THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

WINTER 2010 VOLUME XXIV, NO. 3

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I have college age children and always ask myself what service I want them to receive if they are faced with a health issue. I always strive to be caring, clear and considerate on the phone.
"As a college parent myself, I am extremely sensitive to students and parent concerns"
Like when I received a call from a student who had a foot injury. He was upset that he would have to get around a large school campus on crutches. I worked with him and the provider to get him access to a wheelchair. He was very appreciative.
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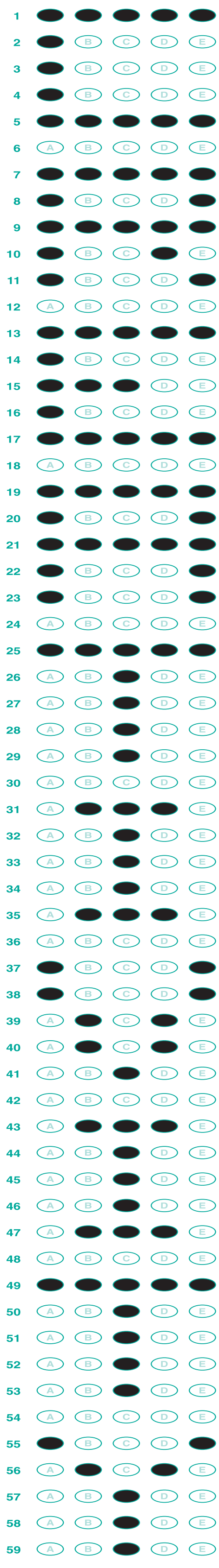

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TEST 2010

As New England's Economy Becomes More Knowledge-Based, How Will We Be Sure Our Students Are Learning What They Need To Know?

According to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's report, ***What It Takes to Succeed in the 21st Century – and How New Englanders Are Faring***, the success of our region will depend in large part on how proficient our residents are in the skills necessary for success in New England's increasingly knowledge-based economy - skills like communication, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, the ability to work as part of a team, and the use of modern technologies.

Standardized tests still play an important role in an accountability system by providing assessments of certain skills. However, we must recognize that knowledge is obtained in various ways, through different methods in different places, and we must begin to measure competency accordingly.

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COMMENTARY & ANALYSIS

FORUM: AFTER THE CRASH

DEPARTMENTS

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EDITOR'S MEMO

NEJHE's Paperless Future

After touching our toes in the digital waters, *NEJHE* is now taking the full dip. It's a deep plunge driven by economic realities and the shifting preferences of readers, many who are "digital natives" as likely to read news and commentary on small screens as in print.

A new integrated NEBHE website will feature "*NEJHE* Online" as its central focus and will capture ideas that have informed NEBHE's historical interest in education and economic development.

The site will be dynamic—a "content hub." We plan to feature: bylined commentaries and analyses, but refreshed more frequently than the old quarterly print schedule allowed; news and event listings, but refreshed more often than our biweekly *Newslink* allowed; and new dynamic content made available by digital technologies—web roundtables on pressing topics and videos and podcasts of NEBHE conferences and key events. We'll feature a slate of regular bloggers, including Boston University Dean Jay Halfond whose thoughts on higher education and the recession appear in this issue. Friends Paul Harrington and Neeta Fogg of Northeastern University who have shared their economic insights in hard copy have agreed to join us as regular bloggers on issues in access, retention and outcomes.

We'll also continue to present the richness of our annual "Trends & Indicators" feature, but again updated more frequently.

Among the clichés of this brave new world: Content wants to be free. This new hub will expand our content to a broader audience, whether it is content we *create* or content we *curate*—something like what we've been doing for more than two decades, but liberated and enriched, we hope, by the more flexible, more frequent digital format.

As often attributed to Otto von Bismarck, laws are like sausages; it's best not to see them being made. Though the same may be said of articles, the online presence will afford room to share some of the sometimes-illuminating back and forth that goes into writing and editing *NEJHE* articles.

It'll be nice to work on a new, more open canvas.

* * * *

Marx Brothers. "Decades of declining real wages with rising levels of exploitation and economic inequality, increasingly unaffordable energy costs, and a loss of the illusion of middle-class status. … Declining state support for social welfare programs, privatization and deregulation, record levels of migration of people, growing urban slums, and increasingly authoritarian state interventions in the lives of ordinary citizens have become the norm in the past two decades." Sound like a lament of the Bush-Cheney era? Sort of. That's the teaser from the seventh annual conference of the *New Marxian Times*, which a dear friend (*I refuse to name names*) coaxed me to attend in November at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

With capitalism going through its own economic and social crises, the conference organizers asked, how can Marxism be re-thought to respond to today's challenges? Never mind that the proceedings were haunted by the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, something of a low-water mark for Marxists, the contrasts with capitalist collapse seemed to resonate with the surprisingly young crowd. Most seemed to be in their 20s. They may be the children of people worried that President Obama and a band of Socialists are going to make them get health insurance, but gathered in Amherst, they were speaking intellectually about abolishing private property amid a new multiplicity of states, corporations, global organizations and NGOs, and descending at times into "analytical reformulations of sexuality" and "medical tourism" and all manner of p.c. sympathies. As a colleague reminded me, "Some things survive in academia long after they've outlived their use in other surroundings."

John O. Harney *is executive editor of* The New England Journal of Higher Education. *Email: jharney@nebhe.org.*

In the Air

Nearly a year ago, Connecticut officials opened the Connecticut Aero Tech School at Hartford's Brainard Airport to be home to one of two aviation maintenance technician programs run by the Connecticut Technical High School System.

CT Aero Tech features a 31,000-square-foot hangar area flanked by classrooms and specialty shops devoted to teaching students how to maintain small and large planes and helicopter and aircraft engines. A 20-month aviation maintenance curriculum trains high school graduates of all ages, up to 60 students at a time, to become Federal Aviation Administration-certified Airframe and Powerplant Mechanics. Graduates generally go on to work for aircraft manufacturers and service companies, such as Connecticut's Pratt & Whitney and Bombardier Aviation Services. Employers typically send newly hired mechanics to training courses specifically geared toward their products.

CT Aero Tech also has agreements with Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley community colleges and plans to forge one at Manchester Community College, which is geographically closer to the school. Program grads receive 30 credits toward a 60- or 70-credit associate degree.

What's the forecast for grads in today's turbulent market? "Aviation is kind of a strange business," says instructor Roger Phillips. "It's the first thing to take it on the chin and last to recover." In addition, though commercial flying suffered after 9/11, facilities that contract for maintenance on military aircraft have seen steady growth in employment. Phillips and colleagues see a silver lining in the aging aerospace workforce. Local aerospace companies such as Pratt & Whitney and Sikorsky Aircraft are seeing large numbers of mechanics retire, increasing demand for certified mechanics.

CT Aero Tech is also an FAA-certified repair station. Its students working closely with faculty members learn by working on customers' private planes. Students also work on helicopters and engines donated by the Connecticut National Guard and jet engines donated by area manufacturers.

Due to state budget cuts, tuition has risen to $6,200 for the program—still not much compared with the $30,000 or so that some private colleges charge for such certificate programs, but enough that the school is now exploring adding federal loan programs to its financing options, which already include Pell Grants.

CT Aero Tech's relocation last March from Danielson's H.H. Ellis Technical High School in the state's "quiet corner" to the "aviation corridor," (stretching roughly from Springfield, Mass., to Hartford) was a 10-year project driven by industry. When a hangar that the school had been eyeing was snatched up by the new Department of Homeland Security following 9/11, state backers had to switch gears and seek authorization for the new construction at Brainard. The price tag rose, but the project's promise of job creation made it worth the investment, says Rep. Pamela Z. Sawyer, the House Republican whip and ranking member of the Legislature's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

"We wanted to move the school more toward the center of the state because it was hard to get students to the quiet corner and hard to find internships for students," recounted Sawyer. "We knew if we moved it into the aviation corridor, we'd get more students, more availability for internships and attract more industry." Indeed, Connecticut transportation officials leveraged the future supply of mechanics from the school to attract Brazil's Embraer, one of the world's largest aircraft manufacturers, and Bombardier, maker of Learjets, to locate repair facilities at nearby Bradley International Airport. At the time, Bombardier predicted it would need 500 mechanics.

"These employers want a trained, skilled workforce, and if they can get the talent here in Connecticut, it keeps their business model moving forward," says Sawyer. Add to those big employers the demands of private fliers, and the need for mechanics is enough that program graduates are landing jobs paying $50,000 or more.

A Super-Region?

Don't tell Red Sox fans lamenting the success of the New York Yankees or *Boston Globe* readers cursing *The New York Times'* ownership, or Jordan Marsh shoppers who can't get used to Macy's, but the specter of New England and New York organizations merging operations seems always to be around the corner.

Scholarship America is facing the same kinds of economic challenges as many for-profit and nonprofit organizations. In July, it announced that its affiliated New York Dollars for Scholars office would close, and the more than 100 New York chapters and 54 Collegiate Partners would move under the umbrella of the New England Dollars for Scholars regional office to be known as New England & New York Dollars for Scholars.

Letters

I feel compelled to take you to task a bit about your Editor's Memo in the recent edition of the *NEJHE*. It has been several years since the University of Bridgeport was "dogged by controversy …" UB is a thriving institution. It no longer receives funding from the Unification Church. It has award-winning academic programs, refreshed yet historic buildings and facilities, and students from all over the world. Its dental, naturopathic, chiropractic and acupuncture clinics serve the greater Bridgeport community while giving students hands-on learning opportunities and its engineering and teacher-preparation programs are first rate. UB faculty, staff and administrators take seriously their role in the community and in the lives of their students.

I think the throwaway line used in your piece does a disservice to all who have worked so hard to rebuild UB into what it is today.

Judith B. Greiman, President
Connecticut Conference of
Independent Colleges

Getting to the Core: Higher Ed's Opportunity and Responsibility

MICHAEL K. THOMAS

In December 2009, NEBHE convened an important regional meeting of leaders from K-12 and higher education regarding the recently released Common Core Standards for College and Career Readiness.

The Common Core initiative was launched last summer by governors and state commissioners of education across the nation to develop a single vision for what American children should learn from kindergarten through high school graduation. These Standards are designed to be internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations and focused on rigorous content and skills.

The December event convened many of New England's higher education commissioners and university presidents, and four of the region's six K-12 commissioners. Held in partnership with the American Council on Education and the two organizations coordinating the effort (the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers), the event was among the first to focus on the Common Core initiative's varied implications for higher education.

In recent months, NEBHE has engaged higher education in the review of these critical Standards and their implications for higher education and K-12 alignment and collaboration.

One of the most pressing issues is how to define and assess what it means to be *college- and career-ready*—and to do so in a way that fosters collaboration among key stakeholders. This is particularly true in the context of an emerging national goal to increase the percentage of individuals who attain a postsecondary degree.

While some higher education scholars with subject-matter expertise have played a role in developing and reviewing the Standards, the initiative has been largely driven by governors and K-12 leaders. This is understandable given the Standards' specific implications for K-12 instruction.

