

Dear Fellow Community Members,

Last fall New Hampshire Listens facilitated a series of community conversations at each of our three campuses to elicit feedback from our community members about how to continue building a safe, inclusive and equitable campus climate at UNH. I am writing to share the following report, which summarizes the community's feedback. The report will inform our continuing work toward making UNH a more supportive, welcoming campus in which everyone can thrive. I invite you to read the report, share it with others and continue this important dialogue.

In many respects, the conversations affirmed for us that the important work of diversity, equity and community building is ongoing. Highlights include:

- Attendees communicated a need to clarify and realize the university's values and priorities for inclusion and equity.
- Participants indicated the need for the administration take a firm and visible stand when harm occurs and to set clear priorities for equity at the core of all UNH processes.
- Participants from all three campuses advocated strongly for more training, education and other opportunities focused on equity and inclusion for the entire community—students, faculty and staff.
- Finally, participants called for alignment of decisions and actions related to resource allocation, campus environments and collaborative efforts.

These highlights represent the participants' views on how UNH can remain proactive as we carry out our strategic mission, uphold our highest institutional values and comply with federal requirements. Over the next month, we will finalize membership for Phase II of the task force's efforts, which include development of the action plan. The task force will work over the summer to complete the plan, which will be made available to the community. Implementation will begin in the fall.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who participated in the conversations, New Hampshire Listens, the facilitators and the members of the Task Force on Community, and all who continue to work diligently to build a safe, inclusive and thriving community at UNH.

Best regards,

Jaime Nolan, associate vice president, community, equity and diversity



Conversations at the Crossroads

Fostering a safe, healthy and equitable campus community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As noted by President Mark Huddleston in his June 2015 letter to the community, efforts around campus climate and the building of an equitable and inclusive community in which all students, faculty and staff can thrive in their learning, working and living must transcend a focus on the establishment of rules and compliance. Realizing this, and that the important work of diversity, equity and community is ongoing, UNH conducted a series of campus-wide conversations. These conversations took place in November 2015 at UNH Durham, the UNH School of Law and UNH Manchester and centered on the question: *“What can we do together to sustain a robust learning community that is safe, inclusive and equitable for all?”*

These conversations took place in a larger national context in which campuses have become increasingly visible spaces in which to engage in complex political dialogues associated with historic challenges to building a truly just, equitable and democratic society. While the university has realized some successes in diversifying its faculty, staff and student body over the years, tensions continue to exist concerning the institutional commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. In addressing these concerns, we are asking ourselves if our institutional spaces are equitable, safe and valuing of all members of our community, whose complex and intersected identities include ability, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, nationality, linguistic diversity and more. The purposes of the fall conversations were to:

- Inform an action plan that demonstrates UNH’s vision for a safe, inclusive and equitable community;
- Identify obstacles; and to
- Indicate steps and best practices for overcoming those obstacles.

A total of 221 students, faculty and staff attended one of the three conversations and participated in 18 small groups led by a facilitator. Of those, 152 participants responded to a survey, the full results of which may be found in Appendix C. Of the survey respondents, 15.8 percent were from Concord, 73.7 percent from Durham and 10.5 percent from

Manchester. Over half of participants identified as UNH staff members (51.5 percent), 15.2 percent of participants identified as faculty members, 26.1 percent as undergraduate students and 7.2 percent as graduate students. About 16 percent identified as people of color; the majority of participants (71.4 percent) identified as female.

When participants were asked how they felt about the community conversation, 96.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were glad they participated, 92.1 percent agreed or strongly agreed that everyone had an equal chance to express their views and 96.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their perspectives were respected. The majority (94 percent) of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the group talked about the most important issues related to the topic.

KEY FINDINGS

While many participants described UNH as a welcoming community where people are connected and committed to helping others, this positive view was accompanied by a strong desire for changes, including broader and deeper commitments to building a community where all individuals, of all backgrounds, feel comfortable so that they can learn, work and grow to their potentials. Participants called for increased efforts in recognizing the complexity of identities in our community. This includes sustained activity to learn skills and information that will help us to work together across our differences. The following action-focused themes emerged across all three campuses:

- **Clarify UNH values and priorities for inclusion and equity, including:**
 - Lead with clear messages that connect values to practice,
 - Strengthen and reinforce the everyday lived values of community and inclusion
 - Establish clear pathways for responsiveness and accountability

