Busy Year in Inclusive Excellence

A student from a UNH writing course asked us why UNH has an Office of Inclusive Excellence. Our answer was, as Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry has said, “In a democracy, recognition matters. Everyone wants to be seen as who they are. If they are not, then it’s impossible for them to enjoy the experience of being full citizens.” The Office of Faculty Development and Inclusive Excellence works within the institutional structure and campus community to create strategies to eliminate barriers toward applying individual talent and working to become an active participant in the community.

The IE Office hosts Mentoring programs on research, writing and service toward promotion and tenure while ensuring, through services and programs, that the campus offers an equitable and welcoming environment. The President’s Commissions advocate for access in programs, employment and education.
Why should UNH care about diversity?

Institutionalized bias is found in decisions made over job interviews, at loan desks, and in classrooms lacking equipment to assist all learning styles and methods. Traditionally, barriers have been found in access to education, jobs and housing.

Inclusive Excellence applies the values of the democratic process in which all people are offered the right to an education, a good job and a decent place to come home to.

Why should UNH care about inclusion of diverse cultures and backgrounds? Because being diverse makes UNH a place for excellence and, therefore, more competitive. Research on decision-making in groups shows that diversity can trump ability in decision-making. A group comprised of a wide spectrum of backgrounds may have an advantage over workplaces and learning communities that are made up of people of homogeneous backgrounds.

Margaret Pobywajlo of UNH Manchester’s Center for Academic Achievement reported at a recent meeting on inclusive excellence at UNH, “Diversity is its own reward, and exposure to diverse viewpoints also greatly facilitates critical thinking.”

The UNH faculty senate has stated our core value for diversity in education by saying, “In the same way in which UNH seeks to provide students with exposure to a diversity of subjects, cultures, athletic activity and arts, we also have an obligation to offer students exposure to the multicultural diversity that comprises our nation…”

Philosophy professor Paul McNamara said, “When everyone’s at the table, everyone’s empowered. You want an academy that’s inclusive for the social justice element and because inclusiveness facilitates inquiry. Academic excellence couldn’t be achieved without it.”

PROGRESS

FORTY YEARS AGO, WOMEN STEPPED UP TO A MICROPHONE IN THE MUB TO VOICE CONCERNS ABOUT LACK OF PROGRESS FOR WOMEN. THEY ASKED FOR EQUAL PAY AND AN EQUAL CHANCE AT TENURE. THEY ASKED FOR BETTER ACCESS TO STUDENT ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS AND FOR INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM. THEY WANTED A CORE CAMPUS CHILDcare FACILITY. IN 2012, THE WOMEN’S COMMISSION MARKED ITS 40TH YEAR OF ADVOCATING FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND PROGRAMMING.

PLANS IN THE MAKING

THE PRESIDENT’S COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR HAS WORKED TO ESTABLISH THREE MAJOR INITIATIVES: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINED DIALOGUE, AND CAMPUS CLIMATE PROGRAMMING IN WHICH FURTHER UNDERSTANDINGS OF INCLUSION AND ACCESS WILL BE FOSTERED.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

ON MARCH 21, STUDENTS TOOK QUESTIONS IN THE MUB STRAFFORD ROOM AND DESCRIBED THE UNH EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. HOSTED BY THE COMMISSION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES & DISABILITY SERVICES, ALUMNI AND CURRENT STUDENTS SHARED THEIR STORIES TO HELP OTHERS LEARN HOW TO PROMOTE INCLUSION IN OUR CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNITY.
Anniversaries and New Beginnings

UNH President’s Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities hosted two 2012 discussions: a student panel on the UNH experience for students with disabilities and guest advocate Monica Quimby, Class of 2009. After sustaining a spinal cord injury in a skiing accident while at UNH, Quimby has worked toward and reached her goal of becoming an adjunct professor of microbiology.

Kelsey O’Neil was a host of the 20th Annual GLBT Pancake Breakfast, which brought 270 guests for peak attendance. Guest Ann Philbin of UCLA spoke about her museum’s public engagement programs which create interactive museums through contact among visitor, artist and staff. She was hosted by the Kidder Fund and the GLBT Commission.

UNH Women’s Commission brought leaders Marianne Jones of the Women’s Fund; Linda Griebsch of the Joan G. Lovering Health Center, and Elizabeth Tentarelli of the League of Women Voters to speak about the future of women’s public power and influence, and they began with a discussion of women’s rights as human rights for both women and girls. Those rights, as Linda Griebsch stated, begin with “freedom from fear of violence and freedom to control reproductive life and sexual orientation.”
UNH CELEBRATED THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING WITH ITS 22ND ANNUAL PROGRAM OF EVENTS INCLUDING INTER-FaITH AND MULTI-FaITH SERVICES AND A CONVERSATION WITH REV. ROSEMARY BRAY MCNATT AND DR. BRUCE MALLORY ON OUR NATION’S PERSPECTIVES ON WEALTH. REV MCNATT DELIVERED THE COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS, “THE POLITICS OF WEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE” IN WHICH SHE ADVOCATED FOR A MOVE TOWARD A MORE FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH TO POSITIVELY AFFECT OUR POLITICAL SYSTEMS, LAWS, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS. PARTICIPANTS ENJOYED STUNNING PRESENTATIONS BY DR. STEPHANIE BRAMLETT IN HER AERIAL DANCE PERFORMANCE AND MICHAEL VIDAL IN HIS CALL TO ACTION.
“We can create programs that focus on both excellence and inclusiveness with students of all races who are excellent in science and engineering,” said Keynote speaker Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, President of the University of Maryland at Baltimore County. As one of Dr. Hrabowski’s graduates has said, “We need people from all backgrounds to believe in themselves as scientists and learn how to work with others, to think deeply, to seek people who are great in other areas without being intimidated, and build teams to solve problems together.”

