



Good morning. And welcome to everyone.

Leading up to this year's Fall Assembly, I know there has been a certain buzz about campus... What is he like? What will he say? What does he think? Where does he really stand on that all important topic: namely, those work days that fall between Christmas and the New Year's holiday? So, let me get that out of the way first.



Then, we can move on to more substantive matters. It makes no sense for us to open the University for a day or two over the holidays... Just as it makes no sense for you to head to campus when you have a refrigerator full of turkey, a pile of new toys, children home from school, and older children and loved ones visiting from afar. So, I'm pleased to announce that the University of New England will be closed between Christmas and New Year's Day. And these days off will not count against your "floating" holidays. How's that for a start of our Fall Assembly?

Some of our colleagues told me that would be a good way to break the ice. I guess they were right.



Now, let us turn our attention to other matters. I'm going to talk in just a few minutes about some of my initial impressions concerning the challenges UNE faces at this time, and also about some of the opportunities I see for us. But first, let me say... it really is wonderful to see so many of you gathered here today. And isn't the Fun Run and Walk a terrific way to enjoy this beautiful campus together? My thanks to Sharen Beaulieu, who began this wonderful tradition eight years ago, and to our colleagues from Human Resources and other UNE departments who organized this year's event.

This is the first time I've stood before a crowd of this size at UNE, and seeing you all under one roof makes me eager to embark upon this new journey we're taking together. We're charged... all of us... with ensuring that the next era in UNE's evolution is the best, brightest, and most impactful one yet... and I'm just thrilled that I'll be working beside you to make sure we succeed. I am humbled and honored to be your president.



I have been here about two months now, and I've been absolutely overwhelmed by just how dedicated, talented, and thoughtful you all are. My wife Lynn and I knew prior to my appointment that this was a special community, but meeting you first-hand has really affirmed my decision to join you all in supporting UNE's mission.



On the first day I was here – before we’d even gotten our moving truck unpacked – I was greeted by the folks from facilities, who bent over backwards to ensure that everything was in order. The professional staff in the President’s Office has likewise been helpful with everything from scheduling countless meetings to telling me where to go to get my hair cut or to secure my Maine driver’s license. The deans and other senior leadership have helped orient me to the details of the University’s history, accomplishments, and challenges. Colleagues have been eager to ease my adjustment to the community by telling me everything from the shortcut to five points in Biddeford, to the preferred exit off of 295 to get to the Portland Campus, to where to find the best lobster rolls. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to everyone who has helped to welcome me and my family and to everyone who has helped us to settle into our new home.



More than just witnessing the care UNE community members have shown to me and my family, I've also been struck over the past several weeks by the love members of this community express for their work and for the University of New England. I've been struck by the depths and authenticity of that love. I've been struck by the concern you all have for our central mission – serving the needs of our students. I want you to know that no matter what role you play at UNE, I recognize that love as an essential ingredient in your making UNE the amazing place it is. I thank you for caring as much as you do, and for working as hard as you do, to ensure we succeed.



Our dedication to UNE is one of our distinguishing characteristics as a community. And it gives us a real advantage in the marketplace. But it is not the only strategic advantage we have. We also benefit from an amazing sense of place – on all three of our campuses. We are surrounded by natural beauty here in Biddeford. Our budding health professionals in Portland enjoy access to Maine’s largest city, a vibrant jewel of a highly livable urban environment. Our campus in Tangier sits at what has been rightly called a crossroads of civilizations. You just can’t manufacture those sorts of intangibles. We have them, and we need to maximize their impact.

We are also innovative, forward-thinking, and nimble. As a private institution that is smaller than some of our competitors, we can move quickly to adapt to changing realities and landscapes. We can move quickly to capitalize on emerging opportunities.



And over the past decade we have done that – *you* have done that. Thanks to your hard work, UNE has made great strides. We have come to play an increasing role in higher education locally, nationally and even internationally, and our impact reaches deeply into Maine, and extends beyond to touch the larger world.

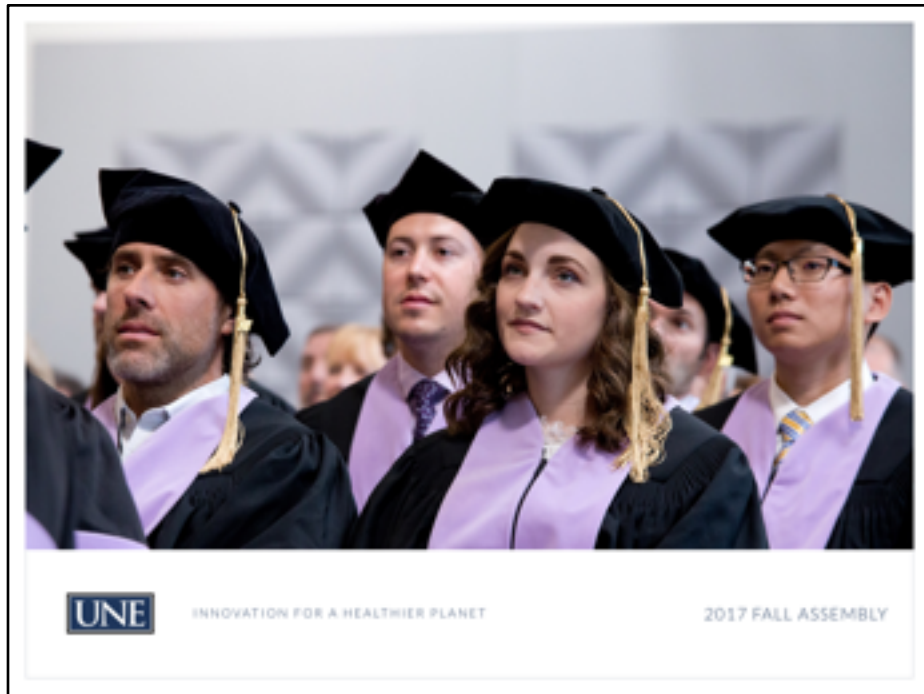
But we can't take our foot off the throttle now. We need to continue leveraging to the greatest extent possible the qualities that have made us successful thus far. I'll share more with you shortly about my thoughts on some of the coming challenges for higher education and on how we can best tack them, but first, I'd like to give credit where credit is due. We've had another highly successful year, and I'd like to highlight just a handful of our recent accomplishments. It goes without saying that I cannot possibly do justice here to all of the many achievements of the past year. Any list of accolades at a place as dynamic and productive as UNE will necessarily be very incomplete. So, I will only highlight a few examples of our collective excellence, and, if I don't mention your specific unit or program, please don't think that your efforts have gone unrecognized.



Since my arrival in July, we have learned that for the third year in a row UNE has been included in the *Princeton Review's* "Best 382 Colleges" list. This is no small feat. Cracking this highly selective list puts us in league with the best colleges and universities in the country – institutions that, in most cases, are much older than we are and further along in their evolution. UNE was selected on the basis of our high-quality academic programs, optimal locations in Maine and Morocco, competitive cost, and size. Our profile in the guide says that we distinguish ourselves by "creating socially, environmentally, and intellectually aware students." Please note that this high praise is in recognition of outcomes from our emphasis on studies in both the liberal arts as well as health sciences. It praises our high-intensity courses, internships, and research opportunities, as well as our small class sizes and enthusiastic, accessible professors. This is high praise, and I know many of you have worked very hard to earn it... Again, I thank you.



