UNH to cut 72 faculty and staff members

The aftermath of last week’s announcement has been felt in all corners of campus

Isabel Dreher, Managing Editor

On the morning of Jan. 17, Ashley Cierri along with her music department peers, received an email in her inbox with a subject line simply stating “Some News.” The email came from Susan Adams, the senior program support assistant to the UNH music department. It was sent to all of UNH’s music majors, and in it Adams shared that her position at UNH would be terminated effective March 1 as a part of the widespread staff and faculty cuts announced last week.

This list, which is not being released to the public in order to protect the privacy of those on it, named 72 UNH faculty and staff members, according to university president James Dean. Dean stated in a webinar Wednesday afternoon that of those 72, 63 individuals’ positions were cut entirely, and the rest received a decrease in their hours.

According to Dean and other members of the administration, this decision was made in an effort to reduce operating expenses as enrollment continues to decline. During Q&A session following the webinar, Dean was asked if tuition would be affected by declining enrollment and budget concerns. For now, the answer is probably.

“We just can’t keep this up any longer with everything that we’ve had facing us,” Dean said.

For the past six years, UNH tuition for New Hampshire residents has been “frozen,” or remained the same cost. According to Dean, the decision to raise resident tuition has yet to be approved, but it will more likely than not be the outcome.

As of Wednesday, Dean said that the university’s financial team was still working through the analysis of these cuts. However, the administration believes that they are “very close” to reaching the goal to cut $14 from the budget that was announced during the fall semester.

Upon hearing the news of Susan Adams being let go, Cierri, a fourth-year music education major, along with other students in the music department decided that something needed to be done. Cierri created a petition to “oppose [the] shortsighted termination of [a] vital UNH music department staff member.”

“I wasn’t expecting (the petition) to get as much traction as it did so soon, but I’m really thankful for that,” she said. “It shows how many people care about Susan and also how many people care about the music department in general.”

Cierri has a unique vantage point, knowing Adams not only as a senior administrator but also as a colleague. Cierri fulfilled a work-study position as a music office assistant that was added two semesters ago as a way to alleviate the already overpowering responsibilities that were previously split between Adams and another administrator in the music office, Adam Gallant.

“I saw firsthand how much she does for the department,” Cierri said. “So it’s unbelievable, [it’s] shocking, thinking of a department without her.”
The intention behind Adams being cut, Cierri believes, is to roll all of her responsibilities into Gallant, the only remaining staff member for music department administration. Cierri says this is “especially unrealistic” based on the amount of work the music office staff is responsible for.

Cierri and other UNH music students will not be stopping at the petition. The plan, according to Cierri, is to send emails to Michele Dillon, the Dean of COLA, and the UNH provost’s office detailing how important Adams and her position are to the music department. Following that, Cierri says they may reach out to the president’s leadership council and even the NH state government regarding school funding. According to Dean, only about 11% of UNH’s funding comes from the state, which contributed to the cuts.

“It’s really unfortunate, especially as a music education major. You’re prepared to kind of deal with that already on a K-12 level because music cuts happen everywhere,” said Cierri. “There [are] a lot of schools that unfortunately don’t have a music program because there’s not enough funding.”

As of Thursday afternoon, the petition opposing Adams’ position cut has 1,184 signatures towards a goal of 1500. The petition can be read and signed here.

“This means a lot to all of the music department, both on the personal level of losing such a valued member of our department, but also on the broader level,” said Cierri. “A future of music belongs at UNH.”