THE SEARCH

The Board of Trustees of the University System of New Hampshire (USNH) seeks nominations and applications for the next president of Plymouth State University (PSU). This is an opportunity to lead a much-beloved institution that plays a vital role in the surrounding community, region, and state in preparing students for a myriad of careers and instilling in them a lifelong appreciation for service and learning. Hallmarks of a Plymouth State education include close relationships between students and faculty, engagement with the beautiful surrounding community, a genuine concern and curiosity about issues that will affect the world we live in for generations to come, and a dedication to service embodied in its motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve). A special connection to place is an important defining characteristic of PSU’s identity, its service mission, and its commitment to environmental sustainability.
The next president will bring an appreciation for the values and traditions that have engendered a deep sense of loyalty and care for PSU among alumni, friends, faculty and students while also looking ahead to future opportunities and setting a vision that will take the university in bold new directions and ensure a bright future. The ideal candidate will be an entrepreneurial, experienced, and change-oriented leader with the skills and acumen to rapidly advance a clear vision for the institution in collaboration with faculty, staff, students, the communities of Plymouth and Holderness, alumni, the sister institutions in USNH, and other constituencies. Candidates should have a record of successful organizational leadership; a deep understanding of the challenging environment currently impacting rural higher education; the ability to build and cultivate financial support for the university and its programs from both public and private sources; and documented accomplishments in creating and supporting a climate of openness, understanding, and mutual respect.

The president serves as the chief executive officer of the university; reports to the USNH Board of Trustees; and is a colleague of the USNH chancellor and presidents of the University of New Hampshire, Keene State College, and Granite State College. The president of Plymouth State University will have the opportunity to shape and implement a compelling and distinctive vision that competitively positions the university within a well-coordinated system of public higher education that has recently given increased autonomy to the presidents of its four institutions of higher education. For additional information see: http://www.plymouth.edu/

The executive search firm Isaacson, Miller has been retained to assist PSU in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

MISSION

As a regional comprehensive university, Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and New England by providing well-educated graduates, by offering ongoing opportunities for graduate education and professional development, and by extending to communities partnership opportunities for cultural enrichment and economic development. In each of these roles, Plymouth State University has a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

THE PEOPLE

Faculty

Plymouth State’s faculty are dedicated to the interrelatedness of teaching, student learning and development, research and scholarship, and applied life skills, and they work with a talented staff to create a challenging and satisfying student life experience. PSU faculty are committed to engagement with the Plymouth community and communities beyond the campus in order to advance their research, enhance educational opportunities for students, and to fulfill the mission of service to the region and the state.
Plymouth State University has approximately 210 full-time faculty and 260 part-time faculty (teaching lecturers). Full-time faculty members include tenured/tenure track as well as non-tenured contract, clinical, and research faculty. They are award winning authors, poets, artists, composers and conductors; nationally renowned scientists and educators; Fulbright scholars; former CEOs, CFOs and regional sales managers of Fortune 500 companies; and leaders in their respective professional organizations. Among them are the most recent former President of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education Recreation and Dance (AAAHPERD), a Principal guest conductor for the Vietnamese National Orchestra and the New Hampshire Master Chorale, a winner of the American Prize in Composition (music), and a Regional Emmy award and National Bronze Telly producer/director.

In accordance with its mission, PSU faculty place the highest priority on the quality of instruction, with research, creative work, and scholarship emphasizing an applied focus. The university also has a long and well-established emphasis on service and service learning. Given the institution’s close attachment to and identification with its location in a rural area at the foot of the White Mountains, faculty have developed a considerable range of learning projects and experiences that take advantage of its location through affiliations with the U.S. Forest Service and the Appalachian Mountain Club. PSU’s Meteorology department is among the best in the country (see: http://vortex.plymouth.edu/) and has close ties to the Mount Washington Observatory and its unique research capacity for the study of weather and climate. The observatory’s director of research has a joint faculty appointment with the observatory and the university.

Eighty-four percent of the full time Plymouth State faculty are qualified at the PhD or equivalent level. The teaching lecturers represent a mix of senior practitioners and academically qualified instructors who have chosen non-tenure track careers. Many of them have, or have had, distinguished careers in business, education, the sciences, humanities, or civic organizations devoted to issues such as environmental sustainability.

