

The View from T-Hall: An Extraordinary Legacy

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

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When Dana Hamel and I met for lunch in Durham on a beautiful day this fall and looked over the profiles of 15 brilliant UNH students, we joked that neither of us would have qualified to be among them when we were in college. I shared that observation when we honored this year's Hamel Scholarship winners and Hamel Scholars, and it got a good chuckle from the audience.

I wasn't joking entirely. Among the 10 new scholarship winners are some of New Hampshire's best and brightest recent high school graduates: "go-getters" who excel in academics, demonstrate leadership and show a real commitment to community service. Likewise, our five new Hamel Scholars are rising juniors who join an elite group of past recipients who have grown and achieved with unparalleled distinction at UNH.

What these students do with the opportunities UNH offers is simply astounding.

Take Hamel Scholar Gwyneth Welch, for example. Gwyneth, a junior from rural Hancock, N.H., is majoring in neuroscience, and she recently earned a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship. Her project: "Understanding the Role of Histone Modifications in DNA Damage Response." She is also editor of *Inquiry Journal*, UNH's online undergraduate research journal; a violinist who shares her talents at Portsmouth Regional Hospital; and a member of UNH Oxfam.

Or, consider Tim Marquis, who was named a Hamel Scholar two years ago. Tim, who grew up in Nashua, will be the first in his family to finish college when he graduates in May. He aspires to pursue an advanced degree, attend medical school, become an oncologist—and establish a state medical school in New Hampshire. He has also been awarded a Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the premier national award for undergraduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) majors. To relax, Tim performs as the principal bassoonist for the UNH Symphony Orchestra, and also volunteers for the Crotched Mountain Ski Patrol and in the endoscopy department of Portsmouth Regional Hospital.

Then, there is Dana Hamel.

To those outside of UNH, perhaps the most surprising fact about Dana is that he did not attend UNH. He graduated from Harvard. But he and his family became passionate about the university when his daughter, Karen '88, attended UNH. Through their experiences, the Hamel family became an integral part of the UNH family—and some of the university's largest benefactors and most dedicated volunteers. Dana established the Dana A. Hamel Family Scholarships and Hamel Scholars Fund in 2007 with a \$5 million endowment. This fall, he contributed \$10 million more. It is the third-largest gift in UNH history, and the largest ever for scholarships. Through these and other efforts, his lifetime giving total is close to \$25 million.

Dana believes that the best way to make a positive, enduring impression on New Hampshire's future is through UNH. And while he is a soft-spoken, unassuming man, Dana gives in ways that speak volumes about his genuine compassion for the families who entrust the promise of their talented sons and daughters to UNH. It is nearly impossible to imagine—even when we meet these brilliant young scholars in person—the real impact that his gifts have on students like Gwyneth and Tim. And will have on generations to come.

I am deeply moved and inspired by Dana's example. And I hope that you are, too.

Imagine the hundreds of Hamel Scholarship winners and Hamel Scholars who will one day be our state's doctors and nurses, teachers and business leaders, writers, artists, scientists and engineers.

What an extraordinary legacy for Dana to provide to UNH, and to our home state of New Hampshire.

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