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Lori Gula

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Contact: Lori Gula
603-862-0574
UNH Media Relations

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DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire President Ann Weaver Hart highlighted the university’s achievements and outlined challenges during the annual State of the University Address Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2003.

“You are in a room filled with people committed to advancing our abilities to teach our students to the ultimate of their potential, to push the boundaries of new knowledge and understanding, and to expand what we teach and learn for a better future for New Hampshire and the people of the world,” Hart told nearly 400 faculty, students, staff, Durham town officials and community members. Prior to her address, she read a proclamation from Gov. Craig Benson, who declared Sept. 16, 2003, “University Day.”

In her address Hart said UNH should celebrate its academic excellence, noting that the university is poised to potentially become the world’s leader in Earth-sun relationships in the study of the solar system.

In celebrating student leadership, Hart noted the work of student leaders who have led the organizational efforts of the first ever national student-led summit promoting responsible celebrations, which takes place this weekend, Sept. 19-21. The summit is the beginning of a national conversation, she said, to address how student and university communities across the nation can find ways to express celebration and disappointment in a civil manner.

Hart made note of UNH’s new leadership team, which includes Bruce Mallory, the university’s new provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. Under Mallory’s leadership, university administrators hope to finalize with the Faculty Senate the implementation of the new Academic Plan.

In thanking Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) for his support, Hart discussed the university’s achievements in research and support. In fiscal year 2003, UNH received $86.2 million research funding, with the largest sources being NOAA, NASA and the U.S. Department of Health.

“Even though we are the second largest recipient in New England behind MIT for NASA funding, and ahead of Harvard, Princeton and Cornell, we all must commit to becoming engaged partners in securing competitive grants and contracts,” she said.

In celebrating making the “quintessential New England campus a reality,” Hart discussed the
university’s master planning process, the upcoming final site visit in connection with its decennial accreditation, and several building and renovation projects.

Following her discussion of the university’s achievements, Hart outlined some of the challenges UNH faces.

She called upon the Faculty Senate to work with the administration to implement the Academic Plan and Discovery Program, to make discovery and a distinctive, inquiry-based education at UNH a reality.

UNH must continue to instill a greater appreciation of the university’s value. “I must work hard in the off-year of the budget biennium to push for greater understanding about our role in New Hampshire and its future, and secure resources that are necessary to make us successful,” Hart said.

The university should expand its engagement throughout the state and the academic leadership should continually examine the curriculum to ensure that it prepares students to meet the needs of companies working with cutting-edge technologies. The president called upon the university to begin planning the next capital campaign, to ensure private fundraising is “an ongoing and strong component of the university as a complement to state and federal support.”

She challenged students to hold faculty accountable for their promise to deliver an inquiry-based education, and to have high expectations for their behavior.

Finally, Hart challenged the UNH community, families and Durham residents to confront and fight underage drinking. “An honest self-appraisal confirms that in the past, we have not made full use of the resources and policies that we had put in place to address the issue of alcohol misuse. This year, we will work to make parents full partners in addressing this issue by notifying them whenever an underage student is charged with an alcohol violation, not waiting for the resolution of the hearing process or a second offense,” Hart said.

“We have worked jointly to elaborate a vision and a plan that will result in the University of New Hampshire becoming among the best small public universities in the United States, and therefore in the world. Parts of the University of New Hampshire have already achieved this vision. We must commit to action upon the vision to move the entire university forward,” she said.

EDITORS: UNH President Ann Weaver Hart’s speech will be available for download soon at http://www.unh.edu/president/univday03.html. A photo from the address can be downloaded at http://unhinfo.unh.edu/news/img/unh_hart_uday.jpg.