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November 14, 2007

DURHAM, N.H. -- Although the date of the New Hampshire Presidential Primary is yet to be determined, University of New Hampshire students will be the first to vote in the Granite State, going to the polls this December as part of the university's first mock presidential primary "Wildcats Vote."

Sponsored by the University of New Hampshire Discovery Program and Department of Residential Life, Wildcats Vote will be the university's first ever large-scale, simulated presidential primary for students.

The campuswide political exercise slated for December 2007 is meant to educate students about the presidential primary process and underscore New Hampshire's role as the first-in-the-nation primary state. It will target UNH's 11,000 residential and commuter students.

A Primary Primer issue forum moderated by Dante Scala, associate professor of political science, will be held Thursday, Dec. 6, 2007, at 4 p.m. in the Memorial Union Building Granite State Room to inform students of four major issues facing their generation in the upcoming presidential election: the environment, U.S. foreign policy, education and healthcare. Additionally, students will have an opportunity to meet with representatives of all of the presidential campaigns to discuss their concerns.

The Primary Primer will feature discussions by Tama Andrews, lecturer in the Department of Political Science, on the history of New Hampshire as first in the nation; Scala on an overview of the New Hampshire Primary in selecting a president and the difference between a primary and a caucus; Andy Smith, director of the UNH Survey Center and associate professor of political science, on current New Hampshire Primary candidate poll standings; Alynna Lyon, associate professor of political science, on the impact of a U.S. president in the world; and Vanessa Druskat, associate professor of organizational behavior and management at the Whittemore School of Business and Economics, who will talk about how to be an independent thinker when deciding on which candidate to support.

Voting will occur over a three-day period from Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2007, through Thursday, Dec. 13, 2007, at polling stations in each of the university's 21 residence halls, Memorial Union Building and two university apartment complexes. The polling places have been divided into three areas, and each area will vote on a separate day.

"We plan to report the results as the vote progresses, with the ballots counted on the night of each the vote. Voting by areas is intentionally designed to simulate how results from states

that voted previously influence states that have primaries later in the season,” said Michele Holt-Shannon, assistant director of the UNH Discovery Program.

UNH will hold a news conference Friday, Dec. 14, 2007, at noon in the Memorial Union Building food court to announce the results of the Wildcats Vote.

At the conclusion of the mock primary, UNH will educate students about the primary system, including the benefits and drawbacks of using popular vote and the Electoral College system to elect presidents.

“Our hope is that students will not only learn about their electoral system, but more importantly, realize that they have the very real possibility of affecting the outcome of next year’s presidential contest,” said Taras Ferencevych, an organizer of Wildcats Vote. “Eleven thousand students casting votes in New Hampshire is bound to attract some high-profile attention.”

For more information contact Michele Holt-Shannon, assistant director UNH Discovery Program, at Michele.holt-shannon@unh.edu or 603-862-0130.

