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9-17-2002

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Recommended Citation

Hart, Ann Weaver, "UNH State of the University Address" (2002). *UNH Today*. 2306.
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Why I Came to UNH

State of the University Address

by **Ann Weaver Hart**

September 17, 2002

I came to UNH because of all of you, your accomplishments, your energy, and the tremendous potential for the future represented by the UNH you have helped to shape. It is a privilege to join this fine community we call the University of New Hampshire. I am proud to be among its newest citizens. In my remarks this afternoon, I would like to share with you just a few of the achievements of the past year that have built on that potential. I so appreciate the warm welcome that I have received from the university, the town of Durham, the city of Manchester, and the state; let me begin by welcoming a few of you.

I extend greetings to the more than 60 new faculty members who have come here from as close as Durham and as far away as Singapore; Berlin; Nesbyen, Norway; and Queensland, Australia. Welcome.

We also have been joined this year by 2,729 first-year students. They hail from across the United States and from around the globe. I consider myself to be a member of this freshman class and thank them for their recent indulgence in letting me join them in front of T-Hall for the class picture. I'm sure that we will learn many things together, and I look forward to celebrating with them at their commencement ceremonies. Welcome.

Although we have a long way to go, I am encouraged by the consistent growth in the diversity of the student body that we have worked so hard to achieve over the past four years. This year we have 451 undergraduate students of color with us -- that's a 30 percent increase since 1999. As we evolve as an institution, including as many voices, ideas and backgrounds as possible, we are better able to offer a globally authentic education to *every* student. That's a must for a twenty-first century

education. Welcome.

Welcome, also, to our legislators and trustees, our fellow citizens of Durham and Manchester and their leaders, our faculty and students, our staff, our alumni and friends. Thank you all for your wealth of knowledge and expertise, for your love of learning, and for your support. Your experience and perspective on UNH ground us in our community and serve as a crucial source of wisdom shaping our decisions.

We are fortunate to have many friends and partners in the business world, from the nonprofit and social service sectors, and from the professions, some of whom are with us today. Every day, we find new and productive ways to work together. On the one hand, we share our research and our teaching in mutually beneficial ventures. On the other hand, we learn from you about the difficult issues you face that must shape the questions we ask when designing our research and the curriculum we teach. A recent study by the N.H. Small Business Development Center reveals that each new high-tech job in New Hampshire creates 2.1 additional jobs in other industries. That's a great equation for success in the high tech sector, and I am confident that, by extending the connections between research and assure the vitality of our state and region, and beyond, in all our endeavors. Welcome to all of you.

Let me return to the question introduced on the video you watched a few minutes ago -- Why did I come to UNH?

Why did I come to UNH? UNH is located in a beautiful state and is part of several vibrant and unique communities. Could we have a more ideal Main Street than we do here in Durham? Could our beautiful building in Manchester's historic mill yard be a better setting for fulfilling the university's urban mission? I don't believe so. I recognize that we have our challenges and sometimes have different stewardship responsibilities that place us at odds, but we are at our best when our interests are aligned. I sensed when I met members of the Durham and Manchester communities and their leaders last March that strength, resolve and mutual respect are New England traditions that can shape our joint efforts, and that this was a community I

would like to join. Town Council chairperson Malcolm Sandberg's comments at our joint remembrance ceremony on September 11 affirmed the critical role of education in sustaining and advancing our American commitment to an open society, inspired me, and reinforced my belief that we can and must work together. I look forward to working closely with you to confront our shared problems, some of which have already surfaced this year, and to join our cultural, intellectual and social resources, creating a richer life for us all.

Let me give you one example of ways in which we can do this. We can plan together to shape a better setting for the town and the university. Thanks to a recent \$1.8 million federal grant, Main Street will get traffic, bicycle, pedestrian and safety improvements, crosswalk upgrades and landscaping; the Durham train depot will get a bigger platform and an indoor waiting space, and UNH shuttle service will be improved.

