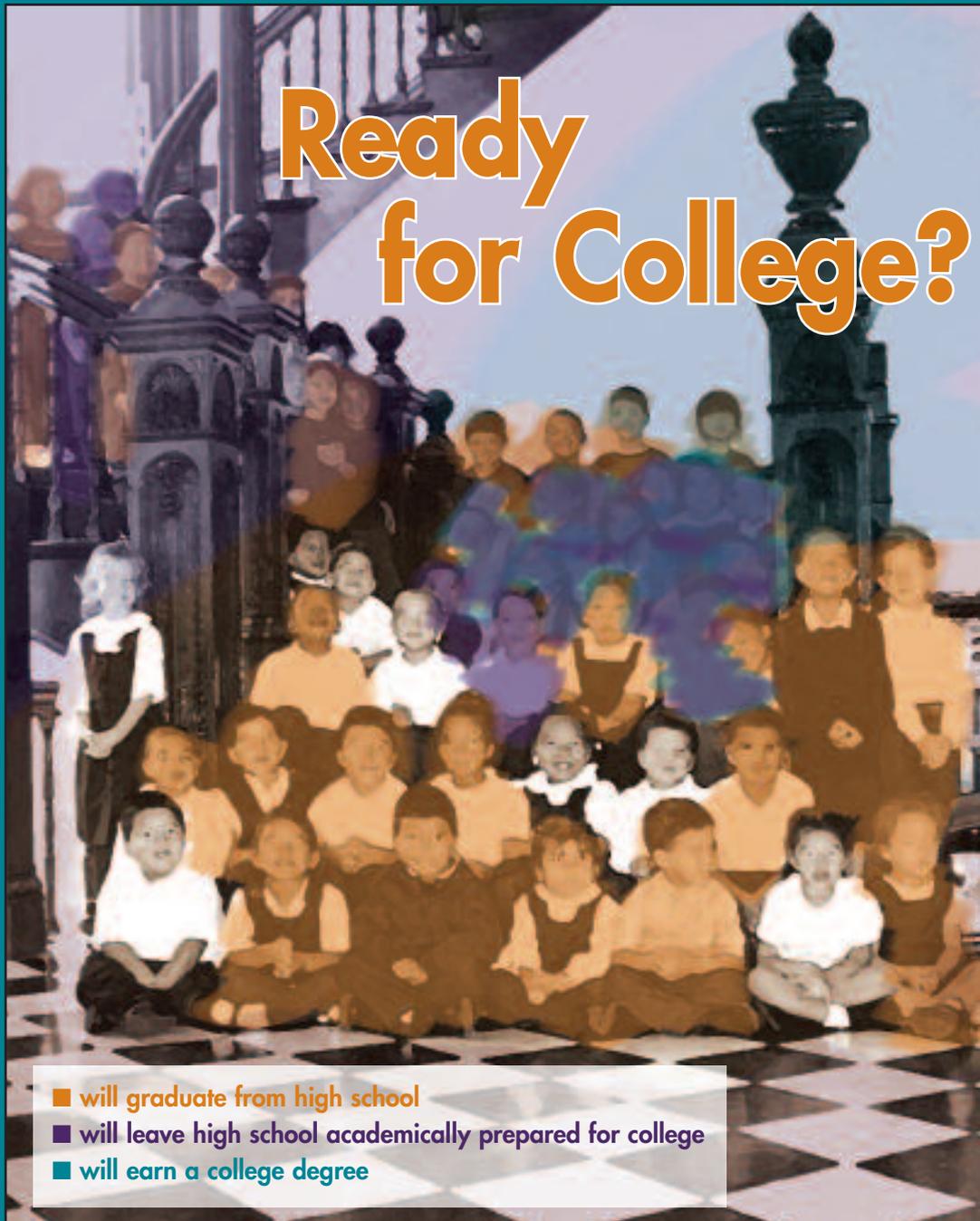


# CONNECTION

THE JOURNAL OF THE NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION



- will graduate from high school
- will leave high school academically prepared for college
- will earn a college degree

VOLUME XX  
NUMBER 4  
WINTER 2006

### *Inside:*

- New England Looks to Become "College-Ready"
- What States Can Do to Boost College Success
- Encouraging College-Going in Rural New England
- Connecticut's Lieutenant Governor on Fixing New England Higher Education



# *mefa*

## Easy Access

### More than just a loan.



The financial aid process can be **overwhelming** for students and parents. MEFA was created by colleges for colleges to help make higher education more accessible. Our only shareholders are the colleges, universities, parents and students of Massachusetts. We work with our **college partners** and **Tuition Management Systems** to provide a low-cost, simplified and streamlined educational financing process.



### Massachusetts Colleges and Universities

Through partnership with MEFA and Tuition Management Systems you can offer your students seamless, easy access to college financing, payment and financial planning needs. Plus we've got the expertise – and the programs – to “make the numbers work” for you and your students.



**WE MAKE IT PERSONAL.**

**WE MAKE IT EASY.**

**WE MAKE IT HAPPEN.**



#### TUITION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

*Helping Families Afford Education  
Helping Schools Prosper*



Tuition Management Systems provides innovative options for payment of educational expenses.

- Objective affordability planning and counseling
- Interest-free monthly payment options
- Best-in class lending partnerships

## *mefa*

Massachusetts Educational  
Financing Authority



MEFA, a not-for-profit state authority dedicated to helping families and students finance higher education costs through affordable and convenient financing options.

- Lowest cost education loan programs offering fixed and variable rate options
- Faster, streamlined loan processing
- College planning programs for high school students and their families

For more information, call 800-842-1531, ext. 502 or visit [mefa.org](http://mefa.org)

# Put the expertise of the NUMBER ONE BUILDER of educational facilities in the U.S.\* to work for your academic institution.

\*1998 - 2004 as Ranked by ENR



## Transforming Historic Structures

The restoration of the University of Pennsylvania's historic quadrangle created unique living spaces that meet today's life safety standards.

"...this feat is particularly impressive because of the logistics involved with working in the Quad...the stakes were so high. I'm just absolutely happy about it...pleased is an understatement."

Omar Blaik, Vice President for Facilities and Real Estate Services, University of Pennsylvania

## Successful Projects

A record of on time and budget projects

## Unparalleled Service

A company built on a foundation of client advocacy

**Gilbane**

[www.gilbaneco.com](http://www.gilbaneco.com)

## Creating State of the Art Learning Environments

The new 221,000 SF School of Pharmacy/Biology building at the University of Connecticut Storrs campus provides cutting-edge research technology and specialized laboratory areas.

"Building the School of Pharmacy/Biology Building demanded that our team be responsive and flexible to accommodate advances in technology. Occupied ahead of schedule in June 2005, the completed facility is an outstanding testament to the team approach."

John Parrinello, Gilbane project executive





At TERI, we believe that education is the key to prosperity and well-being – for individuals and society.

- Helping student and families pay for their education
- Promoting college access in our community
- Fostering partnerships and reforms so that a college education is an achievable dream for all young people

[www.teri.org](http://www.teri.org)  
31 St. James Street, 4th floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
(617) 426-0681

**TERI**<sup>SM</sup> Bringing A Better Future  
Within Reach<sup>SM</sup>



Photo reprinted with permission from Community Day Charter Public School, Lawrence, Mass.  
Color-enhanced by tpgcreative.