Nonetheless, higher education has a significant opportunity that must be seized with the arrival of the Core Standards. Failure to do so could jeopardize one of the most important initiatives in recent memory to increase college and career readiness on a national scope. Given the massive proportion of students entering postsecondary education who require remediation—and the low levels of degree attainment among those who participate in it—higher education leaders should provide the greatest advocacy for the Common Core Standards.

New England higher education leaders and policymakers at state and institutional levels have an opportunity to take a leadership role in showing how this can be done. More specifically, higher education leaders should:

1) Carefully review and understand the Common Core Standards, the goals that underlie them, the vision of how they will be used, and their connection to ongoing K-12 reform agendas.

2) Provide timely feedback to the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers as they continue the Core Standards effort, addressing the Standards' substance, level of rigor and their alignment with college and workplace expectations.

3) Undertake a frank analysis of the varied roles that higher education institutions and policymakers might play in supporting the successful use of the Common Core Standards to increase proficiency in core content areas, close achievement gaps and increase the overall readiness of incoming students.

4) Begin detailed conversations with their peers in K-12 education on how both entities can work together charting specific avenues, strategies and next steps in the process. To their credit, many New England higher education systems and institutions have already undertaken such activities. Efforts must be redoubled to have statewide scope and impact.

The response to NEBHE's December event was overwhelmingly positive, but it must be the first in a series of dialogues and work sessions in which higher education maps out its response to key issues that the Common Core raises. For example: What are specific strategies and structures for facilitating detailed alignment by university and K-12 faculty, rooted in the Standards? How will higher education ensure that the Standards are tightly aligned with knowledge and skills required to enter credit-bearing, gateway courses at two- and four-year institutions?

Among other key issues to be addressed: How will higher education alter teacher-preparation programs and professional development to support instruction that helps a greater number of learners achieve Common Core Standards? How should K-12 assessment strategies be designed to assess content mastery and 21st century skills providing timely feedback to students and teachers about readiness for college entry?

Higher education has consistently called for greater levels of readiness from entering students. Now is the moment to leverage an important national initiative to make it happen. A shared commitment to actively respond to the Common Core Standards will be a fundamental step toward defining—statewide, regionally and nationally—what it means to be college- and career-ready. New England higher education must step forward as a full and eager partner.

Michael K. Thomas *is president and CEO of the New England Board of Higher Education and publisher of* The New England Journal of Higher Education. *Email: mthomas@nebhe.org.*

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Recognizing New England's Excellence

JOAN MENARD

On March 5, NEBHE will gather the region's business, education, government and nonprofit leaders at the Long Wharf Marriott in Boston to celebrate the best in New England education.

Among the 2010 honorees, U.S. Congressman **John F. Tierney** will receive the Governor Walter R. Peterson Award for Leadership. In his seventh term representing the Massachusetts 6th District, Tierney has been a member on the House Education and Labor Committee since first elected. A tireless advocate of keeping college affordable, he has also championed high-quality programs for students with intellectual disabilities, alterative paths to the teaching profession, loan forgiveness for borrowers who pursue public service professions and maintenance of effort in state funding for public campuses. He fits well in the line of great New Englanders to win the Peterson award, including the late Sen. Edward Kennedy.

This year's Eleanor M. Mahon Award for Lifetime Achievement goes to **James Wright**, president emeritus of Dartmouth College. Wright has been a member of the Dartmouth faculty since 1969 and was the Big Green's president from 1998 until 2009. Wright's priorities included advancing the academic strength of the institution and expanding the faculty and strengthening Dartmouth's sense of community. In 2005, he began visiting U.S. military medical facilities, where he met service members wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. A former Marine, Wright encouraged America's injured sons and daughters to continue their education and established the educational counseling program for U.S. veterans, called "Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dreams," now offered through the American Council on Education.

This year's Robert J. McKenna Award for Program Achievement will be shared by Maine's **College of the Atlantic** and **David F. Finney** of Vermont's Champlain College. College of the Atlantic is renowned for its environmental programs and outdoor, hands-on instruction. Champlain, under Finney, has committed to keeping the Vermont economy robust, establishing the BYOBiz program to attract entrepreneurs as well as the New Americans Scholarship program to reach Vermont refugee students and the Vermont First Scholarship program to serve first-generation college-goers.

The David C. Knapp Award for Trusteeship will also have two recipients this year: University of Vermont trustee and Vermont state **Rep. Martha P. Heath** and University of Massachusetts former vice chair **Robert K. Sheridan**.

As chair of the Vermont House Appropriations Committee, Heath has advocated for the value of higher education and consistently supported efforts to increase educational awareness and aspirations beyond high school.

Sheridan, president and CEO for Savings Bank Life Insurance (SBLI) since 1992 and former president of the Massachusetts Bankers Association, is chair of the board of trustees of the UMass Building Authority. He has served on several search committees for UMass leadership positions.

In addition to these regional Excellence Awards, NEBHE is proud to honor the following individuals and organizations with State Merit Awards:

In Connecticut, **Capital Crossroads to Careers (C3) Program**, a unique education and business partnership at Capital Community College that provides students with financial support, internships, academic advising, career mentoring, leadership development and community service experiences.

In Maine, **Henry Bourgeois**, cofounder and executive director of the Maine Compact for Higher Education, which is dedicated to the vision that college is a "right and responsibility" of all Maine people.

In Massachusetts, **Northeastern University's Cooperative Education** program—founded nearly a century ago and regarded among the world's largest and most innovative co-op programs.

In New Hampshire, the **Energy Services and Technology Program** at Lakes Region Community College, which prepares students to be energy auditors, analysts, building operators, resource conservation managers, technical service representatives and measurement and verification technicians.

In Rhode Island, Cumberland, R.I. Mayor **Daniel McKee**, who bucked traditional thinking when he forged a coalition of Rhode Island mayors to create the Mayoral Academy charter school geared to improving student performance and outcomes.

In Vermont, **Quantum Leap at Bennington College**, which helps children who seem least likely to succeed—who often come from chaotic home lives, extreme poverty and traumatic histories—to return to school and discover a love for learning.

As New England and the rest of the nation persevere through another year of recession, these honorees symbolize hope for students and their families—and for the region.

Joan Menard *is chair of the New England Board of Higher Education. She is assistant majority leader in the Massachusetts state Senate and has served in the Massachusetts Legislature for 31 years. Email: catherine.donaghey@state.ma.us.*

Kaleidoscope

Admitting and developing "New Leaders for a Changing World"

ROBERT J. STERNBERG AND LEE A. COFFIN

In the fall of 2005, the Academic Council of Tufts University proposed a new slogan to characterize its mission in educating students: "New Leaders for a Changing World." Many colleges, of course, have slogans of various kinds. The challenge is how each translates its words into action in an authentic manner.

Sternberg's theory of leadership—called "WICS," an acronym for *w*isdom, *i*ntelligence, and *c*reativity *s*ynthesized—seemed like a potential basis for implementing the mission as well as an opportunity to add a more discretely creative dimension to Tufts' evaluation of undergraduate applicants. According to the theory, people are leaders by virtue of making a positive and meaningful difference to the world at some level, from the family right up through the community, state, nation and world.

The theory suggests that leaders need to be: a) *creative* in generating a vision or new ideas for how to effect positive change; b) *analytically intelligent* in ascertaining whether their ideas are, in fact, good ideas; c) *practically intelligent* in implementing their ideas and in persuading others to accept their ideas; and d) *wise* in ensuring that their ideas will help their stakeholders to attain a common good in the long term as well as the short term, through the infusion of positive ethical values. These skills are viewed as modifiable and flexible, rather than fixed and static.

Our goal at Tufts was to infuse the WICS theory into strategic points within undergraduate (and eventually, graduate) education. The initial strategic points were undergraduate *admissions*, *instruction* and *assessment*. Infusion into admissions would be done through a pilot initiative to augment the Tufts-specific supplement to the Common Application with a set of questions designed to assess WICS in freshman applicants. Infusion into instruction and assessment would be accomplished with the help of the Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, which helps teachers enhance their already considerable teaching skills by showing them ways in which WICS and other ideas from cognitive science can be integrated into their instruction and assessment. The focus of this article is on the admissions initiative.

Admissions initiative: Kaleidoscope

The initiative in undergraduate admissions came to be called "Kaleidoscope." Our intent was to assess wisdom, analytical and practical intelligence and creativity by deliberately inserting optional exercises in the undergraduate application. Most of these exercises are in the form of an optional, written essay, although each year at least one nonverbal exercise is included.

Kaleidoscope is not simply about writing essays. It represents an opportunity to enhance the way admissions officers conceive of and understand applicants within a holistic and highly competitive selection process. Admissions officers use Kaleidoscope, as well as the other traditional elements of the application, to rate each applicant on one or more of four scales: wise thinking, analytical thinking, practical thinking, and creative thinking. This enhancement of the typical admissions ratings categories supplements the existing academic and personal ratings that most highly selective admissions processes use. Kaleidoscope offers the Tufts admissions staff another perspective to consider; it is a window into a set of attributes that, we believe, corresponds with the core values of education at the university.

Ideally, Kaleidoscope enhances Tufts' ability to select future leaders by recognizing and rewarding the qualities of good leadership in its undergraduate application and selection process. In doing so, it sends a strong message to applicants, their parents, guidance counselors and other interested parties that Tufts is serious about assessing academic data (scores and grades) but also about other essential aspects of the whole person. Although the Tufts admissions process has always been holistic in its approach to candidate evaluation, Kaleidoscope augments the traditional admissions assessments that have served the university so well for so many years. The quality and rigor of a high school transcript, standardized testing, personal essays, teacher and counselor recommendations, and so forth continue to offer a rich set of information that informs admissions outcomes; in fact, an SAT or ACT score is evaluated as one measure of the analytical skills that constitutes part of WICS. But Kaleidoscope expands this suite of information and offers tangible data that quantify, often uniquely within an applicant's file, what is often labeled "an intangible" in most admissions processes.

From the standpoint of the WICS theory, the SAT or ACT is incomplete. An admissions officer needs to know about the analytical skills these tests measure but also about other skills that these traditional tests were never designed to capture. Obviously, all information needs to be considered in light of each student's family and school background and the opportunities with which the student has been provided in the course of his or her life.

Kaleidoscope exercises

The exact Kaleidoscope prompts vary from year to year. Here are the exercises used for the 2009 admissions cycle:

1. Since the silent movies of the 1920s first flickered on the screen, the medium of film has inspired, provoked, entertained and educated. Select a film whose message or imagery resonated with you long after the credits rolled. How did it capture your imagination or affect your consciousness?

2. Engineers and scientists like astronomer Edwin Powell Hubble discover new solutions to contemporary issues. "Equipped with his five senses," Hubble said, "man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure Science." Using your knowledge of scientific principles, identify "an adventure" in science you would like to pursue and tell us how you investigate it.

3. The 44th President of the United States will be inaugurated on January 20, 2009. If the 2008 presidential primaries were an indicator, young voters will have had a substantial voice in the selection of the next American president. Offer an open letter to the new president: What issue would you like to see addressed in the first 100 days of the new administration. Why does this matter to you?

4. The human narrative is replete with memorable characters like America's Johnny Appleseed, ancient Greece's Perseus or the Fox Spirits of East Asia. Imagine one of humanity's storied figures is alive and working in the world today. Why does Joan of Arc have a desk job? Would Shiva be a general or a diplomat? Is Quetzalcoatl trapped in a zoo? In short, connect your chosen figure to the contemporary world and imagine the life he/she/it might lead.

