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Going Online: CONNECTION’s Campus Newslink

WEST HAVEN, CONN.—The University of New Haven was awarded $2 million by the U.S. Department of Justice to establish the nation’s only academic center for crime scene training. …

NORTH ANDOVER, MASS.—Merrimack College and five community partners launched an initiative to strengthen math and science skills among middle-school students in nearby Lawrence, Mass. …

ORONO, MAINE—University of Maine food scientists received a $71,762 grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop nutritious snack foods from the byproducts of shellfish processing. …

RINDGE, N.H.—Researchers at Franklin Pierce College’s Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place and Culture began a major “Anthology” project to collect and record local New Hampshire stories and make them available to future generations. …

WARWICK, R.I.—New England Institute of Technology introduced a bachelor’s degree program in digital recording arts technology to prepare students for work in the electronic media industry. …

BURLINGTON, VT.—The University of Vermont College of Medicine received a $250,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to test technology designed to increase the survival rate of patients transported via ambulance in rural areas. …

For more than a dozen years, CONNECTION presented those types of newsy items in a rather understated news “department” at the back of the journal called “Campus.” Whether a $25,000 grant to study the commercial potential of sea cucumbers or a half-million gift to support women and minorities in engineering, the quarterly collection of campus bulletins adorned simply with wire service-style city lines captured the richness of New England’s diverse higher education enterprise and provided a nuts-and-bolts foil for the big ideas advanced by our distinguished CONNECTION commentators.

But delivering “quarterly news” is increasingly oxymoronic. Things just happen too fast on our campuses, like everywhere else. So with this issue, the stuff of Campus—grants, new programs, novel collaborations—moves to the Internet, where it can be continuously updated and where access to more indepth coverage will be just a click away.

The new online news source called CONNECTION’s Campus Newslink will feature not only news and developments from New England’s 270 colleges and universities, but also notice of special campus events open to the public. Like the old printed Campus department, CONNECTION’s Campus Newslink will be an egalitarian place. A new associate degree program in computer security at Springfield Technical Community College gets the same play as a multimillion-dollar Defense Department grant to Yale. And we save some trees in the process.

There is just one catch. In order to access CONNECTION’s Campus Newslink, you must be a Friend of NEBHE. So please visit www.nebhe.org/friends.html and become a Friend soon.

John O. Harney is executive editor of CONNECTION.
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**Letters**

**Labor vs. Capital?**
Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson’s “Bright Futures?” article in the Summer 2003 CONNECTION was wonderful! I enjoyed the outline of the dilemmas we face as policymakers trying to protect higher education in tough times. One point though—please try to use some other term for the value of human effort other than “human capital”—a term more appropriate for the human beings who built the pyramids. Under our system of economics, Adam Smith argues that there are three factors of production: land, labor and capital, making a clear and stark distinction between labor and capital. Another big difference: human labor cannot be owned, except by the person who labors; capital ownership can be transferred. It may seem like a petty point, but our language reflects our world view. Keep up the great work.

*David P. Magnani*
State Senator
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**Outdoor Education**
Monica Deady’s Summer 2003 CONNECTION article on “The Great Outdoors” caught my eye because Recreation Resource and Ski Resort Management is one of the flagship programs at Lyndon State College. Far from the leisure studies it may have once been, the program now includes bachelor’s degree programs in ski resort management, adventure-based program management and natural resource GIS mapping and planning as well as an associate degree in GIS/GPS. In fact, Lyndon recreation students are performing a considerable amount of GIS/GPS work for area towns and for the state of Vermont.

Last year, some of these students mapped culverts for local municipalities under the supervision of the Northeastern Vermont Development Authority. Others worked with the Balsams Ski Area in Dixville Notch, N.H. to generate 3-D models of sedimentation ponds for an environmental review. Still others collaborated with a local ecologist to generate a natural community map of the West Mountain wildlife management area, a 22,000-acre parcel located in northern Vermont, formerly owned by a large paper company.

While it was interesting to see what other colleges are doing in outdoor programs similar to ours, it was disappointing that Lyndon was largely left out of the article.

*Susan C. Gallagher*
Coordinator of Public Information
Lyndon State College

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**Reactions?**
CONNECTION welcomes letters to the editor. Please address letters to:
Editor, CONNECTION
45 Temple Place
Boston, MA 02111
Or email: jharney@nebhe.org

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Networked
The fastest-growing segments of New England’s job market require skills in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Yet many of the populations that are growing fastest in the region have been severely underrepresented in these fields.

The New England Board of Higher Education’s Science Network program aims to address this paradox. On Saturday, Oct. 4, more than 400 high school, undergraduate and graduate students interested in STEM disciplines—most of them black, Hispanic or Native American—converged on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the network’s 12th annual meeting. There, they met with more than 100 academic and industry professionals for a day of networking and information sharing.

The day began with some inspiration: University of Rhode Island biologist Harold Bibb, an African-American, implored the students overflowing MIT’s cavernous Sala de Puerto Rico ballroom to repeat: “I belong in math. I belong in science. I belong in engineering. I can do this.”

NEBHE President Robert Weygand urged them to call the advisors they would meet that day. “Don’t think you’re imposing on them,” he intoned. “They want to hear from you.”

Massachusetts state Rep. Marie P. St. Fleur, the nation’s first Haitian–born state legislator, told the students: “Don’t be fooled by this standing room only crowd, you are few and you are selected. You are ambassadors representing the diversity that is needed in STEM fields.”

Three “keynote” speakers then shared their personal accounts of STEM success. University of New Hampshire biochemist Lisa Boucher Clark, a Passamaquoddy Indian, described falling in love with marine science during a trip to the Marshall Islands with her father, an electrical engineer.

African-American computer engineer Moses McCall zipped an aerodynamically flawless paper airplane clear across the crowded room, as he described the hard work that led him to a job at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. “To think that something I make will be used by many people makes me smile,” said McCall.

Dartmouth Physics Professor Marcelo Gleiser, a Brazilian, told of being obsessed with nature as a child, finding and losing mentors in Brazil and encountering bias and low expectations in England. “You must have the fire in your belly,” said Gleiser, “because sometimes the support of others is not going to be there.”

Affirmative
The U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark rulings on affirmative action in college admissions last June sparked a barrage of emails from higher education associations proclaiming victory in real-time. And why not? The court’s 5-to-4 vote upholding a University of Michigan law school program that aimed to enroll a “critical mass” of minorities reaffirmed the principle that a diverse student body enriches everyone.