## COVER STORIES

- 13** Building a Pipeline for College Access and Success  
*Richard Kazis*
- 16** Levers for Change  
Steps States Can Take to Improve College Readiness  
*Andrea Venezia*
- 18** What Does It Mean to Be “College-Ready?”  
*Laurie L. Hazard and Jean-Paul Nadeau*
- 19** Are Colleges Listening to Students?  
*Michael C. Poindexter*
- 20** Short Shrift for Staffing Student Support  
*John K. Fisher and Joanne R. Wolfertz*
- 21** College Ready New England  
Regional Collaboration Explores Models for Readiness and Success  
*Michael K. Thomas*
- 23** College Graduation *Is* the Bottom Line  
*Greg Johnson*

- 25** Adults Must Be College-Ready Too  
ABE-to-College Transition Project Inspires Lives  
*Blenda J. Wilson*
- 28** College Material  
Tapping Rural Areas for the Next Generation of College Students  
*Stephen E. Abbott*
- 30** New Hampshire’s Get Ready for College Initiative  
*Stephen Reno and René A. Drouin*

## COMMENTARY & ANALYSIS

- 33** Fix Higher Education ...  
*Before It Breaks!*  
Challenges and Opportunities for New England  
*Kevin B. Sullivan*

## DEPARTMENTS

- 5** Editor’s Memo  
Ready Yet?  
*John O. Harney*
- 7** Short Courses
- 9** Message from the President  
Reform for College Readiness  
*Evan S. Dobbelle*
- 36** Data Connection

# [ Community Outreach ]



## **“They give flu shots to high-risk individuals.”**

Community outreach and health education are important roles for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont. Each year, we provide flu vaccine to Vermont seniors and other high-risk individuals. While people of all ages and health status can get the flu, some people become much sicker, however, and many need to be hospitalized. BCBSVT funds the serum that Vermont’s home health agencies use to service these populations.

For more information please visit [bcbsvt.com](http://bcbsvt.com).

the signs of a healthier vermont



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Vermont**

An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

[bcbsvt.com](http://bcbsvt.com)

# CONNECTION

THE JOURNAL OF THE NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

CONNECTION: THE JOURNAL OF THE NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION is published five times a year by the New England Board of Higher Education, 45 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111-1325  
Phone: 617.357.9620 Fax: 617.338.1577  
Email: connection@nebhe.org

Vol. XX, No. 4 Winter 2006  
ISSN 0895-6405

Copyright © 2006 by the New England Board of Higher Education.

**Publisher:** Evan S. Dobbelle

**Executive Editor:** John O. Harney

**Senior Director of Communications:**

Charlotte Stratton

**Design and Production:** tpgcreative, Boston, MA

**Back Issues:** Back issues of CONNECTION are accessible on the World Wide Web at [www.nebhe.org/connection.html](http://www.nebhe.org/connection.html). Hard copies of regular issues may be purchased from NEBHE for \$3.95 each; annual directory issue, \$20.

For advertising information, contact Jodie LaBombard at [jlabbombard@nebhe.org](mailto:jlabbombard@nebhe.org).

CONNECTION is printed in New England.

CONNECTION is indexed and abstracted in EBSCOhost's Academic Search Elite, Academic Search Premier and Professional Development Collection, and indexed in PAIS International, the MLA International Bibliography and ERIC's Current Index to Journals in Education.

The New England Board of Higher Education is a nonprofit, congressionally authorized, interstate agency whose mission is to promote greater educational opportunities and services for the residents of New England. NEBHE was established by the New England Higher Education Compact, a 1955 agreement among the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

**Chair:** Senator Lou D'Allesandro,  
New Hampshire State Senate

**President:** Evan S. Dobbelle



## CONNECTION Editorial Advisory Board

**Cathryn Addy**

President, Tunxis Community College

**Katherine Sloan**

President, Massachusetts College of Art

**Robert Whitcomb**

Vice President and Editorial Pages Editor,  
*Providence Journal*

**Ralph Whitehead Jr.**

Public Service Professor, University of Massachusetts

**Robert L. Woodbury**

Former Chancellor, University of Maine System

## EDITOR'S MEMO

# Ready Yet?

Only seven in 10 ninth-graders in U.S. public schools graduate with their high school class four years later, and of those, only about half leave high school with the necessary sequence of courses and basic reading skills to apply to four-year colleges, according to a widely referenced study by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. For minority students, the figures are worse. Only 23 percent of black students and 20 percent of Hispanic students leave high school “college-ready.”

Meanwhile, the standardized test company ACT reports that just 22 percent of the 1.2 million high school students who took the ACT assessment in 2004 achieved scores that would deem them ready for college English, math and science. More than half of high school graduates who do go on to college need remedial courses once they get there. And half of those who enroll in college as freshmen do not complete degrees within five years.

To be sure, business imperatives and political agendas muddy the waters. The ACT wants to convince people that performance on its exams correlates with college success. The Manhattan Institute wants to suggest that blacks and Hispanics are under-represented in college not because of shrinking student aid or weakened affirmative action policies, but rather because their local schools do not prepare them adequately.

Biases aside, people who don't earn college degrees can generally expect low-paying jobs and a life of disadvantages. So “college readiness” is very much a matter of economic and social justice. Which is why New England Board of Higher Education and others have tagged this as a priority issue in higher education and economic development.

Questions abound. Why in today's Knowledge Economy is there *any* gap between what high schools require for graduation and what four-year colleges require for admission? Why do schools continue to sort students into “college” and “non-college” tracks when critical thinking is increasingly required for all aspects of civic and work life, whether a student is college-bound or not? How can school districts ensure that all students are college-ready when parents of the brightest kids want scarce funds directed to enrichment?

And more: What are the special problems faced by sub-populations such as students whose parents did not go to college, students with disabilities, single mothers, working adults? How does declining public support for higher education affect student decisions about where to go to college or whether to go at all? Why, despite the emergence of a massive testing industry that professes to measure merit, is a lackluster student from a rich family still more likely to be enrolled in college than a bright kid from a poor family?

One national coalition of education groups and foundations that has been focused on these problems quite a while, the Pathways to College Network, sees five main strategies to ensure success: 1) encourage schools to make a rigorous college-prep curriculum the standard for all students; 2) improve college marketing access campaigns that aim to influence the college-going behaviors of underserved students; 3) encourage early financial aid and early notification programs for underserved students; 4) persuade colleges to improve retention of underserved students; and 5) pursue research that can inform effective policies and practices.

Some other strategies need consideration as well. Thoughtful people are talking again about national service—not only as a way to revive civic engagement and add a check and balance to military misadventures, but also as a way to universalize college readiness. Is it time to *require* all young Americans to choose from a menu of military and public service options?

Most importantly, the readiness shortfall is not only a “pipeline” problem. Colleges play a role too. They need to recognize and value more complex qualities in applicants than completion of the prescribed sequence of algebra and physics courses, take some chances in their admissions decisions and show as much interest in student support activities as they do in shiny athletic centers.

