

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

STRATEGIC PLANNING 2002

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:
2003-2004**

September 2003

Introduction

Last September, we distributed the first annual Implementation Plan that was a companion to the Report of the Strategic Planning Committee established by the School of Health and Human Services during the 2001 – 2002 Academic Year. In that Plan, we set out a series of specific tasks that we expected to accomplish during the 2002 – 2003 Academic Year, tasks that were linked to each of the Strategic Intentions that emerged from the Strategic Planning Committee. As we enter a new academic year, we wish to evaluate our success in achieving the specific goals we set for ourselves, and we wish to set new goals for the coming year.

One year into our latest planning cycle, we find that the approach we have taken has served the School well. The entire planning process was based on the University's Academic Plan, which was taking its final form as the School began its exercise. Specifically, we took as our starting point six of the key goals of the Academic Plan. Recognizing the unavoidable fluctuations in the wider world of health and human services, and seeking to position ourselves to be able to respond to a changing environment, we took an approach to planning that set out long-term goals but that also gave us the flexibility we need. We did this by dividing the planning process into two components. In the first, which persists throughout the life of the plan (which will be either three or five years), we set out five strategic intentions, each of which represents a general goal that is critical to the overall success of the School of Health and Human Services. We complement this first component with a series of much more specific Implementation Plans, with one to be prepared at the start of each academic year. Preparing more specific annual Implementation Plans not only allows us the flexibility we need to respond to changing environments, it also provides a clear framework for evaluation of our efforts. With a specific set of tasks or goals set out for each year (tasks and goals that are explicitly linked to the Strategic Intentions identified in our Plan), assessing our successes and failures is completely straightforward.

In this report, we both evaluate the extent to which we have achieved the goals we set out in last year's Implementation Plan, and we set out a new set of specific tasks or goals for the coming year. As we have done with previous reports that emerged out of our most recent planning cycle, we organize this report by the five strategic intentions and the three overriding themes that guide our work. Within each category, we describe progress we made this year towards achieving our specific goals and setbacks we experienced along the way. We then identify those tasks we seek to complete in the coming year.

Both the evaluation of our activities last year and the development of specific plans for the coming year emerged out of discussions among the School's Executive Committee, which includes the chairs of the School's eight departments, the Director of the New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy and Practice, the Dean, the Associate Dean and the Director of Finance and Administration. When we first developed a proposal to support our planning efforts, we envisioned the Executive Committee as the

group responsible for the development and assessment of the implementation plans that we would develop each year.

Measuring Progress – Setting New Goals

Intention 1: Reflectively engage with internal and external constituencies to identify emerging trends and needs in health and human services and to address those needs that are consistent with the vision and priorities of the School.

To insure that each department and program was well-connected to the agencies and organizations that hire our graduates and that serve as the sites for both student internships and faculty research, we set as our goal the existence of a functioning external advisory board for each department. We achieved that goal. The exact form of each department's response to this goal differs, but the critical result is that there is now a formal mechanism in place that connects each department to its stakeholders.

During the coming year, we will monitor the way in which these groups work, to insure that each is providing the information, the perspectives and the connections that we envisioned when we first set out this goal.

During the coming year, we will also ask each department, perhaps with the help of their advisory committee, to examine how we reach out to and involve departmental graduates in the work of the department. Because we are a School composed of departments that represent very well-defined professions within health and human services, we believe that reaching out to graduates on a department-by-department basis is the best way to enhance links between our graduates – most of whom are practicing professionals – and our current faculty and students. We are convinced that students and faculty alike can benefit from both deeper and broader contacts with professionals who graduated from UNH, and enhance our goal of more effectively engaging a group of people who are likely well aware of emerging trends and needs in health and human services.

