

New Initiatives for Achieving Inclusive Excellence



UNH is broadening the role of the Office of Diversity Initiatives and advancing the commitment expressed in its Strategic Plan by introducing **The Office of Faculty Development and Inclusive Excellence Initiatives**. Provost Aber says, “The name change and initiatives mirror the national focus on inclusive excellence, which requires strategic, ongoing interactions across campus and in all aspects of university life.” Campus leaders have been promoting minorities, low-income families; first-generation college students; persons with disabilities, nontraditional students, as well as other diverse citizens of the state and beyond.

The UNH strategic plan seeks to engage in cultivating a more inclusive learning community

where persons of differing perspectives, life experiences and cultural backgrounds pursue academic goals with a mutual respect and shared spirit of inquiry. The plan recognizes the value of an investment in creating a well-educated, diverse citizenry in the workforce of the Granite State.

This fall, the Faculty Senate approved the creation of a new five-year plan. Professor Paul McNamara, who presented his work to the Faculty Senate on this issue, says, “You want an academy that’s inclusive for the social justice element and because inclusiveness facilitates inquiry. Academic excellence couldn’t be achieved without it.” McNamara is an associate professor of philosophy.

Margaret Pobywajlo of UNH Manchester says, “Diversity is its own reward, and exposure to diverse viewpoints also greatly facilitates critical thinking.”

The foundational value of engagement with diverse cultures and perspectives is the core of the work of JerriAnne Boggis, Director of Diversity Education and Community Outreach. “This engagement presents our community with opportunities for students from many backgrounds to be mentored by people who share similar backgrounds. It also offers community members a way to gain from each student’s experience. Our students inspire, invigorate, and open us to new ways of thinking,” says Boggis.

Sylvia Foster and Janice Pierson assist the planning groups of the four Presidential Commissions on equity and inclusion. They serve the volunteers who build programs that educate and bring policy changes toward a safer, more welcoming campus. “The volunteers seek programs and policy changes that offer broad social and cultural perspectives. We’ll know that we’ve reached our goal when people of diverse backgrounds see themselves reflected in our campus culture,” says Foster.

While the name change reflects current practice across the nation, and includes the international connection, people want to keep the term diversity in the conversation. Most web searchers will find the Office of Faculty Development and Inclusive Excellence Initiatives by using the familiar term “diversity” and will discover that our web site remains www.unh.edu/diversity/

New Hampshire demographics are changing as evidenced by the numbers of incoming students and new faculty who seek an engaged campus learning community of diverse experiences. The university is watching the statewide changes and seeks inclusive educational initiatives that create students who enter the workplace as role models of inclusive excellence practices. The recent statewide conversation to address the impact of changing demographics “Making Excellence Inclusive: Building Engaged Learning Communities Throughout New Hampshire” is the first in a series of collaborative programs in our colleges, educational agencies and businesses throughout the state.

As Vice Provost Wanda Mitchell’s responsibility has expanded to include faculty development,

she is focused on how her work will directly impact UNH faculty retention efforts by offering support services for all faculty while addressing the challenges faced by women and minority faculty. The University environment requires support systems for faculty to successfully navigate the promotion and tenure process. Mitchell knows that supporting faculty success at all ranks means student successes will naturally follow.

Dr. Mary Schuh research assistant professor at the Institute on Disability, is honored by UNH's recognition of disability as a vital aspect of the cultural diversity that comprises our communities. "As an alumna, I am proud to be representing and leading these efforts within UNH."

Dr. Mitchell recognizes that, in order to maintain our competitive edge, the University of New Hampshire must broaden participation, adopt innovative practices, work with broad constituencies and ensure inclusive leadership. With Faculty Senate support and recognition of the need for diversity, the new five year plan will be one more step among many in achieving overall excellence and inclusion in the community at UNH. The Progress Report states: "We are charged with working together . . . in the key areas of Organizational Structure, Recruitment and Retention, Curriculum, Community Climate, and Outreach & Engagement." Mitchell sees this as a time for being accountable to one another. "As we announce this new name, we announce an initiative that all are invited to join. We wish to continue the work of the many who have begun this integration to promote a more inclusive teaching-learning community, advancing all aspects of diversity - across campus, in every structure."