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April 9, 2007

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire will honor two New Hampshire residents with Granite State Awards for outstanding community service that will be presented at the 137th Commencement ceremony Saturday, May 19, 2007. In addition, two former U.S. presidents, the head of drug discovery and development efforts for Pfizer, and the president of RAND Corporation will receive honorary degrees from the university. Commencement begins at 10 a.m. at Cowell Stadium on the Durham campus.

This year's recipients of the Granite State Award are N.H. Department of Resources and Economic Development Commissioner George Bald and president of the Endowment for Health, James Squires. Honorary degrees will be awarded to former presidents George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton, this year's Commencement speakers; James Thomson, president and CEO of RAND Corporation; and John LaMattina, senior vice president of Pfizer Inc. and president of Pfizer Global Research and Development.

The Manchester campus will recognize the legacy of Saul O Sidore with its Granite State Award. The Saul O Sidore Foundation and the Saul O Sidore Lecture Series' have been established to carry on his interests and ideals to build a strong, secure and responsible community. His daughter, Sara Mae Berman, will accept the award on behalf of the foundation.

George Bald entered public service in the state of New Hampshire nearly three decades ago, serving three terms as mayor of the city of Somersworth before leaving to create an economic development department for the city of Rochester. In 1994 he was appointed economic development director for the Pease Development Authority, assisting in the redevelopment of the former Air Force base into a world-class business park. Bald is currently in his third term as commissioner of the state Department of Resources and Economic Development.

A general and vascular surgeon, Dr. James Squires was instrumental in establishing the Matthew Thornton Health Plan, the Granite State's first HMO. After retiring, he was elected to the New Hampshire Senate where he was appointed chair of the Public Institutions, Health and Human Services Committee where he led efforts to ensure that tobacco settlement funds be used for health-related causes. In 2001 he became the first president of the Endowment for Health, a statewide, independent, private, nonprofit foundation created in 1999 as a result of the sale of Blue Cross Blue Shield New Hampshire to Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc.

James Thomson has been president and CEO of RAND Corporation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan institution that seeks to improve public policy through research analysis, since 1989. RAND's research programs address a broad range of domestic, international and national security issues. Before joining the institution in 1981 he was a member of the National Security Council staff at the White House, where he was responsible for defense and arms control matters related to Europe. Thomson has a bachelor's degree in physics from UNH.

As senior vice president of Pfizer Inc. and president of Pfizer Global Research and Development, John LaMattina oversees the drug discovery and development efforts of more than 13,000 colleagues in the U.S., Europe and Asia. He joined Pfizer in 1977, just two years after receiving his PhD in organic chemistry from UNH. His research involved seeking new therapeutic agents for the treatment of gastrointestinal disorders and asthma. He is the author of 23 scientific publications and holds 15 U.S. patents.