- **Integrate inclusion and equity learning for everyone on all three campuses, which includes**
 - Increase education and development for faculty and staff
 - Build skills for learning and conflict resolution
 - Support faculty and staff proficiencies to foster inclusion and equity

 - Formalize and support education and resources for students
 - Formalize curriculum and classroom experiences -- develop and support educational opportunities that equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively and respectfully consider and navigate differences at UNH and beyond
 - Ensure faculty, administration and staff can connect students with relevant resources
 - Value student voice and honor the complexity of student identities

- **Align decisions and actions related to resource allocation, campus environments and norms of collaboration**
 - Articulate how diversity and inclusion are unique on each of the three campuses
 - Assess how campus environments facilitate or discourage a sense of community
 - Review university policies and procedures in relation to equity and inclusion
 - Take efforts to increase communication and collaboration within and between campuses

CLARIFY UNH VALUES AND PRIORITIES FOR INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Lead with Clear Messages that Connect Values to Practice

The majority of groups (12), including groups from all three campuses, expressed a desire for a strong stance from the president and executive leadership around diversity, community and equity at UNH. Although it was acknowledged that current statements exist related to these issues, participants wanted to see UNH leadership strengthen and unify its message across campuses and departments. Many groups discussed the need for clear, unified messages from administration at all levels so that there was full transparency and understanding of institutional values, goals, norms and priorities across the university. One example discussed was hiring practices as a reflection of our ability to consistently create a supportive and welcoming environment.

The majority of small groups (12, or two-thirds), including groups on all three campuses, felt that there is a disconnect between the written mission and values of UNH compared with actual cultures and practices on campus. This message came through particularly strong from UNH Durham groups. There was a desire to make the “walk” match the “talk,” or in other words, for actions to match overall institutional values. Though many participants commented that the written words and statements reference appropriate values, there was skepticism around how strongly the institution enforced or stood by these written words. For instance, some participants felt that when institutional principles and actual practices don’t align, there needs to be a stronger message or stance from administration. There was also a desire for clearer policies and procedures when incidents on campus occur that violate institutional values.

Some groups (5 at UNH Durham and 1 at UNH Concord) sought clarification on UNH’s policy on free speech on campus. There was confusion around where individual First Amendment rights should be protected and where protecting these rights violated the rights of others. Some participants felt that fear of being politically correct on the part of faculty, staff and students could stifle authenticity and exploration around difference and diversity. There was an expressed desire to balance honest but respectful conversations about difficult

issues, such as racial and ethnic prejudice and inequity. Emphasis on learning and the ability to facilitate these conversations is further addressed in the *Education and Training* section below.

Strengthen and Reinforce Lived Values of Community and Inclusion

Although participants had various ideas about what they would like to see from administration, groups across the three campuses identified some common values for creating an inclusive and equitable university culture. These values included the following:

- Understanding how one's personal background and experience contribute to one's perspectives and behaviors
- Cultivating knowledge about and understanding of cultures different from one's own, including listening to the stories of others on campus
- Balancing a respectful culture that makes everyone feel included and treated fairly with a safe space to be vulnerable, learn, ask challenging questions and make mistakes
- Encouraging openness around and even celebration of difference, disagreement and change
- Developing awareness of how historical power structures and traditions have marginalized some groups while elevating others.

Participants placed importance on a unified campus effort to create an inclusive and equitable university culture, where everyone contributes to this goal. There was an interest in encouraging more participation in existing efforts as well as creating new opportunities.

There was a desire to increase opportunities for interaction across differences as well as a need expressed to encourage better participation in existing opportunities. One example included increasing opportunities for domestic and international students to interact with one another, especially on the Durham and Concord campuses.

Establish Clear Pathways for Responsiveness and Accountability

Overall, there was more time spent on discussion of proactive rather than reactive approaches by the university. However, the majority of groups (16), including groups on all three campuses, felt that when incidents of harm or discrimination did occur, the university should have policies and procedures for action. Participants expressed an interest in clear, standardized steps and actions for response after incidents of harm or discrimination, including steps for repairing relationships through formal, restorative processes. Ideally, these efforts would clearly connect to broader university values and strategic goals around diversity, equity and inclusion in the UNH community.

A need for accountability and responsiveness was expressed, and some participants felt that in the past racial or homophobic slurs, acts of bias and other intentional or unintentional incidents of discrimination and bias that have gone unaddressed. There was a sense that there are not clear pathways for action and that inconsistent responses could be problematic.

