our perception of the academic standards, this is an area of concern. Almost a fifth of the students (19%) report the environment is not intellectually stimulating, and 43% are often bored in class (See Table 1). The students in the residence halls, those who are responding to this survey, are predominantly first and second year students, and the patterns established during the first year are often resistant to change; it is important that we address the weaknesses in the academic environment suggested by these data. It is significant that the General Education Study Committee and the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience also have argued that the first year experience at UNH is a crucial developmental stage that can greatly influence the success of the undergraduate experience as a whole.

Another indication of the standards we actually uphold is provided by the grades assigned to students in courses. We have examined grade distribution reports provided by Institutional Research; the trend from 1977 to 2001 is characterized by an increase in grades of A and A- (from 23% of all grades in 1977 to 31% in 2001, fall semesters) and a decrease in very low grades, although this decrease is not as dramatic as the increase at the high end of the grade distribution (9% to 7%). Grading is a complex activity and outcome of the undergraduate experience, so we do not want to over-simplify the explanation for these changes. However, we find these trends troubling and suggestive of a change in our expectations of student work; if students report not being challenged and not spending the amount of time on course work outside of class that we expect but they are still making good grades, what is the message we are communicating? We conclude that there is a gap here between the standards we articulate among ourselves and those we actually use for evaluating students. This gap needs to be analyzed more extensively.

Table 1: Student Profile Survey, fall 2001  
(n=3971)

Item	%agree
My overall experience at UNH has been positive	78%
I do not feel connected to the UNH community	22%
I feel positively connected with enough people at UNH	59%
I generally know about events happening on campus	45%
I can easily get involved in campus organizations	48%
I've experienced meaningful connections with a UNH faculty member	42%
I've experienced meaningful connections with a UNH professional staff member	43%
I know at least one UNH faculty/staff member to whom I can go for reliable information	62%
I have participated in an informal study group this semester	48%
I am challenged by the faculty's academic expectations at UNH	63%
UNH does not provide me with an intellectually stimulating environment	19%
I am often bored in class	43%

<sup>3</sup> The Profile survey is administered in the residence halls, so these figures describe first and second year students for the most part. We are missing data on upper-class students, whom we hope have closer ties with faculty and staff. A shortcoming of our assessment efforts is that we have limited information on the experiences of upper-class students.

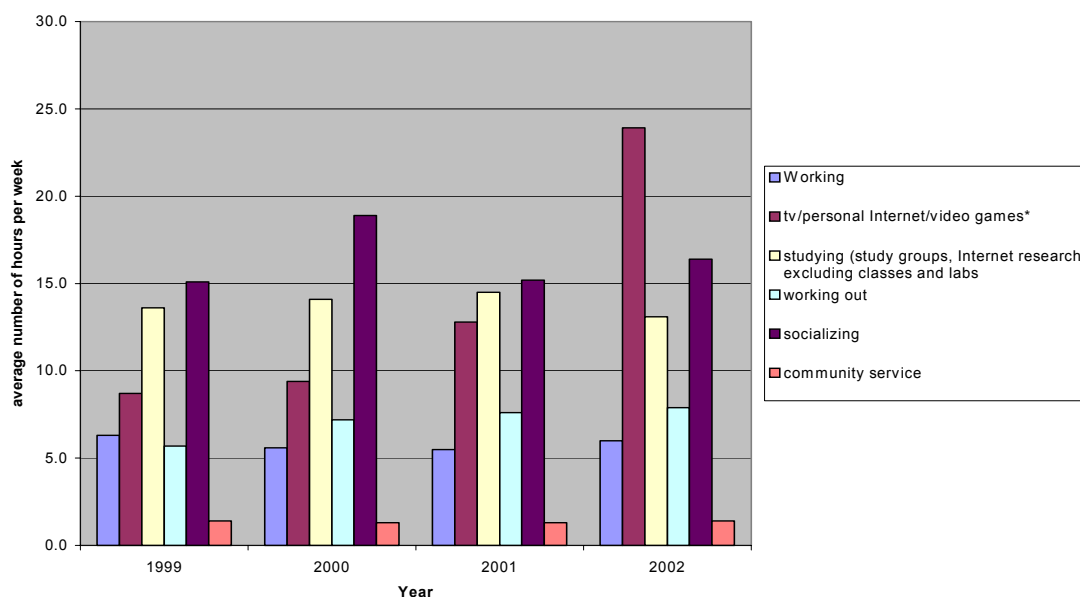
The social atmosphere on this campus promotes alcohol use	58%

Source: Student Affairs Assessment Office

Note: residence hall students only are surveyed

A final relevant piece of evidence is an estimate of how much time students spend studying. The Profile Survey asks students to estimate how much of their time they spend on a variety of activities. Although these estimates are imprecise and the data are collected only in the residence halls, the results for the last several years are informative (see Figure 1). The average number of hours the student respondents report studying has remained relatively constant since 1999. The average for time spent socializing has also remained about the same over this time period, and this is consistently higher than the time devoted to studying. The major change over time is the substantial increase in time spent on TV/personal Internet use/video games. Most of this increase can be attributed to the dramatic increase in the amount of time students spend on the Internet. A majority of these students also perceive that the social atmosphere on campus promotes alcohol use (58%, see Table 1). Definitive conclusions are not warranted, but the

Figure 1: Hours Students Spend on Various Activities, 1999-2002



patterns in these data from students are suggestive. While it is important for students to live balanced lives, with an appropriate mix of time spent on studies, recreational activities, socializing, and participating in student organizations, we expect students to be spending a substantial amount of their time on their academic work.<sup>4</sup> These data indicate that the reality is different from our expectation – students do not spend as much time on studies as we expect, even less time than they spend socializing.

If we held students to higher standards and pushed them more academically, their studying time might increase, socializing time decrease, and time spent on potentially problematic social activities such as partying and drinking decline as a result. These are issues and relationships

<sup>4</sup> This expectation varies significantly across and between campuses; students at UNH-M who are working full-time and supporting their families do not have the time to spend on their academics that is expected of a full-time 18-22 year old undergraduate in Durham. This is only one of the significant differences between the two campuses and their missions.

that deserve more attention.<sup>5</sup>

We have identified five particular programmatic areas for further study and focus as part of the self-study. We believe these areas have potential for addressing the goals of the academic plan and for creating the positive, integrated undergraduate experience to which we aspire. We have studied these areas as tools for facilitating progress toward enhancing the undergraduate experience, so the comments that follow are not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of each area. That is the task of various strategic plans that are being developed as part of the planning effort.

## Advising

### Description and Appraisal.<sup>6</sup>

Academic advising plays a central role in the undergraduate experience. Done well, it integrates students' course work with the larger mission of the University and prepares them for life beyond college. It establishes enduring relationships. Done poorly, it slows progress to degree and leaves students unaided in developing coherence in their college education.

Ideally, academic advising:

- Engages students;
- Builds student-advisor collaborations;
- Helps students fulfill major program and University requirements;
- Assures graduation in a timely fashion;
- Stimulates exploration outside of the students' major disciplines;
- Encourages intellectual connections across disciplines;
- Integrates in and out of classroom experiences;
- Helps set goals and strategies to achieve them during and after college; and
- Prepares students for graduate study and/or employment.

All undergraduates have an assigned academic advisor with whom they meet at least once each semester to review academic progress and approve course selections prior to registration for the subsequent semester. The University expects that advisors are available to meet with students throughout the semester; knowledgeable about University requirements, major requirements, and other campus resources; able to motivate students about the reasons and importance of these requirements and, more generally, a liberal arts education; and interested in students' welfare beyond their classes. The University also expects that students will seek out their advisors; come to advising meetings having reviewed their academic progress to date and course choices for registration; monitor their fulfillment of University and major program requirements; explore

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<sup>5</sup> The task force on alcohol and other drug use addresses some of these concerns, and the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience examined these issues in some depth.