But the implications of the court’s 6-to-3 ruling striking down Michigan’s undergraduate admissions strategy are sinking in more slowly. The strategy automatically awarded 20 points—or one-fifth of all points needed to guarantee admissions—to every underrepresented minority applicant based solely on race. The supremes found that automatic preference to be too formulaic.

New England institutions that used similar point systems are working to comply with the court’s order that admissions assessments be “individualized” and “holistic.” In October, the University of Massachusetts announced it would abandon its system, in which students in the middle of the applicant pool were automatically awarded a half point if they were black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian-American, veterans, foreign students, graduates of low-income schools or members of the first generation of

Growth Spurts
New England’s share of fast-growing small companies is shrinking. Last year, 10 New England firms earned spots in the Fortune Small Business 100, which ranks small firms (annual revenue under $200 million) in terms of earnings growth, revenue growth and stock performance over the past three years. This year, just seven New England companies made the grade. …
their family to attend college. Instead, UMass will use essays and recommendations to determine an applicant’s potential contribution to campus diversity.

UMass officials said they were unsure how minority enrollment would be affected by a new admissions policy. But one impact is certain: the new type of assessments will add to the budget strain on public colleges and universities.

As former University of California Berkeley admissions officer Bob Laird wrote in the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s National Crosstalk: “Going from a process in which few or no applications are actually read in full to a process in which every applicant is given a comprehensive review means adding lots of readers, building a technological capacity to track and record individual and collective admissions decisions and developing the ability to evaluate the consistency and reliability of individual readers.”

Campuses and their lawyers also have plenty to consider regarding how the admissions rulings could affect other race-based practices such as financial aid, faculty hiring and pre-college enrichment programs.

Reflective Techies
News releases from the New England Institute of Technology tend to promote new programs in tech fields from automotive technology to CAD/CAM. So the Warwick, R.I., technical college’s recent announcement of new courses in the “The Changing American Family” and “The American Dream: Stories about Work and Working” caused a double take. The latter, developed by Jeanne Sjovall of the college’s English Department, uses contemporary short stories and short personal narratives about work to raise questions including: “Who am I? What do I want? What is my place in the world and my status within it? Am I useful? Am I fulfilled? Can I change my circumstances?”

Boys Just Want to Have Fun
About three-quarters of teenagers planned to work during this school year, according to a Junior Achievement/Harris Interactive Poll conducted at the end of the summer. More than half said they would work between one and 20 hours per week, but a few will work up to 35 hours. Harris Interactive also asked the teens what they spend most of their hard-earned money on and found a gender gap…

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment (movies, CDs, games)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Car</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saving for College</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investing</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Supplies</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping the Family</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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Nickel and Dimed on Campus
“It’s hard to concentrate in classrooms that were cleaned during the night by people who can barely make rent.”

— Columnist and author Barbara Ehrenreich writing on underpaid campus employees in the November 2003 issue of The Progressive magazine.

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Despite the economic downturn in New England’s technology sector over the past several years, science and technology-driven industries will create jobs at a faster pace than other New England industries over the next five years. By 2010, New England jobs requiring skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics—the so-called STEM fields—are expected to grow by 70 percent.

Yet the pool of talent to fill these jobs has not been fully tapped. African-Americans and Hispanics now account for 25 percent of the U.S. population, but just 6 percent of STEM workers.

Even more troubling, New England’s higher education institutions report declining overall enrollments in STEM fields. And in 2000, only 8 percent of the bachelor’s degrees awarded in science and engineering at New England colleges and universities went to graduates from underrepresented groups. In that same year, only 20 percent of New England’s African-American and Hispanic college-bound high school seniors said they intended to pursue STEM careers.

These numbers represent signs of weakness in New England’s ability to produce the scientists, technology whizzes, engineers and mathematicians who will be the wellspring of tomorrow’s ideas.

Our economy, rooted in innovation, cannot sustain itself without a growing cadre of scientists and engineers. And we cannot prosper without drawing on the talents of our growing African-American and Hispanic populations.

Addressing New England’s STEM shortage will require major changes, beginning in our schools where the seeds of discovery are cultivated. So what should we be doing to fix this problem?

First, New England should adopt alternative certification, differential pay and other innovations to recruit the very best K-12 teachers who understand STEM content but also know how to spark discovery in young students. We need to pay special attention to preparing and recruiting excellent teachers of color.

Second, the region’s schools and colleges should work together to make sure students in all New England school districts take the math and science courses in middle and high school that they need to succeed in these fields at the college level.

Third, our colleges and universities must develop meaningful support networks to help underrepresented students not only access college-level STEM majors, but also persist through undergraduate and advanced degrees in these fields.

Fourth, industry and academia should work in partnership to attract, nurture and prepare members of underrepresented groups for STEM careers and to develop corporate cultures that provide incentives and opportunities to make the most of that talent.

This type of collaboration between academia and industry has been the goal of the New England Board of Higher Education’s Excellence Through Diversity program for the past 10 years. The program seeks to create an environment in academia and business that supports the full participation of students and faculty who are underrepresented in STEM disciplines.

Now more than ever, we need to develop the foundation of the next innovation-based economy. If the composition of our STEM labor force mirrored the diversity of the population as a whole, the shortage of workers in these fields would be virtually eliminated.

Robert A. Weygand is president and CEO of the New England Board of Higher Education and publisher of CONNECTION.
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The adjournment of Congress in December signaled halftime in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. So far, the only significant action has been in the House where four bills have been passed (dealing with teacher preparation, loan forgiveness for teachers, graduate education and international education), two more have been introduced (addressing “affordability” and access to higher education) but not yet acted upon, and one final bill (on accreditation and student aid programs) has yet to appear.

The four bills passed by the House were largely bipartisan and, for the most part, non-controversial. The remaining bills are complex, controversial and potentially partisan. The hard work is still to come.

Meanwhile, the Senate has held two hearings on reauthorization, one on the cost of higher education and one on “intellectual diversity” on campus. Senate Democrats have introduced a comprehensive and complex bill that lays out their goals for rewriting the law. Senate Republicans, meanwhile, have not given any signal about their plans or timetable for drafting legislation. Nor has the Bush administration laid out its goals or proposals. Most observers believe it will do so in the near future—perhaps when President Bush announces his fiscal year 2005 budget in February 2004. But it’s possible, indeed likely, that the administration will provide only an outline of what it wants without much specificity.

Given the huge amount of work that remains to be done, it’s difficult to predict what will happen when Congress reconvenes. But several issues under consideration should be of particular interest to New England’s colleges and universities.