INTEGRATE INCLUSION AND EQUITY LEARNING FOR EVERYONE ON CAMPUS

All of the groups (18) discussed the value of education and training as a vehicle to improving inclusion and equity at UNH. Conversations focused on “mandatory training” for students, faculty, administrators and staff. There was a sense that education and training should position thoughtfulness around equity and inclusion at the core of all university practice, whether it is formal educational experiences in the classroom or informal educational experiences – such as campus events or extracurricular activities.

Generally, education and training ideas were aimed at promoting overall awareness about inclusion and equity issues, skill building and tools to navigate conflict and difference, relationship building, and understanding campus values, policies and protocols. There was a desire to cultivate sensitivity and respect around cultural difference at the administrative, faculty, staff and student levels. These sensibilities were seen as the foundation to building a sense of school pride and an inclusive and equitable campus community. These skills were also seen as a critical outcome for students who will contribute as citizens in an increasingly pluralistic world.

Increase Education and Development for Faculty and Staff

Groups viewed education and professional development as an essential aspect of building an inclusive and equitable campus culture. Groups discussed the need for sustained learning opportunities around diversity and cultural sensitivity. There were several goals for these opportunities, including equipping faculty, staff and administration with the skills and tools needed to effectively educate students around these issues, ensuring an understanding of university philosophies, protocols and policies, supporting faculty in curriculum development and making faculty aware of resources on campus. Though the conversations generally focused on proactive rather than reactive approaches that might minimize incidents of discrimination on campus, value was placed on faculty and staff education around policies and protocols so that if an incident does occur, they know the steps and avenues to pursue to advocate for students or others on campus. Some groups wanted to see faculty and staff training centered on how to balance individual speech, safety and respect on campus.

Build Skills for Learning and Conflict Resolution. There was emphasis placed on skill building and equipping faculty and staff with tools so that they are prepared to teach students how to self-reflect and understand their background in relation to others. In particular there was an interest in how faculty and staff can develop the ability to encourage students to share their experience and disagree with each other in a safe, respectful learning environment. One group called this “responsible free speech” and defined the process as a welcoming environment where boundaries are set while people share opposing points of view. Another group commented that tough conversations should be “curious, not furious.” Some participants made a distinction that though students should be encouraged to share their experiences, faculty and staff should be careful not to make students feel like they have to represent others like them in such conversations.

Support Faculty and Staff Proficiencies. Training and educational opportunities were seen as a way to equip faculty and staff with the skills and resources needed to effectively educate students about social differences and to build an inclusive and equitable campus. Although training and educational opportunities could provide faculty and staff with needed information and tools, participants also expressed an interest in supporting this work through incentives and professional development. One group discussed how it was important for faculty and staff as well as students to engage in experiential learning out of their comfort zones and referenced Timberland’s required employee community service as a model. Another group discussed how course evaluations could ask students if they felt the class sufficiently addressed issues of equity. There was a sense that if student courses around social identity, diversity and equity were required or offered for credit that it would help support faculty as well as student learning.

Formalize and Support Education and Resources for Students

All of the groups at all campuses also discussed the value of sustained student education around diversity, differences and equity. Many groups also noted ways for student voice to be better represented across institutional structures and programs.

Formalize Curriculum and Classroom Experiences. Required first year courses, orientation or other student learning opportunities were seen as ways to educate students around these issues, build skills, and connect students with campus resources. Groups acknowledged that students need to be prepared to enter a diverse, increasingly global world, and they need to learn self-reflectiveness, openness and an ability to work with others and navigate difference and conflict. Several groups expressed interest in building on current course offerings to increase learning around diversity, social identity and equity. Some participants discussed a prospective first year course that would be mandatory for all students. Other participants talked about seminars that draw on themes of diversity and social justice, building on current Discovery offerings or required reading for students. Other ideas included a diversity statement for each department or shared values that are taught across departments and disciplines.

In terms of course structure, there was interest in encouraging faculty to develop curriculum that encourages students to think about themselves in relation to others. It was suggested this could be achieved through text and assignment selection, skill building within the classroom, course discussion and through experiential learning or service learning opportunities. Since students enter UNH with varying experiences, faculty and staff may need to model appropriate language and behavior, particularly for students who have limited exposure to a variety of social differences. Some participants felt faculty should participate in and encourage students to attend diversity-focused events on campus.

