

To whom it may concern:

My name is Lauren Despina and I am Program Director of Project SEARCH; a remarkable program that has been on the seacoast for the past 32 years. It is a collaborative effort between the University of New Hampshire and high schools in seacoast New Hampshire and southern Maine. It is a gifted and talented program that introduces college life to almost 200 students.

Attached is a report of the 2014 – 2015 Project SEARCH program. I have been involved with the program in different capacities since 2001. I can speak first hand about the importance of this and how it has positively impacted my life as a participant, group leader and now Program Director. Project SEARCH allows students to think about important issues that confront us all.

I want to take a moment to thank Ms. Dorothy M. Byrne, President of The Byrne Foundation. Her generous contribution to Project SEARCH has helped hundreds of young men and women in New Hampshire and Southern Maine. In these difficult economic times the help of people like Ms. Dorothy M. Byrne are the reason this important program continues. I also want to thank all of the advisors and administrators from the Seacoast Schools who support the program. If you have any questions or concerns about this report please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Project SEARCH is designed to provide an on-campus, intellectually challenging experience for academically motivated high school students. The program has been in operation since 1983.

Participants travel to the University of New Hampshire-Durham campus for eleven seminars throughout the school year. Each seminar consists of a one-hour presentation and a forty-five minute discussion group. During a typical presentation, participants hear informative, controversial, and often alternative perspectives on issues. During the discussion groups, students are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions with peers. A graduate student from the UNH Teacher Education or Counseling programs facilitates the discussion group.

Additional SEARCH activities include a ropes course practice day, a ropes course, and a spring semester fieldtrip to Boston. The ropes course day is designed to develop cooperation, communication, and problem-solving skills, laying the foundation for the discussion group environment. During the fieldtrip to Boston, students experience an afternoon at historic Faneuil Hall and a theatrical production. Participants are eligible to take courses at the UNH-Durham campus through the Challenging Academically Talented Students (CATS) program; upon successful completion of the course, the Program shall reimburse the cost of tuition.

Participating School Information

Coe Brown Northwood Academy-Northwood, NH

Dover High School-Dover, NH

Epping High School-Epping, NH

New Hampshire Home school students

Newmarket High School-Newmarket, NH

Noble High School-North Berwick, ME

Nute High School-Milton, NH

Prospect Mountain High School-Alton, NH

R.W. Traip Academy-Kittery, ME

Spaulding High School-Rochester, NH

Winnacunnet High School-Hampton, NH

Program Mission

- To provide a forum on a college campus where high school students from southeastern New Hampshire and southern Maine can experience a series of presentations covering challenging interdisciplinary topics and interact with each other in discussion groups.
- To foster positive attitudes toward the exploration of new and stimulating ideas through the exposure to presentations and subsequent group meetings through which they can hone their discussion skills.
- To provide UNH graduate students with the experiential opportunity of developing group leadership and critical thinking skills for teaching intellectually curious students.
- To encourage a positive spirit regarding the joy of learning through the collaboration of the high schools, their students, future teachers and practicing educators.

**Project SEARCH at the University of New Hampshire
2014 – 2015 Report**

Based on a 1-5 scale where 1 is weak and 5 is strong

September 10, 2014: Ropes Course at Dover

Notes:

There is no questionnaire concerned with the ropes course at Dover. All students meet with their groups in order to build bonds of friendship and cooperation. The members of the discussion groups are mixtures of students from the cooperating schools. Many long term friendships are developed during the SEARCH ropes course. There is a question of safety that should be addressed by the program manager and executive board of the program.

September 17, 2014: Speak Out (LGBTQ)

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 68.5 %	5: 52.70 %	5: 66.6 %	5: 74.0 %
4: 25.5%	4: 19.20 %	4: 11.8 %	4: 16.0 %
3: 5.8 %	3: 3.33 %	3: 19.7 %	3: 5.00 %
4: 0 %	2: 14.8 %	2: 1.9 %	2: 5.0 %
1: 0 %	1: 9.97 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes:

The students were both interested intrigued about this issue. I am also happy to report the MUB 2 lecture hall at Memorial Building was completely filled.