*John O. Harney is executive editor of CONNECTION. Email: [jharney@nebhe.org](mailto:jharney@nebhe.org)*



“Today at school  
I learned yellow and red  
make orange,  
and how to get  
tax-free withdrawals,  
a wide range of  
investment options,  
and flexibility.”

“I learned about the 529 *CollegeBoundfund*.

“I also learned how I can use it for any accredited higher education institution in the United States. Undergraduate or graduate, vocational or technical, all are included in this powerful way to prepare for college.

“You can also choose from a wide range of investment options to suit the individual investment styles of different investors. And, special gift and estate tax rules apply to section 529 plans, like *CollegeBoundfund*.

“Choose the 529 *CollegeBoundfund* for your child or grandchild. It’s a gift that will last a lifetime.”

## CollegeBoundfund<sup>®</sup>

888 324-5057

[www.collegeboundfund.com](http://www.collegeboundfund.com)

*You should consider the investment objectives, risks and charges and expenses of the CollegeBoundfund carefully before investing. For a free copy of the Program Description, which contains this and other information, visit our website at [www.alliancebernstein.com](http://www.alliancebernstein.com), or call your financial representative or AllianceBernstein at (888) 324-5057. Please read the Program Description carefully before you invest.*

If you are not a Rhode Island resident or if you have taxable income in another state, consider whether that other state offers a similar plan with favorable state tax income or other benefits not available if you invest in the *CollegeBoundfund*. Under a “sunset provision,” the federal tax exemption for earnings on qualified withdrawals is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2010, unless extended by Congress. As with all tax-related decisions, consult your tax advisor. Statements in this material concerning taxation are not offered as individual tax advice. Investors should consult with their tax advisor or contact their state tax division for more information before investing.

The investments in the *CollegeBoundfund* (“CBF”) are not guaranteed by the State of Rhode Island, or the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority. The CBF is managed by Alliance Capital Management L.P. and distributed by AllianceBernstein Investment Research and Management, Inc., member NASD.

Investment Products Offered

Are Not FDIC Insured May Lose Value Are Not Bank Guaranteed

### Smart Growth

Poll after poll reveals that lack of affordable housing is a major reason educated young people leave New England. Yet many New England communities discourage construction of affordable homes for fear that new families will cost more to educate in local schools than they will pay in local property taxes.

Massachusetts may have found an answer to the conundrum in its recently passed Chapter 40S law. To understand 40S, first consider Chapter 40R, the state's year-old Smart Growth Housing law. Chapter 40R provided incentives to build high-density multifamily and single-family housing near transit stations, in town and city centers and at underutilized commercial properties. But it didn't address the school cost dilemma. Now, 40S—provides a sort of "insurance"—by promising additional state education dollars to communities whose net school costs rise as a result of adding moderately priced housing under the smart growth law.

The population of 20- to 24-year-olds grew by about 6 percent nationally between 2001 and 2003, but decreased by almost 12 percent in Massachusetts, partly because of the Bay State's staggering housing prices. Northeastern University economist Barry Bluestone, whose Center for Urban and Regional Policy helped craft the legislation, notes: "We are losing the young men and women we need to help our economy grow—why would they remain here and struggle to find affordable housing when they can move to Chapel Hill or other attractive communities and have a substantially higher standard of living on the same or lower income than they now get in Massachusetts?"

Bluestone says 40S offers a model for using academic social science to solve real-world problems. His center produced a major research report on the housing problem in 2000, and within a couple years, was issuing annual housing report cards to keep people's attention on the issue. By 2003, the center had built a strong

enough coalition of housing advocates, business leaders and others to pass 40R. Says Bluestone: "This legislation offers a model of how higher education can play a new critical role in important policy areas."

### Searching for Engines

A few years back, the New England Council put the "creative economy" on New England's radar screen with a study by Mount Auburn Associates showing that the region's collection of cultural institutions, artists, design firms and so on, account for 245,000 jobs and that their number was growing faster than the rest of the economy. Now, representatives of the region's oldest business organization have their eyes on another potent New England sector: the marine economy.

The science and technology slice of New England's marine economy alone employed nearly 39,000 people and produced annual sales of almost \$5 billion in 2004, according to a May 2005 report by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute. Council representatives have begun meeting with economists and others to see how the marine sector might be analyzed and promoted on a regionwide level.

Vermont may not figure as prominently as its neighbors in marine sciences (though some believe an errant sea creature inhabits Lake Champlain). On New England's West Coast, University of Vermont President Daniel Fogel has begun urging business leaders to pursue leadership in a related endeavor that fits the Green Mountain State's green reputation: the environmental industry.

### Clarifications

We inadvertently omitted Vermont Law School from CONNECTION's 2005 Directory of New England Colleges and Universities. For more on the South Royalton, Vt.-based private law school, visit: [www.vermontlaw.edu](http://www.vermontlaw.edu)

\*\*\*\*

Add a 10th name to CONNECTION's compilation of New England college presidents who have led their institu-

tions for 20 years or more ["Dean of Presidents?," Spring 2005]. Lawrence H. Mandell founded Woodbury College in 1975 and began his tenure as president of the Montpelier, Vt., college in 1982.

### SNIPPETS

#### Harvard Land

"One Massachusetts businessman [commented] that on a recent trip to China, he met very few Chinese who had heard of Massachusetts or Boston. But they did know Harvard. He ended up identifying where he came from as 'the place where Harvard is located.'"

—Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Executive Vice President Lynn E. Browne, writing in "The New England-China Relationship in 2005," a working paper published by the Boston Fed's New England Public Policy Center.

#### College Readiness in a Time of War

"Kick Ass in College: A Guerrilla Guide to College Success"

—Title of new book by University of Texas in Austin academic counselor Gunnar Fox.

#### Friday on His Mind

"We should support the teaching of more classes on Friday mornings and to support this we should give exams only on Friday mornings. We would make a significant contribution to stopping the Thursday night 'club night' attitude and practice of RI College students. Their parents would thank us for keeping their students' 'nose to the grindstone' and out of harm's way ..."

—From an open letter by Rhode Island College biology professor Lloyd Matsumoto published in November by RIC's student newspaper The Anchor.



Every fall, new  
students flock to  
New England to  
**LEARN**

## ...But four years later, where do they go to **EARN?**

While the economic edge provided to New England by colleges and universities is well-documented, the importance of these institutions' ability to attract young people into the region has long been underappreciated. Today, for our region, the decisions those young people make about where they live after college are more important than ever.

Recently a team of researchers from the University of Connecticut and the University of Massachusetts examined the effects of colleges and universities on New England's population and workforce growth in a new report, "HIGHER ED MATTERS..."

To read this research brief, please visit  
[www.nmefdn.org](http://www.nmefdn.org)



Nellie Mae  
Education  
Foundation

Opening Doors to Tomorrow

1250 Hancock Street, Suite 205N • Quincy, MA 02169-4331

Tel. 781.348.4200 • Fax 781.348.4299



## Reform for College Readiness

EVAN S. DOBELLE

Most Americans see college as the Great Equalizer. If a student can only open those doors, the thinking goes, then a degree, a good job and a middle-class life will follow.