5. People face challenges every day. Some make decisions that force them beyond their comfort levels. Maybe you have a political, social or cultural viewpoint that is not shared by the rest of your school, family or community. Did you find the courage to create a better opportunity for yourself or others? Were you able to find the voice to stand up for something you passionately supported? How did you persevere when the odds were against you?

6. Use an 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of paper to create something. You can blueprint your future home, create a new product, draw a cartoon strip, design a costume or a theatrical set, compose a score or do something entirely different. Let your imagination wander.

7. Use one of the following topics to create a short story:

a. The Spam Filter

b. Seventeen Minutes Ago…

c. Two By Two

d. Facebook

e. Now There's the Rub…

f. No Whip Half-Caf Latte

g. The Eleventh Commandment

Note that the questions differ in the skills they emphasize. No question is a "pure" measure of any single component of WICS because our goal is to assess these qualities as a synthesis—as they work together. Scoring of the exercises is holistic and is completed by admissions officers using rubrics with which they are provided by the Center for the Psychology of Abilities, Competencies, and Expertise at Tufts. We have found that, with training, admissions officers can achieve good inter-rater reliability (consistency) in their evaluations.

What we found

Academic achievement remains the most important dimension of Tufts' undergraduate admissions process. But Kaleidoscope shows that a selective college can introduce "unconventional" exercises into admissions without disrupting the quality of the the entering class. Since we introduced the Kaleidoscope pilot in 2006, applications have remained roughly steady or increased slightly, and the mean SAT scores of accepted and enrolling students increased to new highs. In addition, we have not detected statistically meaningful ethnic group differences on the Kaleidoscope measures. Controlling for the academic rating given to applicants by admissions officers (which combines information from the transcript and standardized tests), students rated for Kaleidoscope achieved (statistically) significantly higher academic averages in their undergraduate work than students who were not so rated by the admissions staff. In addition, research found that students with higher Kaleidoscope ratings were more involved in, and reported getting more out of, extra-curricular, active-citizenship and leadership activities in their first year at Tufts.

The positive effects of Kaleidoscope on the university's undergraduate applicant pool and enrolled class should not be disentangled from the effects of other initiatives, especially increased undergraduate financial aid—which at Tufts is always need-based. Initiatives like Kaleidoscope can help identify an able, diverse group of students but, without adequate financial aid and university commitment, the effects of the program will not be fully shown in actual matriculation figures.

As Tufts seeks to identify and develop new leaders for a changing world, Kaleidoscope helps identify potential leaders who may be best positioned to make a positive and meaningful difference in the future. In the fast-paced, data-driven atmosphere of highly competitive college admissions, Kaleidoscope validates the role of qualitative measures of student ability and excellence.

Robert J. Sternberg *is dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and professor of psychology and education at Tufts University. Email: robert.sternberg@tufts.edu.* ***Lee Coffin*** *is dean of undergraduate admissions and enrollment management at Tufts. Email: lee.coffin@tufts.edu.*

Failure to Launch

Confronting the male college student achievement gap

LANE A. GLENN AND SUZANNE VAN WERT

A few years ago, Mathew McConaughey and Sarah Jessica Parker generated big laughs and big box office sales in *Failure to Launch*, an absurd comedy about a 26-year old man still living in his parents' basement, spending his days watching television and playing video games while the world passed him by. The film was closer to the truth than many of us have been willing to admit.

Young American men, including those across New England, are stopping out, dropping out and "failing to launch" in staggering numbers. Compared with young women, they are leaving high school at higher rates, attending college at lower rates, earning fewer degrees and swelling the ranks of the under- and unemployed.

Consider this:

- Beginning in elementary school, boys earn lower grades, receiving 70% of the D's and F's, while girls earn 60% of the A's.
- More than one million teens drop out of school every year and 80% of them are male.
- Nationwide, only 65% of males graduate from high school, compared with 72% of females.
- Only 43% of men are likely to graduate from college, compared with 60% of women.

In addition to these bleak educational statistics, almost nine out of ten alcohol and drug violations are perpetrated by males; 95% of juvenile homicides are committed by boys; and 56% of men ages 18 to 24 live at home with their parents.

The bottom line: Young men are becoming less educated, less employable, less appealing as potential husbands and a greater burden to themselves and others.

There are a great many possible reasons for this growing achievement gap between young men and young women. Leonard Sax, in his 2007 book *Boys Adrift*, suggests five factors that have been reinforced by other published reports: changing teaching methods, an over-reliance on prescription drugs, video game addiction, chemicals in the environment and changing images of manhood in popular culture.

Teaching methods

Today's typical public school and even college classroom favors girls' learning styles. Students are asked to come in, sit down, listen quietly, read and memorize routinely and write to narrowly prescribed standards. This does not work well for most boys, who need hands-on learning and *movement*. According to Sax, "There is a fundamental belief running through all European pedagogy that both *wissenschaft* (knowledge from books) and *kenntnis* (knowledge from experience) are valuable, and that the two ways of knowing must be balanced." Too often, U.S. schools lack the experiential component.

In their 2001 book *Boys and Girls Learn Differently! A Guide for Teachers and Parents*, Michael Gurian, Patricia Henley and Terry Trueman argue that the physical and chemical differences between male and female brains call for different teaching styles. Girls, for instance, use words and talking aloud to help them think and they enjoy problem-solving in a group where everyone is equal; while boys are typically better at decoding abstract symbols and tend to work silently. So collaborative learning, which has become common in classrooms at every level, may not give boys the best opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. In contrast, boys thrive on challenge and competition, but many teachers avoid competition, fearing that some children will suffer a loss of self-esteem. Without it, however, we lose a powerful vehicle for keeping boys engaged in their learning.

Prescription drugs

The last two decades have seen an explosion in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)—diagnosed in one of every 10 boys ages 3 to 17 and consequently, a 30-fold increase in the number of school age boys taking medications to address it.

Because children with ADHD are more impulsive and more easily distracted, they often encounter problems in schools that want them to sit still and focus. Some children are legitimately helped by the initial effects of prescription drugs like Ritalin and Adderall, which work by stimulating the brain chemicals responsible for inhibitory and controlling behavior. But it is possible that long-term effects of ADHD medication may condemn a boy to failure. A recent Harvard Medical School report found that giving ADHD medications to laboratory animals resulted in a loss of energy and drive as those animals grew up. The Harvard scientists suggested that children, like the experimental animals, might be similarly affected and suffer a loss of motivation as they grew into teenagers and young adults.

Video games

Sax and other researchers point to the prevalence of technology—and particularly video games—in the lives of young men as a further threat.

In a 2008 study published in the *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, researchers at Stanford University found that playing video games stimulates the region of the brain in both genders that is associated with reward and addiction. Male brains, however, show significantly higher levels of stimulation. It is no surprise, then, that males get hooked on video games.

In his 2001 article "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," Marc Prensky observes that by the time they graduate from college, most students "have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV)." Since boys are far more likely than girls to play video games, the result, according to Sax, is that girls are "slightly less likely to read in their spare time today than they were in 1980. But roughly nine out of 10 boys have stopped reading altogether."

Chemicals in the environment

The use of pesticides, plastics and synthetic chemicals in all sorts of everyday products has increased dramatically in the past half century. Some of the most commonly used chemicals in plastic—such as those found in ever-present water bottles—actually mimic the hormone estrogen in the body. Scientists have found that male fish exposed to synthetic female hormones have their own hormone systems disrupted. In contaminated waterways, the sex organs of male fish were discovered to be making eggs instead of sperm.

In human beings, it seems, the results of exposure to these chemicals is that today's young girls may be physically maturing more quickly, and today's young boys may be suffering from an imbalance of hormones, an excess of estrogen that may be "feminizing" them. Startling research published by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences reports that since the mid-1930s, sperm counts in American, European and Australian men declined by an average of 50%; that is, 18-year-old males today produce half as much sperm as their grandfathers did at the same age. If males are getting enough estrogen from the environment to suppress the normal production of testosterone, then one main source of male competitiveness is eliminated, along with its accompanying drive toward achievement.

Images of manhood

The traditional male roles of protector, provider and dispenser of family wisdom, once reflected in popular television images like Ward Cleaver and Mike Brady, have all but vanished. Today's TV dad is a bumbling, barely competent, overgrown teenager who is outsmarted and outranked by his wife and his children. He is Ray Romano, George Lopez or television's most popular dad, Homer Simpson—not exactly role model material.

What can you do?

These factors illustrate how complicated and wide-ranging the possible causes are for the "failure to launch" of young men today. Here are some ideas that can help both young men *and* young women with the educational challenges they face today:

1. Study the student success differences between males and females at your school. Success rates, and the reasons behind them, will be different for your school or college than the national statistics, but you won't be able to *do* anything about them until you *know* about them. In addition to looking at your school district's or college's own web site, you can compare results for K-12 schools on the National Assessment of Educational Progress by state and gender at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.

2. Support a college-prep curriculum for high schools. It is true that not everyone will attend college or want to, but 74% of high school seniors—both male and female—say they intend to complete a college degree, a statistic that has remained largely unchanged for the past 20 years. And some college experience is increasingly necessary for almost any career.

Generally, a college-prep curriculum today consists of four years of English; three years each of social science, math and laboratory science; two years of foreign language; and at least one semester of computer science. Of the New England states, only Delaware and Vermont require at least three years of math and science. Massachusetts recommends the complete college-prep curriculum, but actual requirements are decided by individual school districts.

For at least the past 15 years, boys nationally have lagged behind girls by about 4% in completing these courses prior to graduating. This may help explain why boys are more likely to need remedial coursework when they do go to college, less likely to complete their courses successfully, less likely to seek support (advising, counseling, tutoring) and more likely to drop out during the first year—and not return.

3. Send kids to college immediately after high school. Research has consistently shown that students who enroll in college immediately after high school have higher rates of retention and graduation than students who delay enrollment. Yet many still delay—particularly young men. Since 1987, many more males than females have chosen to put off college for two or more years after high school, and most have paid the price by not completing their degrees. Interestingly, research on dual enrollment and "early college" programs suggests that male students may find particular benefits through opportunities to start college even sooner.

4. Support classrooms and teaching strategies that appeal to both boys' and girls' learning styles. Since Howard Gardner first proposed his theory of "multiple intelligences" in 1983, educators have become far more adaptive to the presence of different learning styles among students; yet we still balk at planning for potential learning differences across genders.

The reality is that young boys need recess, gym, music and art (all things we restrict as punishment or cut during lean budget times). Many male students love competition (which we have nearly abandoned in the grades before high school). And they will benefit from reading material that appeals to them.

5. Consider support services targeted specifically to male students. It may take some work to get them involved, but there are many ways to encourage greater connection to learning for male students on campus, at home and in the community. Consider tutoring aimed at boys' learning styles, peer study groups, lecture series and community service activities (that can help teach often-overlooked empathy skills in young men).