Student loan limits. Many higher education groups (but not all) and the student loan industry have recommended that Congress increase the amount of money students can borrow under federal student loan programs. The case for doing this is simple: the limits were last raised in 1992 (1986 for first-year students) and some adjustment is necessary simply to keep pace with changes in consumer prices. Failure to adjust loan limits in 2004 most likely means that no adjustment will occur until the 2010 reauthorization.

It’s hard to imagine that increasing loan limits would be controversial. But it is. A few college groups and associations representing students fear an increase in loan limits will make it easier for states and colleges to raise tuition, and that the change will only increase student indebtedness. Moreover, increasing loan limits even by a modest amount is a hugely expensive proposition and, given the federal budget deficit, any increases in spending are difficult to secure.

The issue is important for New England because the region is home to some of the nation’s most expensive colleges and universities. Since loans have become indispensable to financing higher education, it is important, especially for expensive schools, that students and families have access to loans with the best possible terms and conditions. Without increases in federal loan limits, students will most likely be forced to borrow money from more expensive private loan programs operated by banks. At best, this means they will pay more for college. However, some students—especially from families with uneven credit histories—may find themselves unable to borrow money at all.

Consider: in 1992, the average tuition at a New England private college was $14,039, and students could borrow $23,000 under the basic federal student loan program. In academic year 2003-2004, tuition averages $25,093, but students confront the same loan limits. By 2010, tuition will be higher, and that $23,000 loan limit will cover an even smaller share of the bill. This could be the most significant issue in reauthorization for New England, though it’s not as important for other regions.

Campus-based student aid. Three small federal student aid programs—Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOGs), Federal Work-Study and Perkins Student Loans—are collectively known as the “campus-based” programs because the federal government distributes money to campuses, which then match the federal funds and redistribute the money to students. The formula by which the funds are awarded was last changed in 1986 and is badly out of date. Many colleges, particularly in the West, Southwest and Southeast, receive a much smaller amount of money per student under this program than institutions in the Midwest, Middle Atlantic and New England regions. Indeed, some colleges in California that now enroll more than 15,000 students were not in existence when
the formula was revised. Any change in the formula is likely to reallocate funds in a way that reduces money going to New England colleges and universities.

A recent front-page article in *The New York Times* dramatically illustrated the inequitable distribution under the current formula. “The federal government typically gives the wealthiest private universities, which often serve the smaller percentage of low-income students, significantly more financial aid money than their struggling counterparts with much greater shares of poor students,” the article noted. The article did not tell the whole story, but it did encourage members of Congress from states that currently receive a modest share of funds to seek changes in the formula.

Fights over federal spending formulas that distribute money for anything—be it roads, hospitals, schools, day care centers or colleges—are mind-numbingly complex.

**Some policymakers have turned their attention to “reforming” colleges and universities.**

In the past, the House committee that handles reauthorization of the Higher Education Act—and which is overrepresented by states that do poorly under the current formula—has wanted to make modifications. The Senate committee, by contrast, is overrepresented by members from states that do well under the current formula and has resisted changes. This issue is non-partisan. No elected official wants his state or district to lose money. Will the Senate continue to prevail or will the House succeed in making modifications?

**Federal intrusions.** Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act usually focuses on federal student aid—who gets it and how much. This makes perfect sense: the federal government does not provide operating support for colleges and universities, it gives money to students and families and lets them purchase a higher education at the college that best suits their needs.

This approach has generally kept the federal government away from legislating on matters related to the basic mission of colleges. The strategy has been particularly good for New England, because it has helped low-income students pay to attend some of the world’s best colleges without forcing the awesome regulatory power of the federal government upon the core academic missions of these institutions.

But the hands-off attitude may be changing: the huge federal budget deficit will make it very hard, if not impossible, for Congress to make significant changes in spending. To compensate, some policymakers have turned their attention to “reforming” colleges and universities. Moreover, ideologically oriented concerns about such issues as “intellectual diversity” have encouraged some members of Congress to think that the federal government should take a more active role in managing colleges and universities.

The Republican chair of the 21st Century Competitiveness Subcommittee has introduced legislation to control college prices. His bill would also authorize the U.S. Department of Education to regulate the transfer of academic credit from one school to another. Senate Democrats have put forward a proposal that would require colleges to provide an enormous amount of data to the federal government each year regarding admissions practices. Still others want to modify accreditation and make it a more transparent process. And a proposed “Advisory Committee” on International Education would give a small number of politically appointed officials unrestrained authority to “investigate” professors to determine if their teaching is sufficiently pro-American.

The best-case scenario is that provisions like these would impose significant regulatory costs on colleges and universities. But there’s a far more ominous implication: they could alter the basic relationship between the federal government and higher education and give federal policymakers unprecedented authority over the day-to-day activities of colleges. This is not a partisan issue—both Republicans and Democrats have shown a willingness to expand federal regulatory control.

These are just proposals, and the reauthorization process has a long way to go. But the nature and range of these provisions far exceeds anything that colleges and universities have seen previously. Those who believe the federal government would never take such a dramatic step need only look at the transfer of authority over elementary and secondary schools that occurred under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Federal student aid has helped millions of low- and middle-income students go to college without harming the autonomy of colleges and universities. All institutions have been free to pursue their missions without fear of federal interference. Institutions that have fared well under the hands-off system have the most to lose from a rewriting of that relationship. So for New England’s colleges, the stakes are high.

In the past, New England’s colleges have worked closely with New England’s congressional delegation, and this has resulted in carefully designed federal policy that has allowed New England institutions to thrive. Still, because the federal government provides so much student aid through the Higher Education Act—now about $60 billion a year—this reauthorization will have a great deal to do with how Americans finance higher education in the years ahead. And because the federal government spends so much money on higher education, some policymakers think they can increase their level of control over campus activities. How New England institutions fare will depend, in large part, on their ability to work with members of Congress who may be looking at them in a new light.

Terry Hartle is senior vice president of government and public affairs at the Washington, D.C.-based American Council on Education. Chris Simmons is the council’s assistant director of government relations.
In the decades since passage of the Higher Education Act in 1965, far-reaching changes have taken place in opportunities for college and other postsecondary education. There is greater ethnic and racial diversity in the student population, a fairer gender balance and a new influx of working adults seeking better skills and wider opportunities in the workplace. This progress is comparable to that made after World War II, when a generation of veterans was educated through the G.I. Bill.

In this century, it is clearer than ever that the strength and security of the United States depends on the best possible education for the largest possible number of people, beginning as early as possible.

In 2002, President Bush and members of Congress in both parties worked together to pass the No Child Left Behind Act, which raises standards for students in public elementary and secondary schools and holds schools and states accountable for results. Now pending in Congress are bipartisan bills to improve the quality of early childhood education, help ensure that young children begin school ready to learn, improve special education and expand opportunities for job training for working adults. One of the most important priorities for Congress this year is to reauthorize and improve the Higher Education Act.

