Only in NEW HAM

Professorial duo: political junkie Mark Wrighton and prince of polls Andrew Smith.
To study politics, UNH students just have to step outside

By Virginia Stuart '75, '80G

For January term this year, adventurous students at Hartwick College in upstate New York could travel to the Costa Rican rainforest in search of poison dart frogs—or to the streets of New Hampshire for sightings of Howard Dean and Wesley Clark. Harvard and Hofstra sent expeditions to the state in the fall. UNH students, on the other hand, had only to step out the door to observe presidential candidates in their natural habitat.

These encounters could sometimes occur at inopportune moments. Freshman Tegan Schroeder, for instance, would really rather not have bumped into Sen. John Edwards just outside Hetzel Hall one day in October. “I was coming back from the gym, all sweaty,” she explains, “and I didn’t want to be seen by anyone.”

Normally, Schroeder and her friend Kaitlyn Smith are more than happy to meet presidential candidates, and a couple of weeks later they shook hands with Edwards in a small café in Dover, N.H., as a camera from “60 Minutes” looked on and a fuzzy boom mike loomed overhead. They heard Edwards speak about education and respond to the concerns of citizens, including a woman whose medicine costs $4,000 a month. But they also got something that TV viewers don’t get: an up-close look at a man who might some day occupy the White House.

“Did you notice he was wearing a Timex digital watch?” Smith asked Schroeder on the way back to campus. “It made him seem almost... humble.”

The two students, a Republican and a right-leaning independent, may not have agreed with his positions, but they were struck by the wealthy trial lawyer’s ability to connect with everyday people.

Now at the end of her first semester in political science, Smith has met most of the nine Democratic candidates more than once and had her picture taken with five of them. She worked on retired General Wesley Clark’s campaign and helped out in his “rapid response” room during the nationally televised