
that the plan should not collect dust on a shelf like so many such efforts do but rather should be a living roadmap, regularly updated as we made progress on specific initiatives and as new ones emerged.

And what a roadmap it's been! Our plan has served us well to guide our strategic work over the past five years. I'm so proud of what we've accomplished together, and I'm very grateful to each of you for the role you've played in our success.

Before I highlight a few of our achievements, it's important to ground the conversation in our history, and to appreciate just how young we really are as an institution. As you know, our University is the product of the merger of three precursor institutions — St. Francis College, the New England College of Osteopathic

Responding to complaints from both students and faculty about our Learning Management System, or LMS, our faculty partnered with the Provost's Office and the Office of Information Technology Services to stand up a new LMS, which has proven to be much better suited to serving our students.

We have also expanded our experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom. For example, we significantly upgraded and expanded our interprofessional simulation facilities and programming. We added more opportunities for students to participate in faculty-led research. We expanded our internship offerings. We formed new relationships, and deepened existing ones, with clinical partners for our health profession programs. And we have increased opportunities for students in our Office of Innovation and P.D. Merrill Makerspace to develop their creative ideas as far as they want to take them. In the four years we have participated in the Greenlight Maine College Edition business pitch competition, UNE student innovators have already had two first place finishes!

The plan's second priority focuses on Increased Enrollment, Program Growth, and Leadership. Here, too, we've made great progress. As we've discussed many times, we live in a challenging time for higher education. Demographic changes, especially the steady decline in the number of college-bound high school graduates in the Northeast, make it difficult for all but the most selective of institutions just to maintain current levels of enrollment, much less to grow. Many of our peers have seen dramatic declines in their enrollments. Many have closed, and more will follow. Public and governmental skepticism about the value proposition of higher education has reached an historic high.

Against this backdrop, we've managed to hold our own and even to grow in some areas. Sure, we've seen enrollment declines in some programs, but we have been able to pivot to grow in other areas. Central to these efforts has been the development of new, market-aligned academic offerings, along with revisions to existing programs, that prepare students for strong career prospects. We've developed new undergraduate programs in criminology, aquaculture, special education, data science, accelerated nursing, among other areas. We've developed new graduate programs in areas such as aquaculture, nurse anesthesia, emergency management, and clinical anatomy. We've expanded our online offerings, including by adding stackable certificate programs and non-credit bearing credentials in areas like emergency management, health informatics, and online teaching – the kinds of offerings demanded by today's adult learners. We've embraced our undergraduate students who've not yet decided on an academic major by developing the "GUST," or Guided Undergraduate Studies, program.

While we have had a bustling Portland campus in the summer months due to our year-round graduate programs, the Biddeford campus has historically been quieter. Recognizing the great potential to grow our academic program footprint on the beautiful Biddeford campus throughout the summer, we launched a

Our research growth led to a reclassification of UNE in 2018 by the Carnegie Foundation from a master's institution to a doctoral high research activity university (also known as "R2"). UNE was one of only ten institutions nationwide, and the only one in New England, to rise from the former category to the latter.

One thing that really stands out at UNE is the extent to which our research agenda includes students. Our most recent estimates are that a whopping 41% of UNE undergraduates participate in faculty-directed research, compared with an average of 23% at colleges nationwide. Unlike most research universities, in which undergraduate students rarely work closely with faculty investigators, our students work side-by-side with their faculty mentors in the lab, the field, and the clinic. Indeed, every active researcher at UNE has students working closely with them, something that can't be said by many of our peers. As just one example, our Center for Excellence in Public Health has not only brought in \$41.5 million dollars in extramural funding over the past five years, resulting in 51 peer-reviewed publications, but has involved 319 students over that period.

affinity groups for students, including the Brothers of Color, a Muslim Student Association, and a Hillel

You may remember that last year at this time I announced a new recognition to support these efforts: The President's Award for Constructive Discourse. Recall that one award will be given each year to a faculty member, and another to a member of the professional staff, who go out of their way to support constructive, thoughtful discourse on difficult or controversial topics. Each award comes with a \$1000 cash payment. I appreciate all those who responded to Provost Mahon's call for nominations in April. We received many worthy and impressive nominations. This morning, I'm happy to announce the inaugural recipients of these awards.

Now, the fifth priority of our strategic plan is enhancing **E a , L ca , R a , a d G ba Pa**. Once again, we've made significant progress here. We've enhanced our study abroad experience in Tangier through better internship experiences in the local community. We've established a new partnership in France to offer a better experience for our students. We've established new student exchange partnerships with two universities in Iceland. In developing a focus on the "Blue Economy" and the global North more broadly, we were accepted into the University of the Arctic consortium, and we established UNE North – the Center for North Atlantic Studies – to support these efforts. It's no wonder that UNE students now study abroad at over four times the national average.