**Staff**

Students at Plymouth are supported and served by approximately 1,100 employees – including faculty and administration. Other staff members – Professional and Technical (PAT) and Operating Staff (OS) – serve in enrollment, student services, academic support services, advancement, budget and finance, information technology, human resources, athletics, library and information services, physical plant, residential life, and a wide range of centers and activities that support the university’s mission.
Staff members express tremendous support for the university and its mission, speaking with deep commitment to their roles in working with faculty, students, and the communities of Plymouth and Holderness to advance the wellbeing of Plymouth State. The university has been twice recognized as a “Great College to Work For” by The Chronicle of Higher Education and was named one of New Hampshire’s five Best Large Companies to work for by Business NH Magazine.

Students

Plymouth State’s 12-month unduplicated headcount is 6,787 (4,675 FTE). The university enrolls 4,428 undergraduates – primarily full time – and 2,359 graduate students – many of whom are part time. Approximately 59 percent of students are New Hampshire residents, but students hail from 42 states and 31 countries. More than 40 percent of PSU students are first-generation college students and 90 percent of first-year students receive some kind of financial aid. Plymouth State has grown the ranks of international students and recently opened an office in Chengdu, China to recruit students. The university has developed 18 formal international partnerships through the PSU Admission Office over the past two years.

Many students are drawn to Plymouth State because it has a wide variety of programs typical of a comprehensive university while offering the small class size and attention found at a liberal arts college. It is a university of place and, once on campus, students quickly seek ways to engage with the community that often lead to productive and exciting careers. Students have gone on to leadership roles in government, education, research, meteorology, professional sports, business, IT, nursing, and a variety of other career paths.

According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 94 percent of PSU students have professional experiences as an element of their education, compared to 86 percent for their peers. PSU ranks above its peers in NSSE measures of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction and supportive campus environment. Ninety-nine percent of respondents to a recent PSU alumni survey reported having a job or enrolling in graduate school within six months of graduation.
Community Outreach

As a public institution serving the North Country of New Hampshire, PSU serves an important role in the state, providing leadership and collaboration to enhance and improve the economic development opportunities of the region. A beautiful rural area just north of the White Mountains and encompassing all of Coos County, the North Country is an example of a region with limited resources but great potential. PSU has numerous partnerships with local governments and foundations to improve early childhood education in the area and aid efforts to revive the economy through a unique quarterly economic index it publishes. PSU launched the North Country Teacher Certification program with White Mountains Community College in 2005, enabling the region's place-bound students to receive bachelor’s degrees and K-8 teacher certifications.

PSU students, faculty, and staff also engage frequently with the local communities of Plymouth and Holderness as well as with national and international organizations of all kinds through internships, experiential learning, and contracted projects through the university’s centers. Students have examined water quality of local rivers, developed plans for area businesses, analyzed the biological clocks of horseshoe crabs at the seacoast, studied media impact on childhood obesity, presented research on Capitol Hill, discussed social issues with community leaders in the Dominican Republic, and much more.

A recent survey found that 427 New Hampshire businesses and organizations were assisted by PSU outreach efforts in the past fiscal year. The university received the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2011, recognizing it as one of the nation’s top schools for encouraging community service among students. It’s been named to the President’s Community Service Honor Roll, as a leader among institutions that support service learning and civic engagement, every year since 2008 and this year it was the only New Hampshire institution to be named in three categories: General Community Service, Education, and Economic Opportunity. Communities for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth (CADY) named PSU its Partner of the Year for work with youth in central New Hampshire, promoting healthy choices and promising futures for young people.
Plymouth State University offers 55 bachelor degree programs, more than 60 minors, and 75 graduate degree and certificate programs, including doctoral degrees and online programs. Scholarship, research, and service are carried out by a talented and deeply committed faculty. As an engaged university, PSU strongly supports collaboration and partnerships within the community and across the region, the state, and beyond. The university also offers 17,000 credit hours through online and hybrid courses.

Plymouth State University is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The last comprehensive accreditation was completed during Fall 2013. Its accreditation was continued with a request for a report to NEASC in Spring 2016 to provide an update on assessment of student learning, with emphasis on the general education curriculum; review of PSU’s educational partnership programs; and, implementation of a process of review for programs in Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. The University will submit a fifth year interim report in Fall 2018. The next comprehensive evaluation by NEASC will be in 2023.

