

JOAN LEITZEL:

Teacher, Leader, and University President

Joan Leitzel (pr. Jo-ann Lite-zell) was born in Valparaiso, Indiana. With mathematics as her field of study, she earned a bachelor's degree from Hanover College, a master's degree from Brown University, and her Ph.D. from Indiana University, where she met her future husband, Dr. James R.C. Leitzel, also a mathematics Ph.D. student.



The Leitzels joined the mathematics faculty at The Ohio State University in 1965, where they remained until 1990. Joan was then appointed division director of materials development, research, and informal science education for the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C. She served as Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 1992 until 1996, when she was appointed president of the University of New Hampshire.

Dr. Leitzel held leadership roles in: the American Association for Higher Education (board of directors, chair-elect, and national chair in 1997-998); the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (board of directors); the Mathematical Association of America; the American Mathematical Society; and the National Research Council at the National Academy of Sciences, where she chaired the Mathematical Sciences Education Board from 2000-2005. She was also a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; and Sigma Xi, the honorary science society.

As the University of New Hampshire's eighteenth president (1996-2002), Dr. Joan R. Leitzel practiced her leadership skill at the highest level. She was widely recognized as one of the most successful presidents in UNH history.

“Since her arrival, Leitzel has worked tirelessly to raise the level of excellence in academic programs as well as the day to day operation of the university. ...[She] has successfully run the most aggressive capital campaign in the history of the university, as well as implementing new financial and fiscal management policies. Her vision and commitment have taken the university's academic standard to a higher level, as well as successfully increasing the amount of research funding the university receives.” —*U.S. Senator Bob Smith*

A 2002 *UNH Magazine* interview by Lois Shea, announcing Dr. Leitzel's impending retirement from UNH, reflected on her impact there. Excerpts from that article:

In Northwest Indiana, where Joan Leitzel grew up, they have a saying: "Leave the woodpile higher than you found it." "I think," says Leitzel, who will retire at the end of June after six years as president of the University of New Hampshire, "I can be confident that I have."

While Leitzel has accomplished much, she has rarely done so with sweeping gesture or bold proclamation. Steve Taylor, NH Commissioner on Agriculture and a university trustee, says that on any given issue, Leitzel "would bring people in, hear their side, talk to everybody who had a stake in something, make a decision and say: 'This is what we're going to do; this is where we're going to go.'" ... Taylor gives Leitzel a huge chunk of the credit for UNH's unprecedented fund-raising success: "A lot of it was her hard work and the respect and confidence that she inspired in major

donors...". Joan Leitzel's gift to New Hampshire is a stronger, better university.  
—*Excerpts from Profile of a President, Lois Shea, Spring 2002 UNH Magazine*

In 2002, the University of New Hampshire honored Joan Leitzel with their prestigious Pettee Medal, recognizing her outstanding accomplishments and distinguished service. Her citation for that award notes:

In her six years as UNH president, Dr. Leitzel has initiated changes to strengthen the University's financial condition, improve the physical plant, enhance academic programs and expand research opportunities. Significant accomplishments during her tenure include:

- The most successful and ambitious fund-raising program the University has ever undertaken. The campaign has strengthened key academic programs, brought state-of-the-art technology to classrooms and the library, and created new opportunities for students and boosted UNH's endowment.
- A new campus for UNH-Manchester. She encouraged that campus to develop programs to meet the specific needs of the Manchester community -- programs in communication arts, engineering technology and business, as well as the Center for Professional Graduate Education at Manchester.
- Important new campus facilities. Several outdated buildings were renovated or are slated for renovation in the coming year. The Environmental Technology Building opened last year, and construction is under way on a new dormitory and dining hall. The university acquired the Coast Guard facility in New Castle, N.H., and secured federal funding for a marine sciences laboratory on the site.
- A dramatic increase in research funding. Funding from government, foundations and industry for competitive research proposals nearly doubled during Leitzel's tenure.
- A more diverse student body. Leitzel's commitment to making the university more diverse has prompted a slow but steady increase in minority enrollment at the undergraduate and graduate levels over the past six years.
- A major expansion of graduate programs. Eight new master's programs have been created. The university is also now offering doctoral programs in natural resources and earth systems, ocean engineering and materials science.

She remains professionally active at the national and international level.