The University engaged in a comprehensive self-assessment last year as part of the ten-year accreditation review by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, or NEASC. Led by Interim Provost Sheldon and Vice President Beaulieu, and with the participation of members of the faculty and professional staff from across the University, this self-study highlighted UNE's many accomplishments over the past decade. NEASC conducted a site visit this spring, and the preliminary report of the site visit team was very laudatory. As the next stage in the re-accreditation process, I will meet with the NEASC commissioners next month. The NEASC self-study, and the commission's report, have proven very helpful to me in understanding UNE's strengths and challenges, and will serve as a foundation for building our new strategic plan.



This past May, we graduated our first class of doctors of dental medicine, thus taking another important step in fulfilling our commitment to easing Northern New England's shortage of dental care providers. I expect that as our dentists settle into professional roles in the field – and begin practice -- in many cases -- in rural communities across the state where the shortage is most acute, they will be wonderful ambassadors for UNE... just as the student clinicians in our Oral Health Center have already proven to be.



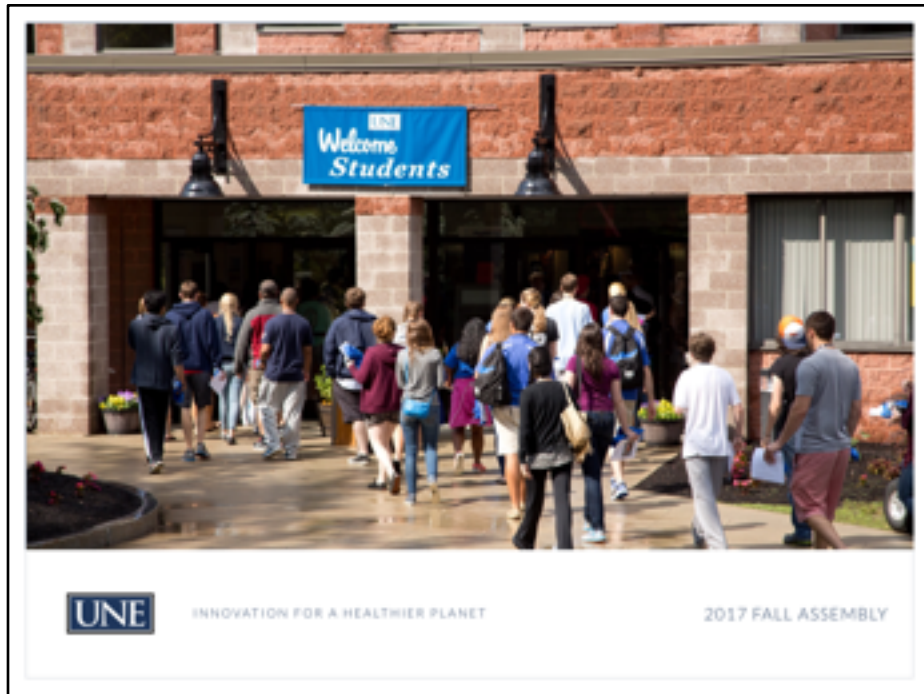
We made national news last spring for hosting an open house for Moroccan students at our campus in Tangier. We are now welcoming two freshmen from that country. I hope they'll open the door to many more in the future. Our global programs are getting stronger every year. Forty-two students will be spending the fall in Tangier, and many others will be at our partner universities in Spain and France.



In May, we made international headlines by welcoming former Senate majority leader George Mitchell to our Tangier Campus, where he shed light on one of the greatest challenges of our time -- the turmoil emanating from the Middle East. I am pleased to announce that Senator Mitchell has agreed to visit us here in Biddeford this fall to deliver the annual George and Barbara Bush Lecture. The lecture will take place on September 12th at 5 PM and will be titled "Challenges Facing the U.S., at Home and Abroad;" I hope you will be able to join me there.

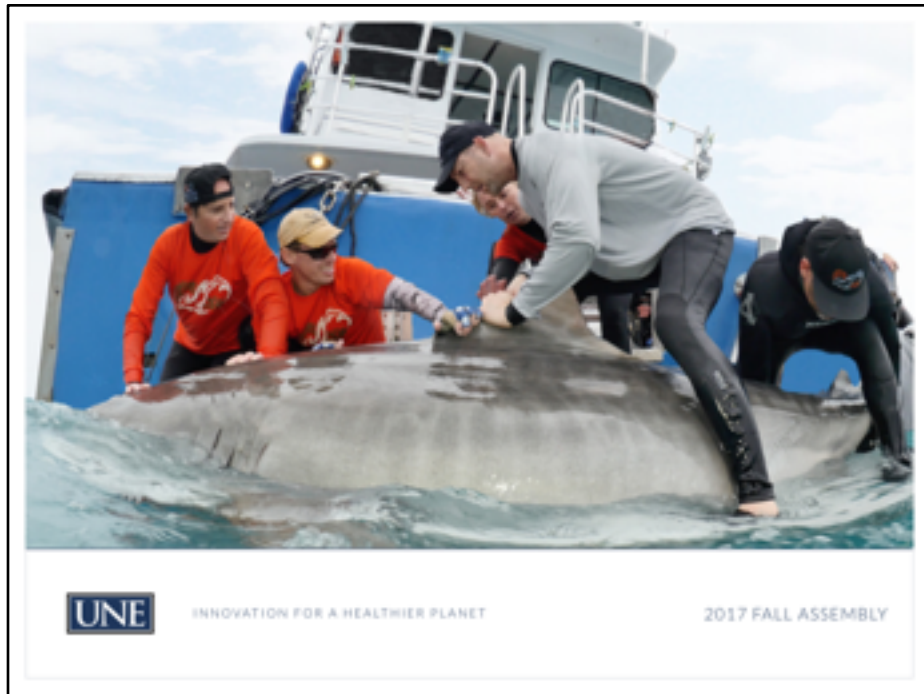


In February, the University received its first ever financial credit rating in conjunction with our first stand-alone bond issuance. Credit ratings are assigned by rating agencies to gauge the overall financial health of an institution. These ratings impact how easily we can borrow money, and how much interest we would need to pay. Two of the country's leading credit rating agencies, Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings, both assigned UNE A-level ratings, recognizing us as a low risk for investors. This is a remarkable accomplishment, and I congratulate Vice President Trufant and her team.