PSU’s educational philosophy is based on academic excellence, experiential learning, applied research, regional service, and leadership. Many students come to PSU for the individualized attention they get from small classes that allow for group discussions and personal relationships with faculty that often endure long past graduation. The education experience at Plymouth State features a complementary relationship between liberal arts and professional studies, balancing academic and professional development.

The university’s academic programs are organized into three colleges: Arts and Sciences; Education, Health, and Human Services; and Business Administration. Graduate education is fully integrated into departments and colleges. In addition to outstanding programs in education, business, the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences, centers and institutes in meteorology, the environment, New Hampshire studies, and rural partnerships are hallmark outreach programs at PSU. While the university’s rich tradition of place-based education was established in 1871, today its horizons have expanded substantially, with online programs and academic partnerships throughout the state and the world.

The university has developed several new programs over the past decade, focusing growth efforts in STEM and allied health fields while expanding opportunities in traditional areas of strength in education and business. Since 2006, the university has added new programs in nursing, historic preservation, environmental science, tourism management, sports management, and professional sales leadership. PSU also recently added a Doctor of Education program to
educate working teachers, administrators, counselors, and individuals in higher education, related community agencies, and organizations. A new partnership with Manchester West High School, UNH Manchester, and Granite State College will make it easier and more affordable for Manchester teachers to gain an M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction through in-person, hybrid, and online classes. Other new online opportunities include a master’s program in accounting and expanded programs in healthcare administration and international business.

The nursing program joined a growing list of allied health program offerings at PSU, including mental health, school psychology, athletic training, exercise and sport physiology, and additional programs in health and wellness. The university will also add a Doctor of Physical Therapy program in the 2015-16 academic year.

**STUDENT LIFE**

Most first and second-year students at Plymouth State enjoy a robust residential student engagement experience that the university seeks to continue to grow. All students have the opportunity to enjoy a variety of activities outside of the classroom. The university participates in NCAA Division III athletics and fields teams in 24 varsity sports as well as hosting an extensive club and intramural program. Students participate in more than 100 clubs with activities ranging from sailing to gaming to leading activities that promote environmental and social justice. Four of the seven residence halls on campus offer communities with programming centered around specific themes including service, health and wellness, international/cultural exploration, and LGBTQ and allies. The Community Service Center connects students with a variety of opportunities – from organizing food and clothing drives to mentoring children.

Entertainment options include performances at the Silver Center for the Arts, skating at Hanaway Rink, fitness center workouts, shopping in downtown Plymouth, as well as the hiking, biking, climbing, fishing, skiing, and snowboarding for which the area is so well known. PSU’s Outdoor Center offers students free use of recreational equipment including skis, snowshoes, and paddling and camping gear and sponsors day and overnight trips.
FINANCES, PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Plymouth State has an all-funds budget of approximately $105 million. With state support for its public universities the lowest in the country, New Hampshire institutions are very tuition dependent. The general appropriation from the state is approximately $12 million. Tuition and fees from students net of financial aid are approximately $52 million. The estimated average annual cost of tuition, fees, and room and board is $22,205 for in-state residents and $30,115 for out-of-state students. Commuters pay an estimated $12,677 annually. Auxiliary services, grants, gifts and other operating revenues total approximately $41 million. Employee compensation accounts for approximately 60 percent of the operating budget. Services, utilities, depreciation, and interest expense account for the other 40 percent.

The $20 million “Imagine A Way” fundraising campaign is nearing a close. The campaign has resulted in increased scholarships, created endowed professorships, and supported new awards for staff and faculty excellence and campus priorities for programs and buildings. PSU enjoys the support of a loyal alumni base of more than 30,000 and has made efforts to build up its advancement division, recently hiring a new vice president for university advancement – Paula Lee Hobson. Plymouth State has an endowment of approximately $18 million.

