

11-2-2005

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## Recommended Citation

Billings, Kim, "In The Wake Of A National Energy Crisis, UNH Task Force Will Explore Measures To Reduce Energy Consumption And Costs" (2005). *UNH Today*. 1505.  
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/1505>

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## **In The Wake Of A National Energy Crisis, UNH Task Force Will Explore Measures To Reduce Energy Consumption And Costs**

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Nov. 2, 2005

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DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire President Ann Weaver Hart has announced the formation of an Energy Task Force, charged with developing immediate and future actions to reduce energy costs and improve energy conservation on the Durham campus.

“Everywhere across the nation, families, communities, businesses and universities are being affected by the steep and steady increase in oil and gas prices,” President Hart explains. “We need to be strong and proactive in addressing this crisis, and the task force will ensure that we are doing everything possible to reduce energy costs and consumption.”

This fiscal year alone, if there is no change in the university’s consumption of oil and gas at the current purchase price, UNH faces a \$3.5 million budget overrun.

Net tuition dollars and other revenue sources that are better than projected are expected to cover the overrun, but “We need to explore both immediate and long-term solutions,” says John Aber, UNH vice president for research and public service and chair of the task force. While the task may appear daunting, he is quick to point out that UNH already is a nationally recognized leader in energy conservation and has been for several years. “Energy conservation makes sense both economically and environmentally,” Aber said.

The U.S. Department of Energy ranks UNH in the top five percent of research campuses for energy efficiency, and the campus has earned several regional and national awards for its innovative energy conservation efforts. From propane-powered vehicles to its recycling and composting program, UNH leads the region in sustainability and conservation. Last summer, President Hart traded in her SUV for a Toyota Prius, and she boasts about 50 miles per gallon, even through Dixville Notch.

In January, 2006, the campus’s new cogeneration plant goes online, an upgrade to the current heating plant and related facilities that is projected to cut harmful air emissions and avoid energy costs of \$35 million over the next 20 years. While the plant is designed to be fueled primarily by natural gas, it can operate effectively and efficiently on other fuels, and campus officials are exploring alternative fuels that would significantly magnify economic and environmental benefits.

The Energy Task Force will review existing UNH energy management and education programs and summarize steps taken to date to minimize the cost and environmental impacts of energy consumption on campus. The group also will analyze current energy sources and uses and identify opportunities to reduce costs and impacts through technological improvements, increases in efficiency, reductions in waste, and selection of fuels. It also will inventory and promote educational and outreach programs intended to increase energy awareness and efficiency on campus.

The effort will build on programs already begun by the staff in the Office of Sustainability Programs and their Climate Education Initiative. Aber stressed that, “The needs are immediate, and we need to begin this fall. The Task Force will present recommendations as they are developed, rather than waiting for the completion of a detailed study.”

Early next year, UNH’s Central Budget Committee will review the FY06 energy budget, as well as net tuition, indirect costs, and fee revenue. According to Candace Corvey, vice president for finance and administration, an energy surcharge to UNH departments will need to be implemented. While final numbers will not be available until Spring semester, she says UNH budget offices already have been given preliminary estimates for planning purposes.

“By that time, I expect there will be more to report from the Energy Task Force and with respect to our efforts to reduce our energy consumption and to capitalize on alternative fuels,” Corvey says, “and I am confident we can be innovative and open to new ways of doing things. In the meantime, we are asking everyone to think about ways they can reduce energy use, from turning down thermostats, to turning off lights, to powering down computers. Literally, every step that is taken will help in some small measure.”