<sup>6</sup> Data on advising came from several sources: the Chairs' survey on advising assignments, load, rewards/incentives, strengths and weaknesses; interviews with professional advisors, discussions with the Associate Deans; student Focus Groups; and Reports of past reviews of University advising.

and engage intellectually across academic areas, including outside their declared majors; meet deadlines; use campus resources and follow-up on referrals; and check their campus mail boxes and e-mail accounts.

We know that these goals and expectations are realized for some students and their advisors. We also know that for others, we fall short. Students often have difficulty finding their faculty advisors. When they do, they may receive a hurried signature without advice. The default advisor sometimes is the departmental administrative assistant. New students frequently express confusion about who their advisor is or if they even have one. Some students have commented that their advisors do not seem to know University requirements and procedures. Some students follow the path of least resistance by using their friends in the advising capacity often to the detriment of the student advised.

Most faculty advisors report demanding schedules that leave scarce time for advising -- an activity that carries little formal recognition in the promotion and tenure process. Faculty typically believe that advising is part of "the job". They cite "personal satisfaction" as the only reward for good advising. There are seemingly no consequences for poor or indifferent advising, though over time students are diverted from those advisors. The students may also seek a different major.

Many faculty advisors enjoy working with upper level students where they serve as mentors in the disciplines. Particularly in the smaller departments, faculty highlight advising as an opportunity to get to know their students well. Some report that their advisees eventually become their professional colleagues, adding to the value of the advising experience. Less satisfying is advising on University requirements. Some faculty advisors indicate continuing confusion over the University Writing requirement. Many faculty are unaware of the advising resources available through the University's student information system. Those aware of the online system find it not user friendly. Most have never received a copy of the Faculty Advising Handbook -- revised each year by the University Advising and Career Center and distributed to all new faculty -- and do not know that it is available online.

Also challenging is advising students confused about their academic paths, particularly those in their first year. Advising is often cited as being focused on helping students meet requirements rather than exploring a discipline. Many first year students find faculty intimidating and University life overwhelming. Seeking help and knowing how to ask questions are challenges for these students.

Staff in the University Advising and Career Center or the Deans' offices handles most undeclared advising. These advisors see a particularly high volume of students during the relatively brief windows before students register for classes online. These meetings of necessity are short. Unless students take advantage of their advisors earlier in the semester neither they nor the advisors find these meetings very satisfying.

Another advising issue concerns the current General Education program. Many advisors and students experience it as a series of requirements to be met rather than as a tool for exploration and development of critical thinking and analytical skills. These views suggest that the program needs intentional linkages among courses across categories to stimulate integrative thinking. Absent that, the program becomes simply a hurdle to overcome as students move toward their

degrees. (The proposed Discovery Program would go a long way toward addressing this weakness.)

Some faculty also views departmental and program requirements as limiting student exploration outside the major. Several programs leave no room for electives in the first semesters, and many leave only one slot open. That is usually left for a general education course so that students are able to progress toward that requirement. These rigidities pit the goals of a liberal arts education against the needs of a discipline to assure the competence of its graduates.

Most advisors and students see the benefits of the University's real-time, on-line registration system. Further, advisors continue to support advisor sign off on student schedules each semester. Many advisors, however, see the system as driving the experience. Student advisor meetings are compressed into a brief period of time. Having gotten advisor approval for a schedule in the form of an access code, students then may register online for a completely different suite of courses. Because student registration times are generated randomly, there is little incentive for students to prepare early. The last minute mentality is reinforced when students discover that seats in high demand courses often become available at the end of the registration process. Given the demand on advisor time, the experience falls short of the ideal.

Many advisors view students as lacking motivation to take responsibility for understanding requirements and meeting deadlines. These behaviors often underlie student complaints about advising. The inability to get the classes they want or the majors they wish is often traced to students' failure to follow their advisors' recommendations, meet University deadlines and/or attain the grade point average to qualify for a program.

Each of colleges and schools approaches advising somewhat differently and within those units, departments may allocate the advising load differently. Undeclared students in each college/school are advised by the Associate Dean and staff with three exceptions. Those assigned to the College of Liberal Arts are advised by University Advising and Career Center staff. Approximately 40% of the students who enter as Liberal Arts undeclared eventually declare majors outside of that College; approximately 10% of the students advised in the Center came from the other colleges/schools. These staff advisors, therefore, must be knowledgeable about programs and requirements across the University curriculum. Departmental decisions about who advises which and how many students are typically made by the department chair. All departments have an undergraduate program coordinator -- sometimes the department chair and sometimes another faculty member -- who serves as the initial contact for students seeking to declare that major. The chair or undergraduate coordinator is often assisted by a department staff member. In the larger departments, an undergraduate program coordinator may handle all advising responsibilities. In a few departments, one faculty member advises all undergraduates. In others, students select their advisors based on their academic interest or students are assigned to a faculty member based on interest. A few departments assign a faculty member to each entering class. That person then advises students through to graduation.

Equally variable is the percentage of students each faculty member might advise. Some chairs and undergraduate coordinators try to divide up advisees equally. A few faculty members may end up carrying the entire advising load in some departments, particularly those where students opt for an advisor based on interest. Most departments have the expectation that all faculty advise students; however, as faculty members go on leave and student interests change, the

allocation shifts.

Departments vary in the preparation and guidance they provide faculty advisors. A few have handbooks; some refer their faculty to the Faculty Advising Handbook or the University Advising and Career Center. The orientation for new faculty covers the topic briefly; some of the colleges/schools address advising as part of their programs for new faculty. Most new faculty, however, learn advising from doing it. Staff advisors belong to the University-wide Professional Advising Network, which serves to keep that group up-to-date. That organization hosts a list serve, Advise.Net. All professional advisors and undergraduate coordinators are subscribed to this list, where changes in requirements and procedures as well as deadlines are announced.

### **Projections.**

While it is easy to find fault with our current approach to academic advising, it is important to note that based on undergraduate retention rates and time to degree, the University compares favorably with its peers. Many faculty and professional staff advisors work closely with their advisees, and many students seek and follow the guidance provided by their advisors. Undeclared students -- perhaps the most challenging population -- commonly express satisfaction with their advising experience, citing both the availability of their advisors and their knowledge.

Yet, there is room for improvement and that improvement will only come if there are tangible incentives assigned to good advising and the system itself is simplified.

Recommendation: Provide incentives for faculty advising and tie those rewards to regular evaluation and participation in training on advising.

Recommendation: Simplify the process of advising to encourage advisor understanding of University-wide requirements and policies and student accountability for meeting requirements and following policies. Specific steps include: user-friendly on-line technology that provides degree audits and listings of students' advisors with advisor e-mail links; adoption of the revised General Education program (the Discovery Program) which is more easily explained, understood, and fulfilled because it incorporates linked and/or interdisciplinary courses that intentionally integrate the undergraduate experience; and closer monitoring of the academic progress of first semester students.

## **Creating a Culture of Undergraduate Research**

### **Description and Appraisal.<sup>7</sup>**

A key way to advance our mission is to link research to the undergraduate experience through undergraduate research opportunities. It is difficult to establish a uniform description of undergraduate research, given the variety of ways in which academic researchers and scholars engage in research within their respective disciplines, and the ways in which undergraduates may participate in scholarly and research activities. For purposes of the self-study, we consider undergraduate research to be experiences in which a faculty mentor is working directly with a student on research (as defined by the discipline) and in which the student is involved first-hand in scholarship or research as it is designed, carried out, and shared within the discipline.