In 2007, Plymouth State created the Planning and Budgeting Leadership Group (PBLG) in order to more effectively align its strategic planning, program development, and budgeting processes and create a culture of evidence-based planning and budgeting. PBLG has been working across the campus with input from all constituencies to implement the Strategic Plan adopted in 2014. The strategic plan – named Focus 2020 because of its focus on goal measurement and achievement – emerged from a series of campus activities over a two-year period, including open campus forums, consultation with the president’s cabinet, and engagement with department chairs. The plan is designed to cover a six-year period, with the intention that subsequent plans will be developed on a five-year cycle. The plan is designed to monitor progress in pursuit of seven overarching goals:

- PSU will provide every student with an engaging and valuable education experience that promotes post-graduate success.
- Every PSU community member will share in the responsibility of providing a rich and supportive experience that attracts well-qualified students and ensures their retention and timely graduation.
- PSU will live its commitment to service, community partnerships, and environmental sustainability.
- PSU will recruit and retain a more diverse student body, faculty, and staff.
- PSU will distinguish itself as a holistic health and wellness-centered environment.
- PSU is committed to financial sustainability.
- PSU will deepen alumni engagement, foster a culture of philanthropy, and grow private financial support for the university.
For more information on the strategic plan, go to: https://www.plymouth.edu/focus2020/

THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Established by the state legislature in 1963, the University System of New Hampshire (USNH) is the largest provider of post secondary education in New Hampshire. It has full fiscal responsibility for the four public four-year institutions in the state, receiving an annual block grant from the legislature. With more than 31,000 enrolled students and 81,000 alumni living in state, the sister institutions of the University System – the University of New Hampshire, Plymouth State University, Keene State College, and Granite State College – have a direct impact on hundreds of thousands of New Hampshire citizens every year.

USNH is directed by a 27-member Board of Trustees comprising the governor, 11 governor-appointed members, six alumni-elected members, two student-elected members, the commissioner of education, the commissioner of agriculture, the presidents of the system’s four colleges and universities, and the chancellor – who is the chief executive officer of the university system. The board approves an annual budget for system institutions, including associated tuition rates and mandatory student fees. Historically, the campus presidents have reported to the board through the chancellor.

In April 2012, the board passed a resolution delegating greater autonomy to the presidents of the system’s four institutions while the board itself became more strategic and less managerial in its dealings with the campuses and the systems office. The establishment of an administrative board, consisting of the presidents and chancellor, has allowed more decisions to be made amongst that leadership group. In this new model, this administrative board serves as the coordinating body for the university system and is “responsible for recommending and implementing policies and procedures which assist the campus presidents in discharging their responsibilities.” The presidents are directly accountable to the board in academic, operational, and financial affairs of their respective institutions, while the university system office remains responsible for a specified set of shared services, including financial and administrative functions – for which all of the CEO’s are held accountable.

Presidents now report directly to the board and serve dual roles as leaders of their respective institutions and partners with the chancellor and other presidents in leading the system. Presidents have the autonomy to develop and implement strategic plans, subject to board approval. Other areas of increased autonomy include recruiting and collective bargaining, increased signatory authority thresholds for contracts, and reduced need to coordinate on academic affairs. A board sub-committee oversees a heavily metrics-driven and clear annual review process for presidents that specifically addresses goals set out in each university’s strategic plan. Presidents are held accountable for their ability to meet these goals, with particular emphasis around fundraising and enrollment management.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The appointment of a new president is an opportunity to reaffirm cherished traditions, to build on work in progress, and to recognize and embrace new opportunities. She or he will be called upon to provide innovative, visionary, and collaborative leadership to a talented and committed group of faculty, staff, external constituents, students, and alumni. The next president will ensure the implementation of a strategic plan that is aligned with budgetary realities and the university’s core values. He or she will face a diverse and ever-changing group of challenges and opportunities that will call for flexibility and foresight. Below are some key opportunities and challenges the next president can expect to face upon taking the role of leading PSU:

Engage all stakeholders in a sense of common purpose and establish a clear vision and plan for Plymouth State’s future

Plymouth State University’s next president will define and articulate the vision, mission, and goals of the university to sustain it as a vibrant institution of higher learning. The president must be committed to engagement and openness in developing a pathway to success for PSU, respecting the past while being open to new ideas. He or she will lead a conversation that energizes the community and unifies it to take on challenges and pursue new opportunities in a spirit of shared responsibility and accountability. The president must have the savvy to balance short-term needs and a long-term vision, ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability and health while demonstrating the compassion and communication skills to connect across stakeholder groups.

Strategic planning is vitally important for the university to focus resources that align with campus priorities. The next president will assume a primary and critical leadership role in further shaping the plan and achieving desired outcomes. In addition to Focus 2020, processes and documents such as the campus master plan, academic program reviews, financial and capital plans, and the NEASC Self Study all inform the long-term goals and directions of the university. The president will provide the leadership to make difficult decisions in the best long-term interests of the university while empowering his or her leadership team to bring expertise to the table and gather information to make these decisions.