Education is the golden door of opportunity. But for too long, that door has been closed to many students because of their inability to pay. Surely, we have reached a place in America where we can say it and mean it: cost must never be a barrier to college education.

Social Security is a promise of retirement security, and Medicare is a promise of health security to all senior citizens. We should make education security a promise to every young American. We should guarantee the benefits of college education should be available to all, not just to a wealthy, white elite. In less than a decade, 8 million veterans benefited from the G.I. Bill.

In addition to the Higher Education Act, other notable measures were enacted during the 1960s and ’70s. A 1972 bill created basic grants to make college more affordable for low- and middle-income families. Since then, 79 million students have attended college with the assistance of these grants named for Sen. Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, who chaired the Senate Education Subcommittee for many years.

In 1993, Congress created so-called “Direct Lending” to make student loans more affordable. In the same year, Congress created AmeriCorps to encourage young men and women to serve their communities and get help paying for college.

Growing need
The need for college is obvious. Jobs requiring some postsecondary education will account for an estimated 40 percent of total job growth in the next decade. And people with college degrees earn 75 percent more than those without them.

But today’s soaring costs often put college out of reach for qualified students. In 2003, tuition and fees at four-year public colleges rose by an average of 14 percent; in 2002, they rose by 10 percent. For families in the lowest quarter of income, public university prices now consume more than 62 percent of income on average, compared with 42 percent in the early 1970s.

Federal student aid has not kept pace with rising tuition. Twenty years ago, a Pell Grant covered 80 percent of four-year college costs. Today, it covers 40 percent. Twenty years ago, the typical student aid package consisted of 60 percent grants and 40 percent loans. Today, the typical package is the reverse: 40 percent grants and 60 percent loans.

Each year, half a million high school graduates who are qualified for college do not go to college full-time because they cannot pay the bill. The average low-income college student has $3,800 a year in college costs not covered by grants, loans, work or family savings.

It is no surprise that students who begin college have trouble staying in college and graduating. Only 48 percent of students from upper-income families graduate from Southern and Western states, and today, more than 3.5 million students are educated in institutions created under the Morrill Act.

The next landmark in higher education came in 1944, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the G.I. Bill to help veterans who would be returning home when World War II ended. The nation took the first step toward the transforming principle that is a cornerstone of our democracy: the benefits of college education should be available to all, not just to a wealthy, white elite. In less than a decade, 8 million veterans benefited from the G.I. Bill.

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college by age 24, but only 7 percent of students from low-income families do. Minority and first-generation college students are 33 percent more likely to drop out.

Only 40 percent of whites ages 18 to 24 attend college; the figure is 30 percent for African-Americans and 16 percent for Latinos. Four in 10 Latino college students drop out within three years of enrolling.

Congress needs to do more to help students attend and finish college, and this requires doing more to help colleges train more and better public school teachers.

Last fall, Democratic members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee proposed legislation offering five key ways to overcome these hurdles. The proposal would help students pay for college by increasing the maximum Pell Grant by $450 next year. It would make repayment of student loans less costly by allowing students to refinance their already consolidated loans if the interest rate is reduced. It would encourage and reward students who work their way through college by exempting up to $9,000 of their earnings from financial aid calculations. It would offer extra incentives for minority and low-income students to complete college by tracking persistence rates and easing the transfer of credits from two-year to four-year institutions. And it would improve the recruitment and training of the elementary and secondary school teachers who are preparing the college students of the future by increasing Title II state and partnership grants by almost $200 million.

Fulfilling the pledge of “education security” requires new resolve by everyone: students, families, colleges, states and the federal government. Students should work to save money for college. Families should pay what they can afford. Colleges should commit to limiting increases in tuition. States should continue providing as much support as they can for students. Greater federal support should be made available to fill the gap that remains. It is time to make the promise of education security a reality for all citizens, not just for some.

**U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.**

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**Training in Freedom and Civilization**

Today, the American system of higher education is the envy of the world, due in large part to the leadership provided by New England’s colleges and universities. While American higher education has accomplished a great deal for New England and the nation, the system faces several challenges as it seeks to train the citizens and workers of tomorrow.

First, we need to develop a technologically literate workforce that will support the growing demands of business and industry. Obtaining a higher education is increasingly a prerequisite for a quality job and access to the American Dream. Recent studies reveal that over the course of a lifetime, the average college graduate earns about $1 million more than someone with only a high school diploma.

From advances in computers to medical research—and the marriage of the two in nanotechnology—many of the promising and expanding sectors of the economy are producing jobs that require college-level academic training in math and science, and knowledge about how to apply these disciplines through technology to produce wealth and income. So, America’s future prosperity rests on the ability of institutions of higher education to accommodate the demand for a highly trained workforce.

New England continues to lead other regions of the United States in human capital development, as measured by educational attainment. But in an increasingly global economy, with reduced trade barriers, we will face increasing economic competition from industrialized countries as well as emerging nations. It is important that New England’s colleges and universities work diligently to meet the demands of the evolving labor market and ensure that prospective students have access to the course offerings and high-caliber faculty necessary to meet this challenge.

As chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I will be spearheading the effort to reauthorize the Higher Education Act next year. It is my hope that we will be able to use that opportunity to promote better access to higher education, so all Americans will be able to participate fully in the workforce of the 21st century.

In addition to technical expertise, I believe college students also need a solid background in such core subjects as English, history, Western civilization, foreign languages and the arts. Unfortunately, good core curriculum programs are all too rare in higher education today. Those institutions that do have these programs, like New Hampshire’s Saint Anselm College, provide students with a basic understanding of America’s heritage and equip them to wrestle with the challenges we face in our modern world. It concerns me that on many college
campuses, core classes are being squeezed out in favor of a balkanized curriculum that does not provide this kind of basic, well-rounded education. While I do not believe the federal government should mandate changes in college curricula, I do plan to scrutinize those federal grant programs that already exist in higher education to make sure they are not contributing to this problem.

Finally, as our nation continues to persevere in the war on terrorism, it is vital that we train students to understand our common heritage of freedom and civilization. To accomplish that, we need to teach them about Western civilization, traditional American history and the principles of free government on which this nation was founded. This basic knowledge is not only essential to the full participation of our citizenry in America’s civic life, but also to the continued success of the American experiment in self-government. However, college students’ lack of knowledge in these areas is quite startling. One survey of students at America’s top colleges reported that, given a high school level American history exam, 81 percent of college seniors would have received a D or F.