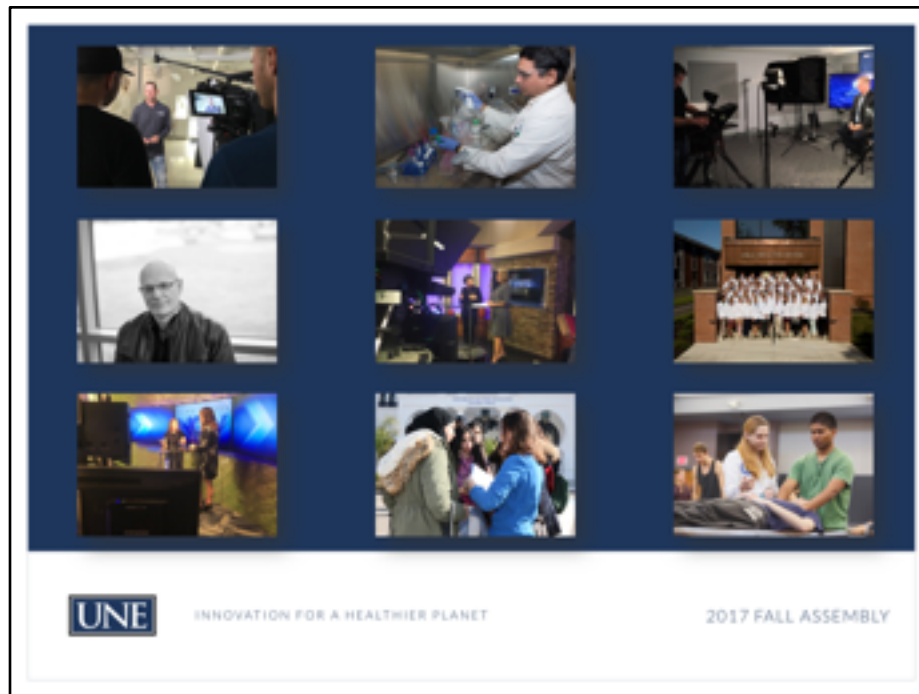


The incoming class of undergraduates is also exceptional in many ways.

With more than 760 members, it currently stands as the second largest class in the past seven years. It is also the most geographically diverse class we have ever had, with its members hailing from 33 different U.S. states. These numbers reflect the hard work of our colleagues in Admissions, which set new records this year for inquiries, tour takers, off-campus recruitment visits, open house attendees, and applications.



We have also just recently concluded a whale of a shark week... well, maybe I'd better not mix metaphors. But in all seriousness, James Sulikowski has again made our community proud and has represented us well. He does so every time he uses his considerable expertise to shed light on the fascinating creatures he's spent much of his professional life researching. James, we're fortunate to have you as a colleague, during Shark Week... and every week.



I know many of you similarly make important contributions to your fields. Sometimes, when you do, you wind up on national TV, or local TV, or on the radio, or in the newspaper. Other times, your research paper or book reaches a smaller audience. Please know that all of these scholarly achievements are critical, not just to your own professional growth, but also to UNE's growing reputation. Hearty congratulations to all of our scholars.



Whenever your work reaches an external audience, either in the popular press or in your field, you help spread UNE's brand. Faculty – and members of the professional staff -- I look forward to learning more about the work each of you does in the year ahead, and to applauding along with the rest of our colleagues when you receive external recognition for it.

Taking a look at our colleges, the past year has witnessed a number of significant accomplishments within each one of them. Allow me to touch on just a few key highlights.



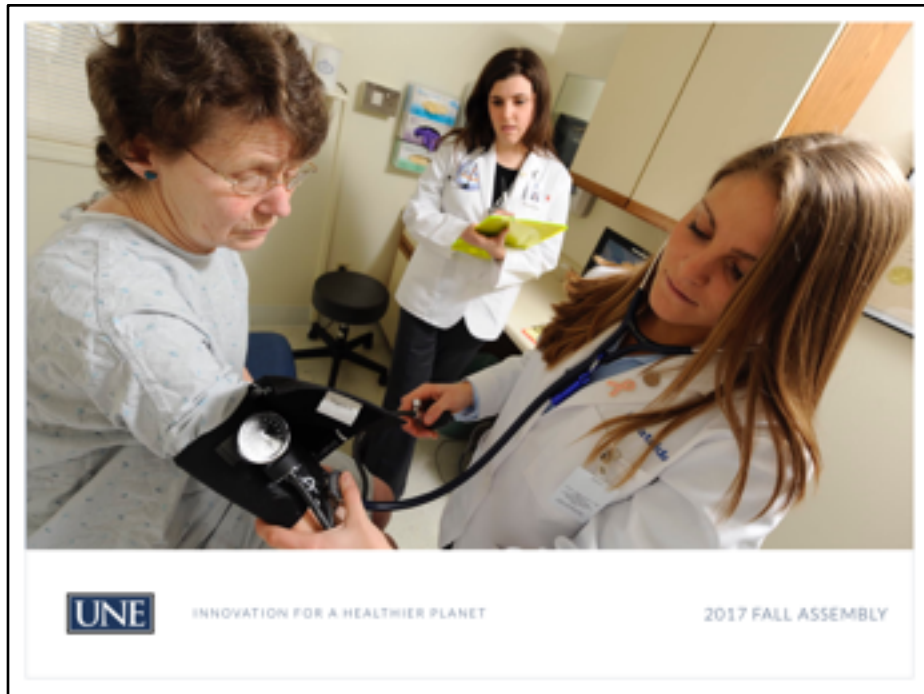
In the College of Arts and Sciences we purchased a marine vessel for teaching and research, which along with our own island, now gives us a strategic advantage in Marine Sciences. The College has also established an amazing Makerspace that serves students from across the University.



The College of Pharmacy's continued education program, the only ACPE-accredited continuing education provider in Northern New England, received accreditation for the maximum 6-year term.



In the College of Graduate and Professional studies our enrollment continues to grow, increasing on average 17% year over year.



The College of Osteopathic Medicine's DO program ranked in the top ten of all medical schools across the country for graduates being accepted into the residency program of their choice. This represents a powerful statement about the quality of our medical graduates.



And if you have been through Innovation Hall lately, you can't miss the new Interprofessional Simulation and Innovation Center. Housed in the Westbrook College of Health Professionals, this amazing center provides a unique training opportunity for health professional students from multiple disciplines.



One of the nice things about belonging to an academic community -- and working in a setting like the one UNE provides -- is the opportunity it presents us to learn and grow professionally, and also to witness the professional growth, achievement, and advancement of our friends and colleagues. During the recently-concluded academic year, a number of you have reached noteworthy benchmarks or received promotions in recognition of your hard work. I would like to acknowledge you now with help from the accompanying slides. I won't be reading them all, but please join me in recognizing our colleagues.

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

PROFESSOR EMERITUS



Judith Kimball, Ph.D.



David Koester, Ph.D.



Paulette St. Ours



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

Professor Emeritus

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

PROFESSOR



Cathrine Frank, Ph.D.



Edward Li,
Pharm.D., M.P.H.



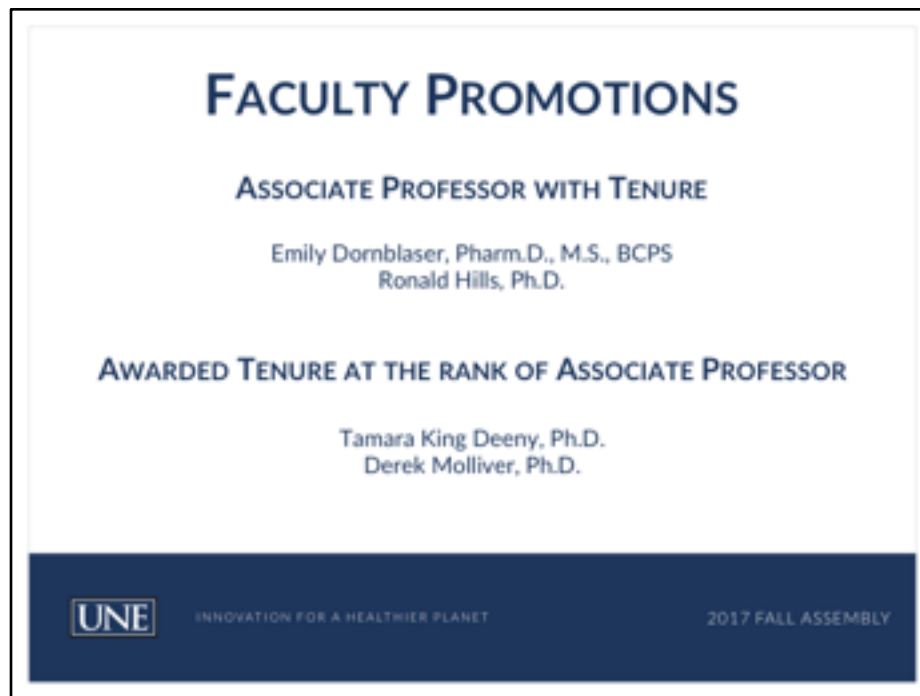
Michele Polacsek,
Ph.D., M.H.S.