Ensure Faculty and Staff Can Connect Students with Resources. As faculty and staff will inevitably work with students different from themselves, some groups talked about the value of learning about cultural sensitivity and cultural humility, especially in regards to students who are traditionally underrepresented at UNH. There was also value placed on faculty and staff abilities to connect students with campus mentoring resources, particularly for first generation students, students of color, international students, veterans, students with disabilities, or students from other historically underrepresented or marginalized groups. Two groups talked about how a designated “diversity dean” could serve as a point of contact for students looking for resources or support. Alongside required courses and classroom experiences, groups discussed how student learning around diversity could occur in clubs, dining halls and residence halls.

Value Student Voice and Honor the Complexity of Student Identities. Groups also placed value on connecting faculty and staff with students to build understanding and community. One group commented on the importance of seeing students as whole people who experience life challenges such as financial pressures, work obligations, mental health issues, substance use disorders and family obligations. On each campus, students have unique needs – for instance, at UNH Law, some international students and students of color have struggled to be comfortable in the city of Concord; as commuter students, UNH Manchester students experienced off campus challenges, and at UNH Durham students navigated living on a rural college campus. There was a desire expressed by groups to hear and value student voice, both about their life in general and campus experiences. Some participants wanted to see students advocate for their own power, which could be supported by self-esteem and skill building. One group mentioned that they would like to see more student representation on university committees. Several groups felt that there was not always coordination and collaboration among various resources for students, and one group recommended that a system with a central repository of student resource information could address this issue.

ALIGN DECISIONS AND ACTIONS RELATED TO RESOURCE ALLOCATION, CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS AND NORMS OF COLLABORATION

Although each campus experiences unique opportunities and challenges, there were some themes that emerged around creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive UNH community that apply to how we work together across all campuses.

Articulate how diversity and inclusion are unique on each of the three campuses

There is a need to acknowledge and celebrate existing diversity while also acknowledging an insufficient degree of diversity in the eyes of many. Overall, many participants felt that UNH lacks racial and ethnic diversity in its faculty, staff and student body. Participants also discussed diversity more broadly, including ability, sexual orientation and social class, and felt that UNH demonstrates considerable diversity. The way that people define diversity on campus may affect their viewpoint, campus conversations and policies. For instance, some participants felt that diversity education for students should acknowledge that many incoming UNH students may have limited exposure navigating cultural differences while others did not agree with this approach. New Hampshire's state culture also plays a role; for instance, some participants connected students of color and international students' negative experiences at the UNH Law School with a lack of diversity and some hostility in the city of Concord.

Assess how resource allocation and campus environments facilitate or discourage a sense of community

Groups discussed the need for adequate resource allocation for efforts related to diversity, inclusion and equity. Though some of the conversation centered on financial resources such as financial aid for students and funding for services and programs, participants also placed value on increased staff and other institutional supports. Participants in several groups felt that the same people were tasked with advocacy around equity, inclusion, and opportunity on campus and that UNH needs to commit and encourage more people power to attend to equity issues. There was a sense that without this commitment, there will be inadequate staffing and resources to achieve the university-wide goals outlined in this report. This inadequacy can contribute to some in our community feeling undervalued and disenfranchised. Participants want to see efforts sustained and strengthened over time. In addition, some groups described how campus environment and accommodations can affect UNH community members' opportunity and experience and that we should pay attention to how campus environments affect the UNH community's access to resources and overall experience. For instance, buildings that are not disability accessible or lack gender inclusive bathrooms may cause some UNH community members to feel unwelcome or treated unequally.

Review University Policies and Procedures in Relation to Equity and Inclusion

Consideration of how university policies contribute to or discourage a diverse, inclusive and equitable community is needed. Groups wanted to see strong policies in place around hiring employees from diverse backgrounds and experiences. There was also talk about how UNH processes like meetings and committee work should be inclusive and equitable so that a diversity of views is represented and all voices are respected.

Take Efforts to Increase Communication and Collaboration on Campus

Several groups (8) discussed the need for improved communication, both across the three campuses and within each campus among faculty, staff, administration and students. Some participants felt that campus silos needed to be addressed so that there was more comprehensive and systematic information sharing and collaboration among departments. There was also an interest in improving communication about resources and supports for students, faculty and staff, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups.

Although participants had different points of view on what issues warrant the most attention and resources, overall, there was a desire for leveraging current energy for action and change. There was value placed on making sure that good ideas have follow through and actionable steps, and that the university is proactive rather than reactive. One participant commented that though these campus conversations were a great start, more needs to happen both in terms of the number of people participating as well as overall awareness about these issues.

