

Catalyzing Planetary Health Engagement at a University

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The University of New England demonstrates that an institution with diverse constituencies and interests can be quickly mobilized through a faculty and student grassroots initiative supported by innovation strategies.

Background & Methods

The University of New England (UNE), Maine's largest private university, participated in and implemented activities to identify ways to integrate PH across the university's six colleges. With the tagline, "Innovation for a Healthier Planet", UNE is committed to finding solutions to global issues through curriculum, research, and community engagement.

Delegation of faculty, staff, and students attended the 2017 PHA conference → **creation of an inclusive, interdisciplinary steering committee representing all colleges at UNE**. Goals included:

- Identify existing UNE PH initiatives (research, education, community action)
- Build collaboration across colleges and units
- Engage with the larger UNE community on PHA related issues.

Utilizing **design thinking approaches**, such as a World Café, strategic planning resulted in:

- Coordination of PHA related activities
- Development of digital identity and communications via webpages and social media.

Five Steps to Catalyze & Mobilize

Establish Guiding Principles

- Process prioritizes student involvement
- Builds upon an interdisciplinary approach
- Provides ongoing opportunities for sharing information and ideas

Inclusive Representation

- Collaborative investment, engagement, and participation across the university
- Representation from all colleges, as well as institutional units
- Representation by staff, students, administration, and faculty

Strategic Planning

- Inclusive and Interdisciplinary
- Student-centered
- Interactive

Communication Tools

- Utilize website and social media
- Increase awareness
- Confirm legitimacy

Institutional Inventory

- Current PHA aligned curriculum, research, and community action
- Identify high impact, low resource activities to jump start PH engagement and strategy.

Proposed Next Steps

- Develop Phase 2 communications plan, including increased social media, e-newsletter, etc.
- Complete institutional inventory.
- Host speaker and film series for UNE and local community.
- Explore collaboration with UNE's digital badging ecosystem to recognize learner success in PH domains.
- Extend PH engagement to local community and other academic institutions.
- Foster interdisciplinary PH research and education initiatives.

"UNE has the potential to be not only a local but an international leader in promoting the relationship between planet and human health. UNE's strong foundation in interdisciplinary collaboration will lead to the success of PH at UNE and allow the university to more fully live its tagline of 'Innovation for a Healthier Planet.'"

– *UNE Planetary Health Steering Committee Strategic Plan Report to the Provost, February 2018*