We are also convinced that reaching out to graduates through our departments has the added potential for enhancing participation of graduates in the University's Annual Fund, and in other fund-raising activities. In recent years, the School has fared very badly in our participation in the University's Annual Fund; responses from both a mail appeal and a telephone appeal have been disappointing. In the coming year, we will revise our participation in the Annual Fund to more clearly highlight the strengths of individual departments. Early in the Fall, the School's Executive Committee will meet with the staff of the UNH Foundation's Annual Fund to decide how best to make this shift to a department focus. We will also seek out the advice and assistance of the UNH Alumni Association as we do so.

Intention 2: Promote and support an infrastructure that fosters an interdisciplinary culture that becomes the motivating factor in the evolution of the School.

We proposed to establish monthly “Town Meetings” to bring faculty, staff and students together to discuss issues that cut across departmental and disciplinary lines. Building on a goal we established under our first intention “to engage with internal and external constituencies.” Under that category last year, we proposed selecting one or two themes as the basis for our activity during last year. To address both the engagement and interdisciplinary culture goals, we instituted monthly town meetings throughout the academic year. Fall meetings focused on the issue of adolescent health and wellness, whereas Spring meetings focused on long term care among the elderly.

In reflecting on last year’s series, we conclude that the adolescent focus achieved exactly what we intended. Faculty organized a series of well-attended Town Meetings that involved individual presentations, outside speakers, and panel discussions. Faculty working groups were formed around specific funding opportunities and at least one large-scale research proposal was written and submitted. The second-semester meetings, which focused on Long Term Care and Aging, were less successful. In our discussions as to why this was the case, we’ve come up with a couple possible answers. First, it’s clear that there was a great deal of momentum around the issue of adolescence. The Adolescence Resources Center had just been established; there was funding available to work on some aspects of issues raised during the town meetings; and there were a large number of faculty members already committed to this topic. Although there were significant numbers of faculty interested in aging and long-term care, there were not as many as there were for adolescence and there was no structure or organizing focus comparable to the Adolescence Resource Center. Second, we suspect that there simply may be more time available to faculty during first semester. Second semester seems to be more hectic in general.

With these observations in mind, we propose to select one theme for next year’s Town Meetings, and to limit the formal, School-wide sessions to the first semester. If next year’s sessions are as successful as the ones on adolescence were, then substantial activities involving a smaller number of faculty can be expected to continue through second semester. After exploring critical health and human service issues, and considering the interest and expertise of School faculty, we will focus our efforts this year on the topic of “Physical Activity and Nutrition.” We will organize a series of School-wide Town Meetings on this topic through the Fall, with the expectation that activities will continue in some form through the Spring.

We also proposed, under this category, that we would focus the School’s limited discretionary funds on supporting proposals for interdisciplinary courses and research. We did provide financial support for the development of a new interdisciplinary introductory course, and we described the results on this investment below, under Intention 4. We did not, however, devote any funding to interdisciplinary research. We address this issue in the next section.

Intention 3: Promote and support an ethos and infrastructure that cultivates scholarship and research amongst School faculty and students.

We have undertaken all the specific tasks we set out under this category last year. We have involved School faculty in the Carsey search (which is on-going); we have enhanced faculty research opportunities through the New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy and Practice; we included research themes in monthly Town Meetings; and we continued to work with faculty to enhance their research productivity.

Although we did everything we said we would do, and are satisfied that we are making progress in enhancing research and scholarship among School faculty and students, we also felt there is more to be done in this area. Therefore, in the coming year we will continue all those activities described in the paragraph above, and do more.

Specifically, we will allocate some funding to encourage faculty to develop interdisciplinary research projects. Considering the School's difficult financial position, the amount of money we are likely to have for this purpose will be very limited this year. Notwithstanding this limitation, we feel it is very important to make financial support of faculty research an essential part of what we do, even in years when budgets are tight. Therefore, this year we will provide funding to support interdisciplinary research projects related to the theme chosen for our Fall Town Meetings, namely Physical Activity and Nutrition. Over the course of the Fall, as these Town Meetings are taking place, we will encourage faculty who participate to identify important new research projects and to explore how resources from the School could best be deployed to develop these projects. At the end of the Fall series, the Schools' Executive Committee will invite groups of faculty to submit proposals for pilot projects related to the theme of Physical Activity and Nutrition. We would hope to receive proposals that both address critical topics and that show promise for attracting additional funding from other sources. Our goal here is not to provide full funding for extensive projects, but rather to provide seed money that will help faculty collect the preliminary data that are needed for the development and funding of such extensive projects.

