One study found they were 100 percent more likely to have particu-
lar knowledge of primary elec-
tion candidates and issues than oth-
ering Americans.

Primary Central
On Dec. 9, in preparation for the
evening's nationally tele-
vised Democratic presidential de-
bate, ABC News held a rehearsal and sound check at Johnson Theatre. A
question on his domestic-policy platform
was lobbed in the direction of the podium
marked "Wesley Clark.

"I have no idea what my domestic pol-
icy is," replied the candidate. "I probably
should, as president. I do want to make
sure every student gets to go to college at little expense—in fact, it should be entirely
paid for by the taxpayer!"

The "candidate" was Elliott Schultz '05, one of nine UNH students who stood
in for the real contenders. "Interns for a
day" for ABC and C-Span, the students
worked behind the scenes, watched the de-
bate from much-coveted theater seats and
then rubbernecked in the "spin room," where the candidates held forth, sur-
rounded by mini-mobs of reporters and cameramen.

Watching the debate live, Wrighton
captured that the TV cameras missed—
like a moment when Sen. John Kerry
 glanced at his watch. Wrighton was
re-minded of the time when George H.W.
Bush looked at his watch during his 1992
debate with Bill Clinton, a gesture widely
construed as lack of engagement and evi-
dence that Bush had lost the debate. A few
moments later, however, Howard Dean
confessed that he had looked at his watch
and noticed, with only 12 minutes re-
mainng, that little had been discussed
other than Iraq. His comment immediately
prompted a shift to domestic issues. "They
both did it, but Dean was able to make
something of it," noted Wrighton.

Students also draw conclusions about
the candidates, for better or worse. Edwards
"seems like he's on TV" even when you're
standing right next to him, noted Jamieson
Scott, a junior political science major whose
opinions on campaign advertising have been
quoted in the Boston Globe. On the other
hand, he was favorably impressed by Wes-
ley Clark's "gentleness," which he found
surprising in a four-star general.

Matt Garascia '05, also a political sci-
cence major, shook hands with all nine De-
cratic candidates over the course of the
fall semester. "Whether you ask a ques-
tion or just talk to them for a moment, you
get an idea of how dedicated they are, how
considered they are," he says. "It's a way
to look through a window at a candidate's
character." According to pollster Smith, it's a win-
dow with a pretty good view. "I don't be-

deive voters vote on the basis of issue
positions," says Smith. "Voters are look-
ing for leadership qualities, and you won't
find that in position papers. It doesn't
come across on TV, and you don’t get it
in the newspaper. You get it by seeing
them, talking to them, and talking with
other people who have talked to them.

In August, a canvassing John Kerry greets UNH students.

Even in New Hampshire, not
that many people meet a candi-
date, but they probably know
someone who has met that per-
son and will tell them what they’re really like. That second
wave is very important.

Public spirit

The primary class, with its
dozens of politically well-con-
ected speakers, gave students many of
those "second wave" glimpses of candi-
dates past and present.

Matt Garascia was only 13 when Bob
Dole ran for president in 1996, but he'll
never forget a story Republican national
committee man Tom Rath told the class
about campaigning with Dole, who had
lost the use of his right arm while serving
in World War II. "Tom Rath said it was one of
the most courageous things he’s ever
sees—to watch Bob Dole tie his necktie
with one hand. He wouldn’t accept help.
That was just the kind of strong-willed and
independent guy he was."

That same year, a major snowstorm pro-
vided just enough adversity to reveal some-
ting of Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander’s
character to volunteer Sheridan Brown '99,
then a freshman political science major at
UNH. Although many events had been
cancelled across the state, the candidate in-
sisted on going out to meet his supporters.
Driving a van for the press, Brown was fol-
lowing Alexander’s car in the heavy snow.

"He remembers sludging around corners, "and at each stop a few more reporters decided
to get out and take a cab back." Alexander
pressed on, however, and soon several cars
ahead of him spun off the road and into a
guardrail. Alexander insisted on checking
on drivers, and gave one overworked
woman a ride home.

Alexander’s kindness and integrity
made a lasting impression on Brown,
and influenced his choice of a career. He went
on to work for John E. Sununu’s reflec-
tion to Congress in 1996, and when Brown
graduated in 1999, he landed a job as a
case worker in Sununu’s Congressional
Office. He now works as a projects assistant
in Sununu’s Senate office.

It’s the character of the people he has
worked for that keeps Brown involved in
government. "It makes a distinction between
public servants and politicians, who are
 driven more by personal ambition than the
desire to serve," he explains. "I have been
fortunate to work for people who have all
been public servants."

Wrighton is gratified to see students
like Brown following a path of public ser-
vice. Both Wrighton and Smith hope the
candidate class will inspire others to follow
that path, and Smith, always the pollster and
prognosticator, predicts that six or 10
members of the class will end up in a
politics-related career.

D-Day

I was standing room only in the MUB
multi-purpose room when 1,000 people
showed up to see Howard Dean in early
October. Music blared from the loud-
speakers: "We can . . . do the impos-
 sible!" On stage, polisci major Jess
Rudman ’04 was about to do what seemed
impossible to her: speaking in front of peo-
ple. As president of the Generation Dean
organization on campus, she was expected
to introduce the candidate.

A tall young woman with a diamond
nose stud and brown eyes that light up
 when she talks, Rudman had been out un-
til 11 p.m. the night before with other Gen
Deaners, using 10 buckets of chalk to ad-
vertise the rally on sidewalks all over cam-
pus. In campaign jargon, the Deaniacs had
also been "flyering" and "posterino."
The resulting crowd standing before her was
by far the largest group gathered to see any
individual candidate on campus during the
primary campaign.

So Rudman was pleased, but still feel-
ing shaky about the introduction. At last
Dean hopped purposefully onto the low
stage. After a fleeting screech of feedback
from the mikes, Rudman found herself ad-
ressing the crowd easily, smoothly. The
short speech was nerve-racking, "but I’m
so glad I did it," she recalls. "After that, I
makes you feel that your vote is more im-
portant," says Rudman. She used that sta-
tistic to convince others—no matter whom
they supported—that their votes would re-
ally count. "I told my friends, ‘You’re liv-
in the wrong state if you’re not political."

In January, Rudman became an inter-
ern at Dean’s Strafford County office, where
she didn’t mind putting in 16-hour days.
With that kind of devotion, it’s no surprise
that she was heartbeaten when Dean lost a
sizeable lead in the polls and came in sec-
ond to John Kerry. But she is continuing
as an intern with the state Democratic party,
and she believes that “all the Democrats are
trying to achieve the same objective, and
eventually we’re all going to be united.”

Her eyes still light up when she talks about
the election. “I’m getting people aware,
getting them out there, getting them to vote.
There is a possibility that we’re going to win
an election in 2004, and that I’m going to
have an impact.”