But before first-year students arrive on campus, they have already spent a dozen or so years in schools of uneven quality and grown up in homes with varying levels of interest in education and exposure to books, to art, to the world. Those prior experiences have a profound impact on how well they will adapt to postsecondary study.

In fact, “college readiness” correlates strongly with the wealth of home communities. Students from wealthier areas usually have parents who are themselves college graduates, and who expect their children to complete four-year degrees. They attend better-funded public schools that emphasize college preparation.

Students from lower-income backgrounds, on the other hand, are more likely to come from homes where neither parent attended college. They may need to take care of relatives or work part-time jobs to help support families, and are thus distracted at school. And rather than being encouraged to go to college, they may encounter teachers and school staff who have lowered expectations of success.

A few school finance reforms and some equitable admissions practices would go a long way in making New England a model for college readiness.

For example, the general difficulty of being poor is compounded by the fact that K-12 education is funded mostly through local property taxes, rather than through statewide levies. That means poorer communities with lower property values get underfunded schools. In these communities, school buildings themselves often resemble

warehouses. Elementary schools likely lack the kinds of preschool programs that are great predictors of later success. High schools offer no model of the sort of critical thinking that students need in order to go farther. The grim result is a college-readiness gap that is all about socioeconomic class.

Some states have expanded their role in school financing to smooth out inequities among communities. Massachusetts in particular passed the 1993 Education Reform Act that established a baseline funding level per student and allocated state monies to meet the need.

But by relying to any considerable extent on local communities to fund local schools, we condone unequal education by class and race. And that costs us dearly in the long run, as less-educated citizens incur higher health care costs than their college graduate neighbors, put more strain on public assistance and criminal justice programs and give back less in taxes and charitable donations.

A Columbia University symposium held in October reveals that if one third of all high school dropouts earned high school diplomas, the United States could save \$10.8 billion in food stamps, housing assistance, and spending on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. If 600,000 recent high school dropouts were to attain one more year of education, the United States could save nearly \$42 billion in health care costs. One more year of schooling on average would reduce murder and assault by almost 30 percent, motor vehicle theft by 20 percent, arson by 13 percent, and burglary and larceny by about 6 percent.

The question is: do we want to spend our state taxes on quality education at about \$13,000 per student-year, or on jails at \$27,000 per inmate-year?

There’s no getting around it: better education is a winning investment. We need to make sure every student in every community has a fair shot at the returns on that investment by ensuring that schools are funded equitably.

Meanwhile, college officials also have a clear role to play in better reaching young people. Too many just admit traditionally defined “college-ready” students and leave the rest behind. This is what increasingly popular merit-based financial aid programs do in effect. And why not? More accomplished and generally better-heeled entering classes mean more successful alumni and greater institutional prestige. Admitting wealthier students also increases tuition income and protects institutional student aid budgets because well-off kids on merit aid pay at least some of the freight.

But I trust no one works in education to just count beans. Educators, I believe, are idealists by nature, who want to improve society and the lives of their students. And society improves only if colleges take a chance on students who may not be college-ready by traditional definitions but are at least “ready to be college-ready” if afforded the right combination of remedial courses and academic support networks.

Today’s Knowledge Economy demands that college officials roll up their sleeves and work alongside governments, pre-K-12 educators and other partners to prepare more students for college success and, in doing so, to confront head-on the thorniest challenge of American life: creating equality of opportunity in an unequal society.

---

*Evan S. Dobelle is president and CEO of the New England Board of Higher Education and publisher of CONNECTION. Email: edobelle@nebhe.org.*

*Above and Beyond*<sup>SM</sup>

**The successful financial management of a college or university requires a variety of products and services.** And since no two higher education institutions should take into account your unique business practices.

**TD Banknorth Higher Education Group is your path to success.**

- Cash Management
- Investment Management\*
- Insurance\*
- Deposit and Lending Services

A TD Banknorth relationship manager will meet with you to review your needs, recommend key strategies, and customize a suite of financial products to help you achieve your goals.

We'll go above and beyond to help you succeed. Begin by meeting with your local advisor. Call 800 833-2098.



**Banknorth**

Higher Education Group

**[TDBanknorth.com](http://TDBanknorth.com)**

\*Investment and insurance products: not a deposit; not FDIC insured; not insured by any federal government agency; not guaranteed by the bank or any affiliate; and, may be subject to investment risk, including possible loss of value. Insurance products are offered through TD Banknorth Insurance Agency, Inc. or TD Banknorth, N.A.

**For university involves an intricate balance of**  
education institutions are the same, your strategy  
practices, environment and management structure.



800 833-2098

# Plan wisely.

# Build smart.



*Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Boston Campus*

The Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences has been preparing the region's top health care professionals since 1823. But with national shortages in the health care workforce, the College needed to expand its student body, its academic offerings, and its physical space. School officials turned to us. We issued a \$51 million tax-exempt bond allowing them to expand and renovate their Boston and Worcester campuses, meeting the College's needs and the needs of the health care community. That's what we do. Our experienced team provides creative business solutions, tax-exempt bond financing, and loans at competitive rates to help nonprofits in Massachusetts grow. So give us a call. Because when it comes to smart financing and business solutions, we're your prescription for a successful project.



**MASSDEVELOPMENT**  
Build. Create. Innovate.

160 Federal Street, Boston, MA 02110  
800.445.8030 [www.massdevelopment.com](http://www.massdevelopment.com)

# Building a Pipeline for College Access and Success

RICHARD KAZIS

**T**he message that college matters is getting through to more and more young people. In survey after survey, more than 90 percent of young people say they want to go to college. And indeed, the percentage of high school graduates who continue their education the next fall rose from about 50 percent in 1980 to more than 60 percent by the mid-1990s. Young people understand that a middle-class lifestyle increasingly requires at least an associate degree.

Not only do young people want to go to college, but they will go to incredible lengths to overcome barriers. Among high school dropouts, according to a recent analysis by Boston-based Jobs for the Future, more than half find their way back to secondary learning programs and ultimately earn a high school diploma or GED. Remarkably, six out of 10 high school dropouts who earn a diploma or GED enroll in some college program by the time they reach age 25, according to a Jobs for the Future analysis of data from the National Education Longitudinal Study.

Yet the percentage of college students actually completing a two- or four-year degree has not increased significantly in more than 30 years. About 30 percent of incoming ninth-graders do not graduate from high school four years later. And too many students who start college fail to earn a degree: about half of all community college students and one in four students in four-year institutions are gone by the start of their second year. College students who earned a GED rather than a high school diploma have a very slim chance of success: fewer than 5 percent earn any college credential.

The message that isn't yet getting through to students, their parents and their schools is that to succeed in college, you need to be academically ready to do college-level work. Just showing up isn't enough. College completion correlates highly with academic preparedness for college-level work. Yet, according to one study, only 32 percent of high school graduates are academically prepared for college-level work with no remediation. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than six in 10 community college students and four in 10 four-year college students need to take at least some remedial coursework.

