

Preface: Introduction and Institutional Overview

The University of New Hampshire

The University of New Hampshire is a dynamic New England public “university of choice” situated on the seacoast. As a land-, sea-, and space-grant university with a high research activity rating, the University of New Hampshire has a strong commitment to public accountability, high-quality academic programming and teaching, engagement in scholarship, and the provision of a safe, happy, and rich environment for our students, faculty, and staff.

Founded in 1866 as the New Hampshire College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, the University of New Hampshire was one of the early land-grant institutions established to serve the sons and daughters of farming and laboring families. First situated in Hanover in connection with Dartmouth College, New Hampshire College moved to its Durham campus in 1893 after Benjamin Thompson, a prosperous farmer, bequeathed land and money to further the development of the college. In 1893, Thompson Hall was completed, built with native granite and state-manufactured brick. That fall, with 37-year-old former minister Charles S. Murkland at its helm, the college opened its doors in Durham. In his inaugural address, President Murkland spoke of the “full freedom of the highest intellectual fellowship,” committing the college to also embrace the liberal arts. Through the years, Thompson Hall has housed the faculty post office, a women’s gymnasium, and classrooms for English, foreign languages, and mathematics. In the early days, a couple of students even lived in the bell tower. By 1919, the college enrolled 607 students. In five years, that number doubled to 1,230. By 1923, the college, by state legislative decree, changed its name to the University of New Hampshire. From 1900 to 1940, many of the university’s core buildings were built: Morrill Hall (1904), Smith and Hamilton Smith Halls (1908), Murkland Hall (1927), Hood House (1932), and Pettee Hall (1938). After World War II, the GI Bill brought waves of new students, and the lack of space on campus was described as “painful.” As then President Harold Stoke explained to the faculty, whereas college enrollment in the country had experienced an eight-fold growth since 1900, the university had grown 30-fold. In 1985 the university expanded again. The former Merrimack Valley College transitioned into the University of New Hampshire at Manchester “to provide UNH-access for area residents, prepare students for career employment opportunities in the region, work with community leaders to identify and respond to educational needs specific to the Merrimack Valley, and contribute to the economic growth and cultural enrichment of the region.” In December 2013, the former Franklin Pierce Law School was officially integrated into UNH as the University of New Hampshire School of Law.

Today UNH is not only a land-grant institution but also a designated sea- and space-grant University, and is among the top-tier research institutions nationally. The University is made up of dozens of academic departments, interdisciplinary institutes, and research centers that attract students and faculty from around the world, including those who access our offerings online. As state-of-the-art facilities are built to support academic growth, and new residence and dining halls are built to meet the growing popularity of campus life, the university continues to rest lightly on the beautiful Durham landscape while offering an urban experience in Manchester and preparation for the law in Concord amidst the state governing bodies.

Our current Self Study delves deeply into the state of our university today. The NEASC review process celebrates the uniqueness of our mission and character, requiring compliance

with strong standards while affording the opportunity to tell our story. Before introducing the 2014 Self Study, we highlight strengths noted in the evaluation report of our 2003 Self Study followed by updated responses to suggestions made in that report.

2003 NEASC Evaluation

Below are summary findings of the 2003 NEASC Visiting Team Evaluation Report. The 2003 Self Study focused on the undergraduate experience, engagement, and institutional effectiveness.

The report from the Commission's 2003 evaluation committee highlighted UNH strengths and made several suggestions. Strengths included a positive campus culture, the institutional effectiveness of Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) and its balance with central planning, collaboration between academic and financial sectors, student advising alignment with programs, a strong academic program review process, Trustees who value the multiple missions of the university, and a strong Office of Institutional Research. The Summary section of the report did not include any "concerns," but it did include eight "suggestions" which are summarized below along with our responses and references to websites and additional discussion found in the current Self Study. These suggestions were also addressed in the 2008 UNH Interim Report accepted by the Commission, so the responses below reflect an update of the Interim Report.

Suggestion 1: Prepare a mini executive summary of the Academic Plan, disseminate widely for improved buy-in and assessment of progress.

UNH Response

The Academic Plan has been replaced by the university's Strategic Plan: *UNH in 2020* that is summarized on the President's webpage with links to more specific information about the Plan and latest updates. A wide range of campus and community constituents collaborated to develop the Plan, then strategic indicators and working groups were identified in order to effect implementation. (See Standard 2.) The President's Cabinet expanded to include unit heads in all major units at UNH. Members meet weekly to discuss strategic progress and unit-level issues. (See Standard 3.) A full review of the Strategic Plan is slated for Spring 2014, to be led by the Provost. Examples of noted indicators of success include a blossoming of online course offerings and plans for new academic programs. (<http://www.unh.edu/president/strategic-plan-unh-2020>)

Suggestion 2: Proceed with RCM review including the credit weighting process and interdisciplinary rewards. Capability for interim adjustments/refinements must continue to be part of the process if it is to succeed.