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<sup>7</sup> Data come from a Survey of Engagement in Undergraduate Research, conducted for this self-study, and from reports of the various offices mentioned here (Honors, UROP, IROP, Library).

Research is defined broadly to include research, scholarship, and creative artistic endeavors.

There are five categories of opportunities for undergraduate research: 1) credit-bearing courses (including independent studies, research methods courses, senior projects, advanced courses in major); 2) Honors Program theses; 3) projects funded by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the International Research Opportunities Program (IROP); 4) projects funded by faculty grants; 5) research done on a volunteer basis (no credit, no remuneration). Of these five categories, accurate figures on the number of participants are available only for the Honors Program, UROP, and IROP. No attempt has ever been made to determine the number of students participating in all categories.

Departments vary widely in the type and extent of research opportunities available to undergraduates. Some departments have long histories of encouraging undergraduate research (e.g., psychology, chemistry, biological sciences). Some have formalized requirements for their majors, including research methods courses (e.g., sociology, history, psychology, nursing, biochemistry) and/or a capstone experience or senior project (e.g., mechanical engineering, humanities program, dual major in international affairs). There is no university-wide requirement, and the precise nature of the research project or capstone experience and expectations of performance are determined by the respective departments.

Given their centrality to undergraduate research, it is important to address the Honors Program, the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, and the International Research Opportunities Program. The Honors Program was created in 1985 to offer an enriched undergraduate education to outstanding students and to encourage talented New Hampshire high school students to consider attending their state university. Approximately 12% of the first-year class participates in the program. All students completing any of the degree options in the Honors Program must complete a thesis. In the 19 years since the Program began, over 1300 students have graduated. Graduates of the Program cite their general education seminars and, especially, the challenge of writing a thesis as positive experiences that prepared them well for graduate education and/or the workplace. Designing a research plan and seeing it through under the guidance of a faculty mentor and, perhaps, presenting findings to an educated audience clearly benefit those students who are willing to expend the effort. Further efforts are needed to increase these opportunities for more students.

UNH made an institutional commitment to encourage undergraduate research with the creation of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program in 1987. From the outset, UROP was a university-wide program dedicated to encouraging undergraduate research in all fields of study. The program develops important research skills, including proposal design and preparation, budget management, compliance with ethical conduct in research, collaboration with faculty, and public research presentation. UROP has always been open to all university students and has attempted to encourage students from disciplines that do not typically participate in undergraduate research. Since its inception UROP has supported over 1200 students through one of three types of support: Undergraduate Research Awards, Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (USA & Abroad) and Research Presentation Grants (see Table 2).

The International Research Opportunities Program (IROP) began with a three-year grant (1997-2000) from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) and institutional matching funds. Currently supported with UNH funds,

IROP offers a few well-qualified undergraduates opportunities for advanced research in an international setting, allowing students to collaborate with both UNH faculty members

Table 2: Total UROP Awards by Type, 1987-2002

Type of Award	1987-94	1995-2002
Undergraduate Research Awards	383	335
Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship	107	236
Research Presentation Grants	52	121

and foreign research mentors. In addition to promoting research skills, IROP adds the challenge of integrating international experience with academic development. Students who successfully meet this challenge count their newly assertive global awareness and profoundly enhanced self-reliance among their many rewards. The first group of IROP students traveled abroad in the summer of 1999. From that time, a total of 35 students have participated, traveling to 23 different countries, representing 23 different UNH departments and 5 different colleges.

In addition to these three programs that have begun to foster a culture of undergraduate research at UNH, the University has reinforced the importance of students presenting their research by sponsoring a university-wide Undergraduate Research Conference, now in its fourth year. In 2003 the conference will be a weeklong event of activities celebrating the quality and breadth of research, creative presentations, and scholarly work undertaken by UNH undergraduates.

Finally, the University Library is a vital resource for undergraduate research. The library supports both undergraduate coursework and research in a variety of ways. Over the past ten years, the number of electronic information resources available to students remotely—from dormitory rooms, offices, homes, and computer clusters—has increased greatly. Digital books and journals, datasets, catalogs, and databases provide researchers with information at any time of day from any location. The renovation of the Dimond Library, the main library facility, not only improved the physical facility but greatly increased access to electronic resources for those students not owning a personal computer; over 90 workstations are available throughout the University Library. Recognizing the increasing complexity of research and the growing number of electronic resources, the Library has endeavored to provide a variety of options for instruction and assistance for undergraduates.

The UNH Academic Plan calls for the University to “provide undergraduate students an innovative, high quality, coherent and integrated education experience,” and specifically urges that undergraduate research be “more integral to the academic experience.” Integration is perhaps the greatest area of concern for undergraduate research. A recent content analysis of all undergraduate course descriptions indicates that approximately 250-270 courses appear to make an explicit attempt to address how research is conducted in the discipline, teach research techniques or methodology, or allow students to engage in original research. Only 8-9% of these courses, however, are offered at the lower division level; the remaining courses are upper division and principally for majors. Achieving a more systematic and coherent introduction of lower division students to research across the university will be a major curricular challenge.

As selective, competitive programs, Honors, UROP, and IROP have served a special student clientele. UROP and IROP student evaluations and alumni surveys offer extensive anecdotal

information on the variety of ways in which students benefit from their undergraduate research experience. In the Honors Program the quality of thesis work and the success of graduates, as reported on exit questionnaires and at the Honors alumni website, give ample testimony to the integral and successful relationship between UROP/IROP and the Honors Program and the important role that completion of the honors thesis has played in the students' perceptions of the value of their undergraduate education. However, to meet the goals of the Academic Plan, these programs must work to develop ways in which the positive learning experiences associated with undergraduate research can have a broader reach across the student population and be more systematically integrated into the undergraduate curriculum. Steps to achieving broader impact will include new courses designed to familiarize students with research early in their undergraduate careers. The adoption of a fully articulated General Education Discovery curriculum featuring a first-year seminar and a senior project will contribute to a more purposeful, consistent, and coherent undergraduate experience.

While there are multiple opportunities for undergraduate research and it is clearly valued by the institution, one key concern is the uneven participation across programs and the schools and colleges. There has been a steady growth in the number of students who complete the Honors Program, for instance, but the participation is not consistent across the university. Some departments have fully articulated programs while others have languished. This is a prime topic of discussion in the recent external review of the University Honors Program and will be discussed with the colleges during the spring semester of 2003. Like the Honors Program, UROP and IROP have an uneven rate of participation among the various departments and colleges. Following national trends in undergraduate research, the biological and physical sciences and engineering have been the most active, along with the social sciences. The traditional challenge of all undergraduate research programs has been to increase participation by the liberal arts, specifically the humanities. At least two factors contribute to these disparities. First, there is a tendency to equate "research" with "science." Second, the incentives for mentoring are more apparent in at least some areas of scientific inquiry than they are in the humanities, while the potential disincentives are fewer. Many COLSA and social science UROP students are participants in ongoing research projects. They are often urged to apply to UROP by faculty mentors who not only recognize the educational benefits of participation in UROP but also value the laboratory or field assistance to be gained. In addition, because their research is going on whether or not a UROP student participates, and is in many cases funded by grant money, they are probably less likely than faculty from other disciplines to feel that their UROP-related activities will go unrecognized (and uncompensated). Humanities faculty members, on the other hand, are more likely to be asked to serve as mentors for truly independent, student-initiated projects; in those cases, the issue of faculty incentives (see below) may be particularly important. In the disciplines represented by the School of Health and Human Services, the need to meet the certification requirements of external professional organizations and major requirements to gain clinical experience allow less time for students to participate in undergraduate research. Yet the nursing program has been one of the most active, both in Honors and in UROP, and several students from this college have participated in IROP. As shown in Table 3, WSBE represents the lowest participation in UROP and IROP on the Durham campus. It is possible that students in the areas of business and management prefer to seek practical on-the-job experience rather than pursue undergraduate research.