During the Fall, as the series is in progress, we will explore a variety of sources of funding for work on this topic, and we are confident that we will have some funding secured by the start of the Spring semester. Furthermore, we are committed to this support of interdisciplinary research not as simply a one-time event. In its 2002 Report, the School's Strategic Planning Committee wrote:

"In order to meet our full potential as a School, these Intentions must be translated into the fabric of our budgets, our staffing decisions, and our annual operating plans. When this is accomplished, actively and forcefully, it will be an expression of what we are about as teachers, scholars, and colleagues."

We take this charge from the Committee seriously, and commit ourselves to providing annual financial support for interdisciplinary research proposals from the HHS faculty.

Intention 4: Create an environment that continues to support the School’s teaching mission while integrating research and service with teaching.

Under this Intention, we proposed to develop a range of new interdisciplinary courses that would further enhance the School’s evolving interdisciplinary culture. During the past year, we devoted a considerable amount of time, energy and resources to this goal – and we succeeded. We

- Developed and offered a new, interdisciplinary introductory course for undeclared students, a course that addressed “Creating Health and Wellness in Contemporary Society.” Based on input from a strong faculty committee, and from current HHS students, this course addressed key issues within health and human services and also, through a service-learning component, exposed student to the world of health and human service practice;
- Successfully competed for funding to support the development and teaching of three interdisciplinary inquiry courses that will be offered in the Spring Semester of 2004;
- Developed a number of new general education courses (in the technology, social science and humanities areas), and added sections of existing language, social science and biological science general education courses. This enhanced range of courses contributed greatly to the 12 percent increase we achieved last year in undergraduate credit hours generated.

As all of us who have taught know well, the development and launch of a new course is something that evolves over a long period of time. Our goals for the coming year are to further refine the courses we have taught once, and to launch those courses that are under development. Having launched this series of new courses, our task for the coming years will be to sustain them, and to enhance them based on our initial experience.

Intention 5: Create an active and engaged process of communication with the larger community regarding the need for and impact of School of Health and Human Services contributions.

Our goal was to “develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy, one that begins with the selection of key messages from each department and program, and with the identification of key audiences. We have made progress on this goal, although we are not as far along as we envisioned at the start of the year.

Working with the University’s communications staff, we assembled a complete inventory of all materials – both print and web-based – that have been produced by any unit in the School in the recent past. The sheer volume of the material was tremendous; we were doing much more than anyone thought. However, very little of what we did was

coordinated, and much of it was done “on a shoestring”, which could well have limited any impact it might have had.

The University’s communication staff have not only reviewed all our existing material, they have also met with each department chair to discuss key themes that should be reflected in all School communications. Based on these meetings and reviews, we are moving forward, as the first step in a broader communication strategy, to develop and launch a new School website. The communication staff have proposed a preliminary structure for the School’s site, a structure that will carry over to individual department sites as well. We hope to have a preliminary version of the School’s new site available by the end of September, with work on the School site and departmental sites continuing throughout the coming year.

A critical element of the new website will be an audience-based focus, a focus that will both insure that our website is responsive to the needs of the School’s many stakeholders, and that will also help structure the broader communication strategy that will emerge during the coming year.

Our goal for the coming year, therefore, is to continue to work on the development of a broader communication strategy for the School, and to focus our efforts early in the year on the design and launch of a new School web-site that will be the first element in this broader strategy.

Overriding Themes

In addition to these five strategic directions, there are three overriding themes that we identified last year, and that we must continue to address in the coming year, and in all subsequent years.