College readiness is distributed quite inequitably. The lower your family income, the more likely that the combination of family background, community of residence and school and teacher quality will leave you unprepared for college success—whether or not you get a diploma after 12th grade. The overwhelming

majority of low-income young people who enter college are at best minimally qualified for college-level work.

It is not surprising—though it is shocking—that while about 70 percent of young people from the most affluent fifth of our nation's families complete college, only a little more than 10 percent of young people from the least affluent quintile ever earn a college degree. While many factors that correlate with income contribute to this disparity, there is no question that academic preparedness for college is a major determinant of who succeeds and who doesn't.

## A divide

It would be easy to pin the blame for this situation on the K-12 system and leave it at that. If high schools (particularly urban high schools) better prepared students of all income backgrounds, colleges would enroll and graduate them. But that would be misreading both the problem—and a significant part of the solution.

**The lower your family income, the more likely that the combination of family background, community of residence and school and teacher quality will leave you unprepared for college success—whether or not you get a diploma after 12th grade.**

To reduce the high attrition among students before they complete college, we need to overcome the long-standing separation between K-12 and higher education systems, each of which developed in isolation through much of the 20th century. The disconnects between these systems—with their distinct and discontinuous academic standards, financing, accountability mechanisms, information management, and governance—create significant obstacles to successful transitions through college, particularly for students with little or no family experience with college-going.

At the same time, policy efforts to overcome that separation—which are beginning to emerge in various states—can make a large contribution to helping more young people make it through college.

## Think pipeline

Increasingly, governors and state policymakers are reconceptualizing public education as a K-16 (or perhaps better yet, Pre-K-20) “pipeline” rather than a set of distinct systems. The metaphor makes visible how

students “flow” in and out of different institutions, at which points and for which students the leaks are most serious, and how to target institutional and systemic improvement efforts to plug the leaks. In this framework, high school completion becomes a means rather than an end, a transition point in the progression to a college credential.

A recent book of essays edited by Jobs for the Future staff (*Double the Numbers: Increasing Postsecondary Credentials for Underrepresented Youth*, Harvard Education Press, 2004) points to a set of policy approaches that echo the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s findings on how states can best pursue K-16 reform. [See “Levers For Change,” p. 16.]

**Alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.** While most states are working hard to raise standards for graduating from high school, even those that have made the most progress peg exit exams to 10th-grade rather than 12th-grade skills. The recent National Education Summit on High Schools has recommended ways that states can raise the bar, such as requiring a college-prep curriculum, giving college assessments to 10th-graders, matching college placement exams and high school exit tests and creating financial incentives for lower-income students to take advantage of Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment and other college credit opportunities.

Jobs for the Future has found from its work helping to launch what will eventually be more than 170 Early College High Schools across the United States (with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) that one way to jumpstart policy discussions about improving alignment is to stimulate the creation of more, and more varied, quality learning environments that combine secondary and postsecondary learning for more than the most academically prepared students. Dual enrollment policies, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate curricula, Early College High Schools and university-assisted models all provide powerful ways to bring secondary and postsecondary institutions and systems together to explain their standards and

expectations to each other, build common curriculum sequences and identify institutional and policy changes that can extend the college-going culture and college experiences more broadly.

**Data systems.** If educational success is to be redefined in terms of K-16 progress, state student data systems have to be able to track student achievement across the different institutions and systems. Yet only eight states currently link K-12 and higher education student records for purposes of accountability and improvement. Technical and political challenges abound, but states like Florida and Texas have shown that integrated data systems are possible.

**Accountability.** Behaviors change when incentives change. With high school accountability systems emphasizing graduation and exit exams and postsecondary accountability systems minimal, there is little incentive for the disconnected systems to work together to promote success across the pipeline. For this to change, states must redesign accountability systems to provide incentives within and across sectors for quality, achievement, efficiency and articulation with the next set of educational institutions. Florida’s Legislature took important steps in this direction in 2003 by establishing a unified K-20 accountability system that holds each education delivery sector responsible for high student achievement; seamless articulation and access; a skilled workforce; and quality, efficient services. Florida law also requires that the state Board of Education recommend to the Legislature a performance-based funding formula that applies accountability standards for the public education system at every level, kindergarten through graduate school.

**Finance.** States use totally separate mechanisms to fund their K-12 and higher education systems, to the detriment of efforts to ensure that fewer students fall through the cracks. In his essay in *Double the Numbers*, David Longanecker of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education argues that pipeline performance can be improved through funding policies that reward success—especially for students least likely to persist.

## A Mosaic of Disadvantaged Populations

Which groups of people face barriers to college? More groups than you might think. A recent Social Science Research Council report outlining a research agenda for issues of access and success in postsecondary education notes: “Traditionally, disadvantaged populations have been understood in terms of their status as students from low-income backgrounds or being the first-generation to attend college. Yet numerous other barriers to postsecondary transitions exist, many but not all of which overlap with these conventional definitions.”

Among the groups whose access to and success in college need particular research consideration, the council counts: adopted children; adult learners; Asian-Americans; African-Americans; children in poverty-level families; court-supervised minors; disabled populations; dropouts/pushouts; English-as-second-language learners; foster children; gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people; incarcerated populations; Native Americans; Latinos; immigrants; migrants; rural youth; undocumented students; and urban youth.

He proposes a funding system that rewards institutions that serve the most disadvantaged students and that rewards individuals and institutions when students complete courses and courses of study. Longanecker implies that postsecondary funding along these lines would give colleges and universities a real incentive to reach across the K-12-postsecondary divide and help high schools and alternative providers help their students become college-ready.

**Governance.** To bring the key policymakers and institutional leaders in a state into ongoing planning and action around reconnecting high school and postsecondary education, many states recognize the need to establish cross-sector councils. The National Governors Association's Honor States Program, which has re-granted Gates Foundation resources to 10 states through a competitive process, has made establishment of a "P-16 council" one of the non-negotiable expected outcomes.

### Better results

The agenda identified here is ambitious—at a time when state policymakers generally are not. Some might argue, in the current environment, that it is better simply to keep working at the local level: forge alliances between high schools and colleges, engage local postsecondary institutions in efforts to improve high school quality and to support educationally disadvantaged students, create new school models that link high school and college learning more effectively, expand pre-college

bridge programs for students who need remediation, and keep working locally to raise instructional quality and teach literacy and numeracy. All of this is necessary—so that new solutions can be tested and refined and so that states will have models to promote as they try to drive improved student success into and through college.

However, without creative changes in state policy, local efforts to reduce the K-12-higher education divide so that more students can succeed will be difficult to sustain. State leadership is needed, because the discontinuities of state policy stand in the way of reducing glaring inequities in college-readiness and success. State policies must be reformulated, starting from a clearly stated goal that all young people should leave high school prepared to succeed in college and that the state will henceforth regard K-12 and higher education institutions as part of the same pipeline to success. Once the P-16 framework is embraced and taken seriously, changes like those noted above will have to emerge. States can't make a significant dent in college-readiness and success without real innovation in what goes on inside schools and across educational institutions—and what goes on inside and across state agencies and authorities.

---

**Richard Kazis** is senior vice president of *Jobs for the Future*, a Boston-based policy and research organization. Email: [rkazis@jff.org](mailto:rkazis@jff.org).

