

PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVES



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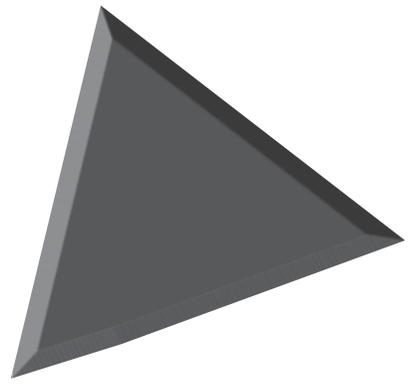
Sustaining Sustainability:
Ten Ideas from New Hampshire

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PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

Sustaining Sustainability: *Ten Ideas from New Hampshire*



Dr. Mark W. Huddleston, President, University of New Hampshire

Given the all-too-familiar challenges confronting higher education today—reduced public support, shrinking ranks of recent high school graduates, increased competition, and persistent pressures to reduce costs—it is not surprising that some institutional leaders wonder whether the push for sustainability has run its course. In times like these, they ask, how can we afford the “luxury” of incorporating sustainability into our curriculum, operations, research, and outreach activities?

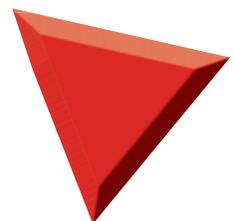
In New Hampshire, we have a keen appreciation for the sentiment driving that question. Historically, our state provides the lowest per capita support for higher education in the nation, and that support was cut even further in 2011, by an unprecedented 49 percent. And recently, in recognition of the financial strain that our students and their families are also facing, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) committed to freezing in-state tuition for the next two years.

Nevertheless, a commitment to sustainability is thriving at UNH. In fact, it plays an essential role in advancing our strategic mission.

How is that possible?

The answer is that UNH long ago came to understand sustainability as more than a bundle of “green ideas.” Instead, we created a vision of sustainability that meets the core needs of our students, alumni, business partners, and the public—in ways that are financially smart. Today, our pursuit of sustainability not only saves us money, but it also makes us stronger by bringing in new revenues, attracting new students, engaging the public, and supporting new research and philanthropy.

“*... pursue sustainability not in a ‘green vacuum,’ but in an intentional, integrated, and financially responsible manner...*”





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Here are 10 examples of the practical, repeatable steps UNH has taken to ensure that sustainability has become “part of our institutional DNA.” Our experience shows that while the overarching principles of sustainability remain constant, what it looks like in practice varies by people, place, and culture.

- 1. A high level commitment**— Our chief sustainability officer (CSO) is a key member of our University-wide leadership team, reporting directly to the UNH provost and vice president for academic affairs. The CSO is responsible for integrating and supporting sustainability throughout our University, from our academic and research missions to our operations, facilities, and outreach efforts.
- 2. Engaged philanthropy**— Having the oldest endowed sustainability program in the country reinforces the importance of maintaining sustainability as a value in our philanthropy efforts. And some donors appreciate opportunities to support it. Since that initial gift in 1997, donors interested in sustainability have established a professorship, a fellowship, scholarships, and other funds.
- 3. Student leadership**— We encourage our students to be equally entrepreneurial, innovative, and pragmatic in pursuing sustainability. For example, when they collect used student furniture and household items that would be thrown out otherwise at the end of each semester, we support their work to gather and re-sell those items to other students at bargain prices. The proceeds cover the effort’s operating costs. The result saves students money, cuts our disposal costs and reduces waste. We also make these efforts fun! Our “UNH Energy Challenge” competition awards prizes to student residence halls that cut energy consumption by the greatest percentage. And our commuter challenge treats participating students, faculty, staff and community members to a great community breakfast.
- 4. Breaking down silos**— **One of the benefits of living in a frugal state is that local, regional, state, private, public, nonprofit and for-profit organizations operate in a culture where working across boundaries is not only valued—but necessary**—to maximizing the impact of limited resources. Our nationally recognized EcoLine project supplies nearly 80 percent of our campus’s energy needs through a 12-mile pipeline that transports otherwise-wasted methane gas from a landfill to our campus. EcoLine’s construction required agreements with nearly a dozen communities, the state transportation department, a railroad authority, and a waste management company.
- 5. Innovative funding mechanisms**— UNH now sells Renewable Energy Certificates from EcoLine, and the revenues are expected to cover the entire cost of the \$49 million project in about 10 years. We also direct certificate revenue into a revolving energy fund, which in turn pays for other energy efficiency projects on campus. These efforts are part of UNH’s aggressive climate action plan, WildCAP, which has a goal of reducing UNH greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.
- 6. Community partnerships**—While nearly two-thirds of all universities in the nation outsource their dining services, UNH operates its own, which allows great flexibility in developing relationships with local food sources. Today, 22 percent of the food we serve is from within a 250-mile radius of campus. This includes organic produce grown by our students on campus, fish from a local seafood cooperative that we helped launch and dairy items from our organic dairy farm. (UNH was the first land-grant university in the nation to start an organic dairy farm.)



