



# UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

October 14, 2008

Dear colleagues,

With the semester in full swing, the fall colors in full bloom, and our students in full mid-term stride, it is time to write about a number of campus matters. We find ourselves in the midst of great uncertainty at the national and international level, with pending elections, a near-collapse of financial systems, and anxiety among our students about the cost of their college education and among our most senior faculty about the timing of their retirement.

At the same time, the campus feels focused and cohesive in a way that we haven't seen for a few years. Relief over achieving the contract settlement last spring is certainly a factor. The intensive work of a number of governance groups and task forces is beginning to show results. We are managing a very tight budget situation carefully and effectively, even as we anticipate that it will get worse before it gets better. And of course the Red Sox give us all something to cheer about at this time of the year (or mourn, as they go down 2-1 in the ALCS tonight).

This will be a year of planning and hard choices. The President's Blue Ribbon Panel on Research has developed a comprehensive draft report that articulates a number of aspirations for an expanded research and graduate education mission at UNH. Discussion of the draft will be taking place over the next several weeks, helping to inform President Huddleston as he reviews the findings and recommendations of the Panel. A Blue Ribbon Panel on Intercollegiate Athletics is getting underway now, with recommendations expected later this academic year. A working group to assess the risks and benefits of a merger of Pierce Law Center with UNH has been organized and will make a recommendation to the President in late winter. The Healthy UNH task force led by Dean Arrington and Vice President Cannon is digging into the great challenges of the cost of health benefits. Above all, the President has initiated a comprehensive, institution-wide strategic planning effort. The goal of this initiative will be to identify a limited number of major strategic directions for UNH in the next five to ten years. The process will involve a central steering committee of over 30 faculty, staff, students, and community members; roundtable discussions with an additional 100 individuals; and multiple working groups charged with examining potential strategic directions in order to select those that are most promising and feasible. Part of this effort will include a review of the Academic Plan to be sure it informs the overall process and to carry forward its main themes with renewed goals and objectives.

In my office, we are engaged in several critical discussions about the academic mission and activities of the University. All of these discussions involve close collaboration with faculty governance groups, including the Faculty Senate (and its Academic Affairs Committee), the Discovery Program Advisory Committee, the University Study Away Committee, and others. First on our priority list is working with the Senate to finalize action on the proposed Discovery Program, including the core curriculum, first-year Inquiry courses, capstones, and the University Dialogue. The Academic Affairs Committee, under the leadership of Professor Prelli, has been interacting regularly with the Discovery directors, DPAC, and Vice Provost MacFarlane to complete the design of the core curriculum in order to place a motion before the Senate in the near future. I am hopeful and grateful that we might finally have in place an approximation of the recommendations made by the General Education Study Committee in 2002.

A second priority in this office has been an effort to define and design legitimate approaches to the assessment of undergraduate student learning. Again, we are working closely with the Senate and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (under Professor

Benassi's leadership) to consider what options we might utilize toward an assessment protocol. This initiative stems from multiple sources—our own desire to know better what our students learn in their major and general education coursework, a sensitivity to the national conversation about accountability and assessment in higher education, a desire to have a rational and defensible system in place before government or Trustee mandates are imposed on us, a need to address evolving NEASC standards, and a desire to strengthen our curriculum based on valid information about how and what our students are learning. I am conscious of the fear that core principles of academic freedom and faculty control over the curriculum and assessment could be threatened. I am also conscious of a concern that we could be co-opted by a reductionist approach to quantifying attributes that are not quantifiable. I hear the voices that fear an “audit culture,” that believe that “productivity” will trump learning as our holy grail, that we will endorse an ideology that of constant measurement at the expense of the messy and unpredictable processes of teaching and learning. I share those concerns (I commend to you a fine essay on this topic by Stanley Katz, at [http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-su08/le-su08\\_Katz.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-su08/le-su08_Katz.cfm)). Yet the core values in the UNH Academic Plan—academic freedom, accountability, integrity—are ones that we should live up to, balancing each appropriately while assuring our students, ourselves, and our publics that we know what we are doing, that we know what works and what doesn't, and that we are achieving our mission. My hope is that by the end of this year, we will have defined how the University will engage in systematic assessment of student learning, what processes and measures we will use, and how we will use that information to enhance our majors as well as the core curriculum.