October 1, 2014: Farms to Factories

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speaker:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 85.2 %	5: 86.5 %	5: 36.2 %	5: 61.1 %

4: 11.2 %	4: 3.5 %	4: 19.4 %	4: 28.9 %
3: 3.6 %	3: 10.0 %	3: 31.7 %	3: 10.0 %
2: 0.0 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 2.9 %	2: 0.0 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 9.8 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: This is the second time Matt Prescott, a former SEARCH student spoke to our students concerning this important and relevant topic. He was as successful as his first presentation. This presenter of this particular seminar is a compliment to the program. Years ago Matt Prescott was a member of SEARCH who is now an integral part of the FDA. His presentation on animal cruelty in our industrial farm system was both enlightening and disturbing. One of the students stated, "I may never eat pork again.

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October 15, 2014: Paranormal by Ian Murphy

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 81.9 %	5: 88.2 %	5: 74.5%	5: 50.9%
4: 18.1 %	4: 8.4 %	4: 4.4%	4: 48.6%
3: 0.0 %	3: 3.4 %	3: 5.0%	3: 20.5%
2: 0.0 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 16.1%	2: 0.0%
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0%	1: 0.0%

Notes:

Dr. Regina Shearer, Dean of Admissions at Rivier University and former lead singer of "The Platters" spoke with SEARCH students concerning how her adolescence was filled with challenges and opportunities. She continues to be well received by the SEARCH students. Her personality and story motivates all of them to do the best they can do.

November 5, 2016: Syria

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 60.8%	5: 81.9%	5: 67.5%	5: 40.4%
4: 22.1%	4: 18.1%	4: 15.9%	4: 34.4%
3: 3.7%	3: 0.0%	3: 8.6 %	3: 25.2%
2: 13.4%	2: 0.0 %	2: 8.0 %	2: 0.0 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: Professor Jeanne Sowers is a favorite speaker at Project SEARCH. Her enthusiasm and knowledge of the Middle East and the Arab Spring brought motivation and knowledge to my students. The questions out of the lecture hall were both competent and knowledgeable. Professor Sowers' answers were made through experience. I hope to see Professor Sowers be a SEARCH presenter in the future.

November 19, 2014: The Boston Marathon Terrorist Act

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speaker:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 83.7 %	5: 95.14 %	5: 83.4 %	5: 70.3 %
4: 9.1 %	4: 1.90 %	4: 11.2 %	4: 5.9 %
3: 7.2 %	3: 2.96 %	3: 5.4 %	3: 21.9 %
2: 0.0%	2: 0.00 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 1.9 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.00 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: One of the most compelling seminars in SEARCH's history. The compassion and emotions felt by both the speaker and her audience was remarkable. I hope my students in the future have the opportunity to talk with history and those who were affected by it.

December 10, 2014 : Poetry Slam

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 87.7 %	5: 94.8 %	5: 37.6 %	5: 72.6 %
4: 3.3 %	4: 5.8 %	4: 30.5 %	4: 8.2 %

3: 10.0 %	3: 0.0 %	3: 20.6 %	3: 9.4 %
2: 0.0 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 11.3 %	2: 9.8 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: The poetry slam has become a staple for Project SEARCH. It is a favorite with the students because they are presented with award winning poetry and they are able to stand before their peers in order to recite their poetry. Simone is a national champion in her field.

Student comments:

Hearing them perform makes poetry a universal language like music.

This gave me the capacity to figure out which art is better than other art.