The New England Board of Higher Education's  
NEW ENGLAND HIGHER EDUCATION

# 2006 EXCELLENCE AWARDS DINNER

*Fifty Years of Excellence*

## SAVE THE DATE!

Feb. 24, 2006

The Fairmont Copley Plaza

Boston, Mass.

[www.nebhe.org](http://www.nebhe.org)

Join New England's business, education, government and nonprofit leaders for the 2006 New England Higher Education Excellence Awards celebration — the culminating event in NEBHE's 50th anniversary year.

#### Dinner Emcee

**Thomas D. Rath**, Chair, The New England Council

#### Evening Keynote

**Douglas Brinkley**, Director, Theodore Roosevelt Center for American Civilization, and Professor of History, Tulane University

For more information, please visit  
[www.nebhe.org/excellence2006](http://www.nebhe.org/excellence2006)

## AMONG 2006 AWARD RECIPIENTS

REV. J. DONALD MONAN, S.J.

Chancellor, Boston College

*The Eleanor M. McMahon Award for Lifetime Achievement*

GRACE K. FEY

Former Chair, Board of Trustees, University of Massachusetts

*The David C. Knapp Award for Trusteeship*

J. JOSEPH GARRAHY

Former Governor, State of Rhode Island

*The Governor Walter R. Peterson Award for Leadership*

## PROJECT RUNNING START

New Hampshire Community-Technical College System

*The Robert J. McKenna Award for Program Achievement*

# Levers for Change

## Steps States Can Take to Improve College Readiness

ANDREA VENEZIA

America's current fractured systems of K–12 and higher education are based on the outdated view that only an elite group of students attends college. Now, in fact, the majority of students attend some form of postsecondary education after high school, but they encounter a host of problems. Many do not complete their programs of study, almost half the students in higher education require remediation, and college-going and completion rates are highly inequitable in terms of income level, race and ethnicity. As student demographics shift in the coming years, and students who have been traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education become the majority in the population, the United States could face an education crisis.

To reverse this course, we should connect high school and postsecondary education standards, policies and practices. Much of this should occur at the state level and it must particularly affect the “broad-access” institutions, which admit almost every applicant and educate more than 80 percent of America's college students. While much media attention focuses on elite institutions, the institutions that educate most of the nation's students—and most underrepresented students—are not in the Ivy League. As Ross Douhat wrote recently in *The Atlantic Monthly*, “In America, access ultimately rests on what happens in the vast middle rank of college and universities, where most undergraduates are educated—in particular, in state schools.”

State policies send important signals to students about what they need to know and be able to do, to educators about what is important to teach and to researchers and policymakers about what students need. States have created disjointed systems with separate standards, governing entities and policies. As a result, they have also created unnecessary and detrimental barriers between high school and college that undermine students' aspirations and their abilities to succeed.

Currently, K–12 and postsecondary education exist in separate worlds. Policies for each system of education are typically created in isolation from each other. Students in K–12 rarely know what to expect when they enter college, nor do they have a clear sense of how to prepare for that next step.

Most students—with help from their parents, guidance counselors, teachers and others—try to negotiate the divide between high school and college. But they often face unexpected hurdles, such as graduating under one set of expectations in high school and, several months later, entering into a whole new set of standards in college.

Many must contend with poor quality high school courses, inequities in high school achievement and college preparation opportunities, a confusing array of state and institutional exams within and between the education sectors, high postsecondary remediation rates and insufficient college persistence and completion.

These problems disproportionately affect students who are underserved throughout the entire U.S. education pipeline. More than 90 percent of U.S. high school seniors say they plan to attend a two- or four-year college, and about 70 percent of high school graduates actually do go to college within two years of graduating, according to The Education Trust, the Washington, D.C.-based K–12 reform group.

*Measuring Up 2004*, the annual report card published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, demonstrated that students' aspirations are rising, but college opportunity has not increased, particularly for traditionally underrepresented student groups, whose numbers are growing. These educational aspirations extend across income, racial and ethnic groups and are grounded in economic reality. In 2000, the median annual earnings for workers age 25 and over with a high school diploma were \$24,267, compared to \$26,693 for those with an associate degree and \$40,314 for those with a bachelor's degree.

Though students of all races and ethnicities may aspire to the same levels of education, the roadblocks along the way have different impacts on different groups of students, according to data from Stanford University's Bride Project and The Education Trust. Of every 100 white, non-Latino students, 93 graduate from high school, 62 complete some college, and 29 obtain a bachelor's degree. For African-American students, the numbers are lower: 86 graduate from high school, 48 complete some college, and 15 obtain a bachelor's degree. For Latino students, the numbers are lower still: 61 graduate from high school, 31 complete some college, and 10 obtain a bachelor's degree.

Not only are African-American and Latino students earning college certificates and degrees at a much lower rate than their white, non-Latino counterparts—they are also not graduating from high school with the same level of academic skills. Across the country, African-American and Latino 12th graders read and do math at about the same levels as white, non-Latino 8th graders, according to The Education Trust.

Thus, many students are not well-prepared for college, and too few complete their college programs. The U.S. Department of Education found that nationally, 63 percent

of students in two-year colleges and 40 percent of those in four-year institutions take some remedial education. About half of first-year students at community colleges do not continue on for a second year. About one quarter of first-year students at four-year colleges do not stay for their second year.

### Reforms cannot be effective if they are simply grafted onto existing policies that divide education systems by level.

To understand these issues more deeply, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and its partners analyzed state-level policies that facilitate, or undermine, student transitions from high school to college in four states: Florida, Georgia, New York and Oregon. The research revealed that four policy levers are particularly promising for states interested in creating sustained K–16 reform. These policy levers center on assessments and curricula, finance, data systems and accountability.

**Alignment of courses and assessments.** States should align the content of high school and college courses and assessments. While most states have some kind of high school graduation standards, they are usually not aligned with college entrance and placement standards. As an example, college instructors believe grammar and usage are the most important writing skills needed by incoming students, but high school teachers consider these skills least important, according to a recent ACT study. Just 69 percent of high school teachers reported they even teach grammar and usage. Most states' high school assessment programs end with 10th grade exams that are not linked to what students need to know and be able to do to place into college-level courses. Students are often left believing that their 10th grade assessments and curricular standards are what they need in order to succeed in college, but that's not enough.

**Finance.** State education finance and budget decisions should provide incentives for increasing the proportion of students who complete high school and enroll in and complete postsecondary education and training programs. State finance structures have not kept up with innovations in K–16 reform. By spanning different education systems, education finance could pull systems of education together and drive change.

For example, the Oregon Business Council (OBC) is developing a unified and transparent budget model. A first step in that process was to analyze state and local funds as though they were all in one budget. The OBC found that the level of state investment varied across grade and degree, with community colleges receiving the least state aid and special education in K–12 receiving the most. Consequently, the OBC recommended to the governor that the budget be based on per-student costs per service and outcomes be established for every education level and service. Moreover, the OBC

recommended that how schools spend money and how students perform become transparent.