To address this problem, I recently introduced the Higher Education for Freedom Act. This legislation would establish a competitive grant program to support centers within higher education that are focused on the teaching and study of traditional American history and government and the history and achievements of Western civilization at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Centers that serve students enrolled in K-12 teacher education programs would be included as eligible grantees. Although the task of preparing the next generation of workers and citizens will not be easy, it can be accomplished if we work together. Where the federal government has an appropriate role, I plan to make sure it fulfills that role responsibly. Where institutions have a role, I believe New England’s colleges and universities, which have led American higher education before, can be a model for others to emulate.

Education Is Welfare Reform

As Congress works to fine-tune our nation’s welfare reform program, we have a great opportunity to look toward states for guidance. In fact, a successful program for moving parents off the welfare rolls and into the workforce has been in operation in Maine for a number of years. The premise of Maine’s “Parents as Scholars” program is simple. Increased education is a critical factor in determining whether a person will be able to transition off welfare and keep a job with a decent income—one that allows them to support themselves, their children and their families.

Parents as Scholars has given hundreds of parents in Maine the opportunity to raise their incomes, by giving them access to higher education programs at the state’s two- and four-year colleges. The parents must be eligible for the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF), though they are supported by state money. Participants are held to high standards. They are expected to demonstrate commitment to their courses of study and maintain minimum grade point averages. While they can’t use the state money for tuition, they can use it to make sure they and their families have the services they need to succeed.

The results have been impressive. A recent study found that, given the tools to build their education, the participants in Parents as Scholars have improved their median wage by about 50 percent—from $8 per hour to $11.71 per hour. Seventy-one percent of Parents as Scholars graduates take advantage of their employersponsored health insurance, and most impressive, 90 percent of the working Parents as Scholars graduates have left TANF permanently.

These graduates’ personal stories are also impressive. Last year, I had the opportunity to personally meet six graduates of the program. Michelle had been sleeping on a friend’s couch with her infant daughter and had to hitchhike back and forth to work. Parents as Scholars gave her the assistance she needed to sustain her family, earn her degree and get a good job. Michelle now works with people with severe mental illness. And she has gone on, on her own, to earn a master’s degree in social work. She and her daughter are thriving—and her daughter has learned a lesson about the importance of education and hard work, from a role model she sees every day right at home.

Maine’s program is a model for other states to follow. The Senate Finance Committee recently adopted an amendment, based on my proposed Pathways to Self-Sufficiency Act, to expand the Parents as Scholars program nationally. Under this amendment, parents would be expected to meet the same hours requirements as other TANF recipients. But by letting them count their hours working in the classroom the same as hours at work, we will open the door for them to secure better jobs in

U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) is chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.
We should encourage parents who are on welfare to use that time to prepare themselves for economic independence.

the long run. The bill goes to the full Senate early in 2004.

The bottom line is simple: just as higher education increases the earnings potential of all individuals, it can also help an individual get off welfare and into a job with good pay permanently. We should encourage parents who are on welfare to use that time to prepare themselves for economic independence, whether by earning high school diplomas, receiving substance abuse treatment or pursuing longer duration vocational or postsecondary education. The state of Maine has shown that programs like Parents as Scholars can make a real difference. It’s a lesson worth sharing with the nation.

U.S. Sen. Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) is chair of the Senate Committee on Small Business. She serves on the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee and is chair of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries and the Coast Guard.

Toward College Affordability

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gress has begun the process of reauthorizing the Higher Education Act for the eighth time since the legislation was first enacted in 1965. Historically, the process has been bipartisan and not very contentious. This year, however, the Republican majority in Congress seems to be looking for ways to foment controversy and disagreement over reauthori-

zation of this and other education bills.

Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-Calif.), the chair of the House Education and the Workforce Committee’s 21st Century Competitiveness Subcommittee—aided and abetted by John Boehner (R-Ohio), the chair of the full committee—has seized on the topic of college affordability with House bill 3311, their proposed Affordability in Higher Education Act.

All committee members and a large part of the American population are struck by today’s tuition prices. Over the past decade, average tuition and fees rose by 47 percent, or $1,506, at four-year public colleges and universities and by 42 percent, or $5,866, at private institutions, according to the College Board.

Prospective students and their parents are stunned by the thought of paying such bills. They fear college will be out of reach. None of us who recall our own experiences or who have had children go through the process lack sympathy for this concern.

Congressmen McKeon and Boehner have apparently decided to respond by playing on families’ fears and drumming up anger aimed at the colleges. Relying on a blatantly unscientific study laced with unsupported assertions of fact and oversimplified “conclusions” about why college prices have increased, the bill’s authors promise to whip colleges into shape by: 1) arbitrarily establishing the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as a benchmark measure; 2) asserting that any college failing to keep price increases below two times the CPI for successive years warrants punishment; and 3) punishing students most in need of assistance as a way to punish those institutions that fail to keep prices “in check.”

Many people who recognize the need to improve college access and affordability nonetheless see problems with the bill’s approach.

First, the CPI is a wholly inappropriate measure for higher education. The “basket of goods” used to determine fluctuations in the CPI has little connection to the costs confronted by higher education institutions. Households don’t have to meet demands for new technology, increased post-September 11 security, salaries for qualified professors in an increasingly competitive market, rising energy bills for sizeable complexes and more.

Second, the fact that the authors backed off their original plan to take Pell Grant and student loan funds away from “offending” institutions of higher education is not enough. Punishing those that show price increases by cutting campus-based aid (such as Perkins Loans, Federal Work Study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants) still results in needy students paying the penalty for alleged administrative fault.

Institutions need to find ways to contain their costs and reflect that discipline in constrained tuition prices, and families need access to information on their success in doing so.

Democrats on the Education Committee are working on an alternative bill that would better promote affordability. The key is to utilize the U.S. Department of Education’s expertise to develop an appropriate Higher Education Price Index instead of using the inapplicable CPI. At the same time, we need to maximize the Education Department’s ability to gather and share existing information on systems’ and institutions’ successes at cost containment. The department should be directed to research new savings techniques and to work with campuses to implement effective methods.

Under the Democrats’ College Affordability and Accountability Act, House bill 3519, colleges that keep costs low and reflect that in affordable tuitions would be rewarded with increased financial aid to further help
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students. This, along with an enhanced Education Department website and a system for informing families early on about how much financial aid a student is likely to be awarded, would help families select an appropriate college.

Of course, we need state governments to do their part and reverse the troubling trend of radical cuts in state aid. This trend is arguably the single largest cause of public education tuition and fee increases. The McKeon/Boehner punitive plan would do little to help students in state universities and colleges that are wracked by huge reductions in aid. The New England states, and Massachusetts in particular, provide shamefully low state support for higher education, thus undermining the region’s reputation as an education mecca.

