March 28, 2011

Dear Members of the UNH Community,

Anyone following the news at the State House knows that New Hampshire is facing a serious budget crisis—and that lawmakers are considering some drastic cuts to balance the budget.

I want to update you on where these discussions stand in regard to the University’s portion of the state budget, and outline how we will respond as the budget process continues to unfold in Concord.

Recently, the House Finance Committee approved a 45 percent cut in state support to the University System. At UNH, that would equal about $31 million—a historic and devastating cut. The full House will vote on the budget by April 1. The budget then goes before the state Senate, which will make its own recommendation by June 1, hopefully at a far more reasonable level than the House appropriation. Finally, both the House and Senate budgets must be reconciled, and then brought before Gov. Lynch for final action by the end of June.

Over the next three months, we will be aggressively making our case—to lawmakers and to the public—to fight these deep cuts and promote the value of UNH to the state’s economy and well-being.

Among our primary concerns is for our students and their families, who are already struggling in this economy. Our mission—particularly in our role as educators—is dependent on keeping UNH affordable to students, and we must not allow a cut in state funding to create a barrier for our students or an undue burden on their families.

It’s uncertain what our final portion of the state budget will be, or how the impact will be felt here. But clearly, the cuts proposed in the House would carry serious consequences for the UNH community, and for New Hampshire.

At this point, we are focused on reminding our state’s lawmakers of the critical, positive role that UNH plays in supporting the state’s economy. In fact, they need to hear from us—and from you—that as an investment, UNH offers the state’s economy an extraordinary return on its public dollars. With the state’s $68 million annual investment, for example, UNH contributes $1.3 billion to the gross state product. We do this by providing education, fostering research, and promoting public-private partnerships that benefit the entire state.

In the coming days, an opinion piece will be running in the state’s newspapers, making the case for UNH and kicking off our public campaign to fight against these cuts.
I want to keep you up to date as the budget moves through the Legislature. So, we’re creating a special page on the Office of the President’s website, at http://www.unh.edu/president/budget/, to keep you informed. Please check in often to follow the process and to learn how you can keep UNH strong.

In the coming weeks, we will be asking the campus community, alumni, and friends of the University to contact their elected representatives to advocate for UNH. Together, our voices will resonate from across all New Hampshire clear into the halls and offices of the State House.

With sincere thanks for your support,

Mark W. Huddleston
President