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

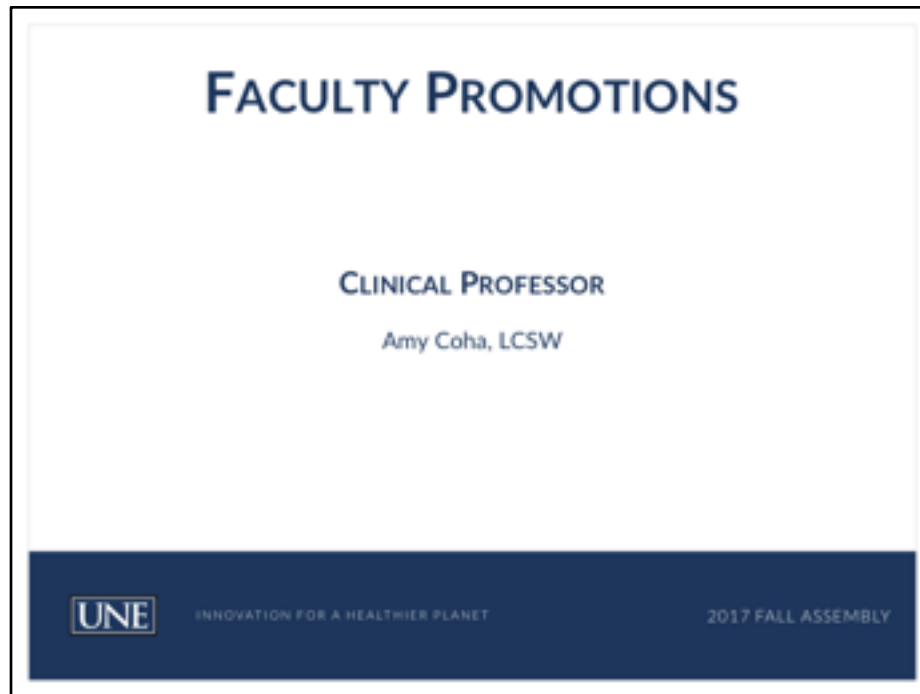
2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

Professor



The following faculty members also received promotions:

Tenure Awards



Full Clinical Professor

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

ASSOCIATE CLINICAL PROFESSOR

Jay Beauchemin, D.D.S., FAGD, FICD
O. Fields Farrior, D.M.D., M.S.
Christopher Frothingham, D.O.
Scott McNeil, O.T.D., M.S., OTR/L
Diane Visich, Ed.D., PA-C
Mary White, LCSW



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

Associate Clinical Professor

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

SENIOR LECTURER

Kaushik Dutta, M.S.
Amy Storch, Ph.D., LCSW

ASSOCIATE LECTURER

Scott Dube, D.O.
Jeffrey Parmelee, Ph.D.



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

Associate and Senior Lecturers

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Gregory Andrews
Student Support Specialist II
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Timothy Arienti
Vessel Program Coordinator
Marine Science Center

Jason Asdourian
Student Support Specialist II
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Cadence Atchinson
Online Research Teach Librarian
Library Services

Sarah Bedell
Assistant Director of Operations, Portland
Graduate Admissions

Elizabeth Benz
Director, Online Student Support
College of Graduate and Professional Studies



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

The following members of our professional staff were promoted to new positions.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Mary Binette
Associate Registrar
Registrar

Laurie Boland
Enrollment Counselor II
Graduate Admissions

Kayla Boyd
Assistant Registrar
Registrar

Madeline Brooks
Staff Assistant
Dental Profession Program

Alaina Cellini
Market Research Analyst
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Crystal Canney
Director, Communications and Global
Operations
Communications



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Heather Chase

Tech Integration Manager Years 1 and 2
Information Technology Services

Andrew Crawford

Assistant Director, Marketing and
Recruitment
Graduate Admissions

Heather Dadiego

Simulation Fidelity Technician
Performance Evaluation Center

Heather Davis

Associate Athletic Director
Athletics

Elizabeth Dyer

Research and Technical Librarian/Associate
Dean
Library Services

Sharon Finley

Coordinator, Portland Campus
Mail Services



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Darcy Flaherty

Director, Freshman Admission
Undergraduate Admissions

Whitney Hutchinson

Student Support Specialist III
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Leah Igo

Senior Marketing Manager
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Bethany Kenyon

Scholarly Communications Librarian
Library Services

Matthew Kogut

Assistant Director
Finance and Administration

Amanda Leen

User Experience Librarian
Library Services



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Alexandra Legere

Enrollment Counselor III
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Andrea Libman

Project Manager, Online Worldwide Learning
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Nicole Lindsay

Director, Online Admissions
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Michelle Littlefield

Assistant Dean, Finance and Strategy
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Kattia Lomando

Dental Assistant
Dental Profession Program

Maria Lorello

Enrollment Counselor III
College of Graduate and Professional Studies



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Stewart MacLehose

Director of Digital Resources
Library Services

Cat Martins

Benefits and Disability Specialist
Human Resources

Laurie Mathes

Information Desk Coordinator
Library Services

Chansatha Meas

Dental Assistant
Dental Profession Program

Marine Miller

Art Director
Communications

Meredith Milnes

Assistant Director, Research and Strategy
College of Graduate and Professional Studies



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Nhi Mulkern

Student Support Specialist II

College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Emily Roach

Student Support Specialist II

College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Jeffrey Nevers

Director

Career Services

Morgan Roberts

Assistant Director, Financial Aid

Finance and Administration

Cooper Quenneville

Admissions Coordinator

Graduate Admissions

Ronni Roberts

Manager Online Registration

Registrar



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Kira Rodriguez

Senior Research Associate
Master of Public Health

Kimberly Soulard

Associate Director of Clinical Affairs
Dental Profession Program

Eric Row

Digital Access Coordinator
Library Services

Katelin Ste Marie

Senior Admissions Coordinator
Graduate Admissions

Lisa Shaker

Senior Student Support Specialist
College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Isaac Stickney

Assistant Director for Educational Support
and Student Recruitment
Dental Profession Program



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

PROFESSIONAL STAFF PROMOTIONS

Mitchell Brown
Associate Director of Corporate Engagement
Institutional Advancement

Tiffany Cantara
Administrative Assistant
Oral Health Center

Alex Hammond
Information Technology Manager
Clinical Education

Nang Tin Maung
Academic Program Manager
Master of Public Health

Stephanie Salamone
Simulation Coordinator
Dental Profession Program

Christopher Tripp
Assistant Director of Operations, Biddeford
Graduate Admissions