6. Consider single-sex classrooms or schools. Single-sex schools or classrooms have always existed in private educational settings, but they are gaining increasing attention in public schools and colleges for a simple reason: They can work. In single-sex classrooms where efforts are made not just to separate boys from girls, but to understand and apply what we know about learning differences between them, both boys and girls see significantly increased rates of attendance, reduced behavioral problems, improved grades and graduation rates.

7. Be a mentor, and find ways to expose young men to *other* male mentors. Most of us went to school for nine or 10 years before seeing a male teacher in the classroom (other than the occasional gym class). Fewer than 3% of preschool and kindergarten teachers and only 19% of elementary and middle school teachers today are male. How much time each day does a young man get to spend learning from other men, whether playing sports or talking about his dreams for the future? Forget the social stereotype that boys and men are supposed to be self-reliant (and therefore don't need to stop for directions).

Some helpful direction today could ensure a successful "launch" tomorrow.

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Price and Value

Considerations for college shoppers

C. ANTHONY BROH AND DANA ANSEL

You have finally found your dream house. You ask the realtor, "What is the price?" The realtor replies, "This owner is a highly reputable person and is absolutely thrilled that you like the house. Since you have some savings and are also eligible for a 'first time home owner credit' from the government, the owner promises you can get a mortgage for an amount of money at an interest rate that meets your needs. Sign here and we'll work out all of the details later." Would you do it?

As families contemplate where to apply to college and the price of college, this is just the kind of choice they make. Families navigate a series of complicated financial decisions about how to save and pay for college, beginning early in a child's life and lasting years beyond graduation—often a 40-year effort in money management. The choices families make can significantly change the price they will pay for college as well as the value of their purchase. Yet, families often make these decisions with incomplete or late information, which can result in serious consequences.

Consider that large numbers of students take out private loans with high interest rates, bypassing government loans which would offer better terms. Other students assume excessive amounts of debt for an education without knowing much about its quality. These poor decisions can limit college and life choices, can cause financial hardship or result in loan default. While readily available and timely information would not solve all problems, it would allow informed choices. In the end, families bear responsibility for their decisions, but they deserve the opportunity to make choices in their own best interest.

In our research, we use a "college-bound decision tree" to examine the major decision-points for families as they: 1) save for college, 2) apply for college, 3) pay for the college that they attend and, in many cases, 4) repay their loans after college.

As families consider colleges, they want to know: What price will we pay? One commonly hears that private universities cost $40,000 per year, which is the *published price* of tuition, fees, room and board and is the price for students who receive no grant aid. In fact, many students—more than half at some schools—receive grant aid and pay less than the published price.

Families who receive grant aid pay a *net price*, which is the published price minus the total amount of grants that a student receives from all sources. While the average 2009 published tuition at private four-year colleges was $35,640, the average net price was $21,240. The difference depends on the total amount of money available to support students and the characteristics of the accepted applicants, neither of which is known at the time a student applies. Consequently, at the time applications are due, students can only estimate the net price for their family based on information that is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to find.

To estimate an *expected net price*, an applicant must determine an expected grant amount which depends on: 1) his or her individual eligibility, 2) the college's financial aid resources and 3) the priorities and methodology that a college uses to determine the mix of grants, loans and work opportunity. All vary at different schools. Historical information about these factors is publicly available, but is neither easy to find nor directly comparable in reliability or format. Nor is it available for specific family-income brackets.

Our calculations of expected net prices for 15 private institutions in Massachusetts suggest important differences among institutions. The published prices range from $40,000 to $50,000, while the average expected net prices can vary from $27,000 to $42,000. Schools differ considerably in their ability to meet the students' financial needs and whether they use grants or loans to meet those needs. Although the published prices appear similar, the estimated net prices can differ.

In addition to price, families want reliable information about characteristics of a school that they value, which may also be difficult to find. While no single indicator reflects the full value of a college, educators have adopted several metrics such as: the faculty-student ratio, the average SAT scores of attendees and the likelihood of graduating in four years. When families can compare the price and their valued attributes of schools, they are in a stronger position to choose a college that offers the most "bang for the buck."

Many families allow their romantic visions of college to determine the amount they are willing to pay. The dramatic increase in price is changing these views, but traditions and systems in place for climbing the college-bound tree do not consider the family as a consumer nor the risk families assume as they borrow money to pay for college. Several changes would help families make more informed choices.

First, the language that financial aid professionals use inhibits a family's ability to understand the choices. For instance, the financial aid "package" that a student is offered includes grants, loans and work study, as if these forms of aid were equivalent. From the family's financial perspective, loans are certainly not the same as grants, even though both pay the college bills. Families want to know the price they will pay to attend college and earn a degree. The earlier they get this information, the better they can plan. Families also need a reasonable way to estimate the price of college before students decide where to apply.

Second, unlike other purchases, families do not know the total price they will pay for a college degree at the time that they enroll. In Massachusetts, as in other states, volatility in state funding of public institutions has led to large fluctuations in tuition and fees. In 2002-03, a drop in state funding resulted in a 21% increase in the tuition and fees at the University of Massachusetts system. The price that students pay to attend a public college can depend on how their year of matriculation corresponds with the economic cycle and state budget conditions. An economic downturn can significantly change the price of a degree. Similarly, not all private schools have announced their fall published price at the time that families must make a selection, and none have announced a price for the expected time that it takes to get a degree.

There are some promising changes on the horizon. Colleges will be required, as part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, to have a price "estimator" on their websites in 2011. The estimator reports the net price based on a few family characteristics, such as income, age, marital status and the number of siblings. The website will return information about the price of attendance, the grant award and the net price. Although these estimators will be an important step forward, there are some shortcomings. Not all kinds of financial aid will be included; for example, merit and athletic scholarships are excluded. In addition, because the government will not collect the underlying data, the information will not be audited. The format and data presentation could also differ by school, making comparisons difficult. Nonetheless, the estimators will help change the focus from how much help a college offers to how much money a student will pay to attend.

Reliable measures of the education experience must also become easily available. There are great differences in the academic experience and educational outcomes of colleges with similar characteristics. Although guide books and websites can help, much of the data are not presented in a manner that allows families to compare benchmarks for institutions with similar net prices but different educational experiences.

As families know more, they are also in a better position to demand more from colleges. For instance, schools that have a history of low graduation rates relative to their peer institutions risk losing students. Families could potentially use this information as leverage to improve quality and lower prices.

More information could also lead to innovation in higher education. In New England, Southern New Hampshire University offers a no-frills option in Salem, N.H., which gives students access to the university's research facilities and many of the same professors, but not to the residential experience nor the accompanying amenities of the more expensive main campus in Manchester, N.H. Successful schools need to compete on both price and educational experience.

Parents and students recognize the value of a college degree. Increasingly, they are borrowing large sums of money to invest in the future. Their choices about how to save for college, where to attend college, how much and from where to borrow for college, and how to repay their loans, have grown more complex. Yet families work with incomplete pricing and value information as they make one of the most important investments in their lives. Improved information will not only help families but also serve as a catalyst for reform and innovation in higher education.

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The Good Business of Transfer

Why improving college transfer pathways makes good sense for New England

CHARI A. LEADER

It's rare for policymakers to think of higher education pathways beyond their own experiences as traditional students. Many went to college directly after high school, stayed in dorms and graduated ready for careers. But the world today must depend upon learners (young and older) who may not be able to choose this path to career success.

Rather, our diverse and highly mobile world now has academic and career entry and exit points that span a lifetime of the "swirling, dropping in, dropping out, and moving on" behaviors of today's learners. Today's learners often do not have the luxury of focusing 100% of their efforts on college as their top priority. Many are working. Many are parents. And many simply cannot afford to think of anything beyond meeting today's challenges. The matter of *transfer* comes into the picture when these learners present credits from different colleges and other sources such as military and corporate training programs and specialized examinations as they make their way toward degree completion.

Transfer coordinators at community colleges have large caseloads with few resources to reach out to students. The confluence of courses "out of sequence" and lack of academic advising, particularly for first-generation college students, can result in credits presented not being applicable to degree requirements or not part of a "program of study." Imagine the extraordinary work and hope associated with presenting earned credits only to find out that they will not count toward a degree. Moreover, credits earned "in and out" of college, "in and out" of the military, and over time can be lost if adult students are discouraged from re-entering college to pull it all together in completing a degree that is the magic ticket to retaining a job or qualifying for a new one.

The U.S. Department of Education reports that 20% of students at New England public two-year colleges earn associate degrees within three years of enrolling. One can surmise that many two-year college students who have earned credit (whether degree-seeking at the time or not) may be presenting it to another college or university later. In fact, part-time students at New England colleges and universities numbered 285,185 in 2007. These students are accumulating credit slowly toward the end goal of degree completion. Another important statistic is the number of students who drop out of four-year college programs before they become sophomores—now averaging between 25% and 30% annually in New England. These students may also be presenting credits down the road to other colleges and universities.

Students follow many different paths and trajectories through the years. The pathways are further complicated by the mobility of today's workforce, the proliferation of online courses from hundreds of providers, and the necessity for workforce training and development programs. It is easy to see how complex the issue of transfer becomes for receiving institutions as well as the learners themselves.

It is estimated that in New England, nearly $536 million is lost in one year alone when receiving colleges and universities do not accept coursework applicable to their degree requirements. This figure has come to be known as the *Transfer Tax*, because it represents costs to taxpayers, students, state and federal governments. Nationally, the Transfer Tax is now estimated at $10 billion per year. The calculation is based upon 11 important variables including numbers of students in public and private institutions, cost of attendance, state higher education budgets and subsidies.

California, Maryland and Florida have tried to conquer the complexity of transfer with state articulation systems that describe how credits from one college will be recognized toward a degree at another college. Created more than 10 years ago, these systems are most helpful to academic advisors and admissions counselors. Today's new technology has taken these concepts and streamlined the information in a way that serves advisors, faculty and, most importantly, the students. Pennsylvania's new transfer portal enables students to evaluate how their courses will be recognized at other Pennsylvania institutions, easily accommodating today's trends of transfer, reverse transfer and the various permutations between two- and four-year colleges. The Pennsylvania portal at www.patrac.org displays courses from all of its state-supported schools as well as private institutions that choose to display their course equivalencies voluntarily. South Carolina is in the process of building its portal.

Bringing information out into the open, as these portals do, is a terrific way to demystify transfer. It is also makes it more difficult (due to transparency) for some institutions to deny credit transfer without a valid rationale. It enables community colleges to finally get their due, because course-equivalency decisions are made based upon academic outcomes. Envisioning the future, technology exists today that can make this information available in a national network, available to anyone, anytime, for free.

The technology is ready. And New England is ready.

Perhaps more than their counterparts in other regions, New Englanders recognize that collaborating, sharing resources and innovating are important for addressing one of the region's biggest challenges: attracting new industry despite an aging population. An educated workforce is vital to attracting higher-paying jobs for economic development. If high school graduating classes are shrinking, an excellent economic development strategy is to improve degree production of adults who have significant work experience and some college credits. Besides the moral obligation of ensuring that those who are working so hard have the opportunity to earn their credentials, there are important social and economic development reasons to make re-entry to college easier to navigate.

Until now, we have counted on individual colleges and universities to track articulation. Sometimes, systems even attempt to improve transfer. But now, instead of keeping self-imposed boundaries around academia, I suggest we open borders "in the clouds" as technology experts say, so that information is more readily available, easier to maintain and is developed using common standards that are inclusive.

