

Preamble

This accreditation self study represents the University of New Hampshire at a critical moment in its history, and in the history of higher education in the U.S. In most respects, the University is strong and well-positioned to meet the challenges facing higher education. Application rates remain consistent, and, by objective measures (licensure examination pass rates, the Collegiate Learning Assessment, graduate school admissions), our graduates are poised to be successful. UNH does well in the context of the recently released White House College Scorecard: Although our cost of attendance is high, our retention and graduation rates are amongst the highest in the nation, and our student default rate on loans, amongst the lowest. Our scholarly mission, including funded research, has strengthened: Faculty research in the areas of, for example, space science, climate change, marine science and ocean mapping, sociology, American history, and creative writing are nationally ranked. With the reorganization of our advancement efforts, private giving is rising. We have engaged both the business community and the state political structure in more substantive and strategic ways, and have begun more comprehensive partnerships with other public institutions in the state. The physical campuses, including teaching and research space, continue to be transformed by major building and renovation projects: to give some recent examples, Demeritt Hall, James Hall, the new Peter T. Paul College of Business. The university's academic reputation is strong, and faculty, staff, and students are ambitious for the university. The forward motion created by our most recent strategic plan, *UNH in 2020*, continues, even as the current fiscal climate presents challenges.

At the same time, we share the concerns of our colleagues across the country and have been deeply affected by the national conversation on higher education. We are following closely a number of important national trends. Among them are:

- Declining support for higher education at the state level, and at the same time, increased pressure for affordability and access;
- Pressure to use technology in more inventive ways, and to engage new modes of learning;
- Declining numbers of high school students, particularly in the northeast, and consequent efforts to recruit nationally and internationally;
- Increased calls to document student learning and outcomes, including job, graduate school, and professional placement;
- Increased student need for services (health, counseling, career, financial aid, for example).

These themes play out in specific ways in New Hampshire, and at UNH. For example:

- In 2011, the State legislature cut the University System budget by 48%, the largest one-year cut in the nation; this resulted in a \$34 million cut to the University of New Hampshire, or a 6% cut in our overall operating budget. (Governor Maggie Hassan has since restored some of the funding in return for tuition freezes for in-state students.)
- In 2011, we began an initiative called eUNH, wherein we offer graduate professional programs and undergraduate general education courses in on-line and hybrid formats; we

seek to expand those offerings so as to offer greater access and flexibility to UNH programs and expertise.

- In 2011, we signed an agreement with Navitas LLC to recruit and develop bridge programs for international students; we have invested more aggressively in recruiting out-of-region students; and we have strengthened our agreements with the state's community college system.
- As part of the 2009 redesign of our general education program, Discovery, we have articulated and begun to implement more systematic and transparent learning outcomes for all academic programs, including the direct assessment of student learning. While this is still uneven across the University, we have made significant strides, and the need to document student learning is now well accepted and a more formalized part of program review.
- Since 2009, we have revised our emergency management procedures and created task forces designed to identify and support all members of our community. We are in the process of creating a plan to redesign our career and professional school placement to better advise, support, and track our alumni.

In addition to the ways in which we have engaged the national conversation, the university has undergone some unique changes that promise to change how we operate, and to improve how we enact our mission. Among the most significant are:

- In 2011-2012, the Board of Trustees oversaw a complete redesign of the University System, its organization and procedures, and governance practices of the Board itself.
- Between 2010 and 2013, the University dramatically increased the number and kind of public-private partnerships in which it engages. Examples include signing a contract with Southwest Research Institute, expanding the Interoperability Lab (IOL), revising our guidelines for the commercialization of intellectual property, and working with industry leaders on the state's high-tech infrastructure.
- In 2010, the Faculty Senate voted to have a full January term, opening the way for a more flexible calendar. This new calendar, eUNH, and an increased emphasis on summer programming paves the way for UNH to become what we call "the University of Choice: an institution committed to providing multiple, flexible pathways for students to complete their college degrees.
- Between 2010 and 2012, the UNH Foundation, Alumni Association, and division of Communication and Marketing were reorganized into a single unit—University Advancement—to better coordinate the University's external relations.
- We remain committed to our Responsibility Center Management model of budgeting; indeed, its principles informed our understanding of and guided our response to the 2011 cuts in the state allocation. We intend to review our current formulae, however, so as to align more effectively our Strategic Plan, evolving external conditions, and our budgets.

These recent, and dramatic, changes punctuate a decade of evolution for the University. The cumulative result is a fuller reflection and integration of all aspects of our mission than at any other point in our history. For example, while the strength of our teaching, and particularly undergraduate teaching, remains our core, we have systematically built upon our research strengths, and integrated them in both the graduate and undergraduate experiences. Similarly,

the success of our Engagement Academies reflects the integration of research and service to the state, region, nation, and world. We expect our acquisition of the former Franklin Pierce Law Center (now the UNH School of Law), with its internationally-known strength in intellectual property law, to support, enrich, and extend our academic programs, our research activities, and our commercial ventures.

Throughout these changes, whether rooted in the national condition or our local situation, our practices are marked by a generative tension between our long-standing decentralized governance and financial systems and our increased need for more centralized and coordinated planning, decision-making, implementation, and assessment. Overall, our niche in higher education might be described in a set of parallel oppositions, paradoxes, and aspirations: small but comprehensive; land-grant and liberal arts; a teaching and research university; dedicated to being an engine in the state's economy, an incubator for engaged citizenship, and a vehicle for social mobility. As we navigate these, we try to live up to our best ideals of shared governance; indeed, those same principles of shared governance that animated the Strategic Planning process itself have influenced our approach to all of the changes listed above—and our approach to self-study.

We are committed to sustaining the university that has emerged from the challenges of the past three years. Meeting that commitment will require us to address directly some very significant questions. Can we afford excellence across as many domains as we currently field or will we have to focus our offerings and activities? Can we effectively integrate the needs of our students on campus with rising expectations for public service, economic development, and outreach to the state and region? Can investing in professional education create resources for the liberal arts and sciences? Similarly, can we integrate new and expanded graduate programs in ways that enhance the quality of undergraduate education? How can we best serve students with culturally diverse, demographically different, and international backgrounds? Can we coordinate expectations and recognition across the wide range of faculty—tenure-track, research, clinical faculty, and lecturers—whose importance to our overall success is crucial? Questions like these will force us all to think anew about what it means to be a public research and land-grant university in this new century. As we address them in the process of this accreditation review, we will be honing our conception of the University's distinctive missions.

As you will see, although UNH faces the same headwinds buffeting all of higher education, we are nonetheless in a modest growth phase, aware of our challenges, and moving deliberately to address them. Throughout the self-study, you will note projections that indicate our ability both to adjust to new circumstances and to assess our progress. The Academic Plan of 2003 and the Strategic Plan of 2010 set us up for a strong future, and we are tacking successfully towards that.

The process of the self study and our accreditation visit occurs as we note the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act (2012), the 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act (2014), and look forward to the University's 150th year (2016). We use the occasion of this review to celebrate the achievements of the past and to chart our course for the future.

Mark Huddleston
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