

Is Keene State College Growing?

By Helen Giles-Gee, Keene State College President

Is Keene State College growing? While the overall size of the student body is not growing, Keene State is indeed growing in many ways. The College's enrollment has been stable for nearly a decade, and there are no plans to increase the overall size of our student body. What we intend to do is serve our students better and enhance the delivery of academic programs through improved and expanded facilities. Keene State College's stature as an academic institution is growing as well.

On August 28, Keene State College celebrated the renovation of the old dining commons into an exciting academic facility that brings together three important academic programs: Film Studies, Graphic Design, and Communications/Journalism – dynamic programs that interface with cutting-edge technology. We are excited about the opportunities this new academic space will provide for these signal programs, which outgrew existing facilities because more students were choosing to study them. The new facility will support closer relationships among these disciplines and provide new opportunities for interdisciplinary study and collaboration.

At the same time we cut the ribbon on the Media Arts Center, Keene State College students were settling into a new student residence on Butler Court. We are also preparing to open a second new residence on Brickyard Pond in January. Our on-campus population is growing. We hope that this increase in on-campus residences will free up dwellings suitable for families and workers new to the area.

The College undertook construction of two new residence halls and a dining commons in response to a need identified by the Keene community. During the College's master planning process, city leaders expressed that the most important investment in the City that the College could make was new on-campus housing to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing. The University System Board of Trustees responded quickly to this concern by authorizing the sale of bonds for the two new residence halls and the construction of a dining hall big enough to feed the number of students living on campus.

The construction also met a Trustee goal for the campus to house 60 percent of its full-time undergraduate students in campus residence halls. *No state funds were provided.* These facilities are paid for entirely by fees charged to Keene State students, who were represented in discussions about their need.

The College's commitment to the community is multidimensional. Of particular significance is the economic activity it generates that is so crucial to the quality of life in the region. A recent study by our institutional research office updated the economic impact of Keene State on the community, region, and state. Among its findings:

- In fiscal 2005, KSC bought nearly \$10 million worth of goods and services from businesses in Keene and the rest of Cheshire County.
- Of \$19 million in construction spending by the college over the last three years, 37 percent went to businesses in Keene and Cheshire County.
- KSC employees who live in Keene spent almost \$20 million in fiscal 2005.
- That same year, KSC students spent about \$23 million, most of it in this county and community.
- Visitors to Keene State spent an estimated \$1.7 million in the region in 2005.

The College returns value to the community in other ways as well. Keene State is proud of its relationship with the City of Keene and actively encourages members of the community to attend scores of cultural and academic events on campus, many of them without cost. We are proud as well of the many partnerships we have established over the years with local organizations such as the Keene-Link library database shared with the Keene Public Library, the Early College Awareness Project (ECAP) to encourage the academic success of students in the Winchester N.H. schools, or the professional development centers for public school teachers in southwestern New Hampshire.

Keene State College students contribute a significant amount of community service in this community. Another institutional study recently revealed that, in the 2004-05 school

year, KSC students contributed the extraordinary figure of 535,981 hours in academic-based and volunteer community service – the greater portion of it in and around Keene, working with such organizations as the Red Cross, Kiwanis, and Habitat for Humanity.

As visitors enter the campus through the Appian Gateway off Main Street, they read the KSC motto engraved there: “*Enter to Learn; Go Forth to Serve.*” We gain extraordinary benefits from our location in this beautiful, lively city. And we do what we can to serve the community in large part by contributing to the economic, cultural, and educational vitality of the city and region. The College’s impact on the region is indeed growing, and we believe in the right direction.