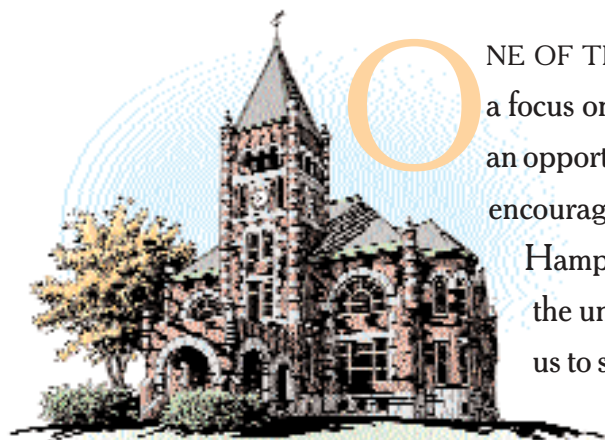


# A Chance to Make a Difference

By President Ann Weaver Hart



ONE OF THE THEMES for the upcoming academic year will be a focus on the biennial budget process. Every two years, we have an opportunity to tell the UNH story to our state legislators and to encourage greater understanding of the university's role in New Hampshire. Working in conjunction with colleagues throughout the university system, our legislative advocacy program allows us to shine a brighter light on all that the university does for the citizens of the Granite State.

We will demonstrate the strengths so many of our alumni already recognize: the excellence of the educational programs; the impact of our research; our commitment to communities; and our responsible use of resources. This effort is especially critical in the upcoming legislative session as we also address the second round of capital improvement funding and work to obtain funds for the badly needed renovations of DeMeritt, James and Parsons halls.

Already, many alumni and parents have volunteered to take an active role with these efforts; we sincerely thank you on behalf of UNH for your commitment. And to those 77 UNH alumni running for a seat in the state legislature: You, too, can have a strong voice in advocating for more funding for your university.

Here are some facts you may find informative:

- Half of all state-owned buildings are on USNH campuses;
- There are more than 44,000 UNH alumni living in the state;
- In a poll conducted by the UNH Survey Center earlier this year, 84 percent of the 560 New Hampshire respondents did not know what percentage of the UNH operating budget is state funded. Forty-two percent thought it was greater than 20 percent, and another 42 percent had no idea.

For the record, funding from the state accounted for only 15 percent of our total operating budget last year. This is a figure I want our alumni to keep in mind, especially as you read and hear about our legislative efforts in the coming months.

In 1998, the state's portion of UNH funding was 18 percent; two years ago it was 16 percent. This pattern of decline is deeply concerning. We will need you and our other advocates to talk about the importance of funding the state's flagship research university.

While the university enjoys national and international visibility in areas like family research, ocean mapping, open-ocean aquaculture and air quality monitoring—receiving news coverage in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, MSNBC and ABC—UNH faculty members and

students make the most impact in New Hampshire. A recent and informal inventory of UNH outreach to the North Country shows the results of our research and engagement. Examples include a middle-school student confined to a wheelchair, who, with the help of Northeast Passage, participated in a class hike; students working in health care facilities as part of their coursework; a student from Epsom, N.H., conducting research on moose habitat; and economic development workshops hosted by the Small Business Development Center. The new Carsey Institute—a center for innovative research in the social, behavioral and health sciences at UNH—will produce a biennial “State of the Region” report that analyzes trends in the northern New England states. The institute also is working closely with the Androscoggin Valley Partnership Project to explore future workforce development in the region.

Tuition increases at UNH and other system campuses have averaged between 5 and 7 percent over the past several years, compared to a national average of 10 to 15 percent. This stems from the long-standing commitment by the Board of Trustees to do everything within its power to resist shifting budget shortfalls to our students and families.

We continue to be proactive in resolving budget shortfalls. Since January, we have worked to eliminate a \$4 million deficit. While this was not easy, we have been especially careful to ensure that budget reductions do not affect the quality of students' education.

In the same Granite State poll, some 60 percent rated the quality of education at UNH as very good or good. As you talk with neighbors and friends, policymakers and lawmakers, think back to your own experience at UNH. Tell people about it. Let people know how your experience at UNH significantly contributed to your success in life, whether in your career, involvement in community service, or interactions with family members and friends.

With your support and the increasing visibility of this great university, we have an opportunity to make a difference. ~