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› Series: SITC @ UNH Spotlights: Autumn Thon

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TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021

Cassie Hollasch '22 | English, Writing and Business Administration

In collaboration with the non-profit [College for Social Innovation](#), UNH has given three undergraduate fellows the opportunity to have a meaningful semester-long internship experience on campus through the [SITC @](#)

[UNH](#) program. In addition to Phoebe Adame's success with her SITC @ UNH internship at the Sustainability Institute, Autumn Thon is next up in our series showcasing the work of students in this pilot program. SITC @ UNH students intern with a UNH department in Durham for 30 hours per week to work on strategic sustainability projects that actively promote making a positive change on campus. SITC @ UNH fellows are contributing to UNH's constantly evolving sustainability

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practices, building their credentials, and connecting with the UNH and New England students enrolled in the Semester in the City Boston-based program.

Autumn, a sophomore Women's and Gender Studies and Social Work double major, is nothing but grateful for this pilot program which she describes as the opportunity to have a "human contact experience even while in lockdown." Because the SITC @ UNH students connect and share classes with the Semester in the City students, she feels like she is actually in Boston, but without having to move there for the semester.

Autumn is interning with the [UNH Office of Community Equity and Diversity](#) and [Sustainability Institute](#) to bring the 7th [Food Solutions New England's \(FSNE\) 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge](#) to UNH. The Office of Community Equity and Diversity helps ensure that campus operations are equitable for all members of the UNH community. They believe diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion are the foundational values that strengthen a community and allow community members to be uniquely themselves. The Sustainability Institute's FSNE is a movement designed to unite the food system community around a shared set of values- democratic empowerment, racial equity, and dignity for all, sustainability, and trust.

Through her internship, Autumn is organizing and executing the UNH [21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge](#) and helping with other related events on campus. The 21-Day Challenge runs from April 5th through the 25th and the UNH organized events aim to educate students, professors, and community members to explore various issues that arise from racial inequities in the food system and make connections to their participation in the Challenge. For example, a series of three student-led dialogues, in partnership with the Civil Discourse Lab, is being held where participants will delve deeper into the bias behind behavioral practices and build more effective social justice habits. Several additional events are available for students to engage with related to the Challenge. Diamond Library will be hosting a

special collection of selected readings, videos and films focusing on racial equity and food justice throughout April and [UNH Dining](#) will feature several local vendors, New England businesses, that have been selected to provide food for UNH's dining halls for their commitment to equitable work practices.

Autumn is working on writing a blog series on each of these vendors. She is enjoying bringing light to the accomplishments of these exceptional people and organizations. One notable vendor is local business Pierce Bros Coffee, who proudly uses only 100% organic and fair-trade certified coffee beans. Additionally, Autumn will be facilitating dialogues to discuss themes of the Challenge and content centered on issues of racial equity. As a frequent participant in dialogues of similar topics, Autumn is incredibly eager. She says, "I've been part of dialogues before but have never facilitated, so I'm very interested to see it from that side."

In order to be successful at planning this sizable project, Autumn has relied on her concurrent classes, INCO 505A and INCO 505B, to help. She recounts, "organization has definitely been very, very helpful to me and it's something we went over in class and I've discussed with my mentors and the staff at the Sustainability Institute. Breaking down goals and putting them on a time frame is something that has been tremendously useful to me, especially for future jobs where there might not be a lot of that structure to begin with."

Autumn does not have concrete plans for the future and is grateful for this experience in the ways that it has shaped her ideal career path. Autumn notes, "I was pretty sure what direction I wanted to go in before SITC @ UNH; I have a queer studies minor and I intended on working closely with the queer community that I belong to because that's where my personal stakes are. Now with all the really interesting work we've been doing and all the people I've been meeting, I'm wondering if there's any way of combining both interests." Luckily, Autumn has learned social justice issues are sustainability issues and they are "more connected

than one might initially think” to other issues of environmental and economic sustainability. She’s learned that the UNH views sustainability as a collective commitment to human dignity for all people and ecological integrity in all places. The work of sustainability is built around ethical obligations to uphold social justice, preserving the health of the planet and much more.

Autumn advises other students to consider the opportunity of SITC @ UNH as the program has many projects that relate to all majors and focuses on helping students develop the qualities that employers are looking for: creativity, self-drive and interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Autumn praises the program for being extremely accessible in creating a work experience relevant to her major and personal beliefs that is inclusive of “non-traditional” students like herself, who are tied to the Durham area. Be on the lookout for her blog posts about the vendors working with UNH Dining and find out more information on the Challenge on the [UNH 21-Day Challenge Website](#).

STUDENTS: Participate in SITC @ UNH and make an impact at UNH! [Learn more](#).

Contact [Faina Bukher](#) Program Director, Changemaker Collaborative, or schedule a time to chat.

UNH DEPARTMENTS: Interested in hosting a SITC @ UNH fellow?

Contact [Jennifer Andrews](#), Sustainability Project Director

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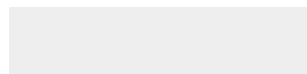
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