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## **N.H. Endowment for Health Awards Grants to UNH Researchers**

By [Sharon Keeler](#)

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UNH News Bureau

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Two University of New Hampshire research projects will benefit from health-related grants awarded last week by a non-profit organization based in Concord.

Ned Helms, director of the N.H. Institute for Health Policy and Practice in the School of Health and Human Services, was awarded a \$153,245 grant, while Charlotte Cross, Cooperative Extension youth development specialist, was awarded \$10,800.

The grants were given by the Endowment for Health, Inc., which was established in 1999 as the result of the acquisition of New Hampshire BlueCross & BlueShield by Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. Its goal is to improve the health of and reduce the burden of illness of the people of New Hampshire. More than 142 proposals were submitted for consideration.

### **Empowering Communities**

The grant awarded to Helms will support a project entitled "Empowering Communities with Data." It was submitted by the institute in collaboration with the Office of Planning and Research at the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services. It is a research grant for one year, which is supported by more than \$200,000 in "in-kind" service from several organizations including UNH's School of Health and Human Services and Cooperative Extension, Dartmouth Medical School, the Business and Industry Association, and Leadership New Hampshire.

The project is focused on creating a sub-state level data

system that will allow New Hampshire citizens to assess the health of community populations, compared to state and national norms, says Helms.

"We are going to work with leaders of the health and human service field and with community leaders to understand their need for data and information, and how we can provide this in a useful format," he says. "We will work with business and community leaders to provide information that is meaningful regarding the risks to their populations' health, and illustrate ways that they can address those risks."

The institute will work closely with other campus researchers who are beginning to build a statewide data repository called the "Granite State Data Archive." This repository will develop New Hampshire economic, social and educational data so that it can be interpreted within the context of the broad definition of health.

Dotty Bazos, who is on the faculty of the N.H. Institute for Health Policy and Practice, will be the primary investigator for this grant.

### **Promoting Healthy Teens**

Cross will apply her grant to further the work of Cooperative Extension's Teen Assessment Project (TAP). TAP's primary goals are to increase community awareness and knowledge of teen issues and to encourage community-wide collaboration to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors in the lives of New Hampshire's youth.

TAP begins by identifying local youth issues in grades 7-12 through a 160-item survey on topics such as teen attitudes and worries, future aspirations, alcohol and drug abuse, sexuality, family relationships and values, and interactions with peers. The results are shared in a variety of ways to evoke positive change.

The Endowment for Health grant will be used to create and examine comprehensively a TAP database across the 10 school districts -- 55 communities, 10,300 students -- surveyed in 2000-2001.

"To date, multi-community reports have provided communities with descriptive data on teen concerns,

perception and behaviors," says Cross. "Data are analyzed by grade, gender and other relevant variables. In this project, however, we will examine our multi-community data for select protective and risk factors within various levels of the ecological model of youth - i.e., youth, family, school and community. TAP will investigate the relationships of both the risk and protective factors with such outcomes as substance abuse and sexual behavior."

A report will be written and distributed to individuals, state agencies and organizations that are involved with services to the adolescent community in New Hampshire. The objective will be to increase awareness of the prevalence of health risk behaviors by youth and the protective factors that relate to those behaviors. In addition the report will help local communities make more informed programming decisions.

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