Collaborating, bringing about transparency and sharing resources (perhaps through a single state, regional or national portal) will enable greater participation in our knowledge economy. Now, education leaders must leverage this existing technology as the mechanism to include all of our mobile citizens who aspire to at last complete their postsecondary degrees. As this happens, New England businesses will tap fresh ideas, new knowledge workers and skills that will build the region's economy and strengthen its social fabric as its citizenry stays in New England to have families and develop new small businesses.

Addressing transfer student needs does make good business sense for New England.

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The New England Nonprofit Workforce

Still a secondary academic priority

DAVID GARVEY

The nonprofit sector employs more than 9% of the U.S. workforce, compared with 7% six years ago, when nonprofit executive Stephen Pratt and I outlined the size and impact of the New England nonprofit sector [See *New England's Overlooked Nonprofit Workforce: An Economic Driver Ignored, CONNECTION*, Fall 2003]. The sector's portion of America's employment is poised for growth into double digits in the next decade, especially due to the supply and demand dynamics caused by an aging baby boomer generation headed toward retirement.

The U.S. nonprofit sector encompasses 1.4 million organizations and 11% of U.S. gross domestic product. Nonprofit organizations also have a track record as the first-on-the-scene economic catalysts that open the way for private investment in economically distressed communities—a condition that has become prevalent due to the nation's economic downturn. But despite the nonprofit sector's size and importance to the nation's economy and life, higher education in New England and nationally has had a spotty record in addressing this growing sector's education and professional development needs.

Current managers within the sector, especially in social services, are not getting the education and professional development training they need. But blame does not lie only at the feet of higher education. Government and philanthropic funders have had a poor record in investing in the human resource talent that manages the $3 trillion in operations they fund. The philanthropic community has historically invested in individual program services, but not in the human resources and facility overhead that keep those programs alive. Worse, national studies, such as Bridgespan's 2006 *The Nonprofit Sector's Leadership Deficit*, predict a larger problem on the horizon. Due to projected increased demand for services, loss of baby boomer nonprofit managers to retirement and lack of succession planning, it is estimated that by 2016, we will be in the thick of a *leadership deficit*: a lack of qualified and prepared managers to take on the leadership roles of America's nonprofits.

The generation X and Ys coming behind the retiring baby boomers have two problems. One, they have not been properly prepared for succession, and two, there are not enough of them. On a large scale, we have not provided the upcoming generations with the education and on-the-job experience they need to manage the archaic, siloed nonprofit sector we are leaving them, for use in a new world requiring speed, proactive adaption and an infrastructure that supports smart networking strategies.

In a class I co-teach at the University of Connecticut, we have heard the frustration of gen X & Y mid-level managers who feel under-engaged by the '60s-generation cohort of senior nonprofit executives in organizational decision making. I ask nonprofits and their funders to look inward and assess if they have been proactive in engaging younger emerging leaders in organizational planning? Has succession planning been on your agenda? In a nonprofit world with often only a few levels of management between CEO and frontline, are you prepared for a rapid retirement of CEOs and senior managers, while experiencing increased demand for services in an aging America?

If you are on a nonprofit board, ask yourself: Have we assessed our human-resource needs for the next decade? How many of our board members are under age 40? Under 30? Now think of your management staff. How much of the upcoming generations are stretched across your organizational lines? If you can answer that you have an ample supply of individuals of X & Y generations on your board and emerging management staff, great. If not, you need to start finding those individuals and preparing them for larger leadership roles. Like global warming, it is an inconvenient truth, but the boomer exodus has begun.

Higher ed's relationship with nonprofits

In the next five years, if projections hold, nonprofits will quickly realize they are running short of skilled management. Will higher education be ready to provide that workforce?

Despite a strong uptick over the past decade in academic programs designed for nonprofit managers, higher education programs focused on nonprofit organizations have been sparse nationally for various reasons:

First, the study of nonprofit organization management is interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary fields have not had a great record of support in the university setting. To be done right, academic programs in this field need expertise from many disciplines, such as business, arts, health care, social work and public policy.

Second, during the 1960s—the watershed moment of government and nonprofit contracting—the federal government adopted a siloed approach to grantmaking, and nonprofit organizations structured themselves to fit this siloed funding stream. For example, through the

’60s and ’80s, funding went to arts programs and gang violence programs separately. One would be hard-pressed to find federal funding for an arts program that sought to reduce gang violence.

Third, there has been a historical lack of philanthropic funding for professional development and the education of nonprofit managers in the nonprofit world.

There is some good news, however. First, over the past decade, interdisciplinary academic work on many of our campuses has gathered support and begun to flourish. Second, government and private philanthropy have recognized that a siloed *silver bullet* approach to solving complex social problems is a failed strategy. The academy, government, philanthropic institutions, non-profits and communities are recognizing that society’s challenges—such as reducing crime, unemployment, and teenage pregnancies—are interrelated and in need of multiple expertise and interdisciplinary approaches. Third, the philanthropic world is gathering steam in acknowledging the need for smart capacity-building and education for the managers that run organizations and programs they fund. (No one wants to give $1 million to an organization that can’t manage effectively.)

Ladders, color and age

Along with educating the current executive pool, UConn’s Nonprofit Leadership Program is designing programs targeting the sector’s demographic future: emerging leaders already on a managerial path and talent from historically untapped markets, including populations of color, older Americans and “bridgers” from the corporate sector.

For already career-tracked emerging leaders, UConn is offering *Leading Nonprofit Organizations: A Learning Experience for Emerging Leaders*. Now in its second year, the six-month learning experience helps up-and-coming, nonprofit managers get ready to take the place of retiring executives.

However, individuals of color remain an untapped human resource for nonprofit management. Individuals of color make up only 20% of nonprofit directors in the U.S. today—in Connecticut, 10%. These numbers reflect a strong disconnect between leadership of the nonprofit sector and the constituents served.

A lack of access to education is one of the many historical factors that have caused this state of affairs. Many individuals of color currently working in the field have the experience but not the academic credentials to move up the career ladder. UConn is developing a bachelor’s degree completion concentration in nonprofit leadership. The target audience will be individuals with an associate degree. The program will provide a means for seasoned individuals of color working in the nonprofit field to complete their bachelor’s and have a stronger edge in moving up the nonprofit organizational ladder.

Encore careerists and bridgers

Another source of managerial talent for the nonprofit sector is the cohort of aging Americans who never stepped into the sector before. America’s boomer generation is one of the healthiest and most educated generations in this country’s history. Many of these older citizens are seeking employment that gives back to society with “encore careers” in their second chapter of life. Also a growing number of for-profit employees are being attracted to the work and purpose of the nonprofit sector as “bridgers.”

UConn and key partners have launched *Encore!Connecticut* to help encore careerists and bridgers transition into nonprofit-sector employment.

Higher education has a window of opportunity to educate a new workforce and contribute to the success of the social sector in this coming decade. Let’s take advantage of it.

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A Different Path Forward

The Institute for New England Native American Studies at UMass

J. CEDRIC WOODS

In New England, interactions between Native peoples and some public institutions have taken divergent paths over the past three decades. State legislatures and the many academic institutions that call the region home have developed different approaches to working with Native peoples.

Initially, both the academy and the statehouses responded positively to the 1975 federal adoption of a policy that moved away from paternalistic practices toward tribal self-rule, cultural survival and economic development. Legislators at both state and federal levels—recognizing a long history of neglect and discrimination against their indigenous residents—established commissions and councils to help address the needs of those residents and advocate for their rights. These councils and commissions have served to promote dialogue between New England states and their indigenous populations. Partly as a consequence of this dialogue, academic institutions created Native Studies classes, recruited Native students, and—in Massachusetts and Maine—established tuition waivers for Native students. In Massachusetts, waivers applied to all state residents who were citizens of state or federally recognized tribes, and in Maine, to state residents who were citizens of the Wabanaki (Mic Mac, Maliseet, Penobscot and Passamaquoddy) tribes.

After about a decade of generally positive interactions between the tribes and the statehouses, followed by a decade of less-friendly but at least not openly contentious relations, legislative and academic policies and practices related to tribes took somewhat different directions. Interestingly, state legislatures sometimes opposed certain efforts of the tribes, while promoting or at least permitting efforts related to enhancing educational opportunities for Native students. For example, Maine legislators actively opposed efforts to allow Maine tribes to engage in gaming. Nevertheless, they adopted legislation authored by Penobscot legislative representative Donna Loring, requiring that Native American history and culture be taught in Maine's schools. [See "The Dark Ages of Education and a New Hope: Teaching Native American History in Maine Schools," Donna Loring, *NEJHE*, Summer 2009.] In Connecticut, the state's flagship university developed a concentration and later a major and minor in Native American studies, while state legislatures actively opposed the recognition of several tribes in Connecticut and Massachusetts. In Vermont, where the University of Vermont offers courses on Native peoples as part of its U.S. Ethnic Studies program, the state actively opposed Abenaki federal recognition and in 2008, the chairman of the Vermont Indian Affairs Commission resigned in frustration.

Why have New England state legislatures and public higher education institutions developed such different relationships with Native peoples over the past decade? How can Native peoples use their strong relationships with higher education institutions to develop more positive relationships with state legislatures?

There is no single answer. Some parties may associate the change in relationship between the state legislatures and the tribes with the advent of Indian gaming in the region. Others may point to a fear of losing control of regulating tribal territory as a result of the federal government taking land owned by a tribe and transferring it into "trust status." Still others may believe that any gain in power by tribes—economic, political or otherwise—will result in a loss of power previously held by the tribes' state and municipal neighbors. What is clear is a need for increased dialogue between New England state legislative bodies and the tribes.

Public colleges and universities, given their ongoing development and support of initiatives engaging Native communities and their connections with state governments, can and should play a role in moving this conversation forward. A model for beginning and sustaining such a conversation may be found at the Institute for New England Native American Studies (INENAS) of the University of Massachusetts Boston.

In the spring of 2009, through the collaborative efforts of the University of Massachusetts Boston, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, and with funding from the Kellogg Foundation, the INENAS was established as a unit of UMass Boston, and I was hired to serve as director. The INENAS mission is to develop collaborative relationships, projects and programs with the indigenous peoples of the region. Within a matter of months, the institute hosted a seminar to assist tribes in identifying government and other resources that might help them meet their community needs. Representatives from 11 tribes and tribal organizations across New England participated, gathering to hear panels of tribal grant writers, government affairs professionals and grant technical assistance providers. Notably, this first activity of the institute emphasized needs and interests of regional tribes and Native organizations as expressed to UMass Boston in a survey conducted prior to the opening of INENAS.

UMass Boston's responsiveness to tribal concerns was not surprising, as its dialogue with tribes had been ongoing, and one of the university's strategic objectives is to "identify and promote signature examples of campus community engagement, with community understood in local, national and global terms." Engagement with tribes clearly fits within this community outreach objective. Tribes will participate in and benefit from university research, innovation and education, while the university community will be enriched by increased engagement with Native peoples. This increased Native presence will make voices that have been frequently pushed to the margins more audible, especially in a geographic region with relatively small numbers of Native people. Additional evidence of the university's support for increasing the Native community on its campus was expressed by the hiring in 2009 of two Native faculty members, one in the History department and the other in Environmental Earth and Ocean Sciences department.