Maria Webb
Sterilization-Dispensary Assistant
Oral Health Center



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

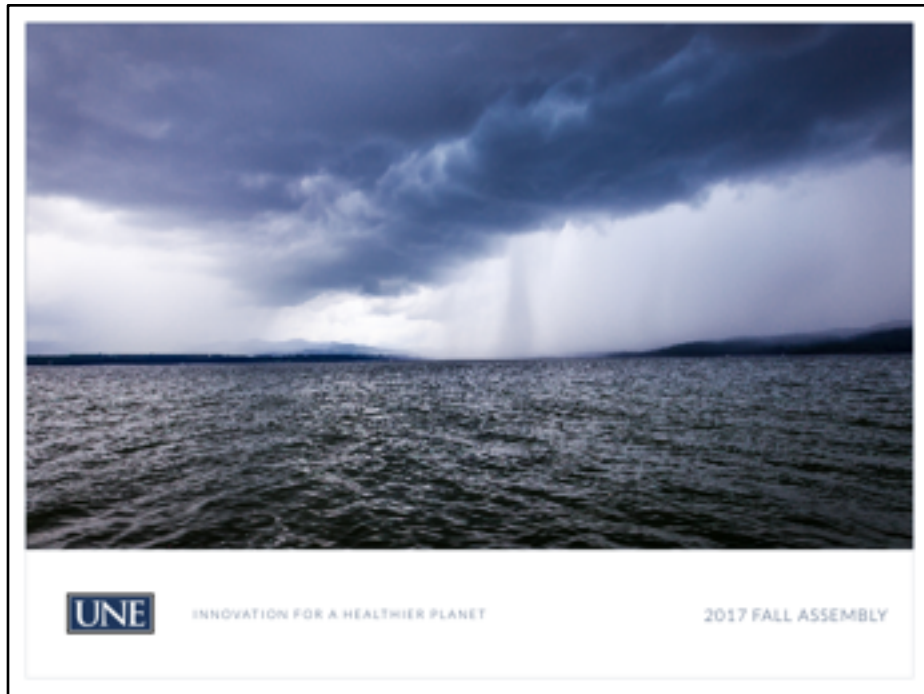
2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

My heartfelt congratulations to each of you.



I would now like to share my initial assessment of the state of UNE as we begin our first academic year together, and I'll do so within the context of a larger discussion concerning the state of higher education in our present time.

Yes, we have accomplished much. And it was good for us to take some time during the presidential transition to pause and reflect on our achievements. But it would be foolish for us to become complacent now.



When I look out at the vast Atlantic and imagine a group of UNE students standing across the ocean in Tangier looking back, I see great beauty and great opportunity on those waters, but I also see storm clouds gathering over the horizon. There is no question that the winds they bring to shore will churn our bright blue sea. I'm going to be very blunt: Higher education – like practically every other industry – is going to be turned on its ear in the decade ahead. And if institutions like ours aren't smart, strategic, and nimble, they are not going to prosper. Indeed, many will not even survive the fundamental restructuring of higher education that lies ahead.



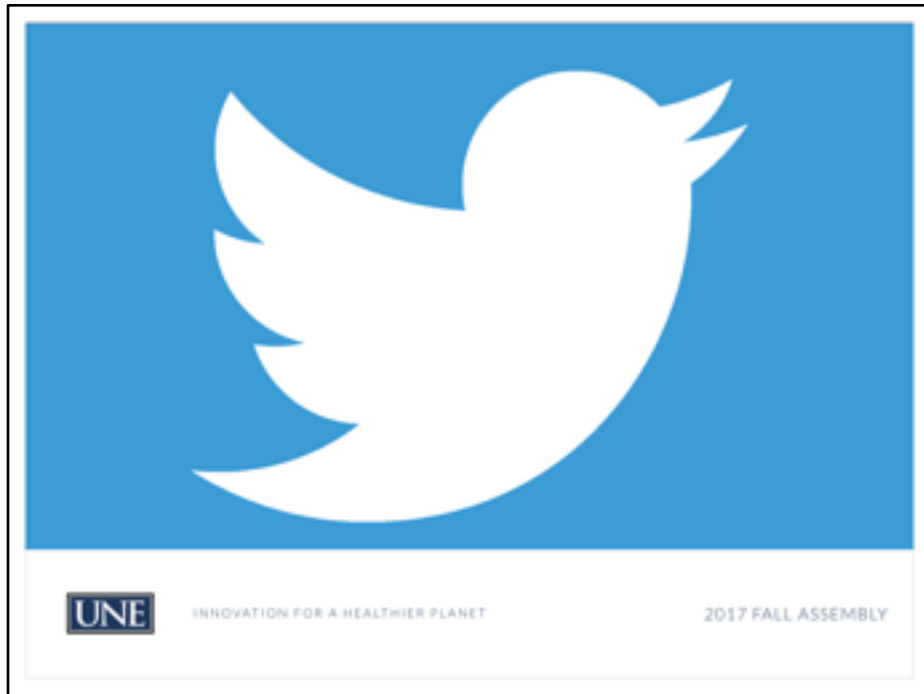
As technological innovation, automation, and artificial intelligence become greater and greater factors in every aspect of human life, industry's needs are going to change... and then change again... and then again. Colleges and universities that merely try to keep up are going to fall behind. Only those able to stay a step ahead of these changes... only those that play leading roles in embracing the new technologies and the changes they bring, are going to succeed. This is the one overarching reality of our time that must shape our thinking in every aspect of what we do. Several inter-related challenges – internal and external – are emerging for UNE amidst this new reality.



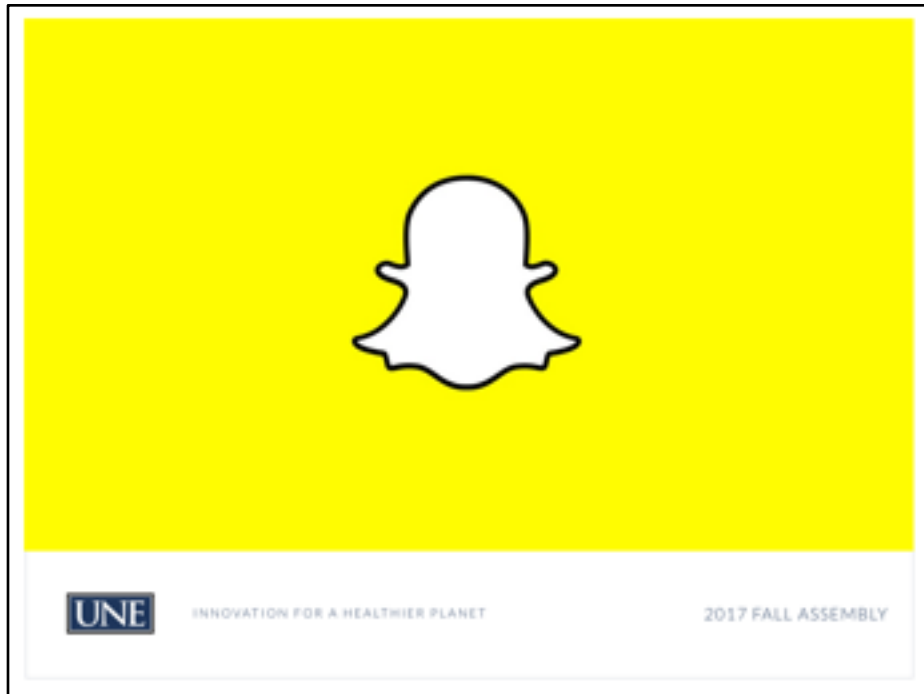
First, the demographic shifts that began some time ago are continuing to make the higher education landscape more and more competitive... especially for private institutions... and especially here in the northeast where the market is quite saturated. There just aren't enough high school students in the region to support the applicant pool that was assumed when many institutions of higher education were building their programs and facilities.



