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Media Relations

November 5, 2015

New UNH Center Prepares Students to Use the Skills of Entrepreneurship to Lead Community, Social, and Environmental Change

DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire has launched a new center focused on social innovation, the application of market-based and cross-sector strategies to develop sustainable, scalable solutions to societal problems. A joint venture of the Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics and the Carsey School of Public Policy, the Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise will bring together individual entrepreneurs and business models (traditionally the domain of business schools) with public policy and systemic change (traditionally the domain of policy schools).

“This center plays a key role in advancing the university’s efforts to develop a learning centered environment for the 21st century,” said Jan Nisbet, senior vice provost for research. “We have a deep commitment to interdisciplinary learning because we understand that society’s most complex problems must engage multiple sectors and disciplines.”

The center will place a strong emphasis on applied learning and research opportunities for students from across the university to equip them to contribute to social and environmental change in their communities, both as students and later in life as professionals and citizens. The center will engage with leading mission-driven companies, nonprofits and community organizations as well as the public sector to work alongside UNH students and faculty in investigating and developing innovative solutions to societal challenges.

Michael Ettlinger, director of the Carsey School of Public Policy, said the center will serve both students and the policymaking sector. “Business models and social entrepreneurship are important parts of the toolkit for addressing societal challenges,” said Ettlinger. “By exposing future and current policymaking professionals to these tools we will improve their practice. Likewise, social entrepreneurs will benefit from a deeper understanding of the societal and policy context of their enterprises. Through these synergies the center can make a real contribution in offering innovative solutions to daunting problems.”

“This interdisciplinary center will give UNH the opportunity to build national leadership in the growing field of social innovation,” said Deborah Merrill-Sands, dean of the Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics. “The center represents new and significant opportunities for Paul College to engage with other UNH colleges, as well as external partners, to demonstrate the relevance of business and entrepreneurship for social impact to a wide variety of students across a wide variety of disciplines and sectors.”

The center will be led by co-directors [Fiona Wilson](#) and [Yusi Turell](#). They bring extensive expertise in building experiential learning programs, as well as in the practice of social innovation. In their previous roles at UNH, they have collaborated to build several university-wide initiatives in social

innovation, including the New Hampshire Social Venture Innovation Challenge and the Social Innovation Internship. These programs will now fall under the Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise.

The center is supported by UNH, as well as by support from leading UNH alumni, specifically the Peter T. Paul Fund for Innovation and by a supplementary gift from Marcy Carsey, whose generosity established the Carsey School of Public Policy.

The official launch of the Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise Friday, Nov. 20, coincides with the finals and keynote address of this year's [New Hampshire Social Venture Innovation Challenge](#). The SVIC keynote address "Inventing the Future: How Social Entrepreneurship Can (and Will) Save Our World" will be given by Gary Hirshberg, co-founder and chairman of Stonyfield Farm, the world's largest organic yogurt producer. For more information on the center visit <http://www.unh.edu/social-innovation>.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 13,000 undergraduate and 2,500 graduate students.

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