The institute is working with tribes to help them access federal, state and private funds for social, cultural and economic development. In this way, INENAS hopes to help Native peoples build tribal government and community capacity. This increased capacity will allow tribes to become more self-sufficient and more effective advocates for the needs and goals of their communities, and to work more skillfully with state legislatures. INENAS has engaged in outreach activities with several tribes in the region and with government agencies that either have tribal-specific programs or are active partners with tribes in other areas of the country. We hope to expand these efforts to offer graduate students and faculty from a variety of disciplines opportunities to gain experience working with New England Native peoples.

INENAS is working to identify and build a community of UMass Boston Native students, alumni, faculty, staff and Native leaders from Massachusetts. As one strategy for moving this effort forward, the institute, with the assistance of internal and external partners, rewrote the UMass Boston undergraduate application to include a more comprehensive list of Native American tribal identifications. As of fall 2010, all Massachusetts tribes will be represented, as well as several other regional tribes with significant populations in Massachusetts, such as the Wabanaki. Enrollment Services and Alumni Affairs are collaborating with INENAS to identify and recruit Native students and keep them engaged with the university after graduation.

Future INENAS activities will bring tribal leaders to campus in a variety of forums to identify ways to help their constituents strengthen their communities, to educate other individuals and groups about matters of interest to the Native peoples of New England, and seek ways to help Native peoples to work collaboratively with others—especially members of state legislative bodies. By these means, INENAS will sponsor a robust, informed dialogue about the aspirations, challenges and contributions of contemporary Native peoples of the region. The necessary participants in that dialogue include the Native communities and their leaders, academic institutions, state legislators and regional opinion leaders. In Massachusetts, as in most states, connections between public academic institutions and the state legislature already exist. The New England Institute for Native American Studies plans to facilitate the re-engagement of tribal leaders and their counterparts in state government, thereby cutting a different path toward more effective tribal-state relations.

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Students at the Center

New England's future demands education based on a learner's needs and interests

NICHOLAS C. DONOHUE

The past five decades have produced a tremendous archive of important and interesting strategies, frameworks and practices aimed at improvement in public education. Yet despite the vast set of knowledge generated by this work, gains have not been significant enough nor sustained. Young people still arrive at postsecondary institutions ill-prepared if they are lucky enough to arrive at all. At the same time, our region's economy and overall way of life are changing and will change more in the coming years. More and more, people find they need a degree or certificate that indicates a high level of skills and knowledge in order to achieve their goals and contribute to society. If we want to improve our region's prospects for the future and make good on the promise of education, we must find a way to increase the number of people who achieve this kind of postsecondary success. If we are to do that, we must begin to look at new ways to prepare young people for life during and after high school.

So what might it take to increase the number of well-rounded, educated young people who arrive at New England postsecondary institutions truly ready for success? One approach gaining momentum is "student-centered" or "personalized" learning.

Examples of student-centered learning have some important things in common. They allow for flexible use of time; acknowledge that learning can happen during "traditional" school hours, after school or during the summer, and in a variety of classroom or community settings; assess both a learner's mastery of content and skills using a combination of demonstration and traditional measures; and are customized to some degree based on a learner's needs and interests.

While these are not brand-new notions, these characteristics make it easy to see what differentiates these approaches to learning from our current K-12 system. The student-centered model takes into account the many ways and rates at which students learn and is focused on a broad set of essential and relevant skills. The current K-12 system instead focuses on a narrower set of skills, employing a familiar and convenient way to "batch process" those who will determine our collective future. This needs to stop.

The truth is that for many young people, learning experiences already take place in what are currently described as "nontraditional" settings. Research on summer learning reveals that young people learn invaluable lessons from camp, family and other experiences. Young people are often outside school when they tap their own desire to master some new skill.

The technological revolution has also had a profound impact that is, in part, personal by definition. The Internet as a research tool has, by itself, changed how people digest information. Young people now also engage in learning through online games and their related communities, and on social networking sites. Increasingly, they take their learning with them wherever they go, via 3G and 4G mobile networks. The changes in what young people need to know and how they engage will only continue to accelerate. The time has come for schooling to keep pace by taking some big, brave steps forward.

So what might a student-centered approach look like in practice? It might look something like the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) grant program in New Hampshire, where students receive credit for learning that takes place outside the classroom. While ELO students may receive partial credit for work at a magazine or newspaper, for example, this is not some internship where credits are awarded on the whim of instructors. In the ELO program, students need to demonstrate to the satisfaction of a qualified teacher that what they have learned ties back to pre-determined requirements. Those requirements are at the core of the competency-based assessments that are at the center of many student-centered approaches. The pre-determined requirements and standards must be attended to deliberately and thoughtfully. Otherwise, what should be an important part of a student-centered process could become meaningless to both learners and teachers.

More and more, people find they need a degree or certificate that indicates a high level of skills and knowledge in order to achieve their goals and contribute to society.

The School of One is another example. School of One is a pilot summer school at M.S. 131 in New York City's Chinatown that uses technology to provide students with individualized and innovative math instruction. The month-long program focuses on key math concepts that students will need for seventh grade. School of One combines teacher-led instruction with independent learning and virtual tutors. Students move through the summer at their own pace and receive instruction that matches their own learning styles. Student progress is measured daily over the course of a summer, and it is not measured by seat time or what is taught. Rather, the School of One model utilizes what it has described as a "robust assessment engine that gathers and analyzes student performance each day so that subsequent instruction can be tailored to each student's academic needs."

In our current system young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are too often kept back to repeat grades because they fail to attain arbitrary, age-based benchmarks that define the dominant and rigid "one size fits all" design of most schools. In the School of One and other student-centered settings, education shifts from treating students who learn differently as problems to acknowledging those differences and attending to them as part of the educational endeavor. They ensure equal opportunity by customizing appropriately without sacrificing high expectations. Why then is this experience—one that can be a key component of postsecondary experiences—not promoted more at the secondary level?

There are those who suspect the cost of these approaches will be an obstacle. However, the costs—social and financial—of doing business as usual are unacceptable. The good news is that early analysis of comparative dollar-costs suggests these approaches are feasible. For example, Joel Rose of New York City's Department of Education estimated in *The New York Times* last summer that a school based on the School-of-One program would cost about the same as a traditional school.

New England's higher education community could reap the benefits of a student-centered approach at the high school level. First, it could help provide a more equitable playing field for postsecondary selection. If student needs are being attended to at the secondary level, we may see a decrease in dropouts among two groups that are traditionally not served well and leave high school in large numbers: students from low-income families and students of color (two of our region's fastest-growing populations).

Further, a student-centered approach may actually present students with the best chance to actually arrive on our region's campuses "college ready." In the bigger sea of college, students are treated academically as individuals with diverse interests and backgrounds and are required to manage both their time and their own need for instruction based on awareness of their skill level. David Conley of the Educational Policy Improvement Center describes these self-management skills as being a key to college readiness. If a student has been an active partner in managing his or her own high school education, he or she is much more likely to arrive on campus equipped with critical, applied skills and an ability to self-advocate. Why is an idea that is so conventional at the college level looked upon as "unconventional" or "alternative" if it happens in high school?

Why is an idea that is so conventional at the college level looked upon as "unconventional" or "alternative" if it happens in high school?

Some higher education institutions often react to student-centered learning experiences in high school as being too difficult to quantify when considering students for admission. However, there are already ways to accommodate student-centered approaches. Diploma Plus Inc., a national nonprofit that successfully focuses on re-engaging high-need students, often from underserved populations, uses an algorithm to equate its assessment process to grades to which colleges can refer.

If we are truly to make good on the promise of education, the time has come to firmly connect secondary and postsecondary experiences by putting students at the center of learning.

This will move us toward a system that is properly aligned with learner needs and the realities of our society—one that ensures students are truly prepared for postsecondary opportunities and, ultimately, for their role as the future of our region and our nation.

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A Lasting Legacy

Recommendations of the New England Governors Blue Ribbon Commission on Land Conservation

RICHARD BARRINGER

In September 2008, New England's governors established a blue-ribbon Commission on Land Conservation to identify the most urgent land-conservation issues facing New England today and provide recommendations to the governors in September 2009.

New England faces profound threats to its land and natural-resource base. Fragmentation of the landscape from sprawling development, the generational turnover in farming and forestry operations and the all-but-unlimited private demand for coastal property threaten the viability of the plants, animals and resource-based industries that depend on these lands. They also threaten the human experience of our natural world. As a marker of change, tourism now eclipses forestry and farming as a source of employment in the region's rural places; yet tourism depends directly on these very qualities of the landscape and rural industry.

As the nation urbanizes further, efforts to re-create elsewhere what New England has long enjoyed come at a time when our own qualities of the landscape are in peril. Happily, growing public awareness of climate change and its impacts, the role forests play as carbon sinks, the greatly increased demand for locally grown foods and the resurgence of small-scale, community-based agriculture raise the urgency of conservation initiatives.

This is, moreover, a critical time to engage the next generation of citizens of New England, to care about our future landscape and quality of place as an active duty of citizenship. With a public that is increasingly urban and suburban, more ethnically and culturally diverse and, in many cases, more limited in its access to outdoors, there is compelling need across the region to engage a new generation in land conservation.

Time is now

New England for at least a century has been a national leader in maintaining and renewing the human benefits of land conservation. A highly developed land trust community and creative uses of the conservation easement—both New England inventions—are powerful assets now in use across the nation.

A series of forums with concerned citizens across New England convinced the commission that New England may once again lead the nation, this time through a *collaborative partnership* among the public, private and non-governmental actors that are vital to land conservation in the 21st Century. Now is the time for a high priority, integrated, *pan-New England* land-conservation effort that transcends state boundaries and the public and private sectors.

The collaborative strategy we propose is enabled by new technologies that allow much-improved cross-boundary analysis. A new funding model is required, as well as a true and lasting federal, state, local, private and philanthropic partnership that may serve as a national model for other regions. Central to this funding model is a fair share of federal conservation support to New England and the development of tax and other mechanisms that will allow farms and forestlands in private ownership to prosper.

The set of outcomes the commission foresees for this effort, in terms of quality and quantity, promise a strong, self-renewing legacy on the New England landscape. They include:

• **Farms and forests**. A national model for growing, producing and using local agriculture and forest products and significantly displacing building materials with carbon footprints vastly larger than wood's.

• **Climate mitigation and adaptation**. No net loss of forest and farmlands across the region by focusing development in city and town centers and mitigating forest and farmland loss with new forest cover in cities, suburbs and marginal farm land.

• **Energy**. Exploration and development of alternative energy resources across the region where appropriate and consistent with other values.

• **Sustainable economic and community development**. Maintenance of a diverse landscape that will provide jobs and economic opportunity in all areas and, especially in rural areas.

• **Biodiversity**. Conservation of the existing natural landscape and restoration of plant and wildlife habitats that have been and will be adversely affected by development, climate change and invasive species.

• **Culture and recreation**. Maintenance and enhancement of the natural landscape's cultural, recreational and educational experiences.

