

# Dean Touts Past, Present, Future in State of the University Address

**Max Scheinblum, Executive Editor**

DURHAM – UNH President James Dean delivered his annual State of the University Address on Tuesday, Feb. 14 in a Strafford Room packed with various administrators, high level faculty and an array of Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) cadets.

In his nearly 30-minute-long speech, Dean harkened back to UNH's founding mission, detailing successes as well the uncertainties that could plague the United States' higher education system as a whole in the coming decade.

“If we could go back in time to 1923 and show the university community, as well as the people of NH, I believe they would be both proud and probably astonished at the breadth, depth and excellence of the work we've done together,” he said.

The guiding mission “to prosecute such researches as may be necessary and desirable in the education of youth and the development of the arts, the sciences and the industries” has led to high national ranks in sustainability, intellectual property law and best value, according to Dean.

“[This statement] challenged us to create new and innovative solutions to the biggest challenges facing New Hampshire, as well as the nation, and indeed the world,” he said. “It has guided us and united us through eras of tremendous turmoil and change.”

Dean also noted some highwinds that could impede UNH's progress in the coming years. Among those is the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted enrollment not only at UNH but nationally, a trend that will continue in the coming years, according to research from education consulting firm EAB. Dean also cited the impact of high inflation on families, businesses, and institutions, increased competition due to alternative paths to degrees and international student enrollment problems caused by the pandemic and changes in US visa policy.

Dean also addressed the recent shooting at Michigan State University, which left three dead and another five wounded, and offered a somber message.

“I thought that it might be on your mind ‘what are we doing here? Could this happen here?’ And yes, it certainly could happen anywhere. There's no guarantees – we live in a dangerous world,” he said. “But I think we are doing just about everything we can possibly do to try and protect the campus.”

Dean cited UNH's nationally accredited police department as a sign of encouragement. Under the watch of Chief Paul Dean, who is also president-elect of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, UNH ranked second in safest college towns in America of more than 14,000 people. He also noted UNH's emergency notification system, which swiftly alerts all of campus of any issues via text and email, and constant training by officers and other university leaders on how to handle active shooter situations.



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“We are not an island,” he said, explaining how UNH is constantly in touch with regional and national law enforcement to “anticipate and diffuse situations before they happen,” with last year’s UNH Manchester situation as proof.

But Dean still remained optimistic for the future, highlighting several philanthropic, academic and community efforts that he hopes will offset upcoming difficulties. Among those is the revamp of the Hamel Scholars program to include an honors college, which will be located in what is now Huddleston Hall. This is possible because of a \$20 million donation by longtime UNH benefactor Dana Hamel and comes in a year where UNH raised a record \$79 million in philanthropy.

“The purpose of the Hamel Scholars and Honors College is to, number one, allow young people who have shown leadership and some ability to get good grades and have been involved in communities to get an education,” Hamel said in a pre-recorded video played during the address. “And the second part, over and above that, they will be in a position to be able to be leaders in the communities in which they live, and I hope many will be in New Hampshire. But [I] hope they’ll be all over the country and the world.”

Dean also celebrated the freezing of in-state tuition for the fifth year in a row, the offering of the Granite Guarantee, a program that has allowed roughly 2,000 students to attend UNH for free, and the upcoming merger with Granite State College.largest grant ever from NASA – \$250 million.

“This is an important step forward in our work to increase academic and professional training options for students throughout their lives, and it will help us to grow New Hampshire’s workforce particularly in areas of high demand,” he said.

Dean also highlighted UNH receiving its largest grant ever from NASA – \$250 million – for research on the sun’s impact on space and earth. He also showed a video previewing “The Edge Research Complex,” a proposed expansion on the western edge of campus to build out UNH’s “research enterprise, workforce development efforts and business partnerships.” This 500,000 square-foot “innovation space” will be a key part of UNH’s research and development future.

“100 years from now in 2123, when I finish this speech, I believe that the UNH community will look back with pride on how we envisioned and carried out our work through the headwinds of this era,” he predicted. “And I believe in my heart that they’ll be more impressed by how we as a community have stood together and triumphed.”