And look at our improvements right here on campus. Our beautiful new residence hall is nearly complete and will be ready a month ahead of schedule, and we anticipate the opening of our new dining facility next fall.

The renovation of Murkland Hall and that architectural gem within a gem, Richardson Auditorium, is in full swing. Meanwhile, planning continues for the complete redesign and expansion of Kingsbury Hall, home to our engineering, math and computer science departments.

Why did I come to UNH? Our faculty is second to none. We simply cannot have a great university without a great faculty, and we are very fortunate in this regard. Pulitzer Prize winning poet Charlie Simic, professor of English here for almost 30 years, will be honored Oct. 5 as a fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, along with U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, former Senator Warren Rudman, and violinist Itzhak Perlman. That's good company, Professor Simic.

Imagine the impact on an aspiring poet, an undergraduate perhaps, who has the opportunity to study with someone like Charlie Simic.

Or imagine traveling with Karen Von Damm on a

voyage beneath the waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean to explore an undersea range of active volcanoes.

Imagine studying with Hartman Child and Family Scholar, Liza Little, to unlock the mysteries and heartbreak of childhood developmental disorders. Dr. Little's work on Asperger's Syndrome has earned her national recognition at a time when diagnosis of this and related developmental disorders is on an alarming upswing.

Imagine being able to take part in the largest air quality study in the world because your professors have built relationships and programs across disciplines and with federal, state, and local institutions and agencies that can sometimes be stubbornly provincial in their approach to massive problems.

Now, *these* are life-altering experiences.

Each fall we celebrate the achievements of some of our distinguished faculty. Our Teaching Excellence awards honor faculty who, each in their own way, exemplify the superior quality of the faculty as a whole. Thank you, faculty members, for all that you bring to this university. The standard that you set through your passion and your expertise is perhaps the greatest gift that we can give to our students.

Why did I come to UNH? Our students are simply wonderful. They come to us each year full of enthusiasm and ideals, energy and questions. They expect to make a difference in their communities and to be the best in their fields. They expect to make their mark. We strive to foster these important values and expectations.

Just recently, during the week before Labor Day, 30 first-year students spent five days volunteering at area non-profits through PrOVES, the Pre-Orientation Volunteer Experience in Service program. They organized an activities day for residents at a Rochester adult day care center, performed restoration work at the John Paul Jones House, and contributed to a clean up effort at the Children's Museum in Portsmouth.

In March, during spring break, the Alternative Break Challenge sent a record 140 students to 14 sites all over

the U.S. And 100 student volunteers for Seacoast Reads contributed more than 10,000 hours to 15 local elementary schools. Volunteers with Project Sunshine helped out in two New York City hospitals, and they also brought children from the New Hampshire Childhood Cancer Lifeline to UNH for men's and women's hockey games.

We also have reasons to be proud of our student athletes, and we should be. *U.S. News and World Report's* first annual college athletics ranking placed UNH among the top 20 Division I universities in the country, in large part because we take seriously the student in student-athlete. That's an important achievement. And last June, more than 120 of our student-athletes were named to the 2001-2002 America East Academic Honor Roll.

UNH students are as active in the classroom as they are in our communities and on the playing field. Many students discover previously unexplored capacity and talent while working alongside an expert teacher and researcher at UNH. Our faculty members are committed to providing an undergraduate experience steeped in the process of discovery as the path to learning -- of inquiry and creative work by the students. The faculty is working on an implementation plan for the innovative new general education requirements, the Discovery Program, and have committed to a stronger and more cohesive first-year experience for UNH students. And through our Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program and our International Research Opportunities Program students transform their educations with original research as an integral part of their undergraduate studies.

Why did I come to UNH? Because the quality of our PAT and Operating Staff is unsurpassed, and their love for and commitment to UNH are apparent in the work they do here every day.