Table 3: Distribution of UROP Awards by College, 1987-2002

College	% of awards by college
Life Sciences and Agriculture	42%
Liberal Arts	27
Engineering and Physical Sciences	19
Health and Human Services	9
Whittemore School	2
UNH-M	1

In addition to contributing to the noted cross-discipline differences, the issue of faculty incentives is also critical to the overall success of undergraduate research. Faculty who have served as UROP mentors comment on the rewards of working with motivated students and helping to shape their intellectual lives. Still, mentoring takes time and may have to be wedged into an already busy academic schedule. There is no formal mechanism for “counting” mentoring activities in the faculty workload or in promotion and tenure decisions. In the Survey of Engagement in Undergraduate Research conducted for the self-study, 48 of 57 respondents (19 department chairs and 38 other faculty members) noted “insufficient time” as an obstacle to engagement, and 35 respondents suggested faculty incentives/recognition for mentoring as a means of increasing engagement in undergraduate research.

## Projections

Our goal at UNH is not merely to *offer* undergraduate research opportunities but to create a *culture* of undergraduate research on campus. Recognition of the benefits of undergraduate research has grown in recent years. The successes of UROP, IROP, and Honors Program students have been well-publicized, on- and off-campus. Students and faculty mentors alike testify to the value of participation in these programs. The University’s Academic Plan reflects a strong commitment to providing even more undergraduate research opportunities and acknowledges not only their educational value but also their role in the recruitment of motivated students and the maintenance of a high-quality intellectual environment. There are important challenges as we continue to create the culture of undergraduate research to which we aspire. Recommendation Recognize and reward faculty mentoring of undergraduate research. Undergraduate Research is heavily dependent upon faculty supervision and one-on-one mentoring. To preserve and strengthen this faculty responsibility, faculty mentoring must be appropriately recognized and rewarded. This involves, at a minimum, mention in P&T Guidelines; inclusion of work with undergraduates on research as part of teaching and research responsibilities rather than as part of “service;” specific formula to count mentoring as part of faculty workload; public recognition for such work; and encouragement of mentoring through workshops for junior faculty and graduate students by senior faculty.

Recommendation Undergraduate Research should be more clearly integrated in the undergraduate curriculum. Better integration will provide some relief to the time commitment of one-on-one mentoring of individual students and the expense of funding individual student projects. Moreover, integration has its own intrinsic merits and should be guided by two fundamental objectives: 1) to introduce students to the research skills, methodology, and scholarly and creative practices of the respective disciplines, and 2) to offer students more opportunities to participate directly in research and scholarly and creative activities following the model of professionals within their fields of study.

Recommendation Pay particular attention to the ways in which the new decentralized budgeting system -- Responsibility Center Management (RCM) -- may affect the ability to enhance undergraduate research. There is a perception that the implementation of RCM has created a

centrifugal effect on the flow of funds away from the Office of Academic Affairs and to the colleges. To the extent that this is the case, this undermines the ability of UROP, IROP, Honors, and the other academic support programs that are housed in Academic Affairs, to carry out their work. The implementation of the recommendations in this report, as well as the goals of the Academic Plan, will depend on the college deans assuming a leadership role in this endeavor and on a reward structure across disciplines that recognizes the value of engagement in undergraduate research. The balance of RCM principles with academic principles that require collaboration across RCM units needs to be addressed.

## **Internships and Other Practical Experiences**

### **Description and Appraisal.**<sup>8</sup>

Internships are an increasingly important aspect of the undergraduate experience at UNH. The vast majority of programs offer some option for students to explore the practical application of knowledge through an internship or other practical experience. Based on the information we obtained from department chairs, we know that a range of opportunities exists, including “internships,” “field experience,” “practica,” “service learning,” “exhibitions,” and “work in clinical settings,” among others. In fact, the range of options is both great and potentially confusing for students and for the institution.

Of the approximately thirty programs for which we have concrete data, we know that twenty-three have a separate course for an internship experience. Only four do not have such a course. Only nine programs actually require an internship course as part of the major; it is optional for most of the others, and in at least one case, the internship course cannot be used for the major. There is a separate internship course that is available for any UNH-M student (UMST 500), and students in any program can sign up for a credit-bearing internship under this course number, provided they have a faculty sponsor. All thirty programs offer some sort of practical experience, but the range of these is great, and some of the experiences are not integrated at all with the rest of the program’s curriculum. The School of Health and Human Services programs are at one end of the continuum: these programs have the most integrated practical experiences, and these are integrated fully with the rest of the curriculum. At the other end of the continuum are a number of programs that offer some sort of practical experience, but these are not integrated at all with the rest of the curriculum; they are very much an aside.

In sum, we identified a variety of mechanisms for practical experience, most commonly internships, but other vehicles exist. There is little systematic in common among these experiences. Some are offered via courses, some are not. Some carry academic credit; some do not. The range of academic credit is great – 0 to 16. In most cases, students can receive pay for an internship (although this is uncommon), but in other cases, pay is not an option when academic credit is connected with the internship. And a minority of the responding programs fully integrates the internship/practical experiences with the rest of the program’s curriculum.

There appears to be a gap between student expectations and opportunities for practical experience, as represented by internships. We know from the CIRP fall 2001 survey that

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<sup>8</sup> Data come from a Chair survey and survey to faculty at UNH-M; interviews with the internship coordinator at UNH-M and the staff member in UACC responsible for internships; the student Focus Groups; and the Report of the Task Force on Integrating Advising and Career Resources at UNH (July 2001).

students expect practical experience/training in their college experience. For instance, 68% of the students reported that “to be able to get a better job” was a very important reason for coming to college. 68% reported coming to college “to get training for a specific career.” We infer from these reports that students expect practical experiences as part of their college careers. In some important areas, this expectation is fully realized. The programs in HHS, for instance, have well-developed practical and/or clinical experiences as a core aspect of their curricula. In other cases, practical experiences are very much of a hit-or-miss proposition.

Similarly, in some programs the practical experiences that are offered are fully integrated with the curriculum. But in other cases, if there are practical experiences and internships, these are distinct from the traditional course-linked curriculum. In some cases, internships are available to the students, but these do not count as part of the major, which raises questions about how faculty view internships and the application of knowledge in practical settings. Faculty supervision is the norm for internships that are offered in academic programs, but the way in which such supervision counts towards a faculty member’s load is neither systematic nor well thought out. In the majority of cases, the supervision simply does not count as part of the faculty work load.

Another important dimension of integration is the relationship between the academic programs and the Internship Office of the University Advising and Career Center. In the majority of cases, the relationship is weak at best. In some cases, there may be legitimate academic reasons for the gap between academic internship offerings and the Internship Office, and established internship programs that work well without connections to the Internship Office should not be disturbed. For instance, WSBE has a number of internship options for students, and the internship sites are identified through faculty connections with the business community. WSBE has established its own internship coordinator to help facilitate these arrangements. But in other cases, the gap is a function of a lack of communication and information. The Internship Office policy is to refer students to their advisor if they want to get academic credit for an internship experience. This is as it should be. However, programs that offer internships do not consistently rely on the resources of the Internship Office for help in identifying appropriate internship sites and experiences. The office maintains a database of internship opportunities (the WORK web-based program), but departments do not consistently rely on this for the development of internships for students. The University Advising and Career Center is currently providing outreach to the colleges and schools in this area, a productive development. This is an area for more work to reduce the gap between the Internship Office and academic programs that interferes with students’ ability to realize their expectations for practical experiences.

