Senior Farewell: Isabel Dreher

Isabel Dreher, Managing Editor

The biggest piece of advice I would give to anyone looking to join The New Hampshire (TNH), and in fact any student organization, is that it's not too late. You may think you've waited too long to enter a new club, activity, or social space, but it truly never is.

Many of the senior farewells that TNH publishes at the end of each year include an opening anecdote about the writer's first meeting at the paper as a timid, bright-eyed freshman. My story does not go that way, and for a long time, I thought that this made my contribution to the outlet less valuable. I joined TNH my junior spring and have never looked back. I was lucky enough to be friends with Max Scheinblum, who was the executive editor at that time. He had invited me to join the paper many times prior to this, but something about this ask made me accept. I joined the paper as a news editor on the politics beat. I had never worked as an editor for any outlet before, and I was lucky in those early days to be surrounded by a supportive and generous editorial board who were available for any question I needed answered, whether it be about AP style, leadership, or some personal, social or college-related qualm. In this vein, I feel the need to especially shout-out Melanie Matts, a TNH alumnus who was in the position of managing editor when I joined the paper. Mel's welcoming attitude, kindness, strength, joy, humor, support, adventurous spirit and commitment to the craft of journalism inspired me then and still inspires me today. She made the newsroom feel like home to me, and I'm sure many others have had the same experience with this incredible woman. Mel, thank you.

When the end of my junior year rolled around, we began to have conversations about how to configure the staff for the following year to fill the positions of those graduating. It became clear that the remaining staff saw me as the best fit for managing editor. I was cautiously honored by this and eventually accepted.

The year that I have spent as managing editor has been significant in so many ways. Although I have absolutely experienced an expansion of my practical journalism skills, that doesn't even scratch the surface of what I've learned and gained from this job.

I learned through this role that being a leader is not easy. It can be very difficult to set boundaries for yourself in the midst of the college pressure to be all things to all people, but it is essential to do so. At times the culture of this university makes us feel as though we don't do enough, even when we are doing the most we can. Learning that has changed my outlook on work and life drastically.

Equally as important as valuing your time, morals and well-being in the face of seemingly endless pressure is the ability to own up to a mistake. I have learned that there is very little that cannot be solved if you genuinely apologize and make your very best effort to not repeat the mistake. Owning up to your failures is exceedingly difficult, but it allows you and everyone else to move on, and everyone's life will be better and easier for it. This, in my opinion, distinguishes an okay leader from a great one. I think my leadership has improved a lot as I've learned this lesson over the course of the year.
I feel compelled to address the recent decision by the UNH administration to get rid of the English/Journalism major as it exists today. Obviously, I think this is a huge misstep, but I also think it makes TNH a more valuable organization than ever before. Having journalism students on campus is a threat to incompetent leaders, because we are taught in the classroom exactly how to expose such injustices. I am by no means claiming that the UNH administration is getting rid of the journalism program with this in mind, but I do think that losing student journalists could allow future administrators’ actions to go unnoticed by the student population at large. The UNH community is also awaiting the announcement of who will be filling the role of university president after President Dean’s retirement, which is approaching fast this June. I believe that having a strong student journalist presence on campus holds our leaders accountable. Whether purposeful or accidental, the loss of the journalism major will make it much more difficult to keep our leaders in check, but as far as I’m concerned, TNH has the potential to be the solution to that. Although it may sound radical, I believe that the longevity of TNH and its ability to keep university leaders honest and responsible through reporting is essential to the longevity of UNH itself.

Finally, although TNH is a news outlet, it is first and foremost a student organization. College organizations are designed to bring people together, and I am pleased to report that TNH has done exactly that for me. Although I have learned many professional and personal lessons during my time here, the thing that will stick with me most is the connections I’ve formed. I am so grateful for that, and to those individuals, thank you. Finding worthwhile people who have a shared interest with me has been so very special and has enhanced my college experience immeasurably.

As managing editor, I rediscovered my confidence as a writer, editor and person. I feel as prepared as I can be to enter the post-college world, and I do not think I would be able to say so if it weren’t for the things I’ve learned and the wonderful people I’ve found throughout my time at TNH. I look forward to reading future happenings on TNH’s new website (coming soon (I hope)). I wish the organization and everyone in it the best of luck and thank you.