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# A Commitment to Excellent Education

Ann Weaver Hart

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## A Commitment to Excellent Education

Ann Weaver Hart  
President, University of New Hampshire

April 28, 2004

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This week marks an important time for high school seniors and their families, because May 1 is the traditional deadline for students to send their deposits to the colleges and universities of their choice. For many New Hampshire high school seniors, the University of New Hampshire is their first choice and for all the right reasons: we guarantee an exceptional undergraduate experience at UNH. The quality of our faculty and our academic programs is outstanding, and the research that is conducted here involves students at all levels, from the first-year experience through graduate and post-graduate education. Our graduates get great jobs and go on to the best graduate and professional programs in the country.

It is no secret that the University, like public colleges and universities around the country, is grappling with serious budget issues. I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you that we are dealing with this challenge responsibly, so that we can maintain and improve the quality of every student's academic experience. I also want to assure you we have weathered far worse budget storms than this in the past and have come out on the other side stronger and more nimble.

A recent survey indicates that we are already 30 percent more efficient than our peer institutions. This efficiency has not been achieved overnight - increasing tuition rates and low state support over many years have forced us to think creatively to pursue excellence in our core missions of teaching, research, and public service.

We aim to become even more efficient, and our Academic Plan is the roadmap UNH will follow to balance the budget while maintaining and improving a distinctive program that attracts highly qualified in-state and out-of-state students. Because the University of New Hampshire has a clear vision of its future articulated in the Academic Plan, new programs and financial trade-offs are judged by their contributions to that future and by their proximity to the University's central mission, enrollment demands, and program costs. New opportunities in undergraduate education have become increasingly exciting and viable as UNH has brought its teaching and research achievements more closely in sync than every before.

Prospective students have responded to these achievements. Applications for admission have grown 27 percent over the past five years (to 11,204) and are higher this year than ever before. Facilities are growing and improving along with the academic program. In the past year, we have opened a new residence hall and a new state-of-the-art dining facility. This week, we dedicate our Environmental Technology Building to Senator Gregg.

Let me share just a few examples of the world-class programs undergraduates can be a part of at UNH. The marine science, fisheries, and coastal mapping programs create a cohesive and rapidly growing body of research applied to practice, and our students are actively involved with faculty

in these research projects. The AIRMAP Cooperative Institute and the New England Air Quality Study combine with other UNH initiatives to make New Hampshire a national center for the study of atmospheric science and air quality. Our ocean mapping center is one of only two in the nation.

UNH is well on its way to becoming the best small public university in the country, and we provide every student with a comprehensive undergraduate or graduate education that is steeped in the liberal arts tradition of critical thought and analysis. At the same time, we provide students with study-abroad and international research opportunities.

UNH will respond to budget realities. Responsible management is a given at UNH as we work to balance expenditures and revenue while focusing on the future. Even as the current economic downturn places new challenges in our path, we will continue to grow in distinction, distinguished by the special combination of a supportive living and learning environment and a world class intellectual atmosphere that provides opportunities for creative work and original inquiry and research for every student. While this year presents financial challenges, our commitment to providing students with a first-rate education remains unwavering and steadfast.

**If you need confirmation regarding this op-ed, please contact Kim Billings, Director, UNH Media Relations, 603-862-1558.**