The UNH-M campus provides an exception to this lack of integration between academics and internships. In Fall 2002 an Internship Coordinator position was established. The coordinator has a number of responsibilities: to oversee the internship experience in Communication Arts; to serve as a resource to other programs that have internship experiences as part of their curricula; to further develop internship programs to promote the urban mission of the campus; and to be the contact when someone from an agency or business is seeking a student for an internship. The coordinator is responsible for publicizing internship opportunities through the use of a database (under construction), and through an internship board. This position will also provide a centralized location for data to be collected on where and how many students are placed every year, providing the college with an ongoing resource to track student engagement with these opportunities.

It should be pointed out that the Internship Office in Durham plays an important role in offering students opportunities that are not tied to their academic programs of study. Students occasionally want to try something new, to explore a different option, or to test their skills in the world of work. In these cases, the students do not want to tie the internship to their studies, and the Internship Office works with these students to identify internship possibilities. There is no academic credit, and thus no need to work with academic departments.

Programs need to know if their students expect practical experiences, and while some data on this is part of the CIRP survey administered every other fall, it is not clear that programs know about the data or access it in any systematic way. In addition, assessment would be enhanced if we collected information on how students evaluate their internship experiences. It is probably the case that those programs in which there is little integration also lack an assessment of internships. The standard student evaluations of teaching do not include items that are specifically useful for assessing internships. While the Internship Office assesses internships from the perspective of the employer, there is no mechanism in place at that office to assess the experience from the student's point of view.

### **Projections**

Internship experiences are an important expectation among students, and they are essential for some programs. In order to enhance these opportunities, we recommend several steps over the next five years:

Recommendation There is such a wide range of experiences that are labelled "internship" that the term does little to communicate what the experience entails. It is important for us to clarify what we mean by an "internship" and to develop some common expectations about what is entailed in an internship, both in terms of academic expectations and faculty involvement. A common definition and common course numbering would greatly clarify what is now a confusing reality.

Recommendation All programs need to carefully examine the possibility of and expectation for practical experiences for their students. Practical experiences are obvious for some programs, but not for others, and in these less obvious cases, faculty should consult with programs that do offer model internship opportunities both within UNH and in their discipline at other institutions. To the maximum extent possible, all academic programs should have an identified, credit-bearing internship course. A campus-wide workshop to share ideas and practices would be a good vehicle for both communication and faculty development.

Recommendation Greater centralization of information and resources for internships and more collaboration between academic programs and the Internship Office would facilitate student access to internships. We do not advocate less programmatic autonomy for handling internships, but we do advocate greater sharing of information about options and opportunities. We also advocate more centralization of data on internships; nationwide 77% of students graduate with at least two internships. What is the figure at UNH? We do not know since the data are not collected in any systematic way. This is an activity that the Internship Office could develop and thus make a significant contribution to the assessment of internships. The Task Force on Integrating Advising and Career Services (July 2001) recommended that programs identify a liaison to work with the Internship Office to facilitate communication and knowledge about internships, and the new University Advising and Career Center has begun this work. Consistent, sustained communication is a key for successful integration.

Recommendation Faculty work with students on internships must be recognized and counted in

faculty workload and in the reward structure. In the majority of cases, internship supervision is not counted as part of the faculty load; it is unrecognized and thus marginalized. There are some notable exceptions, and models need to be shared about how to do this. There is no reason an internship should not be counted if it is “generating credits.” What are the formulas and strategies that are working in this regard? Programs should study this, in conjunction with their Deans and the Provost’s office. If the reward structure does not recognize and reward work with internships, it is doubtful that we can make substantial progress.

## International Education

### Description and Appraisal <sup>9</sup>

UNH undergraduate students must learn to appreciate, understand, and function effectively in a world in which international relationships and global forces continuously affect their lives. To achieve that outcome, international education must be a coherent part of their academic experience. There are three major aspects of the current undergraduate experience that are vehicles for international education: the *undergraduate curriculum* in some programs and the foreign culture requirements in the General Education curriculum; *study abroad programs*; and the *dual major in International Affairs*.

UNH provides several programs of study with international emphases. UNH provides language, literature, and culture majors, minors, and/or course work in Spanish, French, modern Greek, Italian, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese. There are also several majors with formal and informal international concentrations (e.g., anthropology, economics, political science, tourism, natural resources). Interdisciplinary majors in European Cultural and French Studies, and minors in Latin American, Canadian, and Asian Studies are open to interested students. In addition, all UNH undergraduates must fulfill a “Foreign Cultures” general education requirement. To meet this requirement, UNH undergraduates may choose an intermediate level language course or one of nearly three dozen non-language courses, of which only about one-third have an international focus. There is a separate foreign language requirement for students in B.A. programs, usually fulfilled with two semesters of study of a foreign language.

The Foreign Cultures general education requirement is a necessary but insufficient condition for a globally authentic education. Most UNH undergraduates do not engage in international academic studies beyond the minimum requirement. With the exception of internationally focused majors, and lightly-enrolled area studies minors, international engagement is not integrated into the typical undergraduate program. To achieve greater integration, we will need to expand the international content of general education requirements, strengthen foreign languages and area studies, and encourage students to advance to higher levels of language learning where appropriate.

UNH manages 22 study-abroad programs in 14 countries on 4 continents. We are directly responsible for programs in Spain, France, New Zealand, India, Hungary, England, and Italy. In addition, the Center for International Education (CIE) has approved, using criteria established in 1998, over 300 study abroad programs provided by other institutions and organizations. In 2000-

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<sup>9</sup> Data come from CIE Annual Reports, various years.

01 we sent 453 students overseas; the trend in participation is upwards and is expected to exceed 500 students in 2002-03. UNH has a very generous financial aid policy for study abroad students in which students are eligible to use their UNH scholarships and grants to fund their costs. This policy helps make the study abroad experience affordable for a wider range of our students than is often the case at other public institutions.

Most UNH-managed programs operate in a decentralized manner. While creating ownership of international education within the academic units, the decentralization sometimes leads to coordination problems and administrative inconsistencies. Although UNH has a policy manual for study away, the policies are not always followed faithfully. In fact, since the adoption of the policies in 1998, several study abroad initiatives began their development without the responsible parties even being aware of these policies and procedures. The policy manual also provides a coherent framework for evaluating new and reviewing existing study abroad programs. However, for faculty-led trips (as course components), the policies are rarely followed. There is no clearly established procedure for faculty to follow and there is little administrative oversight at the department, college, or university levels. While the faculty leader is usually well-versed in the academic components and may be familiar with local culture, issues of student safety as well as personal and institutional liability have not been addressed.

While UNH supports study abroad as a key element of international education, participation rates among science students are low. Students and faculty often encounter curriculum barriers, both real and imagined, which hamper participation in study abroad.

The majority of study abroad participants go to English-speaking countries (Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom). Most foreign language majors study in Europe; even Spanish majors rarely venture into Latin America. Despite UNH's goal of engaging the world, study abroad activity is geographically limited.