**Data systems.** States should create high-quality data systems that span the education systems. K–16 data systems should identify good practices, diagnose problems, provide information about all education levels, provide students with diagnostic information to help them prepare better, assess and improve achievement and track individual students over time and across levels. Without such systems, it is impossible to understand where problems are or to get traction for change and evaluate reforms. In many states, existing data systems were created to provide reports and audit expenditures, not to meet accountability and assessment demands associated with K–16 reforms, such as documenting student achievement across the education systems and identifying systemic barriers.

**Accountability.** States should connect their accountability systems to span K–12 and postsecondary education. Currently, accountability systems are usually designed for either K–12 or postsecondary education without much attention to the interface between the two. Accountability systems need to better reflect the reality of students' educational paths. Across the country, accountability for high schools is generally geared toward graduation rates and proficiency on state assessments. Very few accountability systems are in place for postsecondary education, and even fewer connect K–12 and higher education. Historically, states and localities have been viewed as the entities responsible for establishing goals for, and overseeing the performance of, K–12 schools. At the postsecondary level, however, students have been viewed as responsible for their own success or failure in completing their educational programs. Given inequities and systemic problems regarding persistence and completion rates in colleges and universities, it makes sense to establish and monitor performance based on measurable goals for higher education, and to require K–12 and higher education to work together toward common objectives.

Establishing and empowering organizational structures that transcend the barriers between education sectors is essential in promoting K–16 reforms. These bodies should be charged with specific responsibilities, provided with the requisite resources, empowered with enough influence and authority to make real change and held accountable for performance.

State agency collaboration—both in terms of the content of work and the organizational structures supporting that work—is essential, and having components of K–16 reform in statute appears to be useful but not sufficient for creating change. Leadership at the state level is of crucial importance in establishing a vision and sustaining long-term change.

We caution state education leaders, however, that convening a commission and holding cross-system discussions may be helpful, but these steps alone will not

create meaningful and lasting K–16 reform. To be lasting and effective, the deliberations must be anchored in policy and finance reform and must reflect each state’s culture and history. Policies like the ones noted above must drive the type of governance structure that is needed, not vice versa.

The responsibility for reform cannot be carried by one sector, but must be shared across systems to reach common ground, focusing on improving K–12 and post-secondary education for all students. Moreover, these reforms cannot be effective if they are simply grafted onto existing policies that divide education systems by level. Traditionally, states, systems, schools and colleges responded to student needs by adding new policies and programs while maintaining existing policy structures. In order for these reforms to affect all students, states

must move beyond limited approaches and adopt more lasting and ambitious changes to their underlying policy structures.

---

**Andrea Venezia** is senior policy analyst and project director with the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. This article is a summary of a report entitled, “*The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*” co-authored by Venezia, Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan and released in September 2005 by the national center, the Institute for Educational Leadership and the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research. This work was supported by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Email: [avenezia@highereducation.org](mailto:avenezia@highereducation.org).

## What Does It Mean to Be “College-Ready”?

LAURIE L. HAZARD AND JEAN-PAUL NADEAU

Many young people see the chief benefit of a college education as preparation for a career or perhaps increased earning power. But being “college-ready” means looking beyond the dollar signs and experiencing learning beyond required readings, papers and exams.

To really learn in college, students must be prepared to interact with professors and peers who continually challenge their present understanding of the world. Instead of thinking about college as a place where professors are responsible for “teaching” them new information, students should see themselves as partners in the learning process. True learning will involve more than mere collection and absorption—and more than doing the minimum amount of work.

Openness to change is a critical component of college preparedness. For students making the transition to college, this means rethinking attitudes toward learning. If they have the motivation and the humility to reflect upon their attitudes, they will be able to function more effectively in their new environment, adapting and affecting change where appropriate.

Once students are immersed in their new environment, they can be guided effectively by the many people at every institution of higher education who are interested in student success. Most campuses offer a range of programs to help students make necessary adjustments. These include first-year experience programs connecting students to one another and familiarizing them with the college, academic

success centers offering tutoring or learning skills assistance, and academic advising programs.

The majority of colleges and universities offer some type of first-year success course. Too often, the focus is aimed at teaching students “how to” manage their time, keep up on their reading, and prepare for exams. Effective courses must go beyond the “how to” approach. Instead, the course should be intentionally designed to help students to think about how they think, including their understanding of the role and responsibilities of a college student. These courses must convince students that an open mind and willingness to change is as necessary as hard work. Pedagogy should consist of strategies designed to help students reflect on their thoughts and feelings about their role as students and how those may either negatively or positively influence their ability to meet the new demands of college life.

Developing the ability to adapt in the face of new roles and responsibilities, and understanding the importance of change and self-reflection are habits of mind that will serve students not only during their first year of college, but also well into their careers.

---

**Laurie L. Hazard** is director of Bryant University’s Academic Center for Excellence and Writing Center. **Jean-Paul Nadeau** is an instructor in English at Bristol Community College. They are co-authors of *Foundations for Learning* (Prentice Hall, 2006). Email: [lhazard@bryant.edu](mailto:lhazard@bryant.edu) and [jpnadeau@bristol.mass.edu](mailto:jpnadeau@bristol.mass.edu).

# Are Colleges Listening to Students?

MICHAEL C. POINDEXTER

Given the rising cost of a college education, inquisitive students and parents are asking more questions than ever before about student satisfaction and success on our campuses.

To answer these questions, most institutions are speaking a new language. *Student engagement, outcomes, assessment and culture of evidence* have become familiar terms as administrators, faculty and staff become invested in how to better recruit, retain and graduate students in preparation for their roles as respectable members of the workforce and society. With each increasingly diverse freshman class, campuses must revisit these issues of assessment, outcomes, student engagement and data, so they can better understand the entire process of student life, from recruitment to graduation.

**Factoring in students.** In the 21st century, collecting, analyzing and utilizing data underlies how learning institutions mold themselves. Simply stated, institutions of higher education *must* factor the needs of the students into the equation. Collecting information about students is certainly not new. But this process has not always been the driving force for colleges to change, nor has it been the basis for supporting or implementing new initiatives at most institutions. In fact, institutions often moved toward change solely on the recommendation of an individual or group who promoted an idea without clear evidence to support it.

Now, with resources scarce, no blank checks are being written. Today, colleges place priority on those projects supported by data, where the benefits are easily noted.

Data also help colleges answer questions about themselves such as: Who are we? Who do we want to be? How well do we want to do what we do? What do we want to be known for? What do we want students to leave with? And how will we know we are on the right track? Using data carefully to address these questions, colleges can better prioritize their goals and develop evidence to form strategies for student success.

**Taking a snapshot.** Four-year institutions generally use ACT or SAT scores to get a snapshot of a student's academic preparation and progress. It is well-known, however, that many variables, including family income, parents' educational background, home library or access to a computer, books and a host of other factors, affect how well students perform on these tests. Consequently, many colleges, particularly community colleges, administer their own assessment to all incoming students. This assessment, usually Compass or Accuplacer, is used to

appropriately place students in English, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking courses which directly relate to the assessment score.