Establish effective strategies to grow enrollment and stabilize the budget

Plymouth State has experienced declining enrollments over the past several years, but applicants for next year’s entering class are up by a third over last year as the university has fully implemented its enrollment management strategies and invested in a marketing campaign to recover these losses. As a public university that receives less than 10 percent of its operating funds from the state, strong enrollment is critical to PSU’s long-term prosperity. But PSU has physical space limitations and values its reputation as a university that gives individual attention to students – who enjoy a 16-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio. Other factors such as demographic trends, innovations in education delivery, and changing expectations about what a college education should entail will make it incumbent on the next president to work with leadership and faculty to develop a thoughtful strategy around enrollment with a focus on improving the outcomes of the academic and student life experience.
The president will set sustainable enrollment targets and develop marketing, recruitment, enrollment, and retention-to-completion strategies to achieve those targets. The enrollment strategy will be closely tied to the president’s ability to generate resources and engage friends and alumni to support student scholarships and professorships. She or he will establish a budget that supports long-term sustainability while maintaining high quality programs and serving an important role within the larger public system of higher education. The president will prioritize university programs and lead an open conversation about where resources at PSU should be focused in a logical and strategic manner. The university has already begun an important University Review and Strategic Allocation (URSA) program prioritization process.

Maintain and build upon the university’s close relationship with the surrounding community

While Plymouth State’s close relationship with the local community dates back to its founding, town-gown relations have experienced ups and downs over the years. President Sara Jayne Steen has made connecting with the local community a top priority over the past decade and it has resulted in a relationship with the local community characterized by respect, trust, and mutual admiration. Whether it is through official relationships with local schools, businesses, law enforcement, environmental agencies, and outdoor recreation groups or less-formal day-to-day interactions, students, faculty, and local residents appreciate one another and get along in general harmony. The next president will have this positive relationship to build upon and should encourage the development of an already-robust set of connections such as internships, research collaborations, and outreach activities while being a regular positive presence in the community and a role model to new students.

Be a committed and active fundraiser

The next president will have a passion for and proven ability to take the lead in fundraising efforts, working closely with advancement to engage PSU’s network of supporters. The university has more than 30,000 alumni and enjoys an unusually deep well of affection for the role it continues to play in the lives of students and communities throughout the state. While the university is winding down a $20 million campaign, the next president will think in grand terms about PSU’s needs and mission to lead consistent and sustainable fundraising efforts. The president will set the tone internally, building an advancement-oriented culture while communicating to diverse audiences and delivering a clear and concise message about the university’s strategy, programs, achievements and opportunities. The president will be a tireless and optimistic champion for Plymouth State who is unafraid to take risks and be creative. She or he will convey PSU’s value to New Hampshire as a provider of a world-class education, an economic engine, and a gateway to opportunity.

Advocate for PSU and work with university peers to advance public higher education in New Hampshire

The president will work diligently with elected and appointed public officials at all levels of government to advocate for PSU and public higher education. The board, chancellor, and presidents all must work together to communicate the importance of higher education to the
state’s future and the important contributions the public universities make despite New Hampshire’s low level of funding public higher education. The president will be a tireless advocate for PSU and USNH with policy makers, the media, industry, and New Hampshire residents. While the president is the external representative for Plymouth State, he or she will also recognize the dual role of executing PSU’s strategic plan while collaborating with the other campuses to best achieve the system’s overall mission. The president will be a politically-savvy communicator who seeks common cause and understands that relationships with other presidents should be collaborative.

**THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE**

The president must understand the university’s distinctive heritage, keen sense of community, and strong tradition of shared governance; its expectation of frequent, open, and honest communication; and its abiding concern for excellence in programs and services. The new president should possess a combination of personal qualities and professional experience that fully matches the critical and ambitious expectations of the Plymouth State University community and the USNH Board of Trustees. Ideal candidates should exhibit the following qualifications and experience:

- Demonstrated commitment to public higher education.
- Demonstrated ability to successfully lead change.
- Demonstrated senior-level leadership experience in a higher education institution or similarly complex organization.
- Ability to lead a highly creative and committed faculty, academic professionals, and staff.
- Strong business acumen and management skills.
- Successful fundraising experience and the ability to develop additional resources for the institution.
- Outstanding academic credentials. An earned doctorate is preferred but an applicant who has attained the highest level of distinction and leadership in his or her chosen field may also be considered.
- Demonstrated knowledge of higher education markets, trends, and challenges.
- Demonstrated ability to create partnerships with alumni and business partners.