Why did I come to UNH? This community takes seriously the imperative to be inclusive, to embrace difference in an atmosphere of mutual respect. UNH is a place where seemingly intractable problems and points of view that divide us can be confronted and discussed, where the traditions of academic freedom and civil discourse are not in conflict, and where we

recommit ourselves to these values when painful events, such as the MUB wall confrontation last spring, rub nerves raw and test our resolve. You have heard me say that UNH recognizes that a globally authentic education requires diversity commensurate with the diversity of the globe on which we live, that diversity comes in many different forms. We all realize that our globe is not a place devoid of controversy and conflict, division and high emotion. We resolve to maintain the university's highest value -- academic freedom in which new knowledge and art are created and differences debated in a haven free of violence and sustained by respect, however painful the process.

Why did I come to UNH? With \$86 million in sponsored research funding last year, UNH is approaching star status. We are seeing real advancements in research funding, scholarly activity, and externally-sponsored programs in fields in which UNH is poised to be a major international force.

We have many nationally and internationally renowned programs whose value and richness are fundamentally transformed by this funding. For example, UNH marine programs are pioneers in important research in such areas as ocean mapping, coastal marine science, estuarine science and open ocean aquaculture. In the last decade, these programs have moved the university to leading positions in these fields.

Many programs in the arts, social sciences and humanities benefit from grants and sponsored research, as well. Our graduate and professional students, increasingly visible and influential in their own right, come here expecting this charged intellectual atmosphere to continue to expand.

Why did I come to UNH? We make all this new knowledge and creative work count in people's lives right now as well as into the future. Cooperative Extension is so crucial to the mission and spirit of UNH that it is sometimes easy to forget how much this work helps people make informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities; sustain natural resources; and improve the economy. There is not a town or community in this state that UNH does not touch through Cooperative Extension.

Why did I come to UNH? This place is committed to magnifying its power and success through the energy and resource of strong partnerships with the state and with private friends. New Hampshire has provided crucial funding that supports and preserves the state's investment in our buildings and laboratory teaching facilities. And we have seen the value of private giving partnerships. Most notably these partnerships are emerging through dynamic research centers, endowed chairs and student scholarships that were born out of the *Next Horizon* campaign.

For example, we opened the Hubbard Center for Genome Studies last spring, our first center devoted to understanding the structure and function of genomes from across the spectrum of life. Through private support, we were able to complete the physical facility and attract and retain scientists who are at the top of their fields.

Why did I come to UNH? Because the friends of the university have brought private giving to new heights of achievement. Nowhere is this more evident than in the successful and early completion of the *Next Horizon* campaign. This historic effort has given us more than the \$104 million it raised. It has also provided a new understanding of how we will build the academic quality of UNH for the next decade, adding immeasurably to the scope and richness of the core program and facilities provided by New Hampshire for its university. We now have three new, groundbreaking, interdisciplinary centers that provide outstanding opportunities for our students and faculty. Today, we are a more confident and purposeful university, and private support has helped us reach this new place on the horizon.

Why did I come to UNH? Because UNH is a community that celebrates its past and looks with excitement and anticipation into the future. This is the best public university in New England, and it has begun to shape higher education's future in significant ways, building on the achievements I have mentioned this afternoon -- and on many others. As president, I hope to be able to contribute my part to the value of the gift of higher education to the quality of life of all who come into contact with this wonderful university. Great

universities like the University of New Hampshire are a gift -- a gift we give to ourselves. By supporting and working for the university, we can give and receive at the same time. Despite its traditions and great history, the university needs our continued intense efforts and support to assure its vitality and growth as it faces new challenges. There is much to be done. I want you to know that I will work with you and with all my heart to build on the tremendous achievements of the past and advance the promise of the future for the University of New Hampshire. It is a gift to be asked to join you.

Thank you all for being with us today. Now I invite you to join me at a reception honoring Mr. Feldstein in the Strafford Room, which is just down the hall to your left. And then, of course, I hope you'll enjoy our annual campus picnic on the Thompson Hall Lawn beginning at 3:30.

[Back to UNH News Bureau](#)