At the same time that the pool of applicants has diminished, the emphasis prospective students and their parents place on return on investment has intensified. A higher education is not cheap. For many families, a higher education requires much sacrifice – especially in a less affluent state like Maine... and especially when their youngster is a first-generation college student, like the kind we often attract. We need to make sure we are returning value to our students in the form of demonstrable, marketable skills, coupled with passionate intellectual curiosity and a drive for lifelong learning that will translate to ongoing success in the modern workforce.



Faculty members, I know that you face discipline-specific challenges in your various fields, too, as you keep up with the rapid advancement of technology and change. In addition, many of us have encountered new challenges in the classroom as well. Our students have come of age in an era of tweeting and texting. They've been taught in the era of No Child Left Behind and its heavy emphasis on standardized testing. They enter our classrooms with fundamentally different communication modes and learning styles than the ones we possessed when we were students. We need to recognize their needs and help them learn the language, discipline, and depth of engagement required to be successful in the academy, and indeed in life. At the same time, we need to embrace this new world of communication and learning and make adjustments to our courses to meet them on their terms -- and meeting them on their terms has become quite the challenge -- without sacrificing any of the rigor we expect. I know from the most recent outcomes cited in the NEASC report that you are up to facing these challenges.



New technologies... shrinking demographics... expanding regulatory concerns... students who communicate more comfortably via Snapchat than in a face-to-face conversation... These are realities every institution of higher education now faces.

At UNE, we are confronted with some institution-specific challenges, as well. We do not need to be afraid of these. But we need to recognize them for what they are, and to work as a community to address them.



The fact is, although much has been made of our recent successes and financial health, we still don't have the **deep** financial resources that many of our competitors do. We continue to be a relatively young, tuition-driven University. Due to smart fiscal management and to everyone's hard work, we have made great strides and we are fiscally sound. We have just completed a highly successful capital campaign that exceeded our goals. However, it is simply a fact that our endowment is smaller than needed to support our ambitions. That doesn't mean we should temper our aspirations. It means we must be creative. We need to be open to non-traditional partnerships. We need to demonstrate to potential funding sources that we are designing solutions to critical real-world problems and that a partnership with us, or an investment in us, is going to make a profound difference in the world.

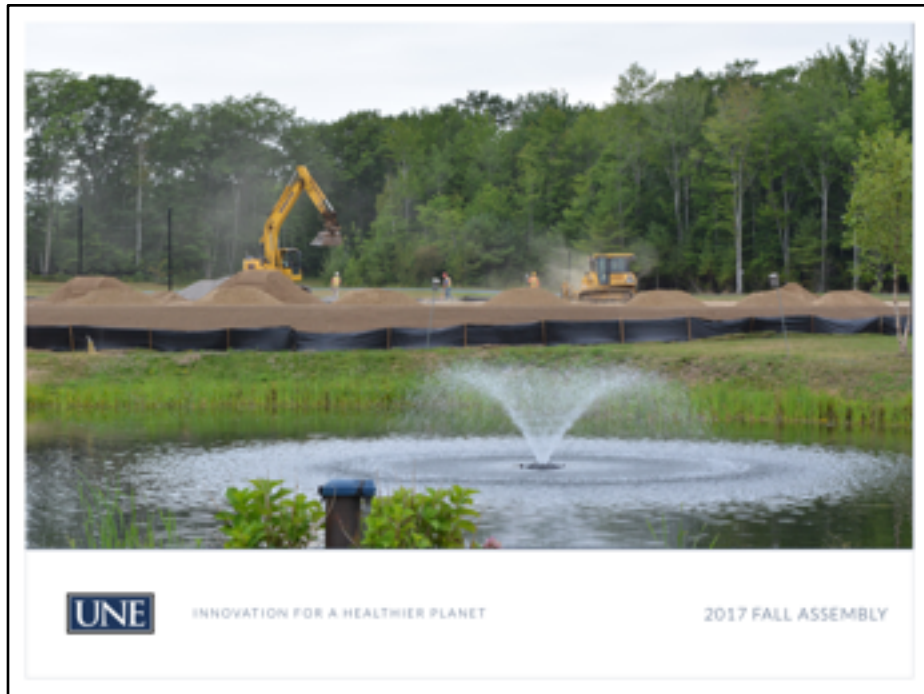
It will come as no surprise to those of you on the front lines to hear me say that we face some very real infrastructure challenges at UNE, even with our impressive expansion and growth of facilities on all campuses. We are currently addressing some of these and will need to continue to work on them. These have resulted from the rapid growth of our programs and student body over the past few years.



Our wonderful new Student Commons building will meet some of our needs, but certainly not all of them. We need to ensure that our faculty, professional staff, and students have the space they require to do their work and to do it to the best of their abilities.



When I hear that in some cases we have up to four faculty members sharing a single office . . .



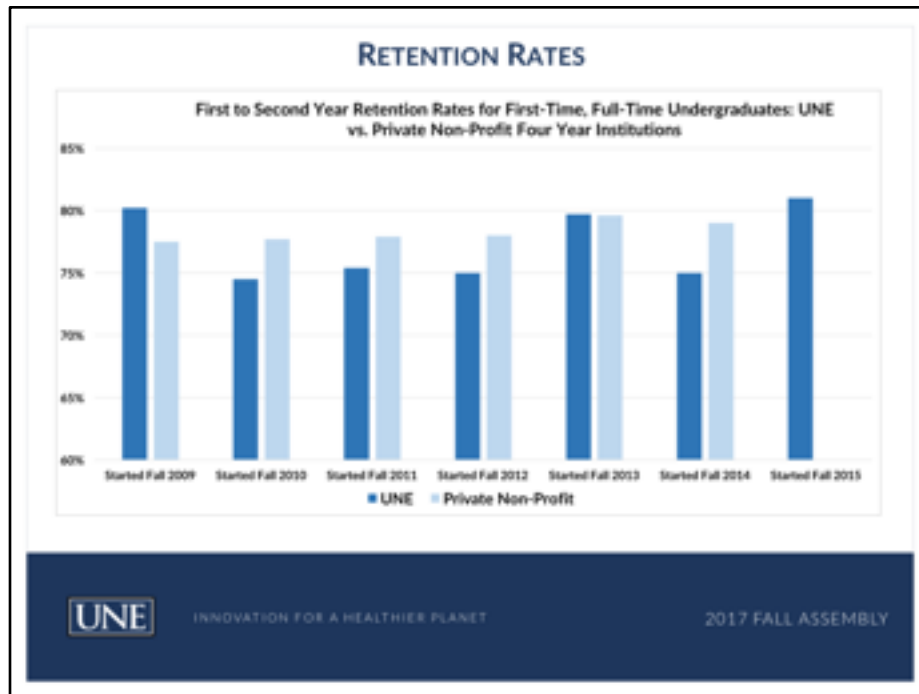
. . . Or when I learn that our athletic teams can't practice when they need to because we don't have sufficient field space, and that intramural activities for the general student body are restricted by the same conditions, I know we can do better. And we will. But it will take some time and some creativity...