• **Public education**. Greater opportunity to experience and learn from nature close to home, wherever one may live or visit in New England.

Building the legacy

The commission offers five recommendations on which to build a conservation legacy for future generations.

1. Keep Forests as Forests. Empower New England's state foresters, in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, the region's universities, private forest landowners and other stakeholders, to prepare a *New England Forest Initiative*. This will constitute a creative partnership among the New England states, federal government, local communities and private forest and conservation interests that has as its goals no net-loss of forestland and the sustainability of these lands. It will identify barriers to and opportunities for sustaining forestlands that are in private ownership, expand regional forest product production and consumption and identify the tools to make these policies work. Higher education can help set clear economic and environmental targets and benchmarks for the forests of the region as a whole and identify region-wide forestland conservation priorities, considering ecological factors, recreation needs and the region's forest-product industry.

2. Keep Farmlands in Farming. Empower New England's chief agricultural officers, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the region's universities, private farmland owners, commodity and farm organizations and other stakeholders, to develop a *New England Farm and Food Security Initiative*. This will determine the region's capacity to increase production, utilization and consumption of New England-grown farm and food products. Higher education could help measure the region's capacity to increase production and consumption of New England-grown farm and food products; identify barriers and constraints to meeting this increased regional production and consumption; and develop state and federal investments and policy reforms to address these barriers and facilitate achievement of regional production and consumption goals.

3. Connect People to the Outdoors. Empower the six New England state liaison officers to the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, in collaboration with local partners and education leaders in each state, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, to prepare a *New England Outdoor Initiative* built upon the states' comprehensive outdoor recreation plans and related open-space planning documents. The initiative will identify six-state priorities for outdoor recreation and education and means to engage younger generations in land conservation; address urban as well as rural needs; and identify priority issues and land-conservation projects common to two or more states.

4. Protect Wildlife Habitat. Empower the six New England chief wildlife officers, in collaboration with partner groups, to prepare a *New England Wildlife Habitat Initiative*, using each state's wildlife action plan as the foundation for regional work on habitat connectivity that will inform land use and public infrastructure investment decisions at the local, state and federal levels.

5. Safeguard Coastal and Estuarine Lands. Empower New England's coastal program managers, in collaboration with the chief wildlife officers and other partners, to develop a *New England Coastal Initiative*. This initiative will make use of each state's Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation Program and Wildlife Action Plan and the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers' Climate Change Action Plan, to identify a regional strategy for coastal-land conservation and acquisition that addresses joint goals for climate change adaptation and habitat protection.

The commission recommends that these several initiatives form the basis of a New England Land Conservation Act to advance New England's role in both fulfilling its own priority conservation needs and serving as a national model for regional landscape conservation. It further urges the governors to call upon appropriate agencies of the federal government and New England's Congressional delegation to maintain and fully fund essential land-conservation initiatives and to include in federal climate-change legislation funding for forest,farm, wildlife and coastal conservation and outdoor recreation and education.

Commission members believe this will set in motion a long-lasting legacy—a farsighted and far-reaching initiative to conserve the region's diverse landscapes and help ensure that they will remain forever healthy, productive and accessible to the citizens of New England and the nation.

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The commission's full report is at http://efc.muskie.usm.maine.edu/pages/pubs.html

Higher Ed in the Obama Years

From remarks before NEBHE's Oct. 26 "After the Crash" conference in Boston exploring the impact of recent economic volatility on higher education, lessons learned and strategies for the future

MARTHA KANTER

Fifty years ago, President Kennedy noted that the Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word "crisis." One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger, but recognize the opportunity.

I think that sums up where higher education is right now. We are in danger, but we have an extraordinary opportunity.

We have more than 9 million students enrolled in community colleges and that is not far behind the 10.5 million students enrolled in our four-year institutions. Due to the tough economic challenges, teachers have faced layoffs, and thousands of students are getting shut out, even if they want to enroll.

But by 2016, four of every 10 new jobs will require some advanced education or training. Many of these jobs will have an emphasis on technology and green and sustainable practices in science and technology fields. If we stay on this path, our students will not be able to compete.

This April, McKinsey & Co. reported on "The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools." The firm reported that the U.S. lags significantly behind other advanced nations in educational performance and is slipping farther behind in math, science and literacy. In 2006, we ranked 25th of 30 nations in math and 24th of 30 in science. The academic performance of our 15-year-old students lags behind that of students in countries like Canada, the Netherlands, Korea and Austria with whom we compete for service-sector and high-value jobs.

Regarding high school graduation rates, we rank 18th of 24 industrialized nations. You've also read about the implications of America's racial achievement gap where, given our changing demographics, Hispanic and black students lag as many as three years behind white students of the same age in achievement and graduation rates.

McKinsey notes that if we had been able to close the international achievement gap over the past 25 years, U.S. GDP in 2008 would have been as much as $2 trillion higher—up to 16% of GDP. McKinsey goes on to profile disparities in income and achievement and concludes that if we don't have the "game-changing national strategy" that the report emphasizes, we will have a tsunami that will devastate U.S. productivity and competitiveness for generations.

Other reports have similar findings. A special supplement to this year's *Condition of Education* comparing students in the U.S. with peers around the world revealed that U.S. students are stagnating. In science, our eighth-graders are behind their peers in eight countries that also participated in the original international assessment. In math, although scores have improved somewhat since 1995, our 15-year-olds' scores lag behind those of 31 countries. Four countries—Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Finland—outperform U.S. students on math, science and all other subjects.

And the recently released National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores did not show the progress in math skills our students need. The fourth-grade scores were flat. Although the eighth-grade scores increased, they aren't improving fast enough.

These are the facts. They point to the perils we face and the crisis at hand. But before we let young people inherit a world of rising costs, inequities in teacher quality, lack of access to educational opportunity for low-income and minority students and poor use of student information to improve educational achievement, we need to realize the opportunity we have.

President Obama has said he wants to see America have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. By 2020, he wants us to have "the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world." He'll measure success based on whether the U.S. once again has the highest proportion of college graduates of any country in the world.

It is an ambitious goal, and we have a long way to go. But America's future demands a significant increase in college graduates at all levels, from those who complete one year of advanced training and certification after high school to others who finish their Ph.D.s.

Only about 40% of Americans hold a two-year or four-year degree. That's the same proportion as a generation ago.

More than one-quarter of high school freshmen drop out by the time their class graduates. That's 1.2 million students on the streets instead of in school. We lose most of them in the first two years of high school.

Finally, of students who do graduate from high school and go to college, only 40% graduate within six years from the first college they enroll in.

In short, not enough of our students are graduating from high school; not enough of them are enrolling in college; and not enough are staying in college until they graduate.

Our democratic society depends on every American entering an open door to advance his or her education after high school. More highly educated students will not only stimulate the recovery of our national economy, but also usher in a new era of more widely shared growth and prosperity.

The president, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and I are committed to giving all students this chance. We are committed to a cradle-to-career agenda that will increase the number of high-quality early learning opportunities, especially for low-income families; and we are committed to making higher education more affordable and accessible.

The Education Department budget, together with the Recovery Act, provides the largest commitment to higher education funding since the GI Bill.

We are applauding the efforts of 48 states that have signed on to a state-led process to develop a common core of K-12 state standards in English language arts and math, with other subjects to follow.

We will do everything we can to create opportunities for students of all ages to reach their potential. We will do everything we can to repair cracks in the road to college access. We aim to increase college readiness, decrease dropout rates and help students most at risk of falling behind.

Next year, under our budget, the department will administer nearly $130 billion in new grants, loans and work-study assistance to help more than 14 million students and families pay for college.

The Obama administration also has unveiled a simplified FAFSA application and will be making further changes so it is easier to apply for student aid.

As of July, we reduced recent graduates' student-loan payments through an income-contingent repayment plan. These lower payments will help recent graduates in the tough job market. Graduates working in public service will have their student loans forgiven after 10 years of income-contingent payments. These repayment plans will encourage graduates to pursue careers as teachers, doctors and nurses in public hospitals, public safety and other professions vital to our nation's security and prosperity.

Over the next decade, the higher education plan will also increase Pell Grants to $5,550 next year and index future increases to inflation plus 1%. We will provide low-interest loans to 2.7 million students through the Perkins Loan program and change the program to reward colleges that control tuition increases.

Additionally, we will support community colleges to increase access, quality and student achievement, using best practices and evidence-based innovations. Part of this effort means expanding access to higher education for students, especially for poor and minority students.

One innovative area is the creation of world-class online courses for students to take and college professors to use as supplements to their courses. The courses will be available for free, 24/7/365. These robust, modern courses will take advantage of the latest breakthroughs in cognitive sciences to ensure both self-paced and accelerated learning. They will help students prepare for college and provide adults in the workforce with the opportunity to improve their skills on their own time. They will help colleges control costs and equalize access to a high-quality education by giving free access to courses commonly offered across the country. The program will be built with $500 million over the next 10 years.

All of this will be paid for through savings in the student-loan program. Right now, we are scheduled to pay banks up to $87 billion to subsidize loans over the next decade. Our plan will cut out the middleman. We will lend money to students directly. We will use the savings for what is actually important: helping students afford and succeed in college. The president has also called for $10 billion for the Early Learning Challenge Fund. These efforts are fiscally responsible—reducing the deficit by $10 billion over the next decade.

Our plans are ambitious and our goals are global. Indeed, we are facing the interplay of danger and opportunity, but if we can ride the wind of that opportunity, we can be successful.

The president, the secretary and I take our work seriously. We need your help. It will take all of us to turn things around. It will take facing an uncertain future. But we cannot do anything less than to reach this goal—for our students and for our country.

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Recession Amnesia

Prospects for New England higher education

JAY A. HALFOND

Among the very little that is truly predictable, I would forecast these three truths.

First is the inevitability of recessions. Whether the result of human folly or business cycles, the economy will contract—probably about once every decade, give or take, and probably in direct proportion to the degree to which we lived beyond our means before the crash. This could be called the "stupidity curve"—the fall is relative to its preceding and precipitating bubble.

Second is the sense during prosperity that the good times will just keep on rolling. We will declare this a new economy, with novel and perpetual characteritics that ensure eternal, linear growth. So, debt should be casually incurred, risks taken, commitments made, in the delusional fantasy that a rosy future will more than pay these present costs.

Third is the fall. Bubbles will burst, myths will shatter, plans will unravel and costs will sadly be borne unjustly by those who didn't have a hand in the decisions that put their organizations in harm's way. And then the next fantasy sets in—the new normal—the nightmare that this is a unique reality, the worst ever since 1929 and possibly the longest lasting. If we ever get out of this mess, we promise to live better, to be more cautious and conscientious with resources, and never again precipitate the giddy go-go mentality that got us into this free fall.

Then the cycle of recession amnesia repeats itself.

Universities are organized to assume uninterrupted growth in enrollments and endowments, steady public funding, an annual ability to inflict tuition hikes on students and their families, everlasting degree programs, vast building operations and permanent commitments to a senior professoriate. Lacking an agile and responsive governance structure, and with fixed costs mounting in a massive physical plant and labor-intensive enterprise, the modern university is brittle when suddenly confronted with changing realities.

Academe has trouble responding to wake-up calls—and by the time colleges and universities mobilize with imaginative ideas for new initiatives, it is too late to make a difference.

