

# CONNECTing with UNH

Grace Morelli '21 shares her insights

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COURTESY PHOTO



GRACE MORELLI '21

Want to meet entering UNH students while going on fun adventures? Get credits before you even start classes? And get first pick on your bed? Sign me up!

UNH currently has six different pre-arrival programs: PrOVES, Spark, CONNECT, PAWS, NH Outing Club and Marine Immersion.

The program that impacted me the most was CONNECT. CONNECT has two options: STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) or Classic. People interested in STEM fields come to campus two weeks before classes start. Then, any major is welcome to participate in Classic, which begins one week before classes begin.

I chose STEM because my major falls under the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. When I first got to campus, I saw students yelling and holding signs reading, "Welcome Wildcats," "GET CONNECTED" and "CONNECT is the BEST!" All those signs made my parents and me smile. Even though I didn't know anyone at that point, I felt like I was at home. I was paired up with a mentor who was also a student majoring in the STEM field. My mentor answered all my questions, helped me adjust to college and made me feel welcomed.

During the two weeks of CONNECT, we participated in all types of fun and academically engaging activities. I took a biotech class worth two credits where we learned how to create biodiesel from cooking oil. We went to UNH's Brown Center and participated in a ropes course for team building. And every night would be a different social. Some included go-karting at the Hilltop Fun Center, having a movie night, doing scavenger hunts around campus and playing Family Feud, UNH style.

The activity I thought was most helpful for transitioning into college was called College Confidential. This is an "administrator-free" opportunity for incoming students to ask any questions and get the scoop on college life from a panel of mentors. How to balance academics, social life and sports was a question that came up a lot. Other questions were about best places to get food, which classes were the most difficult and the dos and don'ts of college.

The impact this program had on my life made me want to give back, so I applied to be a mentor for the 2018-2019 academic year. I was paired up with four students who all were interested in STEM. I guided them to their classes, gave advice for their first year here and supported them with whatever they wanted to do. This year, I am again a mentor because I had a wonderful experience with this program. CONNECT helps students transition into college, and I want to be a part of that process right by their side — just like how my mentor was for me when I was a freshman.

CONNECT is a program geared toward students who are first-generation, low-income and/or multicultural. Being a person of color at predominantly white institution, CONNECT was my community that made me felt like I belonged here. CONNECT and the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, known as OMSA on campus, work closely together to create a diverse and inclusive community where everyone is supportive and willing to understand different people's identities. CONNECT changed my life, and it will change yours!

If you know someone that might be interested or want more information, click [here](#).

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