UNH Response

The RCM review report was issued in 2009. Adjustments and refinements continue, such as last year's adjustment of the credit hour weight by college. Interdisciplinary and cross-college programs in the neurosciences, eco-gastronomy, marine science and ocean engineering, and the Carsey School for Public Policy have worked out cost recovery issues under RCM. (<http://www.unh.edu/vpfa/pdf/2009review.pdf>)

Suggestion 3: Clarify roles of the Central Budget Committee and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. A model to adopt might be the maintenance of the CBC as a standing committee with systematic appointment by the President of an Institutional Effectiveness Committee on a term basis...Such a group...could ensure that appropriate data are available and being used, report on the progress on the academic plan and recommend adjustments (keep plan as a living document and not a shelf document). Such activity would inform the CBC process.

UNH Response

The role of the Central Budget Committee is spelled out on the Office of the Vice President for Finance and Administration webpage. There is no Institutional Effectiveness Committee, but the Provost has initiated discussion of expanding the Institutional Research and Assessment Office to include measures of overall institutional effectiveness. Currently, many data sets housed in that office document the effectiveness of the Institution. The President convened a central budget task force recently during a period of fiscal exigency that made recommendations that were acted upon. Clearly, the Strategic Plan is a transparent and “living” document that provides a guide for action. (<http://www.unh.edu/vpfa/budgetcbc.html>) (<http://www.unh.edu/institutional-research/>) (<http://unh.edu/news/campusjournal/2011/May/taskforcereport052511.pdf>)

Suggestion 4: Allocate some funds centrally for new initiatives.

UNH Response

Over the years, many new initiatives have been funded through the UNH central budget. Discussion is underway for creating a “strategic pool of funds” for new initiatives. Current protocols require that proposals that request monies from central funds demonstrate centrality of the project, assessment parameters, and the expected return on investment. In addition, UNH is in the beginning stages of a capital campaign.

Suggestion 5: Institute annual reporting structure to evaluate progress of plan.

UNH Response

This is addressed in our response to item 1. Reporting is ongoing from the various units that are implementing different parts of the Strategic Plan.

Suggestion 6: Continue program review at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and make outcomes assessment a more visible part of those reviews. Include Discovery.

UNH Response

Standard 4 Academic Program in the current Self Study addresses this item. In 2012, during a time of fiscal exigency, the Provost required all units, including programs within colleges, to complete a review focused on the relationship of the unit to the UNH Mission, indicators of quality and success, and capacity. (See Standard 4 narrative, p. 32.) Regular program reviews continue on a fixed schedule. New review protocols require a section on assessment of student outcomes. (See Standard 4 narrative, pp. 21, 22, and 32.) The Discovery Program was implemented in 2009, and, by Faculty Senate motion, will be reviewed in 2014.

The Discovery Committee takes a continuous improvement stance in assessing the effectiveness of the program. (See Standard 4 narrative, pp. 24, 30, and 33.)

Suggestion 7: Integrate alumni surveys conducted by the IR with those alumni surveys conducted by other units (e.g., Nursing).

UNH Response

Development of a new alumni survey is projected for 2014. It will include options for academic departments to capture profiles of their graduates. (See Standard 2 narrative, p. 9.)

Suggestion 8: The Manchester Campus is symbolic of an institutionally effective organization. The relationship with the main campus requires ongoing monitoring to ensure continuing academic integration.

UNH Response

Because competition for students among institutions of higher education has increased within the Merrimack Valley, a review of our institution at UNH Manchester was undertaken by the Huron Consulting Group. The report was delivered on December 23, 2013, has been reviewed, and implementation plans are underway.

In the next section, we turn to the current Self Study, highlighting our goals, preparation, format of the Study, and a summary of our findings.

2014 Self Study

The current Self Study, and the protocol for our preparations, proved to be particularly helpful to UNH in uncovering challenges and determining solutions, as well as in reinforcing our understanding of what we do very well and why. An important part of the self-study process was to involve the university community in the research, writing, and review of the final documents as a way of gaining an understanding of the university as a whole. One internal goal for the Self Study was to pinpoint areas of needed improvement and plan for making those improvements. At the same time, we hoped to uncover pockets of excellence to highlight before the public and prospective students. We believe that UNH can be the university of choice for many students, once they understand the opportunities that are available here. The process of self study has helped us to recognize and highlight some of those opportunities while involving constituents from across our two campuses. Our internal goals have been met. While documenting our claims, for example, we found that we needed improved mechanisms for policy review and updating. Plans for putting such mechanisms in place are captured in the Projections' sections. We also learned about the "value added" of our high-impact programs such as honors' options, study abroad, and undergraduate research opportunities. Self study provided a grand overview, with sufficient detail, to draw the portrait of how our mission as a land-, sea-, and space-grant university is carried out.

Self Study Preparation

Work on the UNH Comprehensive Self Study began in 2011 with the establishment of a committee for each of the eleven NEASC standards, each headed by a chair or co-chairs. Committee members represent active UNH constituencies: students, staff, faculty, and administrators of academic and non-academic units. In general, members were chosen for their expertise and/or interest in particular fields. Chairs were chosen for their administrative skills. The UNH NEASC Steering Committee is made up of the chairs and co-chairs of each standard committee and several at-large members to ensure full constituent representation. Names, titles and contact information for the committee chairs are listed at the end of the Preface. The overall effort was headed by the NEASC staff, composed of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and the faculty fellow charged with coordinating details of the review.