Another challenge we face involves maintaining and growing our enrollment in certain majors and minors that have seen their numbers plateau or even decline in recent years. Despite most programs either holding their own or showing growth, we do have some programs that seem to have stagnated. We need to address this. I believe most of the critical thinking about these programs and about how they can be adjusted to more successfully attract students should occur within the academic departments themselves.

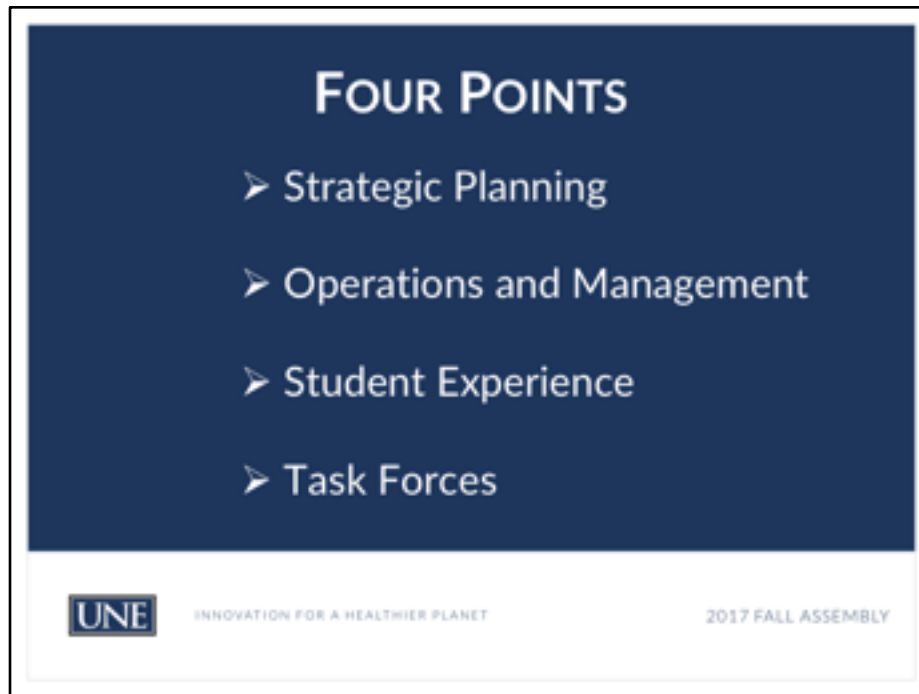


I don't believe that there is a one-size-fits-all solution to re-energizing these programs. Rather, I think we need to be self-analytical, attuned to student interest, and sensitive to current market needs. I think we need to make specific adjustments according to each program's unique situation. The more our academic programs can do to fill specific niches within that context, the more successful they will be. I'll talk more about this challenge – and about how I think we can confront it -- toward the end of my remarks today.



Another area in which we need to do better is in student retention. Our freshman to sophomore retention rate is not reflective of the fine institution we have become. Nor is our graduation rate. In the area of student retention, for example, the most recent year for which we have comparative UNE and national data is 2014. That year, our retention rate was 75%. The national average for four-year private non-profit institutions was 79%. While we have improved this number in the past year, we still need to do better. We don't want to be average. We are an exceptional, modern, innovative, global university that grows more exceptional by the year. We should be distinguishing ourselves such that once students get here, they don't want to leave. This is an area where our faculty and professional staff alike have roles to play in ensuring our students' academic and extra-curricular experiences make them want to stay.

Fortunately, as I've said, we are well-poised to address all of these challenges. And it is my hope that we will make four specific efforts as a community this fall to begin doing so.



First, we must embrace a new period of strategic planning. In doing so, we must focus on leveraging our existing and emerging strengths to meet key societal and global needs. From a process standpoint, our planning must be highly inclusive. I haven't been here long, but I've been here long enough to recognize that collectively you possess much wisdom. You have many good ideas. I believe all of you should have a voice in our planning process... and not just because I believe in being inclusive and because I want to empower you -- which I do -- but because I recognize the product of our work will be that much stronger thanks to your participation.

I've been struck by the intelligence and experience of UNE's professional staff. You are an immensely talented group of women and men, whose expertise and skills are only matched by your passion for UNE. I would like to challenge you to take a deep dive into the particulars of your unit's operations, and to think creatively in imagining new approaches to existing and emerging challenges in your area. We will not change things just to change them, but we should not hesitate to try new approaches that you believe will yield better outcomes and improve efficiency. The guiding principle here should be -- and should always be -- the best interests of our students. We are conducting this review centrally, of course, but today I ask all units to engage in this process as well. Step back, and take a critical look at what is working well, and what

might be improved. Then, communicate your findings to your director or dean.

The third step I wish for us to take – which, for many of you, may dovetail with your review of operations or academic programs -- is taking a fresh look at the student experience, in the context of our opening the new Ripich Student Commons. Led by Interim Provost Sheldon, Associate Provost Leighton, Assistant Vice President and Dean of Students DeBurro, and others, we will consider how we can better integrate various academic and non-academic student support services to best meet the needs of our students. I am confident that this effort will begin to address the concerns I expressed earlier regarding our retention and graduation rates. But I think it will have wider implications too.

As we proceed together in initiating the University's next strategic planning process, a couple of issues have emerged consistently in our conversations. Instead of waiting for the plan to be completed, with your input and support I have begun the process of moving forward on a couple of these themes that are certain to feature in any strategic plan we develop.

I am commissioning two task forces. The first focuses on envisioning the future of UNE's Health Professions Training, and on developing a plan to best grow and capitalize on this University strength. Health care in the United States is notorious for being overly-siloed and poorly-integrated, and this lack of interprofessional coordination is reflected in – and, in part, driven by -- prevailing educational models. UNE has made strides in addressing this reality through our interprofessional education (IPE) and interprofessional practice (IPP) initiatives. In too many cases, however, there remains a disconnect between the educational continuum of our campus-based IPE components and our clinical partner-based IPP experiences. In addition, logistical barriers such as varying curriculum schedules and challenges posed by the two-campus system have limited the impact of our IPE and IPP initiatives. A larger question persists, too, concerning the scalability of our IPE and IPP experiences. If we can address these issues, we have the opportunity to become a national model in key areas of integrated health care education and delivery. In this context, the task force is charged with accomplishing a number of specific objectives related to visioning the future of professional health care education.

The second task force focuses on improving our undergraduate retention and graduation rates, as I discussed earlier. This task force is charged with studying the issue and drafting a detailed plan for addressing it. The group will document UNE's retention and graduate rates, particularly across undergraduate programs, conduct a literature review on the variables impacting student retention and graduation, and embark on a number of other specifically prescribed investigations aimed at understanding why we lag behind our aspirations in this important area and how we

can do better.



