



# Proposed Recommendations

NEBHE Policy & Research

December 4, 2017

The **Commission on Higher Education & Employability** is a regional endeavor of the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE). The Commission is chaired by Rhode Island Governor Gina M. Raimondo. Despite the region's strength in postsecondary institutions, employers remain concerned about a lack of qualified, skilled workers, particularly in technology-intensive and growth-oriented industries. The Commission has proposed a draft action agenda, policy recommendations, strategies and next steps to align institutions, policymakers and industry behind increasing the career readiness of graduates of New England colleges and universities—and facilitate their transitions to work and sustained contributions to the well-being and competitiveness of the region.

This Summit on **Employability: A National Imperative** is designed to expand the reach of the Commission and through the presentations, discussions of its panelists and direct feedback from participants, inform the Commission's action agenda and policy recommendations. We invite you to comment on these broad recommendations. Your feedback will also help inform further action steps for specific stakeholder groups including: institutional leaders and practitioners, policymakers and employers.

We invite all to comment on these recommendations by visiting [www.nebhe.org/commission](http://www.nebhe.org/commission).

The Comment period will run from Dec. 4 through Dec. 22, 2017. Thank you.

## Strategic Priorities

### Recommendations

- New England state higher education systems, governing and coordinating boards, together with New England's employers, should make increased employability of graduates a strategic priority—linked to the strategic plans, key outcomes, performance indicators and accountability measures for the higher education institutions under their stewardship.
- New England higher education institutions should incorporate employability into their strategic plans/priorities supported by efforts to define, prioritize and embed employability across the institution and in multiple dimensions of learning and the student experience—both curricular and extracurricular.
- New England should make strategic efforts and investments—at the state, system and institution level—to expand research, data gathering, assessment capacity and longitudinal data systems to enable more effective understanding and documentation of key employability-related measures and outcomes.
- New England higher education institutions should undertake formal employability audits to review the strategic, operational and assessment-oriented activities related to employability—and their effectiveness in embedding and measuring employability across the institution.
- To confront notable college-attainment gaps and the related personal and societal costs, states must consider specific employability strategies to target and benefit students who are at risk of not completing postsecondary credentials, including underrepresented populations.

## Labor Market Data & Intelligence

### Recommendations

- Key stakeholders, including higher education institutions, policymakers and employers, should develop detailed strategies and action plans for accessing and incorporating actionable labor market data and intelligence into key areas, including: institutional strategy, program offerings, planning, advising and career services, and internship and work-integrated learning opportunities.
- New England higher education institutions, employers, data providers and other stakeholders should launch a regional collaborative to develop shared labor market data and intelligence strategies, frameworks and analytical tools to effectively implement insights into action plans and into the region's economic development efforts.
- New England higher education institutions should develop a regional partnership for shared purchasing and contracting of labor market data, information and intelligence services.

## Planning, Advising & Career Services

### Recommendations

- New England higher education institutions should engage every student in undertaking their postsecondary studies with greater direction, using: clearer goal-setting processes, career-planning engagements, career-related assessments, expanded student knowledge of future-oriented labor markets, and greater supports to align education pursuits and career.
- All New England postsecondary students should have expanded access to the knowledge, experiences, skills and attributes related to greater employability, including an expansion of: job search skills, personal ownership of employability development, ability to proactively navigate the world of work, career-management skills, job-getting skills, readiness for lifelong learning and an informed understanding of the future of work and skills.
- New England higher education institutions should elevate planning, advising and career services as a key set of institutional priorities that improve not only graduate employability and outcomes, but also, enrollment, retention and completion.
- The New England states should launch and lead a New England Planning, Advising and Career Service Network—a collaborative community of practice to provide shared services and increase the availability of cutting-edge and best-in-class resources across all types of higher education institutions.

## Higher Education-Industry Partnerships

### Recommendations

- New England higher education institutions should engage with employers to play more purposeful roles in informing key aspects of institutions' work including: the definition of knowledge, skills and attributes all graduates should possess; academic program design; course content; work-integrated learning opportunities; planning, advising and career services; and creating better and more frequent interfaces between the institutions and the changing world of work.
- New England higher education institutions should work closely with employers and industry partners (including key senior human resources staff members) to better equip students with the ability to understand and articulate the knowledge, skills and competencies they acquire through postsecondary study—enabling them to better speak the language of employment and employers.
- The New England states should collaborate to launch multistate, industry-specific partnerships beginning with three of the top growth-oriented sectors, including: healthcare, life and biosciences and financial services, driven by the participation of key stakeholders from higher education, industry and government/policy.
- The New England states should develop aligned, inclusive calls to action for employers, students, postsecondary institutions and policymakers to market the region as a first-choice destination for higher education, business and industry, innovation and employment.

## Work-Integrated Learning

### Recommendations

- New England states and higher education institutions should significantly expand the number of students who successfully complete high-quality, work-integrated learning experiences—including in key industries and growth sectors important to New England's local and regional economies. Where possible, students should complete multiple experiences during the course of an academic program. Increased participation should work to address affordability, lower student debt burdens and ensure that students are work-ready and employable.
- In New England, higher education institutions, employers, policymakers and students should collaborate in exploring, developing and implementing policies (public and institutional) that incentivize businesses (through tax credits or other means) to expand paid internships. These policies should also work to retain students and graduates in our states and region.
- The New England states and higher education institutions should advocate for changes to federal student aid policies to increase funding for work study and expand opportunities to utilize these funds for paid internships with qualified employers.

## Digital Skills Bundles

### Recommendations

- New England higher education institutions should take a visible leadership role in developing and launching a strategic Digital Competencies Initiative to expand capacity to innovatively deliver the digital knowledge, skills and competencies required for graduate's employability in a fast-changing, technology-driven, global economy.
- New England higher education institutions should collaborate to develop curricular tools, technology, industry partners, resources and learning objects to aid institutions and students in digital skills acquisition across the whole of the institution and education experience—and utilizing both curricular and co-curricular means for enabling students to acquire digital competencies.
- New England higher education institutions should incorporate digital competences into key frameworks of essential learning outcomes that are achieved through high-quality postsecondary learning opportunities.

The Digital Skills Initiative (DSI) will provide HEIs with an executable framework for envisioning and addressing digital skills. It will identify, provide and support curricular tools, instructional and assessment resources and other services to assist HEIs to scale and deliver—and students to acquire—specific digital skills. The DSI will also address key organizational and policy issues related to HEIs expanding their capacity to increase students' employability through digital skills acquisition.

## Emerging Credentials

### Recommendation

- The New England states should collaborate to launch an emerging credentials initiative focused on mapping and detailing the in-demand, high-quality, growth-oriented credentials in two to three key sectors or industries that are critical to the innovation, competitiveness and growth prospects for high-wage jobs in multiple states in the region (e.g., healthcare, financial services, life/biosciences). This should include developing detailed pathways linking such credentials to postsecondary and other providers and demonstrating mobility between jobs, credentials and industries.

We invite all to comment on these recommendations by visiting [www.nebhe.org/commission](http://www.nebhe.org/commission).