



UNH stats showing no hate crimes in recent years raises red flag, experts say

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The University of New Hampshire saw a wave of ugly incidents in May, including swastikas and a racial slur scrawled in dormitories.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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The University of New Hampshire saw a wave of ugly incidents [in May](#), including swastikas and a racial slur scrawled in dormitories.

Months earlier, the campus was among those that were roiled by a series of hateful incidents, as reports of racial epithets, spitting, and bullying followed November's presidential election.

Taken together, the incidents seemed to bolster assertions by student activists that acts of intolerance have long been a problem at the university.

But official university records filed with the federal government do not include a single report of a hate incident occurring on the Durham campus between 2001 and 2015. Experts say that raises a red flag at such a university with 15,000 students and doesn't necessarily mean that no such incidents took place.



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Specialists say it might signal there has not have been enough awareness, outreach, and education for school officials, campus police, and students about identifying, taking seriously, and reporting hate crimes, and administrators might not have been diligent about tracking statistics.

Table: Reported hate crimes at New England colleges

This table shows how many reported hate crimes were tracked at major colleges across

the region in recent years.

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“It raises questions,” said Jack McDevitt, director of the Institute on Race and Justice at Northeastern University. “I would think UNH needs to ask themselves why are they an outlier.”

“UNH is a big school,” he added. “You’d expect to have some hate crimes.”

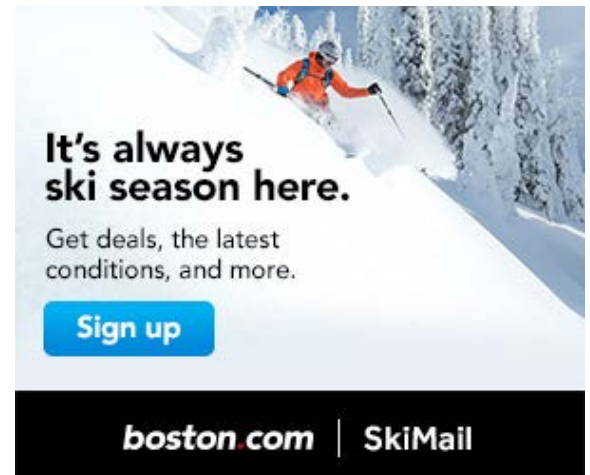
Some other colleges also have noticeably low numbers of reported hate crimes relative to their size. But among the nearly 200 four-year public and private nonprofit colleges across New England, UNH is by far the largest in enrollment to record zero hate crimes from 2001 through 2015, according to a Globe review of [data](#) that schools must submit to the US Education Department annually.

By comparison, the University of Rhode Island, a similarly sized state school, recorded 39 hate crimes during those years, and the University of Vermont, which is somewhat smaller, recorded 11. UMass Amherst and UConn, much larger schools, recorded 10 and 33, respectively.

UNH officials said its figures are accurate.

“We take all allegations of hate seriously, as we do our reporting requirements,” campus spokeswoman Erika Mantz said in an e-mail.

She said the school expects to report “a number of incidents” as hate crimes when the school releases



its figures for 2016, which are due this fall.

Mantz said that in the past the school has received some reports of hate and bias that it determined not to be criminal.

For example, she said, from July 1, 2015, through May 12, 2017, campus officials fielded reports of 46 race-based hate and bias incidents, seven religion-based, and nine incidents that involved both race and religion, Mantz said. Of those 62 reports, 45 came after July 1, 2016.

UNH said noncriminal cases are addressed through the campus's Affirmative Action and Equity Office.

Only crimes are required to be included in statistics sent to federal officials.

Federal [rules give colleges latitude](#) in determining whether incidents rise to the level of hate crimes.

That is one reason why the rate of hate crimes per student, and the accuracy of statistics, can vary widely among colleges. A campus's geography, how much student housing it includes, and its demographic makeup can also be factors.

To be sure, specialists say, hate crime statistics tracked by other sources — including law enforcement agencies and advocacy groups — are also believed to significantly undercount the actual number of hate crimes.

Among the reasons why cases might not be captured in statistics: Victims might not tell authorities for fear of retaliation or worry police won't solve the case, McDevitt said.

He also said some victims might not even recognize an act as being a hate crime; victims might also internalize it, blaming themselves.

Colleges tend to be a prime setting for hate and bias incidents, experts said.

“Young people often deal with differences for a first time,” Northeastern's McDevitt said. “They may have never interacted with someone who is gay before or someone who is African American or Muslim, and sometimes young people will confront and discover within themselves some of their own stereotypes.”

Because of that, universities “need to model how students can deal with that rather than ignore it or pretend it doesn’t happen,” he said.

Experts said that when campuses report zero or low numbers of bias incidents, it can raise questions about whether administrators have downplayed or avoided reporting them out of concerns about damage to their schools’ images.

UNH officials [have condemned](#) the recent hate incidents, [saying](#) everyone on campus deserves to feel safe and respected, and threatening behavior will not be tolerated. Campus police have [said](#) they are investigating.

Mark Huddleston, UNH’s president, acknowledged at a recent campus forum there was more that administrators could do for minorities on a mostly white campus.

Of the 15,236 graduate and undergraduate students enrolled at UNH as of last fall, about 8.9 percent were minorities, school data show.

Correction: Because of a reporting error, this story previously listed incorrect statistics on the number of reported hate crimes between 2001 and 2015 for the University of Rhode Island, University of Vermont, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and University of Connecticut.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele).

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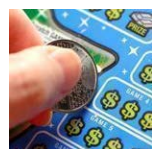
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