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UNH's Commitment To Urban Education And Social Justice Found In The Classroom And Conference Room

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EDITORS AND REPORTERS: You are welcome to attend the Distinguished Scholar Lecture in Durham Thursday, May 4, and the conference Friday, May 5.

DURHAM, N.H. -- Pamela Power’s job as an elementary school teacher at the Beech Street School in Manchester involves much more than teaching her students reading, writing and arithmetic. For her, it’s a commitment to social justice and furthering understanding of her culturally and linguistically rich students, many of whom are immigrants and refugees working every day to learn English.

Power is one of a number of teachers in the Manchester School District who interned while at UNH in the city’s urban schools and was then hired as a teacher. Each year up to 130 UNH graduate education students complete full year teaching internships in K-12 classrooms around the state, with a growing number in Manchester’s schools as part of the university’s focus on urban education.

Many people don’t equate New Hampshire with “urban” or “diverse classrooms” but Manchester, home of the university’s urban campus, serves more than 17,500 K-12 students and has a vibrant and growing immigrant and refugee population. There are more than 80 languages spoken in the district and approximately 40 percent of the 700 students at Beech Street School speak a language other than English.

“We are involved in these culturally, linguistically, socioeconomically diverse schools because of our commitment to social justice and to the teachers and administrators dedicated to serving populations traditionally underserved by our public schools” says Judy Sharkey, assistant professor of education. “We have a strong urban mission in Manchester because we are a land-grant institution, and these are the needs of the community we serve.”

As part of UNH’s commitment to social justice and urban education, the Department of Education is hosting its 4th annual Teachers as Researchers Conference Friday, May 5, 2006, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at UNH Manchester. The conference features more than three dozen classroom and school-based research projects conducted by pre-service and veteran teachers in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Marilyn Cochran-Smith, director of the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction at Boston College’s Lynch School of Education, is the keynote speaker. She will discuss “Teaching for Social Justice.” For more information, visit http://www.unhm.unh.edu/misc/TeacherEdConference/. A renowned expert in teacher education, multicultural education and teacher research, Cochran-Smith will give the Distinguished Scholar Lecture in Durham Thursday, May 4.
Scholar Lecture are free and open to the public.

“In this current climate of No Child Left Behind, the voices from classrooms and schools are not being heard. The conference legitimizes and validates the role of teachers’ knowledge in school reform,” Sharkey says.