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UNH Gets High Marks From Washington Monthly Magazine For Its Retention Efforts

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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire was recently ranked No. 11 for its efforts to keep students in college through graduation by Washington Monthly in its 2009 College Guide and Rankings.

"This impressive ranking is a tribute to the efforts of faculty and staff who continue to provide substantial individualized attention to our students in the classroom, in academic advising, and through the host of offices and programs that focus on student life," University Professor and Provost John Aber said. "The institution expects to see our incoming students through to graduation, and we have proven successful in meeting that goal."

The social mobility ranking is compiled by Washington Monthly using a formula that predicts the graduation rate of the average school given its percentage of students receiving Pell Grants (a number they recognize as a good measure of a school's commitment to educating lower-income kids) and its average SAT score. UNH has 16 percent of its student body receiving Pell Grants and a predicted graduation rate of 61 percent based on the average. However, UNH actually has a graduation rate of 74 percent.

Washington Monthly prioritizes its annual rankings based not only on what institutions do for their students but also what they do for the nation, based on criteria including social mobility, research and service. NH received an overall ranking of 103 out of more than 250 institutions; but it ranked No. 11 in social mobility, based in large part on this better-than-expected success in retaining and graduating students.

"Higher education isn't something that only 17-year-olds and their parents need to worry about," wrote the editors of the Washington Monthly guide in explaining the importance of rankings. "In the information age, we all depend on colleges and universities to produce groundbreaking research and new inventions, to serve as engines of social mobility for first-generation college students, and to mold the minds of future leaders. And we all pay for it -- colleges receive enormous amounts of public money through direct subsidies and tax breaks every year. In other words, we need more than just good college rankings for prospective students -- we need good college rankings for everyone else.

"In our eyes, America's best colleges are those that work hardest to help economically disadvantaged students earn the credentials that the job market demands," the authors continued. "They're the institutions that contribute new scientific discoveries and highly trained Ph.D.s. They're the colleges that emphasize the obligations students have to serve their communities and the nation at large."

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