Under our alternative plan, states that reduce spending on higher education below their average for 1998 to 2003 would receive less federal money for education-related administrative costs (though not for student aid).

This price containment plan, combined with enhanced state support and increases in federal Pell Grant and Work Study funding, would help families. As we reauthorize the Higher Education Act, we need to give institutions of higher learning, families, students and states the support needed to ensure that college is a realistic, achievable goal for every student. Punishing students is not the solution. Cooperation in finding and implementing strategies to keep prices down may well be.


Priorities: The View from Congress, 1990 vs. 2003

In 1990, CONNECTION asked members of New England’s congressional delegation to rank the most important issues facing the region and the nation. Against the backdrop of polluted harbors and solid waste crises, members identified addressing environmental problems as the region’s No. 1 priority. Facing a federal budget deficit estimated at $169 billion, the members ranked deficit reduction the top national priority.

In September 2003, CONNECTION repeated the survey, laying out, for consistency, the same 20 policy issues. What a difference 13 years don’t make! The results are remarkably similar. (See below.)

In some respects, times have changed though. Several 2003 respondents wrote in concerns that weren’t on the radar screen in 1990: namely homeland security, prescription drug coverage and funding for the No Child Left Behind Act.

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<td>5. Education/training for dropouts, welfare recipients and displaced workers</td>
<td>5. Adult illiteracy</td>
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Note: In both the 1990 and 2003 surveys, CONNECTION provided members with a list of more than 20 policy issues and asked them to rank their top eight regional priorities and their top eight national priorities. CONNECTION also provided members with 15 education-specific policy issues and asked them to rank the top 5 in order of importance. CONNECTION assigned points for each ranking. For example, a 1 is worth 8 points, a 2 worth 7 points, etc. We then ranked each priority by total points.
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Last summer, in the midst of contentious debates about funding for New England’s public colleges and universities, a New York Times editorial warned that a deepening crisis threatens the future of public higher education nationally. The editorial cited rising tuitions and inadequate financial aid as a double whammy certain to reduce educational access for low-income students. The letters provoked by the editorial were stunning in their disdain for our schools. “I shed crocodile tears for our ‘poor’ state universities,” wrote one parent of college students. Another concluded that “turning down the tap of public largess seems a justified and even measured response—particularly given the needs of elementary education.”

Indifference and even antipathy to public higher education have grown. The belief that support for elementary and higher education is a zero-sum game seems particularly shortsighted in a 21st century New England economy dependent upon higher educational attainment at all levels.

New England gave birth to public higher education. But it is also home to the nation’s preeminent private institutions of higher learning. The New England states have special difficulty attracting support for their public higher education systems, because many taxpayers and policymakers perceive that the region’s rich array of private colleges is sufficient, or could be made sufficient, to serve the states’ needs. Indeed, the prevalence of private higher education has probably undermined the development of New England’s public systems from their inception.

Some critics of public higher education suggest that this heavily private model should be imitated nationally. They should take a closer look. Though private colleges enroll a larger percentage of students than public systems do in some New England states, this is not true in most of the country. Overall, 76 percent of America’s college students—more than 11 million—attend public institutions, not private ones, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. And no one has yet plausibly argued how private institutions would scale up to meet the demand now shouldered by public institutions.

Moreover, a 2002 study by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) reveals that most of the spots in the Bay State’s private colleges are reserved for out-of-state students. By contrast, 84 percent of first-time freshmen at public four-year colleges in the state are Massachusetts residents.

To understand why this matters requires consideration of the broad impact those graduating from our public institutions have on the economy. These students are more likely than private school graduates to stay in the state after graduation. In Massachusetts, a placement accountability system, which tracks “high-demand” degree areas, helps ensure that public college students develop knowledge that is important to employers. Unlike private institutions, whose programs of study are determined without reference to state needs, public institutions are involved in continual monitoring of regional economic development needs and they use this information to develop relevant program offerings. The results are measurable. According to MISER, fully 80 percent of degrees awarded by Massachusetts public institutions are in the high-demand fields of computer and information technology, mathematics and the physical sciences, engineering and medicine.

Taking a broad view of the impact of public higher education also requires understanding its public benefits beyond such relatively immediate economic gains. It is easy to make the case that a college degree increases individual incomes. U.S. Commerce Department figures put the average annual income of Americans who have only a high school education at $25,900, while the average for those with bachelor’s degrees is $45,400. This is a powerful motivating message.

But the more important message is that higher education enables New Englanders to achieve the American Dream in ways that dollars can’t measure. College graduates ages 25 to 45 are 70 percent more likely to vote and 71 percent more likely to do volunteer work than high school graduates of the same age. The better educated we are, the healthier we are, regardless of income. On any measure of social attainment, more education is an asset. And while these societal benefits hold true whether our degrees come from public or private institutions, the pub-
The public system undeniably ensures that more people obtain them. Underrepresented minority students—African-Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans—are the fastest-growing segment of New England’s population. Since these students are often from low-income families, one of the major determinants of whether they will attain postsecondary credentials will be the accessibility and affordability of public higher education. It is true that private institutions have exhibited strong commitment to recruiting and enrolling minority students. Nonetheless, low-income students face an average annual level of unmet need (the portion of college expenses not covered by the expected family contribution and student aid) of $6,200 at private colleges, compared with $3,800 at four-year public campuses, according to a recent report of the federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. Private campuses simply do not have the resources, the capacity or the mandate to serve the growing number of low-income, minority students. That will be an essential role for public campuses, which already enroll eight in 10 minority students nationally.

As public higher education in New England faces fiscal crisis and inadequate political support, I fear we have defined its contributions and its potential in terms too meek and too individualized to inspire broad loyalty. All major expansions of educational opportunity in this country—from the Land Grant Act through the G.I. Bill and the National Defense Education Act—have been based on the principle that higher education should serve not only individuals, but also public interests. To build a vital region in this century, we must develop and utilize our human capital to fuel the economy and create new industries. Privatizing public higher education will deprive the region of a responsive, flexible vehicle for achieving those goals. If advocates of high-quality public education are to win out against growing public unwillingness to invest in state colleges and universities, we must clarify the fundamental terms of our argument: strengthening our public higher education system is sound fiscal policy and sound social policy. The economic return on investment is both substantial and broad. Public higher education provides opportunities for the increasing proportion of low-income, minority and immigrant individuals in our population to participate in high-quality education and training programs. Our investments in public higher education do nothing less than preserve the dream of an inclusive democracy.

