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UNH Is Fast Becoming a Popular Choice for Students

By Kim Billings
UNH News Bureau

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DURHAM, N.H. Given the current number of students who have indicated they're coming to the University of New Hampshire this fall, UNH is growing in popularity. The entering class at the university is expected to be about 2,700 new students, exceeding projections by about 100, according to UNH officials.

"While the number of New Hampshire residents who will be enrolling at UNH appears to be consistent with our projections -- and near the high water mark for the past decade -- we have been genuinely surprised by the sharp increase in the number of students from outside of the state who plan to enroll," says Mark Rubinstein, vice provost for academic achievement and enrollment services.

The factors which might account for this surge, Rubinstein says, are "the solid reputation the university enjoys in the region among guidance counselors and families as a place where a student can receive a strong comprehensive undergraduate education. Students know that they can participate in research opportunities with extraordinary faculty whose work can take them to the bottom of the ocean or the far reaches of space.

"Also, we offer a beautiful campus and one that seems to be built on a human scale that contributes to a sense of community and a sense that the resources and the possibilities of the university really are accessible to each student."

UNH ranked high nationally

The quality of a UNH education is reflected in some of the national rankings as well. It has ranked consistently
in the top 50 public universities in the nation for the past several years and as one of the top 20 schools for Division I athletic programs, of which there are 321 in the country, according to U.S. News and World Report. The university's 80 percent graduation rate was specifically noted in the latter example.

Faculty at UNH are among the nation's best in scientific research, according to the Institute for Scientific Information, a group that ranks high-impact universities in the United States.

More classes and rooms needed

While all agree this is good news for the university, administrators also point out there will be a need for more housing and more classes. In anticipation of the higher than expected enrollments that became apparent in early May, Rubinstein says that more sections of academic courses were added for the fall semester (and will be added for the spring) to ensure that students could enroll in the appropriate courses. "The academic departments of the university were very responsive to this situation and took seriously our obligation to meet the academic needs of our students," says Rubinstein.

Housing officials are also responding to the challenge created by the larger than expected class which exacerbates an existing housing shortage at the university. Recognizing that the demand for on-campus housing was greater than could be accommodated with existing room layouts, UNH made the decision in 1999 to convert 250 of the largest double rooms to house three students. To meet this year's additional and unexpected increase in housing demand, the university will convert approximately 70 lounges into additional residence hall rooms. Each converted lounge will accommodate from three to six students.

No one promised housing will be denied

According to Anthony Zizos, assistant vice president for business affairs, all UNH students who were promised housing for the fall will be accommodated. "We're in for a crunch for a while," he says, "but no one who has been promised housing will be denied."

He adds all students who enter the university as first-
semester freshmen with a housing commitment from UNH are guaranteed housing for both the freshman and sophomore years.

**New residence hall due to open mid-November; 350+ new beds in 2003**

As part of the long-term solution to the challenge of providing adequate on-campus housing, UNH is currently constructing a new residence hall and a new dining hall. While the new residence hall opens in mid-November, 2002, another residence hall (Congreve) is going offline for the remainder of the academic year for extensive renovations.

Some additional relief will be provided at semester break in December -- a time when students leave on internships and national and international exchange programs. In September of 2003 there will be more than 350 new beds for students.

There is an acute housing shortage not just in the Seacoast area but all around the state, Zizos notes. "Rent rates are rising and the vacancy rate has been at 1 percent statewide," he explains.

Rubinstein adds that UNH is in a position similar to other schools in the region, including Plymouth and Keene State colleges, where the overall housing shortage in communities is affecting on-campus housing.

"There always will be a high demand for university housing because residence hall living is the best deal in town," says Zizos, who notes that all utilities and voice, video, and data communications are bundled into the rent rate.