**Leadership Competencies**

- Ability to establish a shared vision and garner support for that vision.
- Successful experience as a strategic and inclusive leader; the ability to lead through collaboration, gain consensus and move initiatives forward in an inclusive way.
- The ability to build and cultivate financial support for the university and its programs.
• Commitment to diversity: Values and is committed to diversity and has successfully worked to foster and enhance diversity within an organization.

• Political adeptness: Possesses the ability to work effectively with local and state legislators and other elected officials.

• Commitment to shared governance: Demonstrates respect for and commitment to shared governance.

• Relationship building: Fosters productive and supportive relationships with internal and external constituencies and effectively interacts with a range of groups.

**Personal Characteristics**

The next president of Plymouth State University should exhibit the following personal characteristics:

• An innovative mind and the ability to see and implement new opportunities.

• A passion for public education, with a genuine commitment to students.

• The willingness and ability to engage with and be accessible to others, including faculty, staff, and students.

• Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to articulate ideas to a diverse group of constituents.

• The personal confidence to lead, the humility to listen, the capacity to credit others for their contributions.

• Appreciation for the importance of environmental sustainability.

• Impeccable integrity and values as evidenced through consistent action.

**TO APPLY**

Applications, nominations and inquiries may be directed in confidence to:

Gale Merseth, Vice President
Greg Esposito, Senior Associate
Isaacson Miller, Inc.
263 Summer Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged to [www.imsearch.com/5334](http://www.imsearch.com/5334).

USNH is an AA/EEO Employer, as noted in USNH policy – Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.
APPENDIX

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Plymouth State University was founded as the New Hampshire State Normal School in 1871 by an act of the New Hampshire state legislature to establish “a state normal school for the better training of teachers.” The town of Plymouth bought and donated buildings from a former academy for the school to use and students learned to teach through hands-on experience in a model school. Normal school teachers and students took over teaching in the local schools in 1874, a practice that would continue for nearly a century.

By the early 20th century, Plymouth Normal School had become so popular that it had to limit the number of students it enrolled. The state opened a second normal school in Keene in 1909. Plymouth began to expand its academic offerings at that time, offering three-year degrees for supervisors of music, art, and home economics in elementary and secondary education followed by the creation of a three-year “commercial curriculum” for students who wanted to teach business in high school. Plymouth established partnerships with several “practice schools” in surrounding towns as well.

The physical campus also expanded with the construction of Memorial Hall in 1911 followed by the building of Mary Lyon Hall, a dormitory and dining area that quickly became the social hub and heart of campus. By 1939 all students at the renamed Plymouth Teachers College were enrolled in courses toward a four-year bachelor of education degree. It expanded its offerings to graduate programs in 1948.

In the 1950s, the college began placing increased emphasis on STEM disciplines and foreign languages, reflecting the challenges of the Cold War climate of the time. The school divided into nine academic departments in 1959 and, in 1963, was renamed Plymouth State College, becoming a multipurpose liberal arts institution and part of the University System of New Hampshire. The 1960s saw the creation of an honors program, non-credit adult education courses, and the arrival of fraternities and sororities on campus. Enrollment skyrocketed and the campus grew to accommodate the influx of students and the needs of a more comprehensive regional institution. Changes included moving the library and the construction of a series of dorms, a new dining hall, and a field house.

Plymouth State started an MBA program in 1974 and curricular expansion continued throughout the 1970s and 80s, with the creation of popular new degree programs in atmospheric science and meteorology, leveraging the school’s proximity to the Mount Washington Observatory. This “connection to place” that has characterized Plymouth State since its founding has manifested itself with new centers and collaborations connecting the community to Plymouth State University around a variety of shared interests, including the environment, public health, outdoor recreation, social justice, history, theatre, and the economy. Today, PSU graduates are making a difference locally and globally as leaders in education, business, health and physical education, government, scientific research, and more.
The university enjoyed an extended period of enrollment growth and increased funding that enabled it to prosper into the 21st century. Over the past six years, however, waning state support and enrollment declines have presented challenges to PSU as it strives to maintain and build upon its proud tradition of community engagement, academic excellence, and the close relationships between faculty and students. The next president must develop and execute a vision to meet these challenges through bold, strategic, and creative measures.

