UNH launches experiential learning program to enable students to create positive impact for New Hampshire organizations

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DURHAM, N.H.—The University of New Hampshire has launched Semester for Impact, a new initiative that pairs UNH undergraduates with Granite State organizations (businesses, non-profits and municipalities) to support projects related to positive environmental and social impact and enhance the overall well-being of local communities.

Students will spend 15 weeks working 30 hours per week for organizations across the state while earning credit towards their undergraduate degrees and participating in workshops and courses designed to prepare them for and support their experience in their placements.

“Organizations across the Granite State need capacity to advance strategic projects, and our students are looking for educational experiences that allow them to apply classroom knowledge to the real world, while building professional skills,” UNH Provost Wayne Jones says. “Semester for Impact is a win-win for everyone involved.”

Four UNH students are part of the initial cohort:

- Skye Loto, an analytical economics and political science dual major, will assess the local impacts that socially responsible businesses can have on their communities for the statewide non-profit membership organization, New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility.
- Abigail Gilbert, an environmental and resource economics major, will work with the City of Dover Office of Business Development, to help launch a small business incubator.
- Dan Markowski, a community and environmental planning major, will work with the City of Manchester to conduct a parking audit of the city's downtown.
  The insights gathered will inform future projects and sustainability initiatives for the city.
- Suzanne Scharff, a women’s and gender studies and sustainability dual major, will work with The Freedom Café in Durham, raising awareness about the cafe's commitment to sourcing materials and ingredients free from human trafficking.

Unlike traditional internship programs which take place outside the regular academic year, or are part-time, Semester for Impact recognizes the transformative nature of high-quality immersive experiential learning, embedding it in the core academic experience. Students stay on-track to graduate while developing their career goals, building valuable career-ready skills, and enhancing their professional networks in the state.
UNH is expanding its partnership with the non-profit College for Social Innovation (CFSI) to launch and deliver this program. Over the last seven years, 190 UNH students have completed Semester in the City, community-based learning semesters in Boston through CFSI. Students who have completed the program have demonstrated significant gains in key workforce and academic competencies and have landed career-track jobs at higher rates than their peers.

"We are excited to continue our long-standing partnership with the University of New Hampshire and introduce the Semester for Impact program, which provides students with the opportunity to contribute significantly to local organizations and earn academic credit while doing so," said Eric Schwarz, co-founder and CEO of CFSI. "We invite local non-profit, government organizations and mission-driven for-profits to consider hosting a Semester for Impact student and benefit from their insights and energy."

For more information and to submit a host organization application, please visit the website: https://collegeforsocialinnovation.org/host-an-sfi-fellow. A virtual information session will be held on February 22, 2024, at 12pm. Register here: https://unh.zoom.us/j/99735336799

Semester for Impact is part of UNH’s Sustainability Institute’s Changemaker Collaborative which is in partnership with the Peter T. Paul College of Business & Economics and the Carsey School of Public Policy. The collaborative is focused on providing capacity and resources to advance sustainability efforts across the state, while enhancing UNH’s educational mission, providing UNH students from all of UNH’s five colleges with transformative real-world learning opportunities and tangible skill building to enable them to become future leaders.

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