

# Voices: Dialogue Is Key

Thursday, December 1, 2016



I appreciate dialogue, different perspectives and opposing views and positions regarding the unionization efforts on campus whether for or against. Dialogue on all levels with multiple viewpoints, respectfully and openly presented and received, can lead to something better than that which exists in a vacuum of communication or a lopsided conversation. I am hopeful that this will be the result of the current dialogue occurring across the campus, and in the end that dialogue will had value to the lives of all the dedicated staff across the UNH campus.

Clearly there are issues on and across the university that should, and need to be discussed in an open forum and in a respectful manner. Denying that people have legitimate concerns regarding workload, hours of work, compensation, benefits, merit and opportunities for advancement does nothing to honor how some dedicated and talented staff feel across the campus. This may not apply to any one individual directly, but it may apply to one or more of your co-workers or a department which you have limited or little exposure. Because it is not how you feel today, does not mean that those feelings do not exist for others. I like to believe we are a kind and compassionate team here at UNH, capable of empathy.

I intend to take every opportunity to consider the merits of both sides of the union issue, and the arguments being presented, and

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I encourage all my co-workers and peers to do the same. I hearten everyone to be respectful and open to ideas, especially those which may challenge one's personal beliefs. Open communication should not be closed down, but rather broadened to provide a forum for healthy conversations. We should all feel safe and respected in sharing our views and concerns.

I am worried that the current rhetoric being generated stymies the possibility for appropriate debate, and that it is creating barriers to healthy conversations which, may, in the end, benefit everyone if opposing perspectives are considered, valued and acted upon.

There are so many great people working here at UNH; people who are inspiring, and who add value to the institution every day in countless different and diverse ways. Their passion, input and perspective should be honored and respected in an environment where opposition, or voiced concern, reveals opportunities for systematic improvements. I have been privileged to work day in and out for the past 29 years here at UNH with a large group of dedicated, talented and UNH passionate teammates. Every day I do my best to be open to the point of view of others, and be respectful of their perspective, and I believe a majority of my co-workers and peers strive to do the same. This is how we become better as a person, a friend, a co-worker and a peer.

There are merits, to both sides of the union issue, and we would all do ourselves and each other a great service, if we were mindful that. We need to allow people the freedom to explore and judge for themselves in an environment that is free from fear or intimidation, either implied or explicit, to decide for themselves what is best and appropriate. We are, after all, working for the same common goal — a great University of New Hampshire!

I remain committed to being open and respectful to the conversation and the positions that each side represents and presents. Perhaps we should all consider that at the end of the

day what is the harm in a vote? It will reveal the intentions of good people on both sides of the union issue. We live in a republic, and we all understand the power of exercising our right to choose through the process of voting. I see no harm in moving forward with a vote, as it will determine, in an appropriate forum, the intentions of the great staff across this campus. And in the end, the goal should always be what is best for the workers, their departments and the university today and moving forward.

—Brenda H. Whitmore '81, '99, MA '02  
Director, Facilities Project Management

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