In January 2012, UNH held a “NEASC Kickoff” luncheon for more than 40 leaders of our accreditation effort. Pat O’Brien, Senior Vice President of NEASC’s Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) joined us to outline the overall accreditation process, advise us on the Commission’s current areas of emphasis, and move among working groups to answer questions and offer advice. Carol Anderson, Vice President of the Commission, also participated in this exercise.

Standards’ committees met regularly throughout 2011-13 to draft their responses to all elements of the standards, gather supporting data, and populate required data forms. An electronic Sharepoint site was created to organize and share the writing and data. The site was constructed as a user-friendly primer for NEASC standards and protocols, and as a chronological repository for drafts of the narrative and supporting documents. It is intended to serve as a working template into the future. Committees used the Sharepoint site to post and edit drafts and collect and display data. Ultimately, the narrative drafts on Sharepoint formed the Self Study; data were hyperlinked to the final draft; and the resulting product was moved to a website. A concurrent effort to populate the Academic Assessment Inventory of student outcome assessments for each degree program was launched, also housed as a dynamic document on Sharepoint. All participants received training in how to effectively use the software and how to successfully decode and address elements of the standards plus choose appropriate assessments for the AAI.

UNH NEASC Staff and other Steering Committee members attended several NEASC workshops throughout 2012-13, returning to campus to educate colleagues on details of requirements. For example, expectations of the description, appraisal, and projection aspects of the Self Study were clarified and addressed by UNH. NEASC staff then gave us excellent and timely feedback on several drafts of our work.

In spring of 2013, a draft outline of the Self Study was vetted to the UNH community on the Blackboard platform available to everyone at UNH. Representative focus groups were then canvassed for feedback by the Provost and the Faculty Fellow. This process was highly successful, resulting in specific recommendations by personnel invested in particular areas of the Self Study. UNH-Manchester, for example, provided details that ensured incorporation of procedures in place on that campus; graduate students cited increasing diversity among their ranks, etc. Finally, the Self Study developed by committee and constituents throughout UNH was given a “single voice,” vetted once again to the UNH community and to NEASC, revised and

recast into final form for review by the Visiting Team. The local community beyond UNH was also informed of the NEASC process and given the opportunity to contact NEASC with any questions or concerns. A pre-visit by the NEASC visiting team chair in September, 2013, established details of the review visit scheduled for March 30-April 2, 2014.

During our self-study process, UNH School of Law (formerly Franklin Pierce Law School) was in the midst of becoming fully integrated into the University of New Hampshire. The law school integration committees include members of UNH's NEASC Steering Committee. Per agreement with NEASC, however, the current Comprehensive Review does not include the law school. Some references to the integration are made in the Self Study, where relevant, such as in Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation and in response to NEASC actions. Review of the UNH-UNH School of Law integration agreement, as documented in the approved Substantive Change proposal to the Commission, and in the Update contained in the Self Study, will be reviewed concurrent to the UNH Comprehensive Review.

Self Study Format

The Self Study narrative addresses, sequentially, the elements of each standard but reduces redundancy where possible, citing places where information is more fully detailed in other standards. As per NEASC expectation of the narrative, a description is followed by appraisal, then projections within each standard. A summary list of projections with responsible personnel and a timeframe follows the narrative. Since UNH feels a strong commitment to the importance of public accountability and to the substance of the NEASC standards, in particular, we state that affirmation at the start of the Self Study narrative but deliberately restrict the number of re-affirmation phrases throughout the document, in the interest of focusing on the substance of responses to elements of the standards within the 100 allotted pages.

We have tried to capture the essence of our case in the Self Study narrative with details provided in the hyperlinked evidence. For readers who do not wish to be "interrupted" by accessing hyperlinked evidence in situ within the narrative, supporting files/URLs/data charts can also be accessed through a separate, appended list, in the order of appearance in the narrative (Appendix D). While the narrative does not exactly read like a novel, it is intended to reveal an intricate portrait of interwoven events inside a land-, sea-, and space-grant university backdrop. We have tried to paint an accurate, candid picture of UNH vis-à-vis NEASC standards with both broad and fine brushstrokes to portray the tone and substance of our university and its life.

Summary of Self Study Findings

As might be expected, we learned a lot about ourselves through self study. The process itself was collegial and congenial with many contributors among all UNH constituencies. Although the collection of data and other supporting materials seemed, at first, to be a daunting task, we found that most data had been collected and housed in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and policies and action documents were in place to support our responses to all elements within the standards. The outcome of the Self Study indicates that we enact our mission and provide a rich and safe environment for study. The academic program and faculty are particularly strong, as evidenced by high student ratings of course content and instructors, and by an abundance of high-quality scholarly activity throughout the university. At the same time, we found that there were areas for improvement: some policy consolidation,

improved collection of alumni information, and the need to better document our successes in student achievement. These areas for improvement are spelled out more precisely in the University Projections. We have already begun to address most of these projections.

The Preamble that follows specifies the context in which UNH operates today and further addresses some of our challenges and overall successes.

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January 31, 2014**

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