CENTERS

PSU currently operates a number of centers that serve as outreach to and collaboration with the surrounding communities and region.

The Enterprise Center

Opened in downtown Plymouth in October 2013, The Enterprise Center at Plymouth (ECP) is one recent example of PSU’s growing relationship with the local business community. A collaboration between the Grafton County Economic Development Council (GCEDC) and PSU, the ECP is a business incubator and accelerator that supports entrepreneurs, small business owners, and overall economic development in central New Hampshire. The university provides staffing for the Enterprise Center and other services while the GCEDC provides the space to house clients and headquarter ECP services. These services include leased space, state-of-the art conferencing facilities, mentoring, professional services, educational resources and networking opportunities. Other partners in the project include the New Hampshire Electric Co-op, White Mountains Gateway Economic Development, the Plymouth Region Chamber of Commerce, area banks, and others. The collaboration has been an instant success, as the three-story, 10,000 square-foot space is fully occupied. ECP serves 10 businesses in the program and nearly 50 more in the surrounding community. In its first year in operation, the business generated more than $5 million in revenue.

The Center for Rural Partnerships

The Center for Rural Partnerships (CfRP) is a growing, vibrant organization that provides value to the university, its students, and the region by connecting Plymouth State’s research, outreach and educational capacities to projects that support student engagement, community resilience, and opportunity in the North Country. Established in 2005, the CfRP’s regional collaboration programs have created partnerships among 50 off-campus partners, 15 faculty, and 10 students over the past year and a half. Its educational workshops and student programming have helped Plymouth State faculty bring 35 students to 10 communities throughout New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, and Quebec.

Examples of impactful work through CfRP include the Coos County Outreach Initiative, which provides seed funding and institutional support for regional partnerships; community-level applied research projects for public and nonprofit organizations and a new student engagement laboratory that has a cohort of students employed in collaborative research and outreach projects through federal work student and externally-funded grants and contracts.
The Center for Active Living and Healthy Communities

The Center for Active Living and Healthy Communities focuses on research and community outreach around projects such as “Healthy PSU” – a campaign designed to help employees and their families make choices that will serve to maintain or improve health and help contain the rising costs of health care benefits. Center staff are also partnering with various community organizations such as HEAL NH, Granite United Way, North Country Health Consortium, Adaptive Sports Partners of the North Country, Eco-learning Gardens, the Circle Program, Local Foods Plymouth, and the town of Plymouth, to assist them in planning for, and providing access to, health-promoting food and active living in the region.

The Center for the Environment

Established in 2004, The Center for the Environment at Plymouth State University (CFE) addresses fundamental environmental issues in northern New England through scientific research, education, and collaboration. It engages on and off campus partners in projects using science-based knowledge to promote informed decision making. CFE provides future educators, researchers, and leaders with a comprehensive environmental education that includes real-world research experience, an understanding of how the natural and built environments are integrated, and knowledge of the community we live in and the economy in which we participate. CFE serves as a hub of expertise supporting local communities by applying regional environmental research to promote a sustainable future within the context of the global economy.

CFE has a special commitment to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire. The work of the Center enhances the North Country economy, and fosters regional environmental understanding and literacy. CFE serves the dual purpose of building research capacity on campus and providing the region with knowledge on environmental issues.

LEADERSHIP

Sara Jayne Steen will step down from the presidency on June 30, 2015 after a nine-year tenure as president. She oversaw the development of several new undergraduate and graduate programs, the creation of a Climate Action Plan for carbon neutrality, dozens of new international partnerships, the execution of a $20 million fundraising campaign, the renovation and construction of several state-of-the-art buildings, and a significant strengthening of relations with the local community.

A professor of English at PSU, President Steen’s scholarship has focused on the recovery of writings by early modern English women and the subsequent reassessment of writers such as Shakespeare when women’s voices are introduced to the literary conversation. She is the author or editor of five books, including The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, as well as having served as guest editor of journals such as Shakespeare Quarterly. In addition, she has spoken and written on issues related to leadership and higher education public policy.