The International Affairs Dual Major (IA) links a primary major with in-depth study of international affairs. The program has been very successful, graduating 337 dual majors since 1991, an average of 28 per year. Enrollments in the core courses in AY 02-03 are approximately 170, reflecting a 40 percent increase in demand from AY 01-02. Because of rigor and additional requirements, the IA dual major attracts high quality students. Program graduates have excellent records in career and advanced education placements. They are also loyal supporters of the program, often providing significant assistance in placing currently enrolled students in internships and entry-level jobs.

The same unevenness noted above in which students participate in study abroad programs also characterizes the IA program. Students in the College of Liberal Arts or the Whittemore School of Business and Economics dominate the IA dual major. However, students from the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, College of Life Sciences and Agriculture, and the School of Health and Human Services account for only a very small percentage of IA dual majors. Science majors do not elect the IA dual major due to curriculum rigidity, lack of knowledge on the part of advisors in science departments, lack of space in foreign language courses, and the existing schedule for IA core courses. It is much more difficult, but not impossible, for these majors to integrate the IA curriculum into their primary major program.

Although the program has a history of excellence, the largest obstacle to its continuing success

and to future expansion is the lack of permanent faculty to teach the three IA core courses. These courses have always been taught on an *ad hoc* basis. While the faculty members who have participated have been excellent, each year the director of CIE must bargain with faculty, deans and others to secure qualified teachers on either a buy-out or overload basis. Moreover, faculty turnover makes co-ordination of core courses difficult and limits the time that professors have to use feedback from student evaluations to improve the courses.

It is imperative that IA students begin planning their course of study early, but many students learn of the program too late in their academic careers to fulfill the IA requirements. Some of the incoherence between stated support of international education and support of the IA dual major may be attributed to the lack of ownership of the major by all colleges. IA is sometimes viewed as a competitor liberal arts program rather than a university-wide curriculum that enhances all majors.

### **Projections.**

While there are considerable opportunities for international education throughout the undergraduate experience, there is need to enhance the international awareness of all UNH undergraduate students and to work together to build on the foundations that exist in the curriculum, in the study abroad programs, and in the IA program. These recommendations support major elements of CIE's Strategic Plan for 2003-2005.

Recommendation Expand study abroad opportunities and exchange programs, targeting institutions whose stature is comparable with that of UNH, especially in countries where UNH does not have existing study abroad or exchange programs. The exchange programs would have the dual intent of expanding study abroad opportunities for UNH undergraduates and of expanding the enrollment of international students (and the diversity of the student body).

Recommendation Develop permanent faculty staffing for the IA core courses by joint appointments or other suitable means.

Recommendation Increase awareness of the IA program and improve access to the program through better coordination with college and faculty advising systems.

## **Cultivating a Sense of Community through Student Life and Learning**

### **Description and Appraisal**

Our goal is to combine the living and learning environment of a New England liberal arts college with the breadth, spirit of discovery, and civic commitment of a land-grant research institution. As the 1998 Boyer report attests, a sense of community is an essential element in providing students a strong undergraduate education in a research university (Boyer, 1998). Programs and opportunities in the area of student life are crucial for developing this sense of community and in promoting a healthy environment in which students can develop as learners and as engaged members of the UNH community. There are numerous efforts underway that contribute to the sense of community at UNH. We identify below areas of strength that facilitate students' ability to make connections on campus and areas of weakness that are obstacles to integrating community activities with academics.

### **Strengths**

*Campus Activities and Student Organizations*<sup>10</sup> There are many opportunities for students to become involved in student organizations on campus and to attend a wide range of campus activities. The keys to successful involvement are to integrate these activities with the overall academic mission of the institution and to make the opportunities well-known among the broadest possible audience on campus. We want students to know of all the opportunities for involvement, but we also want faculty to know of these opportunities so they can link them to their courses where appropriate.

In the residence halls, last year alone, there were more than 2,500 programs. This past fall semester, Memorial Union (MUB) staff and several major student campus programming groups sponsored campus-wide, large-scale entertainment events every Friday and Saturday night in venues such as the MUB, Field House, or through athletic events. Many events are planned, advertised, and produced by students. Funding for campus-wide events comes from the Student Activity Fee, which is managed by Student Senate. Students, therefore, have extraordinary influence over what is funded. Without adequate professional guidance and advice, however, many programming groups have not achieved success with their events. As with other aspects of the undergraduate experience, advising is a key to success. The Campus Activities Board is achieving great success in managing campus events, as they are advised by MUB staff, and possess knowledge of University resources that are useful in planning events. According to the 2001 Student Profile Survey<sup>11</sup>, 54% of students in the residence halls stay on campus during the weekends. Demand for on-campus weekend programming can be expected to continue, both in terms of the number of events and their duration into the early morning hours.

There are currently over 150 registered student organizations at UNH, divided among 11 major categories of interest (political and world affairs, media and publications, honor societies, special interest, leisure and recreation, religious, arts and entertainment, governance, Student Activity Fee funded, academic and career, and campus concerns/community service). Thirty six percent of the student body belongs to an organization. MUB staff report that students exhibit great interest in connecting classroom learning to practical applications. As one upper-class student indicated in the December 5, 2002 focus group on the undergraduate experience, extra-curricular activities give students a chance to “follow their passions”. Students indicated that they get much satisfaction from their involvement in activities outside the classroom, and this enhances their overall experience at UNH.

Approximately 60% of registered organizations have faculty/staff advisors. The benefits for student groups in having advisors are many. MUB staff report that those clubs with a faculty or staff advisor tend to have clear statements of purpose and strong membership bases. Organizations with no advising may begin with a clear learning purpose, but over time they become more disorganized and focus primarily on social activities. To better integrate academic experiences with student organizations, MUB staff are making connections with Deans of each of the colleges to showcase student success with activities connected to their courses. MUB staff hold several membership recruitment drives each year in order to increase student participation

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<sup>10</sup> Data for this section come from a variety of sources: 2002 database of registered clubs and organizations from the Student Organizations Services Office in the Memorial Union Building; “Get Involved” booklet distributed by the SOS staff throughout the campus each year ; 2002 Association of College Unions-International/EBI College Union/Student Center Study; interviews with the Director of the Memorial Union Building, and Program Assistant with the Student Organization Services Office.

<sup>11</sup> Division of Student Affairs, Office of Assessment

in organized clubs. There is also information available on the MUB website regarding how to get involved. Despite these efforts, students report that they learn about many of the organizations in which they become involved through an ad hoc, word-of-mouth process. The data reported in Table 1 earlier in this report indicate that 45% of the responding students agree that “I generally know about events happening on campus.” 48% agree that “I can easily get involved in campus organizations.” While there is no absolute standard for evaluating these percentages, it is clear that there is room for improvement in communicating about the opportunities for engagement in both organizations and activities on campus.

*Athletics*<sup>12</sup> Intercollegiate athletes are vital members of the campus community and add much to the University’s mission both on and off the field of play. In some respects, the academic support programs for athletes are a model for the integration of academics and other aspects of student life at the university. Academic achievement is emphasized for all student-athletes, and the academic support programs for athletes have contributed to their academic success. The annual graduation rate for student-athletes has ranged between 80% and 95% over the last five years, while the rate for the overall student body averages 72%. UNH is annually among the national Division I leaders in graduation rates for athletes, and we generally outperform most Divisions I institutions in both graduation rates and academic accomplishment. UNH is the only two-time recipient of the America East Academic Cup awarded to the institution with the highest cumulative GPA among all student-athletes. We are ranked among the best schools in the integration of athletics and academics by *U.S. News and World Report*. Athletics also contributes to our efforts to develop a diverse campus community. For example, the recruitment and retention of students of color is important for both the athletics department and for the institution as a whole. The diversity within some athletics programs creates an atmosphere for both social and academic interaction that welcomes students of color. Athletics programs create additional environments for students of color to interact on campus and to flourish. Student-athletes are also expected to be campus-wide “leaders” and to contribute to University life, and student-athletes perform over 3000 hours annually in community service. Additionally, the student-athletes are viewed as “role models” for the area’s youth and many take their role as ambassadors to the University seriously. Athletics links the campus community to the local area and beyond. Student-athletes are taught how to become “bridge builders” which in turn creates an environment that brings various constituencies together on campus to interact as shared learners.

