

Library looks to improve with online survey

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The UNH library system is conducting a month-long user satisfaction survey to learn student's opinions of what they are doing well and what they can improve upon. The survey will be available online starting Monday, April 6, and run until Friday, May 1.

"LibQUAL+ is a nationwide survey done by academic libraries to measure users' perception of services," said Bill Ross, head of Milne Special Collections and Archives in Dimond Library.

The UNH library system conducted the survey once before in 2004 and the results influenced many areas of the library.

"We made some pretty substantial changes in terms of how we do things," said Ross.

These changes included keeping the library open until 2 a.m. Sunday through Thursday, the addition of Zeke's, and the increase in the number of electronic journals and resources available.

This year, Ross expects to see comments regarding the library's available group study space, noting that the library always tries

for a balance between group space and the traditional quiet study areas.

The need for feedback from library users is especially important this year due to the budget shortfall, which is currently affecting the university. Library officials want to set priorities for improvements using the best information possible, Ross said.

Library officials won't just be focused on the UNH campus. The fact that LibQUAL+ is a nationwide survey allows library officials to see where the UNH libraries rank in comparison to those at other colleges.

"I think the comparability of the results is very important," said Ross.

The main body of the survey is a set of 27 questions, in which users are asked to put the minimum service level that they think is acceptable, what their ideal survey level would be and where they think the UNH library ranks. Questions cover all aspects of the library, including print and electronic resources, the library environment and the knowledge and helpfulness of employees.

Users are also given eight statements and asked how strongly

they agree or disagree with them. Three questions then ask for the user's library usage patterns, while the final section of the survey asks for the demographics of the survey participant and includes a space for additional comments.

The comments allow library officials to understand the specifics about what users think of their services.

"We invite any and all comments because that's where we can learn both major trends, but also address individual questions," said Ross.

The survey is anonymous, although participants can enter their email address if they want to be eligible for a random drawing. The library will give an iPod Touch, as well as gift cards to Barnes & Noble and UNH Dining.

In 2004, about 10 percent of the campus community, including students and professors, participated in the survey. Ross said library officials are hoping to reach or improve upon that number this year.

UNH students will receive an e-mail giving them a link to the survey on the day it becomes available. There will also be a link online at www.library.unh.edu.

NH bill would legalize medical marijuana

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On Tuesday, March 24, the New Hampshire legislature voted in favor of House Bill 648, which legalizes the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes. The bill is planned to take effect on Jan. 1, 2010.

According to the bill, "modern medical research has discovered beneficial uses for marijuana in treating or alleviating the pain, nausea, and other symptoms associated with a variety of debilitating medical conditions, as found by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine in March 1999."

The "cardholder," or patient, must be allotted a valid identification card in order to obtain the marijuana. To gain authorization for registry, he or she must be diagnosed with an incapacitating medical condition.

These conditions include a "chronic or terminal illness, severe pain that has not responded to previously prescribed medication or surgical measures for more than three months, severe nausea, severe vomiting, seizures, or severe, persistent muscle spasms," according to the bill.

Timothy Horrigan, a New Hampshire Rep., voted in favor of the legislation.

"There are many people, especially those undergoing chemotherapy, who need the drug to combat symptoms such as nausea and lack of appetite," he said. "HB 648 is also very restrictive. It seems to have been designed to allow limited personal use while discouraging the development of a commercial market."

Each qualified patient is given a "designated caregiver" to assist them in using the medical marijuana. The caregiver must be 21 years of age or older, a member of the patient's family, household or a licensed health care professional. This person is only permitted to assist one patient and can only do so if they haven't been convicted of a felony.

Ann-Marie Matteucci, a UNH Health Services alcohol, tobacco and drug counselor, believes that legalizing marijuana for medicinal use could be advantageous, but she has mixed feelings about the bill.

"I do believe people who are very, very sick do find relief from some symptoms, and when they are terminal, I guess any side effects or long term effects are not really of any concern," said Matteucci. "That would be a concern that people whose symptoms are not as serious will get it, use it, share it."

As stated in the bill, the Department of Health and Human Services will take many precau-

tions in reducing the fraudulent use of medical marijuana.

The department will obtain a confidential list of every single cardholder, and will also confirm with authorities that each patient's registration card is valid. Any person who uses a false representation of an identification card is punishable to a \$500 fine or arrest, depending on the circumstances.

Despite the specific statements in the bill concerning medicinal use only, some may view HB 648 as a way to cross the threshold for completely legalizing marijuana.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction towards relaxing the strict laws in place towards marijuana in New Hampshire," said senior Andrew Switzer. "The next step could be the decriminalization, which was recently passed in Massachusetts."

Since UNH is such a liberal campus, this latest progress could only strengthen the movement towards the eventual legalization of marijuana, Switzer said.

Like many other available prescription drugs, such as adderall and painkillers, the bill could increase the misuse of marijuana.

"If I understand the bill correctly, it will only allow for people with the specific diagnosis and also for people who are considered caretakers," said Matteucci. "I imagine that will open up some room for misuse, as we see with many prescription drugs."

Some students may think that this bill could make marijuana easier to obtain for recreational purposes, but UNH administers serious consequences for those that are caught doing so.

"The university is in a difficult position because they can lose a lot of federal aid if they tolerate marijuana use, even legal use," said Horrigan. "Students can be denied their financial aid if they are caught using drugs. Otherwise, the main effect is simply the fact that some community members have conditions which could benefit from medical marijuana."

UNH senior Christy Pallis is in favor of the bill only because it will be used for medicinal purposes. She said she believes people who are truly suffering from a medical condition should use every available resource to alleviate their pain.

Although the bill could be favorable for those suffering from chronic and terminal illnesses, Pallis is worried this bill could have more negative than positive effects.

"Pot is more widely used for non-medical reasons," Pallis said. "People could start abusing it because it's legal. Because there's more pot smoking, there's potential to have more negative effects. It's already a problem for some people, but this could make more of a problem."

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