

UNH Manchester celebrates students in 25th anniversary of ESOL programs

Wednesday, September 7, 2022



In early August, the [University of New Hampshire at Manchester](#) held a graduation celebration for students in the intensive summer [English for Speakers of Other Languages \(ESOL\) program](#). The occasion was particularly meaningful as it marked the 25th anniversary. The program originally started in 1998 under the leadership of Margaret Pobywajlo and the late Michael Pugh, beloved former UNH faculty and longtime advocates for multilingual students and communities.

It was also the first time back in person since 2019. Since its inception, the program has supported more than 700 students from 65 countries. This year's graduation celebrated 16 students

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from nine different countries, including recent arrivals from Ukraine.

“It’s a privilege for me to not only help continue Margaret’s and Michael’s legacies, but to also work with our community partners and the diverse and incredible students in the program,” said program coordinator and this year’s instructor, Emily Kerr. “Our classroom becomes a supportive and welcoming space where everyone shares their different perspectives and cultures, all while learning more about Manchester and becoming more confident in English.”

That was a theme echoed by student graduation speakers Orhan Yigit and Malak El Mikawi. Yigit, a former physics teacher in Turkey, expressed, “I love talking with people who have different backgrounds. My dear classmates: every one of you added some valuable things to me. I always love and enjoy our class time together.”

Mikawi, a former preschool French teacher in Lebanon, agreed. “The program facilitated our ability to communicate in English with new classmates of diverse nationalities in one-to-one discussions or groups. I would like to share that each one of us shared intriguing and new information about our cultures as immigrants.” Mikawi noted another benefit: “It’s a way to begin to connect with other Americans.”

Guest speaker Dr. Judy Sharkey, the John & H. Irene Peters Professor of Education and former Chair of the Education Department at UNH, gave tribute to the cultural and linguistic assets of the students and how these enrich our community. “You make Manchester and New Hampshire better,” she said. Senator Maggie Hassan also expressed her support to the students in a letter read by outreach director Kerry Holmes.

The week before the ESOL
program graduation, UNH



MANCHESTER MAYOR JOYCE CRAIG SPEAKING WITH EXCELL-IN-STEM GRADUATES ABOUT THEIR RESEARCH POSTERS.

Manchester held a ceremony celebrating 27 graduates of the middle and high school [EXCELL-in-STEM program](#). This month-long program combines hands-on experiences in science and engineering with English language arts.

EXCELL started as a spinoff of the adult program in 2004, and was renamed EXCELL-in-STEM in 2014 to reflect its increased focus in

science and engineering. Students conduct investigations in UNH Manchester's biology labs, go on field trips and participate in 3D printing and robotics. They also keep science notebooks and write about the data they collect.

At the celebration ceremony, students demonstrated their learning through poster presentations. They were joined by their families, Manchester School District educators and liaisons, community partners and Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig.

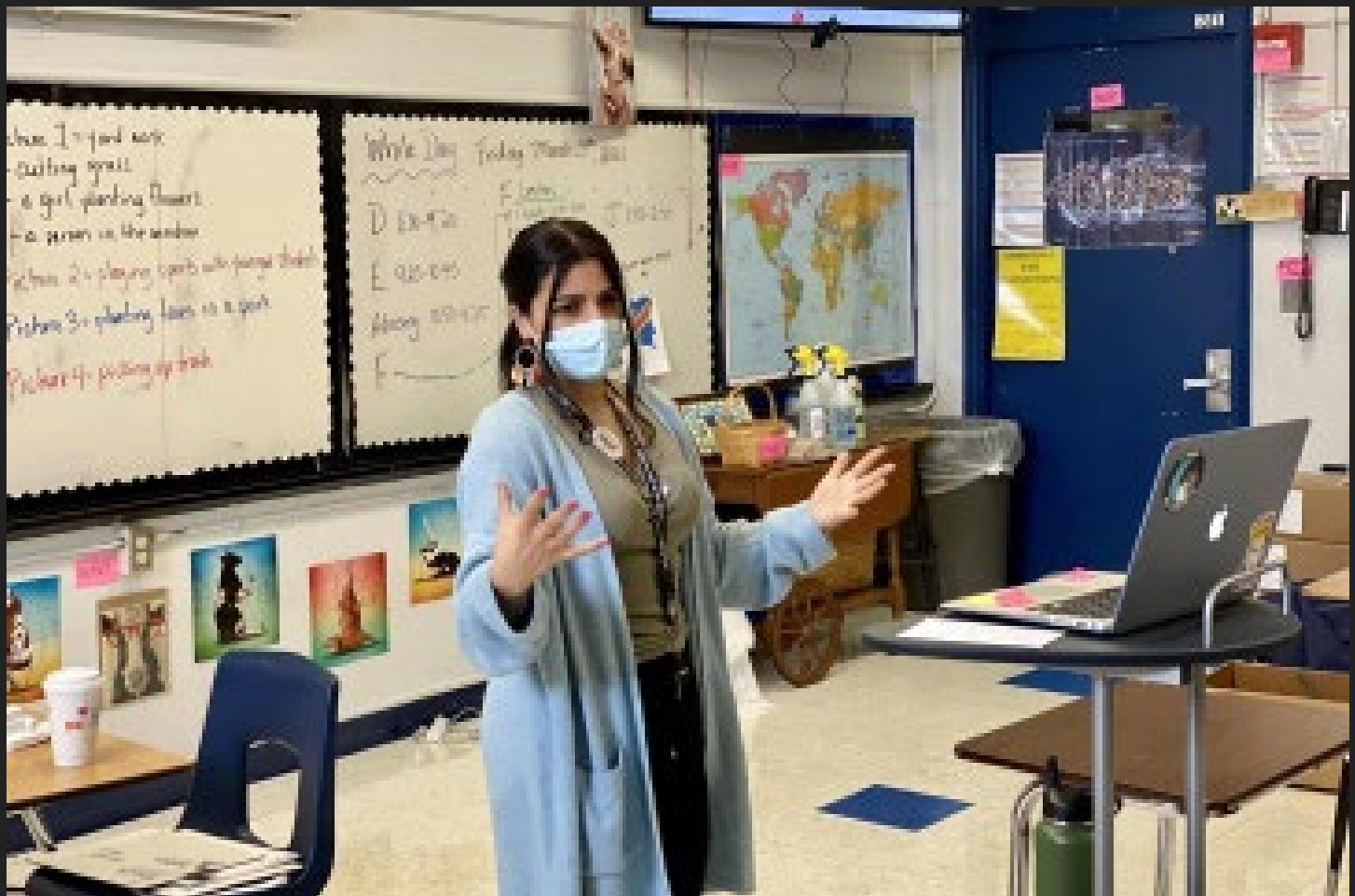
EXCELL-in-STEM student speakers Ashley Santos and Cheilyn Rivera Gutierrez shared that programs like these have helped them to become less shy, learn about science in a fun way, and develop friendships as well.

All of these programs are possible with support from community partners such as the International Institute, English for new Americans, Southern New Hampshire Services, Manchester Community Resource Center, the Manchester School District and

UNH Cooperative Extension, among others. Support from Bank of America and Comcast have also funded the past four years' EXCELL-in-STEM programs.

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