



UNH Commits To Being Healthiest Campus Community In The Country By 2020

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DURHAM, NH. – Got health? The University of New Hampshire wants to, and has set a goal of becoming the healthiest campus community in the country by 2020. This new initiative, Healthy UNH, is a campus-wide initiative targeting faculty, staff, and students to improve health while simultaneously decreasing health care costs.

“Every year UNH spends more than \$40 million on health care benefits for its employees and their dependents,” said Dick Cannon, vice president for finance and administration as well as co-chair of Healthy UNH. “Annual health care spending in the U.S. has been increasing two to five times the rate of inflation since 2000 and national health spending is expected to reach \$2.5 trillion in 2009, accounting for 17.6 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). To support such high spending levels one would expect compelling evidence of much improved health outcomes compared to other democracies that spend less on health care, but it does not exist. It’s time for change.”

These striking figures are just one of many reasons why UNH President Mark W. Huddleston formed the Healthy UNH Action Committee and commissioned the NH Institute for Health Policy and Practice to bring real, sustainable solutions to a very complex set of problems.

This committee, made up of representatives from service, business, and academic departments as well as students, is working to find ways to educate the community about how to make informed decisions to get the most value out of health care dollars spent as well as how to improve personal health by implementing new, healthy habits.

“We want UNH to be the healthiest campus community in the country by 2020 and that means every member of the UNH community will play a role,” said Barbara Arrington, dean of the College of Health and Human Services and co-chair of Healthy UNH. “Every single one of us can make positive changes, from improving our eating habits and committing to regular exercise, to choosing generic drugs when appropriate and making educated decisions about our health care.”

The committee is also responsible for examining how UNH spends its health care dollars and finding better ways to use the money through negotiations with insurance companies and hospital systems. And finally, the committee will identify best practices across USNH campuses, other universities, and other employers and strive to implement such practices to reach its goal of becoming the healthiest campus community in the country by 2020.

Healthy UNH is launching this fall with a series of events running parallel to this year’s University Dialogue Series, which is titled Taking Care of Self and Community: A University Dialogue on Health. Healthy UNH was present at the University Picnic on Sept. 15, to

distribute Healthy UNH stickers and bookmarks, as well as healthy snacks of apples and granola bars. Staff members were impressed with the amount of interest from students, who asked very pressing and poignant questions about the work Healthy UNH would be taking on, with many volunteering to take part in the efforts.

The Healthy UNH official launch event is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 14, at noon. It will consist of a health and wellness expo of campus organizations and departments and a one-mile walk through campus. A one-mile walk at a moderate pace takes most adults about 20 minutes, which is the amount of time the CDC recommends most adults exercise daily.

Other events this year include health-themed meals in dining halls, participation in benefits fairs and dialogue series events, and other fitness-themed events in the winter and spring.

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 more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.