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7. **Regional leadership**—UNH promotes sustainability well beyond the borders of our campus. Food Solutions New England, for example, is a UNH-based initiative that links sustainable farm and food enterprises, nonprofits, state agencies and sound nutrition programs across the region. And a recent grant will help our New Hampshire Farm to School program reduce food waste and bring fresh, local produce to those in need by rallying volunteers to gather leftover crops from farmers' fields.
8. **Curriculum— Students understand, almost intuitively these days, that the pursuit of sustainability requires a multi-disciplinary approach in research, scholarship, and application** — and they are eager to embrace it. In 2007, we launched the nation's first EcoGastronomy program, which combines studies in agriculture, hospitality management, and nutrition. We are now developing a dual major in sustainability, and building an inter-college faculty learning community focused on sustainability in all disciplines. We also offer faculty grants to develop courses in sustainability, such as "Sustaining Ancient Rome: The Ecological Costs of Empire."
9. **Routine daily reminders**—The "small" ways we encourage and make sustainability accessible, attractive, and easy throughout campus help us reinforce the importance of sustainability in our everyday work and lives. Instead of bottled water, for instance, we offer filtered water at our "hydration stations" and provide students and staff with reusable water bottles. Bicycle racks are common throughout campus, carpooling is promoted, and we advertise the fact that our transit buses and shuttles (UNH actually operates the largest mass transit operation in New Hampshire) run mostly on alternative fuels like biodiesel and compressed natural gas. Each of these efforts offers great opportunities to educate our community about sustainability.
10. **Research commercialization— UNH works hard to bring the fruits of institutional research—especially sustainability-related research**—to the marketplace. The Green Launching Pad at UNH is an example of a public-private business accelerator that has helped launch more than a dozen businesses in two years in renewable energy, green manufacturing and energy efficiency applications.

These 10 examples provide a glimpse of the ways that we at UNH have put sustainability at the core of our missions. Though brief, I hope the examples demonstrate that UNH pursues sustainability not in a "green vacuum," but in an intentional, integrated, and financially responsible manner, one that reflects an intense collaboration among students, faculty, staff, administration, and partners in the private and public sectors.

Through steps such as these, UNH has been able to sustain—even deepen—its commitment to sustainability. The lesson, we would suggest, is that the future of sustainability in higher education is brighter than ever. Indeed, properly understood and deployed, sustainable practices constitute one of the powerful strategies we have in meeting the daunting challenges facing higher education today.

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Dr. Mark W. Huddleston was elected the 19th president of the University of New Hampshire in July 2007, bringing three decades of experience in public and private education as a faculty member, dean, and senior administrator.

At UNH, President Huddleston oversees the implementation of a 10-year strategic plan that is transforming the University's mission as the state's flagship public research university and one of the nation's few land-, sea- and space-grant universities. Created through a collaboration of faculty, students, staff, alumni and the University's wider communities, this effort challenges the University to be innovative, entrepreneurial, and responsive so that it can remain vital and financially sustainable.

In May 2013, President Huddleston's leadership as a strategic thinker, fiscal steward and collaborative problem-solver was recognized with his appointment to the newly formed Governor's Commission on State Government Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency.

He began his academic career at SUNY-Buffalo in 1977 as an assistant professor of political science. In 1980, he joined the faculty of the University of Delaware, where he served 24 years. There, he chaired the Department of Political Science and International Relations and was associate provost for international programs. In 2001, he was named dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, overseeing 45 academic departments and centers, and serving in that capacity until he was named president of Ohio Wesleyan University in 2004.

An author of numerous books and articles, he has been a consultant for both the U.S. government and international organizations. He also served as an adviser in Bosnia on rebuilding financial and administrative infrastructures after the Dayton accords.