This past year, one academic sector hit hard has been well-endowed research universities, accustomed to living off investment returns. Their financiers were rewarded for how cavalier they are with other people's money and then crucified when their riskiest strategies soured. The goal was not to be prudent, but to compete successfully with other investment managers at other universities.

The second sector taking a disproportionate hit has been public institutions, particularly those aspiring to the stature of their state's flagship school. State schools are now struggling to juxtapose growing enrollments and declining financial support (especially with the forecasts of stimulus funds ending and tax revenues declining). It has been a rude awakening throughout public higher education to learn that faculty and staff are mere civil servants lumped into their state's budget-slashing plans. The price paid in lost governance control can suddenly seem high as the publicly funded share of their operating budgets erodes.

The remaining schools—tuition-driven without state support or large endowments—worry about whether recession-weary families will pay their prices.

Many would argue that higher education, at least in the broadest sense, is immune to recessions, or at least should be. Do cheaper providers secure more market share in a downturn, or does reputation take on even greater importance? Do students accelerate or decelerate their studies in bad times? Do adults return to college to bolster their credentials when their jobs are in jeopardy? The answer is likely some complex combination of all of the above. Demand might slow or hasten, and some schools might win or lose, but higher education, in aggregate, retains its value.

Still others would argue that New England is the world's Mecca for higher learning—that we can simply extend our global outreach to make up for local shortfalls. But will a growing number of indigenous institutions stem the brain drain from Asia and elsewhere to North America? Will India and China become more receptive to foreign universities on their soil? Will online distance learning eventually find a foreign market and reduce the need for students and academic resources to relocate to the United States?

The U.S., particularly New England, has concocted the secret sauce yet to be replicated elsewhere: a rich variety of institutions with their own strengths and identity, a diverse menu of disciplines and programs, a focus on the whole student, a respect for liberal learning in undergraduate education and for lifelong learners to reinvent themselves throughout their lives. And it's all seasoned by a pervasive belief that higher education is not a spectator sport— that courses and laboratories must be engaging, that work should be interspersed with learning, and that wisdom should be drawn from a total experience both within and beyond the conventional classroom. Even with rapid institution-building globally, those factors that marked our success will not be copied anytime soon, given the investment required to replicate an American-style education.

The key to the competitiveness of individual institutions, the region and the American academic system as a whole is to maintain their distinctive features, their vitality and connection to the world, and their focus on the myriad needs of students. How do we break the syndrome of recession amnesia? By recognizing our lack of historical perspective, while trying to make sense of our strengths and vulnerabilities in an otherwise perplexing world ahead.

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Making It Real

Incorporating cost management and productivity improvements into financing decisions

JANE WELLMAN

Higher education is being challenged to increase access and degree attainment for all student groups—a tall order under any circumstances, but particularly daunting in the current economy. To do this, institutional and policy leaders will need to find ways to reduce costs and permanently reduce spending demands while they maintain access. This means both restructuring costs and increasing productivity—difficult concepts within higher education because of the traditions of institutional finance and an academic culture that views *productivity* as a bureaucratic codeword for *budget cutting*.

To get past some of the rhetoric that typically surrounds the topic, this article explores how this could be done, beginning with language and concepts.

Language and concepts. The language of higher education finance can be blurry, and confusion in language leads to confused decision-making. The terminology is not standard within higher education, and words that mean different things (for instance, costs and prices) are sometimes used interchangeably. But the goal of cost *restructuring* won't be met if institutions are simply shifting costs or cutting budgets. For this discussion, it's important to distinguish between budget cuts, cost shifts, cost reductions and productivity improvements.

• *Budget cuts* are one-time spending reductions through steps such as hiring freezes, furloughs and across-the-board reductions. Budget cuts lower spending, but they are not designed to be permanent changes to the base cost structure. As an example, a two-week unpaid furlough for an employee with a salary of $70,000, and a benefits package costing an additional $14,000, will save the institution $3,230. But the salary has not changed, and unless the reductions are permanent, the employee can expect to make $70,000 plus benefits when revenues go back up.

• *Cost shifting* is a substitute of one revenue stream for another with no change in base spending. For example, if a state reduces spending for higher education, and institutions increase tuitions to backfill for lost state funds, then costs have shifted. Actual spending has not gone up, although prices have. The dynamic of cost-shifting to push spending onto students is one of the reasons policymakers and the public frequently confuse costs with prices, and assume that if institutions are raising tuitions, it's because they are spending more.

• *Cost restructuring or cost cutting* relate to permanent structural reductions in spending. Structural reductions in costs can occur on both the "administrative" side—through restructuring of back-office support to consolidate expenses—or on the academic/program side. Cost restructuring reduces pressure on spending over time, but may not yield much in immediate savings. For instance, an institution that uses faculty attrition from retirement to phase out high-cost/low-demand programs will yield long-term savings in costs, but very little in the first few years.

• *Productivity increases* mean increases in outputs (degrees produced, for instance) without a change in inputs (admissions requirements or revenue). Any institution that permanently reduces spending will show reduced costs per degree produced. But this can happen by increasing admissions requirements—to get better-prepared students, who require less in spending for student aid or for remedial education. In this case, costs may go down, but productivity has not actually increased. To get at instructional productivity—getting more students through to degrees without compromising access—it is helpful to focus on what higher education professor Bruce Johnstone of the State University of New York at Buffalo called "learning productivity"—increasing learning achieved at reduced cost to the student and to the institution. An increase in learning productivity can come from reducing the average number of units taken by students en route to the degree. Substituting credit by examination for classroom-based instruction also yields higher learning productivity.

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Metrics and decision processes. A perennial challenge to an institution facing the need to restructure costs is that most don't have data that show them where they are spending money. Most fiscal measures are presentations of institutional budgets or financial statements—neither of which shows how resources are used within the institution. Finding data that translate spending into academic performance—for instance spending per degree, or spending per discipline—requires looking at spending, not revenues or balance sheets.

Before institutions start restructuring costs, they need to begin with data that show them where their money comes from and what it buys. Even aggregate data will show patterns in where costs are increasing disproportionately and can be the basis for more granular studies. To get at cost drivers within the instructional program, and particularly to tackle issues of increasing productivity, institutions need to get to "unit cost data"—or spending per FTE of student credit—by discipline and degree level. This can help them generate measures of cost per degree, and the relative cost of "excess" units taken en route to the degree, versus the cost of student attrition.

Using data on revenue and spending trends, the Delta Cost Project has identified the following as the most promising candidates for permanently reducing costs and increasing productivity.

Cost restructuring

• **Employee benefits, including pensions as well as health benefits**. Spending for employee benefits—particularly retirement and health benefits—is on "auto pilot" in many institutions as they are higher education's fastest-growing expenditures. These are politically popular, and pensions, in particular, cannot be retroactively changed for current employees. But the costs are consuming a higher proportion of resources each year—an amount that shows no signs of going down. Even if we are successful in containing growth in health care costs, losses to public retirement funds have been severe, which will require even higher contributions in the future if they are to remain actuarially sound. Unless benefits are managed, institutions will have no choice but to do what they have been doing to balance the budgets—which is to hire more part-time faculty, who are not eligible for benefits. Moral issues aside, this is not a prudent investment strategy for an industry wanting to increase student learning and degree attainment.

• **Student aid**. Another fast-growing spending area has been student aid, particularly "merit" aid going to students to induce them to enroll in a particular institution. Merit aid may help the academic pedigree of individual institutions, but it does nothing to increase overall productivity, since it goes to students who would go to college somewhere without it.

• **Administrative spending**. Administrative spending, for activities as varied as executive staff, legal services and campus safety have also been increasing faster than spending on faculty or student services. Frequent targets of faculty and public criticism, these spending areas are examples of things that may be individually important, but collectively difficult to justify. All institutions need to be able to scrub their administrative payrolls to be sure their resources are applied to public and institutional priorities.

• **Academic program consolidation**. Every institution has some high-cost/low-demand programs that can be eliminated or consolidated to save money. Program consolidations are tricky politically, and painful for faculty in particular. And because they don't yield much in short- term savings, most institutions avoid them, in preference to phasing out programs when faculty retire. But programs are the building blocks for academic expenses, and each program carries with it attendant costs for student services, academic support, grounds and buildings and employee benefits.

• **Faculty turnover planning**. Faculty turnover planning provides an opportunity for every institution to restructure faculty costs, using the occasion of retirement to anticipate and enact permanent changes in staffing and compensation patterns. Most institutions will say that recruiting new faculty costs more—not less—than the faculty of the past. This is true in high-cost, high-demand disciplines such as economics, health sciences and engineering. But it is not similarly true in the humanities and social sciences. Turnover planning also gives an institution an opportunity to think about new ways to compensate the profession—such as by recruiting faculty who are paid to be full-time teachers, and who might be put on revolving five-year contracts rather than tenure. A controversial topic, to be sure—but probably better for quality and morale than the current pattern, which is to allow the majority of credit hours in lower-division courses to be taught by graduate assistants and part-time lecturers.

Increasing learning productivity

• **Reduce excess credits to the degree**. Research on the cost of degree production shows that "excess credits"—courses that exceed the minimum required for the degree—add around 27% to the average cost to produce a degree. Moreover, the four-year degree has incremented into a five-year degree for many students. Getting "excess" credits down to zero is probably not realistic or academically desirable, but getting them down to no more than an additional semester's worth of coursework is a good place to start. Eliminating excess credits also helps cut student costs to the degree—reducing the additional tuition and fees needed to stay in school, as well as foregone income.

• **Reduce attrition**. Patterns of attrition vary across different types of institutions. But in the majority of institutions, about 30% of first-time students do not persist to a degree. This translates into additional costs, not to mention fewer graduates. Studies of attrition and the costs of attrition show that most of the attrition for undergraduates occurs in the first two years of degree work, thereby increasing average degree costs by around 20%. (The cost is lower than the 30% figure that might be expected because unit costs are typically lowest for lower division students.) Attrition is most costly at the doctoral level—more than doubling the cost of graduate degree production. Most doctoral attrition occurs after students have been advanced to candidacy—clearly a huge loss in academic productivity.

• **Increase use of distance-based learning**. Technology offers an opportunity for increasing academic productivity by substituting distance-delivered instruction for classroom instruction. Studies of the costs and benefits of technology-enhanced instruction show that student learning can actually be increased in these models, so even if costs are not reduced (a hot topic and a debatable point in some studies), the learning outcomes go up.

Public perceptions to the contrary, higher education leaders are no strangers to budget cutting. But the dominant model has been to reduce spending through one-time strategies rather than through permanent reductions in core cost structures. If current trends persist, in 2025 the U.S. will have lower levels of educational attainment than most of the developed world. Turning this trajectory around will require sustained attention to the problem of educational inequality, and the leaky pipeline that persistently disadvantages first-generation and low-income students. Compared with that, solving the structural financial problem is small potatoes. But if we don't fix the financing side, through permanent restructuring of costs and greater attention to productivity, the failures of our funding system will be the reason our country fails in academic performance. Surely we can do better than that.

Administrative spending for activities as varied as executive staff, legal services and campus safety have been increasing faster than spending on faculty or student services.

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