- Enrollment Growth,
- Diversity, and
- Efficiency.

Enrollment Growth: As a result of significant effort on the part of School faculty, and strong leadership by Department chairs, we experienced a significant increase in the number of undergraduates taking courses in SHHS, with an especially important increase in the number of non-HHS majors enrolled in HHS courses. The total number of undergraduate credit hours generated by HHS faculty increased by 12% between Academic Year 2001-2002 and Academic Year 2002-2003. This increase is the direct result of a number of new courses taught last year, of new sections added to existing popular courses, and increased enrollment in existing courses.

Unfortunately, this significant increase in undergraduate enrollment was offset by a very large decrease in revenue from graduate enrollment. Because our graduate students were significantly more likely to be part-time last year, and to take fewer courses

than we projected, our actual revenues were approximately \$300,000 less than we projected.

For the coming year, we have set ambitious targets for continued growth in undergraduate credit hours generated and for growth in revenues from graduate tuition. Specifically, we project that undergraduate credit hours will increase by 2,400 over this year's level, and that gross revenues from graduate tuition will increase to \$3.0 million. This compares to budgeted revenues of \$2.6 million last year, and actual revenues of \$2.3 million.

Although these are very ambitious growth targets, we think they are both necessary and feasible. They are necessary to return the School to a position of financial stability, with balanced annual operating budgets. They are feasible because we have based these targets on a thorough examination of enrollment patterns and projections for the coming year from each department and degree program, an examination that looked at actual and projected enrollments in each course offered in the School.

Diversity: The goal of developing a more culturally diverse faculty was at the forefront of every active search over the past year. As a result of considerable effort on the part of all search committees, we made tangible – but still minimal - progress in the last year. Over the course of the year, we had extended discussions with three African-American candidates and made job offers to two. One person has accepted our offer, and discussions continue with a second person. Although we will have a smaller number of faculty searches in the coming year, we will continue to explore all opportunities to create a more diverse faculty, through both regular searches and any other opportunity we can create.

Efficiency: We have been vigilant about assessing the efficiency of our operations throughout the past year. As mentioned above, we conducted a thorough audit of all our curricula, to insure that courses offered in each program were as efficiently structured as possible. When there was capacity in courses or programs, we took steps to fill available spaces.

In response to the unexpected shortfall in revenues from graduate tuition, we imposed across-the-board 10% cuts in all non-personnel expenses during both the last Academic Year and the coming Academic Year. We acknowledge that these cuts were drastic, and that we now have operating budgets that are insufficient for the programs we provide. However, we made these drastic cuts in order to focus our limited resources on hiring new faculty, with the firm belief that faculty are the key to our long-term health and well-being. When we reach the enrollment targets we've set, and when our operating budgets are in balance, one of our first steps will be to restore the cuts in non-personnel lines.

Summary and Reflections

One year into the current planning cycle, we remain convinced that the overall approach we set out last year is a productive one. We remain committed to fulfilling the five strategic intentions identified by our Strategic Planning Committee, and we are convinced that setting detailed annual goals, as part of a series of annual Implementation Plans not only keeps us focused on what we need to do but also provides us with a clear framework for evaluating our progress. Reflecting back on the last year, we conclude that we have made considerable progress towards achieving the goals we set out; that there are some specific goals we have yet to achieve fully; and that there is a new set of specific goals we should begin to address.

The progress we achieved this year is the result of the dedication, hard work and collaborative spirit of many people in the School of Health and Human Services. We are indebted to chairs for their leadership in implementing the plan, in completing the tasks associated with our strategic intentions, and in promoting the plan to faculty. We are indebted to faculty who are - when all is said and done – the ones who teach the new courses, get the new grants, and conduct the research. In setting out the goals for this year, we knew we were – collectively – asking an already busy faculty to do more. They clearly rose to the challenge and in doing so have made major contributions to the quality of our work and the quality of our academic life.