January 7, 2015: Professor Robert Ross: Neuroscience

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 58.5 %	5: 32.7 %	5: 66.3 %	5: 74.0 %
4: 31.5 %	4: 29.2 %	4: 21.8 %	4: 16.0 %
3: 10.0%	3: 13.3 %	3: 24.4 %	3: 5.0 %
4: 0 %	2: 14.8 %	2: 11.9 %	2: 5.0 %
5: 0 %	1: 9.8 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: Professor Robert Ross came with the idea to get students involved in the study of neuroscience. The nature of his subject was interesting but his presentation was weak in that it simplified his subject to the point of being confusing. A lecture-like seminar could have deleted the interactive games.

January 21, 2015 The concept of evolution vs intelligent design

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speaker:	Question Period:	Groups:
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5: 57.5 %	5: 41.7 %	5: 26.3 %	5: 64.0 %
4: 21.0 %	4: 31.2 %	4: 35.8 %	4: 34.4 %
3: 21.5 %	3: 13.3 %	3: 34.4 %	3: 1.6 %
2: 0 %	2: 10.8 %	2: 3.5 %	2: 0.0 %
1: 0 %	1: 2.7 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: This was an interesting dynamic for my students. Debating the side of evolution was Professor Jessica Bolker. My students thought she was a bit arrogant even though they agreed on her defense of evolution. On the “Intelligent Design” side was a speaker SEARCH has had before. His defense of his views were a bit out-dated. Looking at all of the questionnaires it shows that the topic of Evolution vs. Intelligent Design may have become antiquated.

February 4, 2015: The Eastern concepts of a mime

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 68.4 %	5: 80.8 %	5: 57.2 %	5: 60.0 %
4: 13.9 %	4: 19.2 %	4: 34.2 %	4: 16.8 %
3: 16.3 %	3: 0.0 %	3: 0.0 %	3: 13.6 %
2: 1.4 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 8.6 %	4: 9.6 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	5: 0.0 %

Notes: Robert Rivest, who is an acclaimed Mime demonstrated to the SEARCH students how they could learn to relax. There was a late cancellation by the National Rifle Association because of a scheduling issue. This seminar fit well after the debate on evolution because the students understood that all academic activity doesn't only have to include thought but can also include some laughter. Many students stated they will use Mr. Rivest's techniques to relax to cope with their high school stresses.

March 4, 2015: The World Health Organization and E-Bola

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
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5: 81.9 %	5: 88.2 %	5: 74.5 %	5; 50.9 %
4: 18.1 %	4: 8.4%	4: 4.4 %	4: 48.6 %
3: 0.0%	3: 3.4 %	3: 5.0 %	3: 20.5 %
2: 0.0 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 16.1 %	2: 0.0 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: Christine Villeneuve is a nurse who works in a New York City Hospital and leads a team specifically involved with the import of the E-Bola epidemic. She did a remarkable job in not only giving a history of this possible endemic but also brought in equipment used to combat this disease. She also brought stories about the doctors who went to West Africa to combat the disease. My students were enthralled by her presentation and wanted to hear more.

March 18, 2015: Sexual Assault on Campus

Seminar Topic:	Seminar Speakers:	Question Period:	Groups:
5: 83.7 %	5: 95.4 %	5: 83.4 %	5; 70.3 %
4: 9.1 %	4: 1.9%	4: 11.2 %	4: 5.9 %
3: 7.2%	3: 3.0 %	3: 5.4 %	3: 21.9 %
2: 0.0 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 0.0 %	2: 1.9 %
1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %	1: 0.0 %

Notes: The final seminar of the 2014-2015, was one of the most important of my 31 years at SEARCH. Most of the students are going on to post-secondary education and have probably been lectured to about this topic. There was a panel set up that had people who worked at the university on this problem. The panel told stories of abuse and how students, especially freshman students, can be both threatened and injured by this painful situation.

April 9, 2014: "Blue Man Group"

The 2013-2014 end-of-year outing takes SEARCH participants again to the Charles Playhouse in Boston where they were entertained by "Blue Man Group". To say they enjoyed this experience would be an understatement.