Provost John Aber emphasizes inclusive excellence as a process that requires strategic, ongoing interactions across campus and in all aspects of university life. As the university recognizes the state-wide changes in demographics, it is seeking inclusive educational initiatives in order to offer UNH students an opportunity to become role models for inclusive practices in the workplace. The April 20th Statewide Summit on Inclusive Excellence, held in Bedford, NH, was born of this vision. As our nation’s colleges have grown from a perspective of accepting minorities to affirming actions for a wealth of diverse voices, NH is seeking to build more opportunities for full access in our communities. Vice Provost for Faculty Mentoring and Inclusive Excellence Wanda Mitchell said, “At UNH, we are charged with working together … in the key areas of Organizational Structure, Recruitment & Retention, Curriculum, Community Climate and Outreach & Engagement.” Mitchell explains that these leaders and community members alike are broadening their vision from their perspectives on diversity and multicultural status, toward a world of inclusive excellence, where we are all invited to join in. “The statewide initiatives are continuing the work that so many have promoted around the concept of a full teaching-learning community, advancing all aspects of our myriad backgrounds across campus, across the state, in our many structures.”
Wayne April performed a revolutionary act. He requested a meeting space in the MUB for the first gay student organization at UNH. It was 1972.

A long legal battle granted the gay students the right to form this organization. The GLBT Commission marked the 40th anniversary of the journey on April 11.

Founders of the GSO visited campus for the GLBTQA+ Pancake Breakfast. Cris Arguedas, Class of 1975, remembered educating people about sexual orientations that differ from the majority. She recalls that a small group of gays and lesbians visited fraternity houses. Many of the people living there had never consciously known a gay person. Arguedas said that her job was to “convince people not to hate us.” The group was regularly invited to classrooms to speak, yet invitations usually came from Abnormal Psychology class professors.

Arguedas said, “In fact, it seemed that, for a long time, there was no progress for gays. Then, almost overnight, people are understanding equal rights for all.” She said that the Stonewall Group and feminism helped guide them. April had visited the UNH Women’s Center, and it was there that they knew they needed a space to meet and give voice to both progress.

Ann Philbin, Class of 1976, said that Governor Meldrin Thompson’s decision to pull all university funding if the gays were granted the right to fund for a student organization, determined their future choices. “The horrible legal decision happened to us, but from there, we made things happen,” said Roma Baran. The legal battle created among them the strong individual resolve to succeed. On behalf of the Kidder Committee, co-chairs of the GLBT Commission, Daniel Innis and Cari Moorhead, presented Founders Awards for the pioneering work: Wayne April, Class of 1974; Cris Arguedas, Class of ‘75; Roma Baran, ’74; Richard Maxfield, ’75; and Ann Philbin, ’76.

UNH Senior Kelsey O’Neil asked founder Richard Maxfield, ’75, “What kept you going in spite of all the roadblocks?” He said, “We didn’t take ‘no’ for an answer. We could feel injustice was being done, and we didn’t walk away.”

Daniel Innis, Dean of the Whittemore School, and AJ Jeffries, UNH senior, were given the 2012 Kidder Awards for their outstanding efforts in fostering understanding and advancing opportunities for the GLBTQA+ community.

Winners of the 2012 Pink Triangle Awards to honor leaders and heroes were presented to those who made outstanding contributions to efforts for equity and visibility for the GLBTQI community: (as pictured) Sean Moundas, Kelsey O’Neil, Travis Pynenburg and Jonathan DiTroia.
It’s been a busy 40 years for women

Forty years ago, women testified to the lack of progress in the areas of pay, tenure, athletic scholarships and inclusion in the classroom, and a core campus facility for childcare would help many women reclaim hours of travel time. This year, the Women’s Commission invited community leaders to answer questions on our community’s pioneering efforts for women in the areas of human rights, affordable physical and mental health care, and the politics of prisons, poverty, wages, and funding. They also covered voting right restrictions to poor and elderly women, young people, and people with disabilities. They called for more women to make their money talk at the public table and also to run for public office. Jones said, “Research suggests that women have to represent at least 30% of the leadership in order to have it be more than tokenism.” Women comprise only 20% of elected officials in NH. There is a lot of work left to do.
Praise was given to the Women’s Commission and members of the study body, faculty, staff, and campus programs and offices for 40 years of community progress in promoting an environment free of sexism and discrimination in employment and education, giving more women opportunities to grow professionally and personally.

WOMEN’S COMMISSION Awardees (Front) Kelly Whittier, Lyn Mooney, Maggie Wells and (Back) the Women’s Studies Program

University of New Hampshire

The Office of Inclusive Excellence & The Office of the President’s Commissions
Thompson Hall  105 Main Street  University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire  03824