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Good Company

Southern New Hampshire University: A Leader in Educational Innovation

Thursday, April 09, 2009

Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green prides itself on being involved with the progress of its clients, helping in good times and in bad. Perhaps there is no better example of this involvement than that the firm has had with Southern New Hampshire University. Since 1952, when the for-profit predecessor of this fine educational institution was known as New Hampshire College of Accounting and Commerce, and was located over the Palace Fruit store on Hanover Street, the firm and the school have been connected.

Founder and accountant Harry A. B. Shapiro started NHCAC to teach accounting and bookkeeping and secretarial science in 1932. When he died in 1952 his widow, Gertrude Shapiro, approached a young attorney who had recently come to Manchester to enter private practice, William S. Green, and asked him whether she should keep the school open or close it. After studying the books over a weekend, Bill Green told Mrs. Shapiro that it was about even, but if she wanted to keep the school open, he would help. That started his involvement as chairman of the board and attorney, while Mrs. Shapiro was president.

In the 1960's, the college was reincorporated as a not-for-profit institution and changed its name to New Hampshire College. About the same time, the Shapiro family purchased two farms on the Manchester-Hooksett border on North River Road (which they later sold to the institution at their cost), and construction of the present campus began. The school moved in the early 1970's, finally vacating its downtown buildings such as the Parish House and many classroom facilities. Edward M. Shapiro, son of the founder, became president at the time of the transition to not-for-profit status, although Mrs. Shapiro remained involved in the business office for the rest of her life. Sheehan Phinney attorney Kimon Zachos, long involved in representing the College, became Secretary of the Board of Trustees. In the 1970's he was joined by Attorney Bradford Cook, as Assistant Secretary. Cook now is the Secretary of the Board.

Innovation has been the standard at the school throughout its history. Night and weekend courses, short terms, continuing education centers at remote locations such as Brunswick, Maine, Salem, Nashua, Concord and Laconia, New Hampshire, and Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, all help provide education to students who had other jobs during the day, civilian and military. The core business programs grew and four-year degrees, MBA programs, and finally doctorate programs were added.

When Franconia College closed in the late 1970's, several of its programs and faculty were added to New Hampshire College. The Community



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Economic Development program that emerged gave the college international reach and reputation.

When Notre Dame College closed, decades later, its educational programs found a home on the North River Road campus and the School of Education was formed.

In the 1980's, tough economic times led to another change of leadership, when Edward Shapiro, under whose leadership much growth, physically and educationally, had taken place, stepped down. Again, William S. Green stepped in as Chancellor, a post he held for almost two years, while a search for the next president identified Richard A. Gustafson, an administrator at Keene State College, as the choice. Dick Gustafson came to New Hampshire College and led it for 16 years, during which time the school grew in quality and size. International programs, started under President Edward Shapiro, grew and became an increasingly prominent part of the mission and life of the college, with students coming from Asia, the Middle East, and most parts of the world.

During President Gustafson's tenure, it became apparent that with the number of undergraduate and graduate programs, and the number of academic offerings in addition to the traditional business courses (Liberal Arts, Education, Community Economic Development), the institution more correctly should be labeled a "university" rather than a college. A study of what that meant in terms of name, structure and governance, was undertaken. The culmination of that process was the reorganization of the institution in a university format, and the re-naming of it as Southern New Hampshire University, or, as it was called at the time, "A Whole New U."

When President Gustafson retired from the University he was replaced by current President Paul LeBlanc, the former president of Marlboro College in Vermont. LeBlanc has continued what Gustafson started in terms of a physical transformation of the campus, with many brick buildings replacing the wood frame structures that served the campus so long. Also, additional acquisitions of land have made extensive parcels on both sides of North River Road available, and the road itself is becoming the "main street" of the campus. With the addition of the home and property owned by the William Ford family, SNHU now owns all of the land from Interstate 93 to Martins Ferry Road, on both sides of North River Road.

Present construction projects are a visible reminder of the continued growth and development of Southern New Hampshire University, with a new state-of-the-art academic building and 47,700 square foot dining facility presently nearing completion.

More important than physical construction, however, is the continued academic progress. Distance Education - on-line courses taken by computer - is a significantly increasing part of the continuing education program at Southern New Hampshire University. SNHU ON-LINE is housed in a separate facility in Manchester's Millyard, and has grown into the largest private, not-for-profit on-line program of higher education in New England. Traditional continuing education centers operate in several locations, and weekend courses keep the main campus occupied almost completely on weekends. The School of Liberal Arts offers new programs such as music appreciation and history, and student and faculty music groups recently have added that aspect to SNHU's cultural environment.

Basketball, soccer, field hockey, ice hockey, and many other inter-collegiate and intra-mural sports are offered at SNHU.

This fall SNHU will be the only US-based institution to offer a an online degree in China, exploring partnerships in three cities: Shanghai, Chengdu and Beijing. Also receiving wide publicity recently has been the SNHU Advantage program, that lets freshmen and sophomore students take the core educational program at the Salem Continuing Education Center for a price significantly below that on campus, making education available to many who otherwise could not afford it.

Increasingly, when civic events or symposia are held in the Manchester area, they are held on the SNHU campus. Examples of the involvement of that institution in the life of the region and state are the recent job fair held on



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campus on April 9, and the upcoming second Women's Leadership Summit, to be sponsored by the University on June 12.

Sheehan Phinney is not alone in its praise for SNHU. In March, 2009 it was recognized as "Best of Business" by the New Hampshire Business Review for their M.B.A. and online degree programs. In 2008 it was named "Great College to Work For" by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

With an annual budget approaching \$110 million, Southern New Hampshire University has become a major economic engine in the Manchester area. Along with the other institutions of higher learning located in and around Manchester, known as the Manchester Area Colleges, it is helping remind Manchester what an educational center it is. Given the number of full-time undergraduate and graduate students, and the full-time equivalent students taking on-line and continuing education courses, SNHU is the second largest institution of higher education in New Hampshire.

Sheehan Phinney Bass + Green salutes President Paul LeBlanc and his predecessors, all of whom had the vision to experiment with new methods of education, in an entrepreneurial spirit, to build a major private university, often in uncertain economic times, so the young and sometimes not so young could get an affordable education on their own schedule, in their own locations. We are proud to have been a part of the University's history and to have it as part of ours.

All of the constituencies of Southern New Hampshire University should be grateful that when the young Gertrude Shapiro told her lawyer she had decided to keep the college going, he said he would help her.