*Campus Recreation*<sup>13</sup> Recreational offerings are extensive. There are 22 sport clubs; 26 intramural sports for men and women; faculty and staff interaction; and currently over 114 hours per week of facility availability. There are over 700 participants in the sport club program, over 4,500 intramural participants, and an average of 300 student employees. Over 71% of the student population use the Hamel Recreation Center, and over 80% of the students utilize some aspect of the Campus Recreation program or facilities. Campus Recreation offers wide ranging educational and co-curricular activities. These programs contribute to: sense of community (bridging academic class and major, gender, age and ethnic barriers), positive first year experience (our highest participating class), and lifelong friendships and connections. They also

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<sup>12</sup> Data sources include Annual reports for graduation rates as mandated by the NCAA, Community Service Records accrued by the office of LifeSkills in the Department of Athletics.

<sup>13</sup> Data provided here include ongoing actual participation demographic information and participant numbers acquired through the Banner system; the Residence Life Survey; and national trend line data provided by National Intramural Recreational Sports Association member institutions.

provide positive alternatives to the many social pressures seen on every campus (substance use/abuse, stress). The facility and its programs create a setting for the interaction of many segments of the university and the community at large.

*Residence Halls*<sup>14</sup> The professional staff who develop and implement programs for the residence halls attempt to provide a living-learning environment to foster academic success for the 4500 students in the halls. The staff provide individual contact; academic-based programs such as test-taking and study skills; and appropriate referrals to the many academic support services on campus (e.g., the Center for Academic Resources, the Connors Writing Center, and the University Advising and Career Center). To further support academic success, some hall directors sponsor study groups. Other staff invite faculty into the buildings to discuss the role of faculty or facilitate review sessions.

The First Year Integration Program (FYI) is a program that explicitly attempts to integrate academics with student life in the residence halls. It is an example of the way in which academic and student affairs can work together to enhance the undergraduate experience. It was established to help the approximately 950 first year students living in Williamson and Christensen be successful at UNH. Students live on the same floor and in the same building with others in their classes, they connect through the Internet using Blackboard, and meet individually and in groups with other students, mentors, faculty and staff. Some of these meetings include in-hall study groups, review sessions, and discussions of study skills, test taking skills, and writing skills. Assessment information for the program indicates that the program is having mixed success in meeting its goals.<sup>15</sup> While the students in the program perceive that they are learning to get along well with others, resolve conflicts, and understand their own values and beliefs, they are not performing better academically (average semester GPA is 2.9 for those not in the program and 2.8 for those in the program). More troubling is the finding that students in the program drink more often and drink higher amounts than other first year students. Although a program that integrates residential and academic life is still a goal, this particular program needs further development to more successfully challenge the peer culture that promotes alcohol use and social life at the expense of successful academic performance.

## Weaknesses

Though there are strengths that contribute to the sense of community at UNH, there are also barriers to integrating student life and the academic core of the undergraduate experience.

*Alcohol and other drugs*<sup>16</sup> As on many campuses, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs is a significant issue at the UNH. While the majority of UNH students do choose to use alcohol in a low-risk way, as the Social Norming Campaign demonstrates, high-risk alcohol and drug use is an issue nonetheless. Many students would argue that the party scene that encourages alcohol and drug use creates a community, and we have pointed out elsewhere that students report that the social environment on campus promotes the use of alcohol. Students meet people and make friends at parties. For some, this is their only perceived sense of community. The relationships in this community are often loose and transitory, focusing only on the next beer or the next party.

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<sup>14</sup> Data on residence halls are from: Residential Life Database (includes hall programs/discussions and individual contacts); Residential Life Survey; Student Profile Survey.

<sup>15</sup> Office of Assessment, Division of Student Life.

<sup>16</sup> Data come from the Office of Health Education and Promotion; the New Hampshire Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Survey; the National College Health Assessment; and the Social Norming Assessment.

The negative effects related to high-risk substance use detract from the educational mission of the institution.

We have developed many efforts to address drinking and drug use, and these will continue. We believe, in addition, that the strategies to develop an integrated and coherent undergraduate experience that are discussed in the self-study will go a long way toward filling the gap between academics and student life in which alcohol and drug use can flourish.

Under the guidance of the Office of Health Education and Promotion, assessment in the area of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs has been a perennial project. Assessment generally focuses on usage and consequences. To date, little assessment has been done recently concerning the effectiveness of our various prevention methods. A new evaluation of the alcohol awareness class and a comprehensive review of the social norming campaign will begin to shed new light on these primary prevention methods.

*Lack of Communication about Campus Events* Too often the campus community is uninformed about events and opportunities. There are some attempts to list activities, but these are not integrated in one place, nor are they made known with sufficient advance notice so that faculty can build the events into their course material. Beyond the lack of a communication infrastructure, there is also no over-riding common intellectual theme or thread that serves to bring together the various aspects of the UNH community. Activities on campus occur in an autonomous, unconnected fashion with minimal linkage to the larger community.

*Lack of diversity*<sup>17</sup> We expect that UNH will be a place where all community members feel safe and comfortable and where they can maximize their individual learning. We strive to be a diverse community of scholars and learners who accept and respect one another regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, religion, or sexual orientation. The current lack of diversity here has a two-fold effect. Multicultural students feel isolated, like they must represent their race/ethnicity and be champions of diversity. Another result is that majority students lack an essential aspect of education since they interact with others who are very similar to themselves. Not only is this a shortcoming of a comprehensive education, but it can inhibit majority students' ability to function effectively in a global workforce. There needs to be a continued institutional commitment to this issue.

*Students Who Live outside the Residence Halls* Commuting students and those living in the on-campus apartment complexes (The Gables and Woodside Apartments) are not served by the programs offered in the residence halls. This population of 6500 students is provided with some services, such as assistance seeking housing and education regarding what to know about living off campus (e.g., legal issues, expenses, and landlord relations). However, any integration that occurred while students lived in the residence halls is lost when they move off campus. While many students would argue that they do not need this integration once they move off campus, and many choose to move off campus so that they can have more independence, for some the college experience can become more fractured when they live outside the residence halls. As the Boyer report found, "commuting students must be integrated into university life by making their participation easy and attractive" (Boyer, 1998). Assessment should be a key component in understanding this issue, particularly in a comparison between residence hall students, those living in the campus apartment complexes, and those who commute from off-campus housing.

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<sup>17</sup> Data on diversity are from the Students of Color Project.

## Projections

Enhancing a sense of community at UNH is a difficult challenge. It requires a commitment from all levels and a belief that creating a sense of community is a value worth the investment of time, energy and resources. Contributions to this sense of community must be recognized and valued.

Recommendation Create a centralized communication infrastructure for co-curricular activities. This clearinghouse would develop a communication strategy and implementation plan for communicating the varied happenings that occur at UNH. One specific possibility would be a university wide website that reports daily/hourly updates of events on campus. There is also a need to have accurate mail and email addresses for students both on and off-campus to support the dissemination of information to students. The current process for providing and maintaining accurate mail and email addresses is ineffective.

