

Higher Ed. Board Impressed by UNH Progress As It Prepares for Reaccreditation in 2003

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DURHAM, N.H. -- En route to reaccreditation in 2003, the University of New Hampshire has passed an interim evaluation with flying colors.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in a letter to UNH President Joan Leitzel commends the university for its efforts to diversify the campus, for defining the role of UNH-Manchester and for drastically improving the library.

"I am particularly pleased by the high marks we have received in these areas," said Leitzel. "We are in the early stages of our programs in these areas, and we have strong momentum in each. Within five years we will have even more to show."

Accredited institutions, such as UNH, are required to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every 10 years. This includes a self-study and visit by a committee of the NEASC. An interim report is submitted at the five-year mark to ensure that schools are on track toward achieving goals set during the previous evaluation. UNH was last evaluated in 1993.

"The commission commends the university for submitting a carefully prepared, extensively documented fifth-year report in which all the areas of concern of the commission were addressed," the letter states. Following are some specific areas that were addressed:

- The university is commended for its efforts to diversify the campus "in an attempt to reverse a declining trend from 1993 to 1997." Women comprise 58 percent of the undergraduate population, and there is a slight rise in minority enrollment. According to the report, current strategies to recruit and retain underrepresented populations will likely yield more impressive results over time.

The report also notes an impressive number of women in high-level administrative positions, but adds that under-representation of women in high-

level faculty positions is an issue that is "likely to be ameliorated, at least in part, as newly hired women advance."

- Expansion and renovation of Dimond Library is cited for its Internet access, expanded electronic services, new equipment and more effective inter-library loan service. The commission also supports the university's long-range plan to address issues such as staffing and additional equipment needs. "The university's struggle with what are familiar problems for most academic libraries is exacerbated by perennially meager state funding," the report says, "yet significant progress has been made, albeit under difficult circumstances."
- Facility consolidation and progress in defining the role of UNH-Manchester also earns high marks. "With its urban environment and non-traditional and minority student body, the Manchester campus complements the mission of the main campus at Durham and is positioned to make significant contributions."
- The commission notes that UNH has begun data collection as a first step toward assessing student outcomes. "Through the self-study, we wish to learn of further progress . . . in developing and implementing direct measures of student learning in general education and in majors and using the results to inform institutional decision-making and planning."

Given that UNH is the only public research institution in the state, the commission also wants to hear about progress toward increasing support for the library and computer resources. According to the report, other areas the university should address in preparation for the 2003 evaluation include continued progress in fundraising, enrollment and diversity goals.

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