

One to Watch

Peter Wilkinson '15 shares aspirations, advice for freshmen

Wednesday, June 3, 2015



WATCH PETER LEADING THE CHANT AT COMMENCEMENT.

If you were anywhere near Durham the day of commencement in May, you may have heard some loud chanting among the speeches and applause of the joyous occasion.

That was Peter Wilkinson, leading the entire crowd of Wildcats in the cheer that's become his mantra during his four years in Durham.

The epitome of Wildcat pride, Wilkinson came to UNH to make a difference, increase student support at athletic events and cheer on UNH students in their many endeavors. Wilkinson is one of a handful of "ones to watch" from the Class of 2015 whom we'll be featuring in UNH Today in the coming weeks.

Hometown: Lancaster, N.H.

Family connection: My little brother goes here now; this year he was in Hubbard, and I was an RA in Stoke.

Majored in: Environmental conservation and sustainability. I was an undeclared engineering major my freshman year, but I started to feel like I wasn't getting enough people interaction. I realized I love working with people, and I'm passionate about the environment.

Why did you decide to come to UNH? Originally I wanted to go to school for engineering, so I was looking at MIT; math and science were the name of the game for me. But when I visited here, the UNH community resembled my home community so much, even though my hometown was about 3,000 people and UNH is so much bigger. It's such a close-knit community, I just instantly felt comfortable here.

You're the leader of the Cat Pack Captains — what's that? I did a lot of stuff to boost school spirit in high school, and when I got here, I thought I could do the same thing. I really like to make change, to create change and build community. I definitely did not see it becoming this big. I used to talk about it — imagine if there was this group of students known on campus that would come together and go support as many of our

athletic teams as possible and really get the crowd going. I wanted to be able to bring students together for these big events, to help instill a better sense of pride in students at UNH.

Mentors/influencers here: I met the right people and they helped me find the tools and resources I needed. Kristin Carpenter (assistant director of residential life) had been a mentor, a personal advisor, even my mom at UNH at times, she's helped me so much.

What else have you done here at UNH: I joined the Residence Hall Association my freshman year, ran some ideas by them. I've been president of RHA for two years, that's where I really learned the skills to be a leader. That, and, UNH Leadership Camp, where we developed something called a leader action plan — it's a physical document that says, "Here's what I'm going to do to make change happen."

What's next for you? I'll go to grad school for student leadership. At this point in my life, I really want to work on a college campus — if it could be UNH that would be amazing — in a position either in a student union or some sort of student affairs position where I'd be able to help students find and develop their leadership abilities so that they feel as though they belong on that campus, and then they can help other students feel the same way. I also like being a motivational speaker, and speaking about community building.

What advice would you give your freshman self if you could, now, in hindsight? Spend time early on to make sure you have the academic side of things down in college, start your freshman year off right. As you progress, you can move a little bit away from that and start exploring. Also, develop your own social support system or network. Find the classmates in your major, your professors and in general other faculty and staff ... people you can rely on, who will point you in the right direction for opportunities. The sooner you can do that the sooner you will be successful. Be part of something bigger.

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