



Elizabeth S. Chilton Named 21st President of the University of New Hampshire

Chilton will begin her term July 1

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

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Following a national search, Elizabeth S. Chilton, a native of the Northeast who most recently served as chancellor of Washington State University’s Pullman campus, has been appointed the 21st president of the University of New Hampshire, effective July 1, 2024.

Chilton will succeed James W. Dean Jr., who is retiring after six years leading UNH. She was appointed the inaugural chancellor of Washington State’s Pullman campus in 2022 after joining WSU in 2020 as provost and executive vice president of the WSU system.

“UNH is a leading public university with strong student outcomes, a large and diverse research portfolio, and dedication to the state of New Hampshire, and I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to serve as president of this incredible institution,” Chilton says. “I’ve long admired UNH’s history, vibrant and engaged community, and commitment to student success and scholarship. I look forward to returning to the Northeast to join the Wildcat family and help UNH serve our students and society in pursuit of a prosperous future.”

WSU Pullman is the system's flagship and Washington State's land grant university, serving about 18,000 students. Prior to becoming chancellor, her role as chief academic officer included oversight of research functions across the six-campus system, a role she continued in while serving as chancellor for the last two years.

A first-generation college student and a graduate of public universities, Chilton is a champion for public higher education, deeply committed to access and liberal arts education. She values UNH's unique position as a leading, public research institution that maintains a sharp focus on undergraduate education, inspired by the university's research mission while also remaining a strong believer in the power of a transformational undergraduate experience.

"Dr. Chilton has shown tremendous leadership and strategic vision across the academic and research enterprise, and her career is a testament to the mission of public higher education," said Jamie Burnett '95, '96G, '98G, the vice-chair of the University System of New Hampshire Board of Trustees and chair of the presidential search committee. "She cares deeply about the student experience and is committed to advancing student success at UNH. She has a record of collaboration, lifting up her peers, building partnerships and creating opportunities. The UNH community and the state should have a high degree of confidence in Elizabeth's appointment."

Chilton's appointment concludes a search launched last fall after Dean announced his intention to retire. A 16-member search committee, comprised of representatives of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and students across UNH's three campuses, led the search.

Chilton will visit all three UNH campuses from May 9 to 11. She will spend May 9 and a portion of May 10 in Durham before visiting the Manchester and Concord campuses on the afternoon of the 10th.

"Elizabeth is a proven and versatile leader devoted to the mission and values of public land grant universities," said USNH Board Chair Alex Walker. "She brings the experience, track record and capabilities to lead a multi-campus institution that is part of a larger, well-coordinated public higher education system. She distinguished herself among a very strong pool of candidates as the right person to lead the University of New Hampshire in these dynamic and challenging times in higher education."

From 2017 to 2020, Chilton was dean of the Harpur College of Arts and Sciences at Binghamton University, part of the State University of New York system. Prior to that she spent 16 years at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, serving in a variety of roles including professor, anthropology department chair, and associate vice chancellor for research and engagement.

She earned her bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University at Albany, SUNY, and then her master's and Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her academic work focuses on the pre-colonial archaeology of Northeast North America, as well as paleoecology, cultural resource management, heritage studies and materials science. She is the author of dozens of peer-reviewed book chapters and journal articles.

Chilton is an avid hiker, kayaker and canoeist, as well as an enthusiastic choral singer. Her husband, Michael Sugerman, is also an anthropology professor. The couple has an adult son and three lively dogs.

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