A third priority this semester is to support critical leadership searches in EOS, Liberal Arts, and Academic Affairs. The first two are underway. The search for the next director of EOS is co-chaired by Janet Campbell and VP Taylor Eighmy; the search for the next dean of the College of Liberal Arts is co-chaired by Professor Kaye and Dean Vellucci. I am currently consulting with the Agenda Committee and others about how best to proceed with the search for the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. In the meantime, I am deeply grateful to Roy Torbert, Ken Fuld, and Lisa MacFarlane for the interim leadership they are providing in these three offices.

These are the top priorities. We are working on multiple fronts on other issues as well. I am very pleased with the work of Wanda Mitchell in the development of a new mentoring program for recently hired faculty. This is a long overdue effort on our part, and one that is already gaining traction. Part of the effort is to also provide resources to deans and department chairs who are responsible for faculty retention. A major focus of the project is to assure that faculty from underrepresented groups find UNH a welcoming place to carry out their teaching, scholarship, and service.

I am also pleased with the continuing synergies that emanate from Ham Smith room 2 and “Hood II.” The most recent evidence of collaborations among those undergraduate programs is the creation of the Discovery Award for Outstanding Research. This award is granted each year to two undergraduate students at the UNH who have made compelling achievements in research related to the Discovery Program University Dialogue topic of the current academic year (Poverty and Opportunity this year). The award comes with a one-time scholarship of \$500.00, and includes an expectation that the recipients will present their work at the Undergraduate Research Conference.

I want to thank those faculty who have made use of the new on-line booklist process, which allows students to see what the required texts will be in their courses so they can make smart purchases ahead of time. And the web site, [www.booklist.unh.edu](http://www.booklist.unh.edu), allows faculty to simultaneously and easily list their book orders at both the Durham Book Exchange and the UNH Bookstore. This semester, over 650 courses were listed. One result is a continuing increase in courses listed through the UNH Bookstore. We are close to achieving the goal of a

75 percent listing, which will result in a \$100,000 bonus payment to Dimond Library, under the terms of our Barnes and Noble contract.

Another CIS initiative that holds great promise is found in the work of the Committee on Instructional Technology (CIT), chaired by Terri Winters and made up of faculty from each of the colleges. This semester the CIT is intensely engaged in an examination of the pros and cons of creating a unified, web-enabled faculty annual reporting system. The Committee will be conducting focus groups with faculty and deans to discuss the value of such a system—as a means for faculty to keep track of their work with easy input for updating, a way for chairs and deans to gather information in a secure environment that assures confidentiality, and a way for the University to report public aspects of faculty activity such as publications and engagement activities.

I will close with a brief personal note. This semester, I am finally back in the classroom. Apparently it takes a good five years to get the hang of this job such that I can now find a way to carve out time for teaching. After 30 years, this is my first opportunity to teach first-year students, in a course that my co-instructor Vilmarie Sanchez and I designed over the summer, “Be the Change you Wish to See; Active Citizenship in a Multicultural World.” The course (EDUC 444) is part of the Common Purposes living and learning community in SERC C, where classrooms were included when the building was constructed this year. All the students in the course live together in a single hall of the residence, and they were recruited with the aim of creating as diverse a group of first-year students as possible, across multiple dimensions. Their energy, curiosity, and passions are a joy to encounter. We are reading Democracy’s Edge by Francis Moore Lappe, and we are examining the intersections of democratic practice, diversity, and deliberative dialogue. Of course, the current election and related current events couldn’t be a better source of conversation in our classes. To work with these young adults who have just entered college, who come from a range of geographic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds, is an honor and a joy. It is a privilege to be privy to the hard work they are doing in their minds and hearts as they find their way at UNH. The experience reminds me daily of why I do the work that I do at UNH, and of the hard work that each of you do with many more students in your classes, labs, and field placements.

I wish you the best as the semester hurtles toward the inevitable madness of the holidays, exams, committee meetings, and overdue manuscripts. Hang in there.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Mallory  
Provost and Executive Vice President  
Professor of Education

cc: Deans Council  
Provost’s Staff  
Cabinet  
Board of Trustees Executive Committee

Provost and Executive Vice President

207 Thompson Hall 105 Main Street Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3547 (603) 862-3290 (603) 862-4741 fax