Before coming to PSU, she was dean of the College of Letters and Science at Montana State University; an American Council on Education Fellow in residence at the University of
Delaware; and professor and chair of the Department of English at Montana State University, where for over two decades she taught undergraduate and graduate courses in her field and regularly guided student research.

LOCATION

The Campus

Plymouth State is situated on a beautiful 170-acre, residential, walkable campus consisting of 66 buildings built between 1797 and 2010. The main campus, in downtown Plymouth, is a classic New England college consisting of brick paths, mature trees, and historic “small house” buildings situated next to small downtown shops. Breathtaking vistas of the nearby White Mountains can be found throughout campus, where students live in seven residence halls and two student apartment complexes.

The heart of the main campus is a central campus green surrounded by a mix of academic, administrative, and campus life facilities. The emerging ALLWell Center, located just across the Pemigewasset River in Holderness, is home to PSU’s new Welcome Center and Ice Arena, athletic and recreation fields, and the PE Center, as well as the university’s primary maintenance and operations complex. The university recently broke ground on a $32 million, 108,000-square-foot structure, ALLWell North. Scheduled to open in the fall of 2015, it is an academic and athletic complex that will strengthen the connection between classroom learning and hands-on experiences for students. It includes the Center for Active Living and Healthy Communities, Adventure Education classrooms, athletic training facility, and a competition-sized track and field that will also serve as an event center capable of holding 6,000 people.

In 2007, PSU formalized its commitment to carbon neutrality by signing the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. The university’s commitment to sustainability has garnered it multiple honors, including being named one of the nation’s greenest schools this year by the Sierra Club. Efforts in support of achieving a carbon-neutral footprint include the construction of a cogeneration facility, an aggressive energy conservation initiative, and the creation of additional green spaces and vistas. The campus created a Climate Action Plan for carbon neutrality and an Office of Environmental Sustainability. An innovative EcoHouse was recently developed as a student living and learning laboratory. Several buildings have been honored for their environmentally-friendly design and practices, including Langdon Woods, one of the first LEED Gold residence halls in the country.
The Community

Straddling the towns of Plymouth and Holderness, Plymouth State’s campus preserves the brick-and-ivy look of its New England small-college heritage while incorporating state-of-the-art technology and facilities into an attractive, contemporary campus design.

Named a Top Ten “Best Small Town in America,” Plymouth sits in the foothills of the White Mountains, just north of the Lakes Region, with the Baker and Pemigewasset Rivers bordering the town to the east. It is the quintessential New Hampshire small town. Holderness, a small and largely rural community, offers natural beauty and rustic fishing camps around Squam Lake that attract summer visitors looking to escape the heat of the cities. The towns are surrounded by some of the country’s most beautiful and accessible natural landscape, with miles of trails for hiking, biking, and rock climbing in the nearby White Mountain National Forest and opportunities for a variety of water sports in the nearby Lakes Region. Plymouth State is minutes away from some of the best skiing in the East and is centrally located within two hours of Boston, Portland, Burlington, and Montreal.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire encompasses a small but diverse geography stretching from the White Mountains and the Canadian border in the North to the suburbs of Boston in the south. Bordered on the east and west by Maine and Vermont, the state has a sizable rural population as well as small but cosmopolitan cities such as Manchester, Nashua, Portsmouth and Concord. The state is home to approximately 1.3 million residents.

New Hampshire is notable for its remarkable civic culture as well as the high quality of life it affords its citizens. The state is routinely ranked as the “most livable state in the U.S.” owing to its impressive natural beauty, various recreational and cultural opportunities as well as other quality of life indicators such as low crime and negligible traffic. The state has a strong culture of independence exemplified by the official motto “Live free or die.” New Hampshire levies no personal income tax or general sales tax. The state also holds a special place in the national and international consciousness for its quadrennial “first in the nation” presidential primary. Citizens take their civic responsibility seriously and the level of engagement is impressive. The citizenry prides itself on being both broadminded and practical.

The size of the state along with the culture creates an environment than is uncommon in the U.S. Citizens are on a first name basis with their elected officials and civic leaders. State-wide offices including the governorship are contested every two years. The bicameral legislative body, called the General Court, consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives is the fourth-largest legislative body in the English-speaking world with 400 members. New Hampshire is a state that both enables and demands a high level of personal engagement of its civic leaders.