Blenda J. Wilson is president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. She previously served as president of California State University, Northridge, chancellor of the University of Michigan, Dearborn, and executive director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

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The appropriation of state funds carries with it a public trust, and all public institutions must adhere to performance measures and welcome objective scrutiny by external entities. The ongoing effort in Massachusetts to devise a broad array of performance measures for public colleges and universities appears headed in the right direction. The community and state colleges and the Board of Higher Education generally agree that an effective system of accountability can be built around issues of student access and success, regional economic and workforce development needs, cost-effective use of resources and quality data reporting.

But one troubling area of performance measurement is gathering attention. Some policymakers and commentators want community colleges to report their graduation rates in an attempt to use those rates as some purported measure of our quality. But graduation rates are an ineffective performance measure for community colleges. In fact, the core purpose of a community college runs counter to the notion that students should be on a strict timetable to reach their goals.

Part of the problem stems from the misnomer that community colleges are “two-year” institutions. Many students arrive at community colleges with goals other than degree attainment. They may enroll in one or two courses for specific job skills, or they may seek personal enrichment experiences. They may take a few selected courses to explore new directions, that is, to “test the waters.” If these students don’t graduate in two years with a degree or don’t graduate at all, that does not mean they failed to achieve their goals.

There are also many students who go to community colleges intending to earn a degree, but who bring with them a variety of issues that make degree completion in two years unrealistic. For example, 85 percent of community college students work full- or part-time while attending class; they never intend to complete a degree program in two or even three years. In fact, community college students who set the goal of earning a degree or certificate and actually do so deserve high praise, regardless of how long they take.

Other factors can prevent students from completing degrees or certificates within a two-year timeline. Some need developmental courses to prepare for college-level work. Some pursue college study intermittently because of personal reasons involving family, work, health or finances. Again, this says nothing about the effectiveness of an institution.

As open-admissions institutions, community colleges foster lifelong learning. We accept and support all learners, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. Some face challenges so great that they must temporarily step out or slow down before attaining their goals. Setting some artificial timeframe within which these students have to reach those goals fails to take into account the challenges they bring to the task. Rather, community colleges excel at giving these students the tools they need to progress toward those goals over time.

At its most recent commencement, Bristol Community College honored the accomplishments of more than 800 people. I asked graduates how many completed their degrees in two years; very few hands were raised. When I asked how many were working and had children or grandchildren (and, yes, even great grandchildren), the fallacy of relying on graduation rates became quickly apparent. Were they any less successful for taking more than two years? Were the ones who took one or two courses and moved on any less successful? The glory of the community college mission is that it allows students to set goals and accomplish them, irrespective of artificial, external timelines.

Certainly, graduation rates can be useful indicators of institutional effectiveness, but only when considered in combination with other performance criteria. Other performance indicators to assess access and affordability could include:

- Comparing student costs with the region’s per-capita income;
- Tracing the historical relationship between institutional tuition and fees and state appropriations;
- Identifying institutional efforts to increase financial aid (particularly to offset federal/state recisions);
• Delineating those selective academic programs that generate lengthy student waiting lists;
• Examining what policies are in place to monitor a student’s “satisfactory progress;” and
• Analyzing institutional budgetary expenditures not only by category (e.g., instruction, instructional support, administrative services, plant management, etc.) but also in comparison with peer institutions.

Some similar indicators for the category of economic and workforce development might include:

• The number of contracts with employers and the number of employees participating in those training experiences;
• Institutional efforts to prepare students for “critical need” fields;
• Surveys of employers and alumni about institutional effectiveness in preparing students to enter the workplace;
• Employment placement rates for graduates; and
• The number of the institution’s collaborative activities in economic and workforce development with community partners (K-12, higher education, business-industry, community-based organizations and public officials).

**Graduation rates can be useful indicators of institutional effectiveness, but only when considered in combination with other performance criteria.**

One of my favorite causes is to urge state and local public officials to include me as they woo CEOs of distant corporations to relocate in our region. The number of such presentations—and more important, the number of actual business relocations—should also constitute a key performance indicator for economic and workforce development.

There are many more examples of key indicators that graphically gauge institutional effectiveness. Of course, the grouping of institutions and the selection of peers requires much care. Should the same criteria apply to four-year state colleges and community colleges? Rural and urban? Large and small?

Moreover, it is important to note the distinction between these indicators, which assess institutional efforts, and the use of graduation rates, which address student persistence. So many personal factors discourage community college students from completing (or even seeking) a degree in a set amount of time, it is disingenuous to hold community colleges to that arbitrary standard. Our assessment criteria should focus on how we reach out to students, conduct the learning process, shepherd our resources and serve the community.

**John J. Sbrega** is president of Bristol Community College.
When Vermont girls have fun getting fit and communities benefit from health initiatives.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont and its HMO-affiliate, The Vermont Health Plan, are proud sponsors of major health, safety and fitness initiatives throughout our state. Run Girl Run teaches preteen girls the value and fun of nutrition and exercise. Eat Smart Vermont brings healthy choices to Vermont restaurants. The statewide tour of Here Today, the award-winning documentary, has spawned grass-roots drug prevention efforts in Vermont communities. All of these programs have one common goal: improving your health. To learn more about BCBSVT/TVHP sponsorship programs as well as the plan’s full line of coverage, visit www.bcbsvt.com
Tomorrow's pool of political, business and community leaders will likely come from today's higher education students. However, a recent survey of highly competitive colleges shows that graduation rates are over twenty points higher for white students than black students, and seven points higher for non-Hispanic white students than Hispanic students. This illustrates a significant achievement gap in higher education that could limit the development of a diverse group of future leaders - leaders we need to represent and reflect our increasingly diverse region.

The "Consortium on High Achievement and Success," initially convened by Trinity College in Hartford, is working on a solution. Now a collaboration of 35 highly selective private colleges, the Consortium is committed to promoting parity in academic achievement and satisfaction for students from all racial and ethnic groups. Funded through the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's Minority High Achievement initiative, this project confronts the problem of lower retention and graduation rates for minority students, and facilitates the sharing of strategies to promote minority student success. Ultimately, these efforts are designed to eliminate barriers to learning and enrich the campus experience for all students.