Unique Themes

Though most values were broadly shared across the three campuses, there were some unique concerns presented. UNH Law expressed concern about the Concord community being unwelcoming to some students. There was also a sense that there need to be more courses and activities that incorporate opportunities for cross-cultural learning and engagement.

Participants at the UNH Manchester campus mentioned sometimes feeling disconnected from the Durham campus and that they had fewer resources to provide to students than UNH Durham. Nontraditional students were mentioned specifically as a group of students with unique needs and backgrounds to address.

CONCLUSION

In November 2015, over 200 people across the three University of New Hampshire campuses participated in conversations centered on how to foster a robust learning community that is safe, inclusive and equitable for everyone. Attendees' final recommendations seek clarification and realization of UNH values and priorities for

inclusion and equity. Participants want to see the administration take a stand when harm occurs and to set clear priorities for equity at the core of all UNH processes. Participants strongly advocated for an increase in training and education opportunities for everyone on all three campuses. Finally, there was a call for an alignment of decisions and actions related to resource allocation, campus environments and norms of collaboration. These actions are seen as a way for the university to remain proactive as it seeks to carry out its mission and comply with both federal regulations and institutional values.

Appendix A: Discussion Guide

Appendix B: Small Group Transcriptions

Appendix C: Participant Attendance and Evaluation

Although 221 people attended the conversations at the three campuses, 152 participants responded to a survey distributed at the end of the event. Of the survey respondents, 15.8 percent were from Concord, 73.7 percent from Durham and 10.5 percent from Manchester. The data summarized below represents the responses of participants who completed the survey, not everyone who attended the event.

Over half of participants identified as UNH staff members (51.5 percent). 15.2 percent of participants identified as faculty members, 26.1 percent as undergraduate students and 7.2 percent as graduate students. 4.3 percent of participants were international students.

When asked about their race or ethnicity, the majority of participants (83.7 percent) identified as white or Caucasian, 5.9 percent identified as African American or black, 3.7 percent identified as bi-racial or multicultural, 3.7 percent identified as Asian, including specific Asian nationalities, and 3.0 percent identified as Hispanic or Latina.

When asked about gender identity, 71.4 percent of participants identified as female, 25.7 percent of participants identified as male, and 2.9 percent of participants identified with other gender identities including cis-male or female, trans, and gender fluid. Participants expressed their sexual orientation in various ways. 70.1 percent of participants identified as straight or heterosexual, 15.5 percent identified as gay, lesbian, or queer, 2.1 percent identified as bi or bisexual, 2.1 percent identified as fluid or pan, 2.1 percent identified as pansexual, 1 percent identified as panromantic asexual, 1 percent identified as a transgendered heterosexual, and 6.2 percent identified in categories that were unclear to researchers.

9.3 percent of participants identified with having a disability that included physical or mental illness.

3.5 percent of participants were veterans.

31.3 percent of participants were the first in their family to go to college.

When participants were asked how they felt about the community conversation, 96.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were glad they participated. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that everyone had an equal chance to express their views (92.1 percent) and that their perspectives were respected (96.7 percent). The majority of participants (66.7 percent) felt that the conversation helped them to have a better understanding of people who they disagree with and their opinions. However, this item scored somewhat lower than other survey questions, which suggests participants did not experience disagreement or difference within their conversations. Still, the majority (94 percent) of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the group talked about the most important issues related to the topic.

Event Highlights: Conversations at the Crossroads

Date and Location

November 3 ~ UNH Law School
November 9 ~ UNH Manchester
November 12 ~ UNH Durham
November 13 ~ UNH Durham
November 18 ~ UNH Manchester

Participants

221 students, faculty, and staff (18 small groups)

New Hampshire Listens Project Team

Michele Holt-Shannon, Bruce Mallory, Gabrielle MacIver, and Quixada Moore Vissing in service to the UNH Community and Equity Task Force.

Task Force on Community

Mark Anthony, Fran Canning, Cameron Cook, Karen Gilbert, Tricia Hanley, Michelle Holt-Shannon, Bruce Mallory, Regina McCarthy, Sean McGhee, Sean Moundas, Jaime Nolan, Tobey Partch-Davies, Janice Pierson, Kei Saito, Jane Stapleton, Selina Taylor and Maggie Wells.

Question

What can we do together to sustain a robust learning community that is safe, inclusive, and equitable for all?