Along these lines... as we think about all of these issues, I would like to leave you today with a specific challenge. I challenge each of our academic departments – no matter how robust or lean its current enrollment may be -- to engage in an organized process of self-reflection over the coming academic year aimed at defining and refining your programs' identity. As a group, I would like each department to contemplate what niche or niches each of your academic programs can strive to fill, and how each program's identity can be best aligned with student interest and national demand in the workforce. You will need to identify your major competitors, and consider the degree to which your program is distinctive vis-à-vis the competition's offerings. The purpose of this self-examination is to ensure that we are not trying to be all things to all people, but are carving out and filling specific niches. We can't compete effectively with much larger universities, whose academic departments feature experts in practically every aspect of a given discipline, by competing head-to-head. But we can promise to provide special value to students within more focused areas of our disciplines. We might choose to become the place where students interested in ultimately becoming lawyers can earn an English degree, for example, that is uniquely tailored to provide the skills of oration, argumentation, and writing that law schools say are lacking in applicants. In this case, some course offerings would be sharpened around this focal area, perhaps in

partnership with other disciplines like political science. Just as importantly, wrap-around extracurricular opportunities such as internships, visits to courtrooms and other legal or forensic settings, lectures by visiting experts, mock trial and debate clubs, and the like could be tailored to this focal area. Of course, this does not mean that every English major must follow this specific path. We may decide to build two or three options within the major. But the idea is to focus our efforts strategically. And let me add that this is only one hypothetical example; I honestly don't know if this is an area the English Department will choose to pursue following its review. I merely wanted to offer a glimpse of the kind of focus that might emerge from a frank process of soul-searching and analysis.



Faculty, by asking you to engage in this process, I do not mean to imply that you have done anything wrong or have misaligned or poorly designed your programs. Rather, at any university, there exists a natural tendency for programs to become broader as they mature... for the focus to expand. If we're not mindful of this tendency, pretty soon programs can come to lack the distinctiveness that is essential to their attracting students and flourishing. In addition, our programs must regularly re-evaluate themselves as the world changes, both with respect to marketplace demands and the competition from other institutions, to ensure that they are making whatever changes are necessary to remain aligned with clear niches.



Given the proximity of so many other colleges and universities, many of which are public institutions with lower tuitions, along with the shrinking pool of prospective students, our programs must be highly distinctive. To flourish, we must focus our efforts strategically. We must be mindful of the competition, and must realize that we cannot compete with many of our major competitors on price. We must therefore build, and then articulate, a clear and compelling value proposition for each and every program. We must address the obvious question of why a student should pursue a given program at UNE rather than at a lower-cost one offered by a competitor.



To build this value proposition we should consider the intersection of three factors: our areas of existing and emerging strength and expertise, marketplace demands, and the competition we face.

SELF-REFLECTION

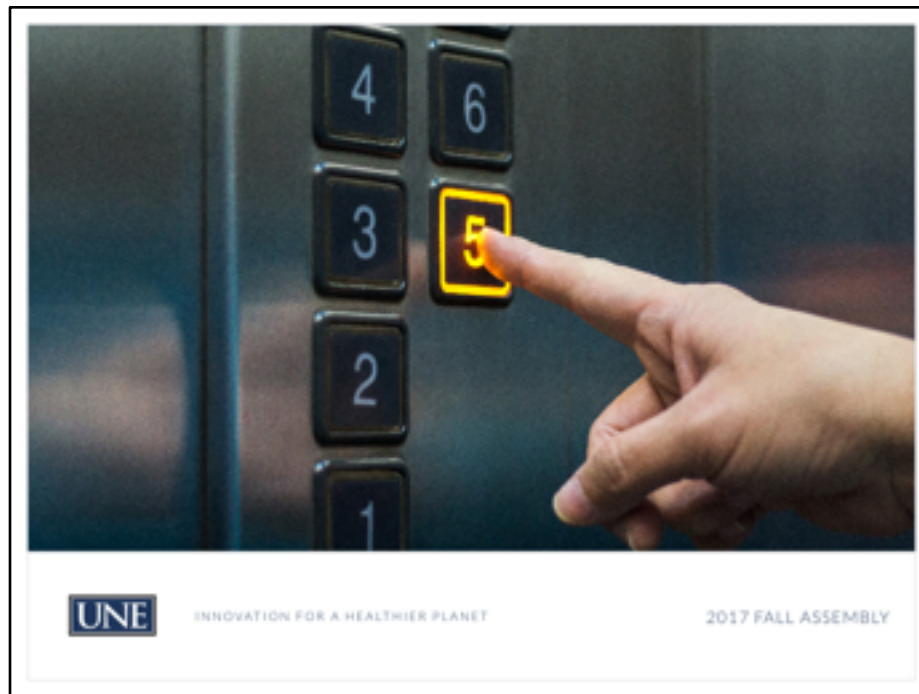
- 1) How would you describe your current program? What are its major focal areas?
- 2) What institutions are your primary competitors for that program?
- 3) What makes your program distinctive, relative to those competitors? If it is not currently highly distinctive, please just be honest and acknowledge this.
- 4) What steps (both new and already underway) can be taken to enhance your program's distinctiveness?

UNE INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET 2017 FALL ASSEMBLY

So, here is my specific challenge to you... and I will share an electronic copy of this with our deans for them to distribute to each academic department chair... I ask each academic program to engage in a process of self-reflection over the coming weeks and months, and to address the following questions:

1. How would you describe your current program? What are its major focal areas?
2. What institutions are your primary competitors for that program?
3. What makes your program distinctive, relative to those competitors? If it is not currently highly distinctive, please just be honest and acknowledge this.
4. What steps (both new and already underway) can be taken to enhance your program's distinctiveness?

As a deliverable, I would like each department chair to provide to your dean by December 1 a reply of no more than two pages total that addresses these four questions. Your dean will then provide feedback to you, and work with you in an iterative process to refine your analysis. By March 1, these reports will be forwarded to the provost and me.



As part of this report, I would also like each unit to develop a brief “elevator pitch” for the new vision of its program. I’m thinking, here, that this would take no more than a minute for you to articulate. It should address the question from a hypothetical student or parent asking, “Why should I come to UNE’s program in X?” The pitch should not focus on UNE’s overall attributes, such as our beautiful campuses, our rich global opportunities, or our robust athletic offerings, but rather on the specific attributes of the academic program itself.



As you engage in this process, I encourage you to involve all members of your department and, also, to reach out to UNE's talented professional staff for help with idea development and crafting your reply. I also encourage you to think about interdisciplinary opportunities that may exist here at UNE for you to add value and distinctiveness to your program.

The idea is not for this exercise to be burdensome, which is why the deliverable is purposefully designed to be short and sweet. But I do hope it will prove useful in sharpening each program's focus. We will set aside a small budget to assist with implementation of this initiative where needed, although I encourage you to work primarily within your existing budgets to reallocate resources toward this sharpened focus.

I am confident that once this process is completed and you have embarked upon whatever next steps you identify, our already excellent programs will be better-than-ever at attracting and retaining students, and preparing them as globally conscious intellectuals with marketable workplace skills and a drive for lifelong learning.



In closing, I would like to reiterate an idea from earlier in my remarks. Though the winds ahead may be ominous, we are well-equipped to tack them. As Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote, in her short poem “The Winds of Fate”:

*One ship drives east and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that blow.
'Tis the set of the sails,
And Not the gales,
That tell us the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate;
As we voyage along through life,
'Tis the set of a soul
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife.*

I believe we Nor’easters have just such a self-determining soul. It resides within each of you. It is expressed in our shared mission, and lived out each day in our important work. **Together**, we will set our sail, and, **together**, we will tack whatever sea may lie ahead.

Thank you.