By working together, we can help assure that colleges create nurturing environments for a diverse group of students -- including tomorrow's minority leaders. For more information on the Consortium on High Achievement and Success, visit the Consortium's website at www.trincol.edu/depts/student-services/chas/ or contact Ms. Kidan Kassahun, project coordinator, at (860) 297-4173, or kidan.kassahun@trincol.edu.
Under President Roy J. Nirschel, Roger Williams University (RWU) has become more selective, expanded fundraising, reduced tuition discounting and improved graduation rates. His wife Paula is founder of the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women, a scholarship program that provides full scholarships to Afghan women. The Nirschels shared viewpoints on the importance of education opportunities during recent interviews with CONNECTION Executive Editor John O. Harney and NEBHE President Robert Weygand.

**University Couple**

Roger Williams University President Roy J. Nirschel on Issues in Higher Education ... and Paula Nirschel on Educating Young Afghan Women

Roy Nirschel on Roger Williams University ...

**CONNECTION: What steps are you taking to make RWU more diverse?**

Roy Nirschel: When people talk about issues of race strictly in terms of black and white, it’s an old conversation. My staff tell me we need more black students. I tell them we need more Cape Verdeans, more biracial students, more Dominicans. ... You can’t have a faculty that is all white and looks alike. Of the 24 new faculty we hired this year, four are African-American women, one is Native American and five have degrees from institutions in China, Africa, Bulgaria or Italy.

**CONNECTION: Do you think faculty diversity will allow you to bring in more diverse students?**

Roy Nirschel: No doubt about it. It’s very tough to sell students on our commitment to becoming a global university when they come to campus and see everybody is white. Our white students have said one of the few negatives about the university is that there is not enough diversity. They are used to being around students of different ethnic backgrounds. We have a program with Rogers High School, a predominantly minority high school in Newport, R.I., in which our minority students mentor Rogers students to help prepare them for college. In the past two years, a number of those students, mostly black, have come to RWU.

**CONNECTION: How would you respond to those who would levy taxes on RWU and other tax-exempt education institutions?**

Roy Nirschel: As a nonprofit, we aren’t structured to pay taxes. But we contribute in other substantive ways. We have a small operation in Providence. If we were to be taxed on it, it wouldn’t be that much. But when the mayor was trying to recruit Chief of Police Dean Esserman, who had been in New Haven and many other places, he didn’t have enough money to hire him. We happened to have a federally funded Justice System Training and Research Institute whose purpose was to work with law enforcement on training police and administrators. We said if you hire Dean Esserman as chief, we’ll hire him as our first executive in residence. It was a way of showing that we as a private university take our public responsibility seriously. Now, the police officers in Providence are engaged in our criminal justice program in ways in which the previous administration was not. They could have hit us with taxes and it would have gone into the bottomless pit of municipal government. This was a more strategic collaboration for the people of Providence.

When the governor announced his support for taxing higher education institutions, the Bristol town administrator calculated it would cost RWU $1 million if all our buildings were taxed. I said, “Do you know how many Bristolians we employ? Three-hundred and fifty three! We paid them $18.7 million.” I said, “Do you know how many of their children..."
went to RWU for free? Do you know how many schol- arships we gave through the police and fire depar- tments?” I said, “I’m not going to send you a bill for the $30 million that we do for the community; don’t send me a bill for the $1 million.” If the university were taxed, the average Bristolian would receive $48 in a tax refund and I’d have to lay off 35 to 40 people. There would be a lot of explaining to do at city hall.

Paula Nirschel on the Afghan Project …

**CONNECTION: How did you get interested in the Afghan Project?**

**Paula Nirschel:** I was glued to CNN after September 11, learning about our tragedy and, at the same time, learning about Afghanistan and the women of Afghanistan. There were a few documentaries about the difficult plight of the Afghan women, including living behind the screens of the burkas, draped in black. I became haunted by the images of these women, beginning to lose sleep, knowing I had to do something for them. I consulted with my husband and we decided to offer one full, four-year scholarship at RWU for an Afghan woman, and we challenged all the university presidents across the country to follow suit. I ended up with five scholarships after a few months of cultivating other institutions. Five women arrived from Kabul and Kandahar in the fall of 2003.

**CONNECTION: Are the students expected to return to Afghanistan?**

**Paula Nirschel:** Every student must return to Afghanistan after their education to be with family and help with reconstruction. Every student returns in the summer to be with family and to work at jobs that I locate for them ahead of time, to utilize the professional skills they are learning in the states.

**CONNECTION: What lessons do the young women offer to their American hosts?**

**Paula Nirschel:** Campus employees and students know that these young women have lived with so much injustice and inadequacies in their lives, and still they remain strong and positive. This is a lesson for anyone who witnesses it. We have been empowered and educated by these women on our college campuses.
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Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds from the top quartile of family income who earn a bachelor’s degree by age 24: 51%

Percentage from the bottom quartile of family income who do: 5%

Median estimated parental income of college freshmen at public universities: $74,711

At private universities: $97,007

At Catholic four-year colleges: $67,411

Of 25 most expensive private colleges in the United States, number that are located in New England: 12

Amount by which New England states cut spending after passing fiscal 2003 budgets: $925,500,000

Percentage of boys ages 8 to 14 who spend two or more hours home alone after school: 33%

Percentage of girls who do: 11%

Amount by which Massachusetts state spending on jails exceeded state spending on higher education in fiscal 2004: $14,000,000

Number of students enrolled in Southern Connecticut State University’s fall semester course on “The Simpsons”: 25

Number of graduate engineering students at New England colleges and universities: 7,964

Number of graduate engineering students at New England colleges and universities who are in the United States on temporary visas: 3,412

Number of graduate engineering students at New England colleges and universities who identify themselves as African-American or Hispanic: 281

Approximate total value of “pork barrel” funds specially earmarked by Congress to support projects at U.S. colleges and universities in 2003: $2,012,000,000

Share of U.S. total that was earmarked to support projects at colleges and universities in New England: 7%

Share of New England total that was earmarked to support projects in New Hampshire: 45%

Percentage of Greater Boston college graduates who leave the area after receiving their degrees: 50%

Percentage who move to New York City: 12%

Percentage who move to the Sunbelt cities of Austin, San Diego and Raleigh-Durham: 2%

Number of mentions of Cape Cod in Boston College alumni notes published during 2003: 65

Number of mentions of hip operations: 10

Sources: 1,2 Postsecondary Education Opportunity; 3,4,5 Postsecondary Education Opportunity analysis of UCLA survey of American college freshmen; 6 CONNECTION analysis of New York Times data; 7 CONNECTION analysis of National Association of State Budget Officers; 8,9 Junior Achievement/Harris Interactive Poll; 10 Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation; 11 Southern Connecticut State University; 12,13,14 National Science Foundation; 15,16,17 CONNECTION analysis of Chronicle of Higher Education data; 18,19,20 Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and the Boston Foundation; 21,22,23 Boston College
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