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OVERVIEW

For our re-accreditation review by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the University of New Hampshire has elected to undertake a focused self-study in addition to its report on compliance with NEASC's 11 Standards. With the agreement of NEASC and concurrence of the chair of the NEASC site visit team, a "mini site visit" structured around the 11 Standards occurred on May 1-2, 2003. (For the self-study on the 11 Standards, see: <http://www.unh.edu/neasc/finalreport.htm>) The University's main self-study activity has focused on three areas central to implementing the Academic Plan for the Future of the University of New Hampshire – The Undergraduate Experience, Engagement Through Research and Scholarship, and Institutional Effectiveness. The focused self-study report, presented here, forms the basis for the full site visit on October 19-22, 2003. As explained in the Preface, our three area reports describe, assess, and project our past, present, and future in three key areas, each of which has a prominent position in the Academic Plan (<http://www.unh.edu/neasc/docs/AcademicPlanExcerpts-UG-Exp.pdf>).

The area committees have found much to celebrate. At the same time, their assessments candidly outline a number of weaknesses that are addressed in their projections. For instance, we conclude that the Undergraduate Experience at UNH is rich and varied, and it remains a distinct, successful part of our mission. At the same time, our academic initiatives for undergraduates must be better integrated, both across our two campuses and with external learning sites and across a variety of platforms, including advising, the first-year experience, undergraduate research, international education, internships, and student-life. And, we must strive to increase our expectations for teaching and learning.

While the "Undergraduate Experience" has long been a feature of campus assessment and planning, "Engagement" is a relatively new concept that fuses research and public service. We conclude that our efforts at Engagement have both breadth and depth, but they require a more systematic approach to structure and promotion. The self-study, with its attendant forums and communications, has already launched us down that path. One of the most productive exercises was the development of a survey (available at: <http://www.db.unh.edu/surveys/ors/default.asp>), which provided extensive data for the assessment section of the self-study. We plan to use this survey to develop "real-time" data on our Engagement efforts.

The university has addressed Institutional Effectiveness in the last decade. For instance, our efforts at planning have culminated in a carefully developed Academic Plan that will drive institutional decision-making for the next five to ten years. We have created a systematic approach to internal program review. We have also increased our efforts in the assessment of student learning outcomes. And in AY 2001, we implemented a new, decentralized budgeting system (Responsibility Center Management) that promises a more nimble and transparent allocation (and reallocation) of resources. These and other initiatives are described and appraised in the area report; they represent significant progress. Our concern, however, has been to examine not only the distinct initiatives but also the degree to which we have integrated planning, resource allocation, and

assessment. Our committee concludes, by way of case studies, that we have made uneven progress in this critical integration. Their projections, especially the establishment of a new standing committee on Institutional Effectiveness, offer a promising path toward meeting our goals in this important area.

We expect NEASC to characterize the University of New Hampshire as an institution that meets and exceeds expectations described in the 11 Standards. The analysis presented in these reports, however, offered us an opportunity to dig deeper into three areas that are central to our own strategic plan. We look forward to the team visit in October as a chance to consult with critical peers who will strengthen our efforts to achieve our mission.

Bruce Mallory
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
August 2003