Recommendation Plan themes for large-scale campus activities and develop and implement a university-wide conversation on relevant topics in classrooms, the residence halls, and other campus venues. As the Task Force on Undergraduate Experience Committee articulated, developing these activities requires coordination and communication. The report suggests a coordination of event scheduling would allow longer range planning for major events and better incorporation of those events in the curriculum, where appropriate. Centralization adds coherence to planning large-scale events and provides the necessary promotion to assure success. This committee supports the Task Force Action Plan to establish a University-wide dialog that: a) begins with new students' first days at the University, b) plans events around a theme that can be incorporated into the curriculum and is identified at least one year in advance, and c) uses the centralized clearinghouse to announce thematic happenings throughout the year.

Recommendation Initiate a yearlong program for first year students that integrates them to the academic priorities of the institution. A model for this program, First year Interdisciplinary Seminar Institute, has been developed by the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience. This program should include all first year students and utilize teams of faculty and staff to develop small learning communities that will allow students to explore issues and concepts while building relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. A fuller description is available in the report of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience Committee. The First Year Discovery seminars recommended by the General Education Study Committee are a similar vehicle for achieving the integration desired. It is clear the community has an interest in seminars as part of the first year experience; we need to implement these ideas. It would be beneficial to link such a first year seminar with the efforts in the residence halls (such as the First Year Integration program) so that the first year experience is truly coherent and integrated.

Recommendation Increase the diversity of students, faculty, and staff and address the feeling of isolation of multicultural students. Improving diversity also needs to be an integrated effort among campus offices.

Recommendation There seems to be an obvious disconnect between students living off-campus and the UNH community. While other recommendations made in this section may help to dissolve that disconnect, the issue needs to be explored further. The university needs to find out what off-campus students want and need to make them feel more connected and satisfied. A comprehensive study of off-campus students would provide the answer to these and more questions.

## General Themes and Recommendations

It is significant that the analysis of these five areas – advising, undergraduate research, internships, international education, and student life – identifies several general themes and that the themes suggest general recommendations to enhance the undergraduate experience.

Recommendation: Work to enhance communication across campus and between the Durham and Manchester campuses. While we do good work across campus in many respects, we too often work in separate spheres without communicating with each other. The five working groups identified many examples of this. We do not need new initiatives in many cases, but greater attention to communicating with each other about the initiatives we have already developed. There is no central vehicle for learning about campus events and activities, for example. There are separate listings on various websites and in various publications, but there is no central, integrated source of information. This impedes students from learning about productive activities and it impedes the ability of faculty to plan the integration of campus events with their courses. We do not communicate sufficiently within and across academic programs about our academic standards and expectations for students. While we produce reports on grade distributions each semester, for instance, we do not systematically use these to create a campus conversation about expectations.

Recommendation: Work to enhance collaboration across programs and between academic and student affairs. Because we work in separate spheres, we often miss opportunities to work collaboratively to meet our common goals. On the academic side, we have addressed this issue through the development of interdisciplinary programs, but there are many opportunities for more collaboration. Greater communication is necessary but not sufficient to enhance collaboration. In addition, we need to recognize the value of collaboration and develop ways of rewarding the successes of collaborative efforts. As is, our verticality works against us in this regard. Another of the self-study committees is addressing the theme of outreach; but we believe the concept is useful for discussing greater collaboration on campus as well.

The First Year Integration program is an example of an effort to work together to enhance the undergraduate experience. It will be important to analyze the outcomes of this program and to identify factors that make the collaboration problematic. Similarly, the creation of the University Advising and Career Center, merging the work of The Advising Center and Career Services, is an example of how we can work across academic and student affairs to improve services for students. It is also an example of the strains inherent in changing the way we work. It will be important to identify the problems in achieving the integration and in using this as a model of collaboration in other efforts. Co-location in Hood House has helped collaboration between the Honors Programs and the office of Undergraduate Research, and between Undergraduate Research and the Center for International Education. Space issues may prohibit more of this type of co-location in the near term, but it would be desirable to bring together more student services and university wide programs in one location or one area of campus.

Simultaneous with the self-study, we have been working with Kubler-Wirka consultants to study the relationship between academic and student affairs. Their report was delivered to the President late in the spring, and it contains many excellent observations and suggestions for ways in which to further this integration. The President has already begun to act on some of these

recommendations, so we are encouraged about the progress already made and the opportunities ahead. We recommend that the newly appointed Vice President for Student and Academic Services work on implementing these recommendations as a top priority.

Finally, we have mentioned the possibility that the implementation of RCM has undesirable centrifugal forces that decentralize the budget in ways that work against some of our academic goals (e.g., undergraduate research or the Honors Program). It may also work against collaborative efforts across the schools and colleges, the units of RCM. We need to pay particular attention to this if we hope to advance collaboration across units in the future. The creation of a University Curriculum and Planning Committee was meant to be a vehicle for addressing the impact of RCM on the curriculum and the inclusion of university-wide values in a decentralized budgetary system. We urge that this group pay attention to the areas of the undergraduate experience that we have identified as areas that would profit from further collaborative work.

It is crucial for us to work together, not only to improve our working relationships but to model for students the connections between their academic work and other aspects of life at UNH. Students don't often see the connections, and we need to provide positive examples by the way we work together.

Recommendation: Build more deliberately on previous work. We have referred throughout this report to the work of previous groups and committees that have studied the undergraduate experience in recent years. In particular, the work of the General Education Study Committee and the Task Force on The Undergraduate Experience represents tremendous time and effort and there are many recommendations in each report. We urge that these recommendations be implemented over the next several years. If this were done, the undergraduate experience would be enhanced, and many of the issues we have addressed in this self-study would be affected. For example, the General Education Discovery program recommends the creation in each academic program a capstone experience for students. This would be a great vehicle for including an undergraduate research opportunity, or an internship experience for some programs.

Many on campus do not know about the efforts of the Task Force, illustrating the communication issue addressed above. Many on campus have the perception that the efforts to implement the General Education Discovery Program are stalled. There is some urgency here to communicate the progress of these efforts and to move ahead. There is a great cost in increased cynicism if we do not communicate about and act on these important efforts.

The Provost's office, in conjunction with the Task Force, requested proposals during the spring semester for new First Year Seminars, to be offered during the spring 2004 semester. We are encouraged by this effort and by the response to it by faculty, who have proposed twelve courses to date. This is the kind of initiative that will ensure progress towards the goals articulated throughout the self-study.

Recommendation: Increase coordination between expectations for faculty and the reward system. Throughout the self-study we have discussed the work of faculty and the role of faculty in enhancing the undergraduate experience – through mentoring undergraduate research, advising undergraduates, sponsoring internship experiences, linking course work with opportunities on campus, advising student activity groups. The implications of these

recommendations for faculty workload must be addressed. UNH is a major research university, and the expectations for research productivity are high. UNH also greatly values teaching, and the expectations for quality teaching are also high. In fact, there are identifiable tensions between achieving excellence in research and excellence in teaching. Add to this greater expectations regarding mentoring students, advising, and sponsoring out-of-class work, and the demands on faculty time become impossible to meet. If we want the faculty role to involve more mentoring and advising as described in this report, it is essential that we recognize the possible trade-offs that will follow and that we appropriately reward faculty for these efforts. Part of this attention to the reward structure will require reexamination of the faculty workload. Otherwise, the expectations we have developed here will be unrealistic and will not be realized.

Recommendation: Develop a permanent assessment mechanism by formalizing the work of the assessment fellows group. Throughout the self-study report we have relied on documentation provided by various assessment efforts. We need to coordinate and integrate these various efforts and provide support for programs to develop their own permanent assessment strategies. This is another area where the collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs can be especially fruitful.