Closer to home, we've significantly increased research partnerships with regional entities, including the MaineHealth Institute for Research, the Jackson Laboratory, the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory, and the Roux Institute, just to name a few. And speaking of the Roux Institute, we've developed accelerated joint academic programs with them. We've also developed enhanced articulation agreements with local community colleges, with the University of Maine School of Law, and with Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, the nation's first historically black university, just to name a few.

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for 315 faculty and professional staff, beyond the standard cost of living increase, to bring them to a competitive wage. We've instituted a flexible work policy. We've enhanced our employee benefits package. Our Human Resources colleagues organized a management training program known as "Lead with Impact," in which 80 of our colleagues have already participated. These are just a few ways that our leadership team and the HR department have enhanced the professionalism of their work to support all of us.

We have also begun the process of improving our annual employee goal setting and evaluation procedures, beginning with automating the process. This will set the stage to allow recognition of truly exceptional performance with additional compensation. While we were initially poised to roll out this system in the coming academic year, we received feedback from many of you that we weren't yet ready, that we need to first develop more robust training and tools for goal setting and performance evaluation. We heard you, and so the coming year will serve as a "test run" of our new processes. We will delay full implementation of this new practice for a year, until the 2024-25 academic year.

And as we grow our resource base and support our employees, we are mindful of our responsibility to be good stewards of our shared environment. We have made good progress on reducing our carbon footprint, for example through a new electrical contract that halves our emissions, the addition of solar panels on our campuses, and adding electric vehicle charging stations. In 2021 our Board of Trustees voted to reallocate the University's endowment into a portfolio that minimized carbon-related investments.

As I said earlier, this snapshot doesn't begin to do justice to the full scale of our work over the past five years, but hopefully it gives a sense of how much we've accomplished together. And there's one more piece of context that I would be remiss not to mention: The COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas most of our peers merely went into survival mode during the pandemic, we continued to move our strategic work forward. Unlike the vast majority of our peers, we kept our faculty and professional staff whole throughout the pandemic, avoiding layoffs and not cutting anyone's salary or benefits. In turn, our community worked hard, not only serving our students during that very difficult time, but also moving our strategic work forward.

As we reflect on our progress to date, there's a key thread that runs throughout each of the six priorities of our plan: providing transformational learning experiences to our students. In one way or another, directly or indirectly, everything we do touches on this overarching theme. It will be imperative that we keep our eye on this North Star as we turn our attention to the next steps in our strategic work.

Over a year ago we began contemplating next steps following the plan's expiration this November. The consensus of the faculty, professional staff, leadership team, Board of Trustees, and myself was that the six high-level priorities of our plan remain just as relevant as the day we adopted them. These priorities are broad enough to encompass many new initiatives — some of which we couldn't have even foreseen five years ago — yet focused enough to channel our collective energies. We agreed that it would be pointless to scrap the plan and start anew when there was so much work remaining in these areas. Instead, what

was called for was a “refresh” of the plan, that is, an updating of the specific initiatives and action steps within each of the six high-level priorities.

from 427 last year to 270 this year, representing a reduction of 36%. We will build on this success by offering even more courses next summer and beyond and by marketing our summer sessions more aggressively.

As we prepare to move the College of Osteopathic Medicine into its new home within the spectacular Harold and Bibby Alford Center for Health Sciences, I'm excited to announce that we will take this opportunity to rename the Portland Campus the "UNE Portland Campus for Health Sciences." We will also rename the remarkably productive Center of Excellence in Collaborative Education to the Center to Advance Interprofessional Education and Practice in order to redouble our emphasis on interprofessional education across our diverse health profession programs. These adjustments will allow us to properly celebrate the Portland campus as a hub of interprofessional healthcare education and research that is quite literally unique in all of New England.

At the same time, we will strategically leverage the space vacated by COM on the Biddeford campus to enhance our academic programming, to elevate our student experience, to grow our research agenda, and to optimize our business operations there.

We will transform all business operations to make them more user friendly and efficient for students and

The campaign is in part about building the new health sciences facility in Portland, but it's about much more than that. While we raise funds from outside foundations, from alumni, and from donors who are intrigued by our mission and vision, we will also begin focusing on how those of us within the University can do our part to support our University. And that's not necessarily about making a gift, though we of course would love for faculty and professional staff to do so.

It's also about just being a cheerleader for UNE in your daily lives and talking to those within your circles about the inspiring work that goes on here, and the impact UNE has on its students.

We also want you to join us in celebrating the campaign's most important milestones, and an important one is coming up. I invite all of you to join us at Homecoming, September 23rd, for the official public launch of the