

“A Passion. We all have one. The key is to find yours and live your life by it. Living passionately is living happily.”

Peter Wilkinson was a shy kid until he got to high school. He was a big fan of his high school basketball team and desperately wanted to boost school spirit for the team aiming to improve their play. One day he asked his Mom to paint his body blue and white. This was the start of something much bigger than cheering on his favorite team; it was the start of building school spirit, and at the same time creating a sustainable positive community of engaged and caring students.

Peter grew up in Lancaster, New Hampshire a small town 2 ½ hours north of Durham. His town was the last town to get cell service in NH, but thanks to Peter and his friends, they were the first school in NH to create a full-on Lip Dub video that caught the eye of 20,000+ viewers on YouTube. When Peter graduated from high school he was recognized as the schools “#1 Fan.” They created an award in his honor that is now given every year to a student who shows a deep dedication to their school.

Hubbard Hall was home for Peter his first year at UNH. He still lives with the same five guys he met in Hubbard. As a freshman he shared with his Hall Director, Faina Bukher, the story of his “gone viral” high school Lip Dub video and a dream to do it at UNH. He explained his interest in building unity and positive energy at UNH. Faina knew that Peter’s vision belonged with the Residence Hall Association (RHA) and steered him in this direction. RHA connected Peter to Kristin Carpenter, the RHA advisor. Both share a desire to increase the sense of spirit and connection among UNH students. Peter became the President of RHA his sophomore year churning out a slew of highly attended and spirited new traditions such as the Half Naked Whole Mile and the UNH Spirit Dinner.

Peter came to UNH as an undeclared engineering student, and while doing well in his classes, he felt something was missing during his sophomore year. After many conversations with advisors and faculty, he left the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and became an Environmental Conservation and Sustainability major in the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture. He managed to keep his hard science brain activated, while at the same time integrating his interest in sustainable communities at the heart of what he does.

Taking a course called “Active Citizenship in a Multicultural World” which focused on creating positive social change; Peter connected the concepts from this class with his desire to create positive change via building school spirit. His passions were melding together with great synchronicity: being a social change agent, caring deeply about understanding and sustaining our natural environment, and being a scientist and a leader.

For Peter dreaming about building Wildcat pride is all about teaching people the value of community, positivity, involvement and being an active citizen at UNH and beyond. Peter connected with UNH Athletics, hosting the first Wildcat Pride student summit, and starting the school informal spirit group called “The Cat Pack.” Having returned from Leadership Camp this January, Peter is motivated to implement his leadership action plan and is creating a new student school spirit recognized student organization. This group will be dedicated to creating school spirit at sports events and other University events. The goal is to instill a better sense of pride and passion in UNH students, thus uniting the community.

When Peter meets someone who is inspiring he asks if they would be willing to talk. These conversations have led Peter to many enriching opportunities: being part of the UNH Sustainability Institute; being the only non-athlete member of the Student Athletic Advisory Committee; presenting at the Undergraduate Research Conference; participating in research with Cameron Wake, Associate Professor with the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space, who sent him to Colorado to work at the National Ice Core lab; joining the UNH Energy Task Force as the first Student Ambassador through the Sustainability Institute. Last year Peter became an orientation leader. This year he is a member of the senior orientation staff. Being part of a group of peer leaders invested in first year students has given Peter the opportunity to connect with other passionate student leaders teaching him about shared leadership.

Peter’s passion is loud and clear when he shares his love of UNH and his deep desire to celebrate and build community. He tells his story with humility and gratitude for all the people who have invested in his UNH learning adventure. Peter has one more year at UNH and has many more ideas to implement before he leaves. This spring will be the first UNH Lip Dub recording. Peter has learned to passionately persevere with his ideas while at the same time honoring the need to be patient and methodical in his approach.



PETER WILKINSON