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UNH Launches Five-Year Graduate Program In Political Science

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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire has launched a five-year graduate program in political science that lets undergraduates majoring in political science earn a master's degree with one year of graduate education.

The five-year BA/MA program recently was approved unanimously by the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts and will admit students starting in spring 2010.

"This new program will streamline the process of earning a master of arts for those undergraduates with strong academic records who wish to take their undergraduate preparation in political science to the next level. We are very pleased to be able to offer this opportunity," said Ken Fuld, interim dean of the UNH College of Liberal Arts.

Designed for the department's highest-achieving undergraduates, the new program aims to improve opportunities for undergraduates to prepare for competitive Ph.D. programs, standardize the department's program of study for students who seek both degrees, provide students another option to advance and specialize their political science education, and increase enrollment in the department's graduate program.

"Year after year, our faculty work closely with students who pursue undergraduate research projects," said Dante Scala, chair of the Department of Political Science. "The five-year BA/MA is a natural extension of the faculty's interest in encouraging those young scholars."

The program requires undergraduates to begin taking graduate classes in their senior year. In their fifth year, they must take either seven graduate classes and pass a comprehensive exam, or take five graduate classes and complete and defend a master's thesis.

"We expect that students with interests in international politics and foreign affairs, American politics, environmental, and sustainability issues will be especially attracted to this opportunity," said Stacy VanDeveer, associate professor of political science and chair of the department's graduate committee.

According to VanDeveer, five-year BA/MA programs in political science are becoming more common. UNH sees its new program as continuing to keep the department competitive for attracting excellent students and better serving the needs of current students.

"We have had a number of excellent UNH undergrads stay and get a master's degree over the last few years, and we believe clearly outlining a path for students to get both degrees will serve them well and better prepare them for future career and graduate school opportunities," he said.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.