These courses may be developmental, or "remedial," because more and more students enter college with one or more deficiencies. These students must upgrade their academic aptitude by taking developmental courses before they can be expected to succeed in their declared major. Though some students may object to taking courses that do not apply to their major and may delay graduating, the effectiveness of these developmental courses is well-established. The Community College of Denver found students who had taken these courses were more likely to graduate with an associate or bachelor's degree than their counterparts who did not follow the advice provided by assessment and advising offices to take the courses. Requiring developmental or prerequisite courses, labs and tutorial programs and enforcing special provisional admit programs based on deficiencies and assessment scores is not unusual for colleges or even prestigious universities, especially if they are committed to helping students to succeed.

Colleges should also survey their students about their levels of satisfaction and expectation to determine if they, the institutions, are on the right track. Many have begun to depend on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and the National Survey of Student Engagement for this information, as they have become more aware of the important role student input can play in whether students leave or stay on their campuses. These surveys give insights into the relationship between effective practices and selected aspects of student success. Says Kay McClenney, director of the community college survey, "Colleges are using the survey data to ask the hard questions about their practices and the student outcomes that result from them." It is clear that, if a college wishes to be successful, administrators, faculty and staff must listen to the voices of their students and all stakeholders and incorporate what they hear into their priorities.

**What's learned?** The colleges in the forefront of ensuring student success are taking on the enormous task of developing a clear picture of what a student can expect to learn in each and every class that the college offers. These expected outcomes provide a common thread that may be woven through every section of a course. Some colleges may also have common threaded outcomes imbedded in all courses. This is often referred to as Critical Skills Across the Curriculum.

These skills may be related to writing, critical thinking, reading, technology, diversity or mathematical reasoning. While outcomes are usually seen in academic courses, outcomes are increasingly developed in almost every area of college operations, because everyone is responsible for student preparedness and success.

**Student engagement.** One thing college administrators know about students is that they are more likely to stay in college through to graduation if they have a sense of belonging or “connectiveness” to a college community. But most students arrive on campus ill-equipped to begin making connections. For many, the new surroundings are frightening, intimidating and unfamiliar territory with new rules, policies and expectations. Most students will need optional ways to engage, participate in and navigate through their new environment.

All aspects of college life can be channeled to address student engagement. In the classroom, for example, faculty are being challenged to provide options for learning, such as combining two courses to create new learning communities, providing an environment that is different from the traditional room and time schedule, using technology or even using the students as facilitators for the class. These approaches all engage students in new ways. Some faculty are creating virtual classrooms through chat rooms where students interact with each other

about course content and materials. Other initiatives are taking place outside the classroom through service learning experiences where student combine practice with theory through volunteer or in-service opportunities that provide them with very specific skills, such as leadership, networking/diversity, organizations, civic responsibility and voluntarism. Freshman-year experience programs and courses aimed at familiarizing and connecting students to learning strategies that help them be more academically successful have also been instrumental in combining in-class and out-of-class experiences.

Data, assessment, outcomes and student engagement have become more than buzzwords. Colleges that do not effectively use data, engage students and listen to their voices risk failure in meeting student satisfaction and expectations (as well as accreditation, membership in various associations and grant opportunities). These are only a few words of the new language that forward-looking colleges speak as they redefine themselves to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The vocabulary is expanding as learning institutions travel a path that clearly has no end.

---

*Michael C. Poindexter is vice president of student affairs at the Community College of Rhode Island and consultant. Email: mpoindexter@ccri.edu.*

## Short Shrift for Staffing Student Support

JOHN K. FISHER AND JOANNE R. WOLFERTZ

Staffing patterns at colleges and universities offer a glimpse of institutional priorities. St. Vincent’s College in Bridgeport, Conn., recently studied two dozen peer institutions in New England, most with specialized missions, to see how these colleges staff various support services other than academics.

What we found, in short, is that those areas that bear a direct relationship to the generation of revenue enjoy robust staffing. In contrast, support services that are not deemed critical to a college’s financial health are thinly staffed.

The average institution served 369 students with a wide variation in terms of staff assigned to various offices. Business offices and admissions offices were better staffed than other areas with 3.25 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and 2.96 FTE, respectively.

Student life and counseling came in last with just 0.92 FTE and 0.55 FTE, respectively. Smaller colleges with smaller budgets frequently rely upon faculty rather than counselors to deliver academic counseling.

Clearly, institutions place a greater emphasis on administrative departments charged with collecting student fees, tuition and other revenues.

Colleges also need to keep the flow of students coming in order to have “customers.” This puts the admissions office close behind the business office as a staffing priority. Financial aid comes next with 1.38 FTE, as it is crucial that students are able to pay the bills sent to them by the business office. The registrar (1.11 FTE) is needed to keep track of the students, and data from that office are needed for regulatory and accrediting agencies.

Libraries were reasonably well staffed at 2.19 FTE staff, because they are one of the places that accrediting bodies look in making judgments about an institution’s academic viability.

Computer support averaged 1.5 FTE staff, but varied considerably among institutions. Some chose to “outsource” this activity.

Despite their claim of developing the student “holistically,” many colleges fall short in staffing areas such as counseling and student activities that are closely related to developing the student as a “whole person.”

---

*John K. Fisher is president and CEO and Joanne R. Wolfertz is vice president and dean of St. Vincent’s College. Email: jwolfertz@stvincentscollege.edu.*

# College Ready New England

## Regional Collaboration Explores Models For Readiness and Success

MICHAEL K. THOMAS

**T**he New England states face the confluence of several challenges that test their ability to compete. These include ongoing economic globalization and technological change, the continued decline of traditional industries and slow labor force growth. Further, the region is aging quickly and will experience low overall population growth—with increases occurring primarily among minority and immigrant populations whose postsecondary participation has been historically low.

Add to that mix the projected decline in the annual supply of high school graduates beginning in 2008 and the highest-in-the-nation college prices. No wonder there is regionwide concern about whether New England will continue to have enough individuals with skills and credentials to compete in the global economy.

In 2003, these looming shadows motivated a gathering of concerned New Englanders—representing business, K-12 and postsecondary education, government and a variety of nonprofit organizations—to create a regionwide initiative called the College Ready New England (CRNE) P-16 Alliance, whose development has been supported by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

CRNE leaders spent much of 2005 charting initiatives to ensure that all New England students leave high school well-prepared for postsecondary success and to improve the college attendance and completion rates of underrepresented students, particularly low-income and minority students and first-generation college-goers.

In this process, CRNE participants have looked closely at the six New England states and across the United States to inform their work. The objective: to find tested and cutting-edge practices, policies and programs to increase college readiness and success. From this, an integrated framework for pursuing statewide and regionwide initiatives has emerged. Here is what we have found ...

### Mandate and goal

States succeeding at increasing college readiness and attainment have done so under the aegis of specific mandates and goals championed by key leaders, including business executives, governors and legislators.

Oklahoma, for example, launched “Brain Gain 2010,” with the explicit goal of increasing the percentage of individuals with college degrees by 40 percent between 1996 and 2010. Texas launched the “College for Texans” campaign, challenging the state to prepare and enroll an additional 300,000 college students by 2015—above and beyond the 200,000 expected to enroll annually. It

also specified a focus on Hispanic, African-American and low-income students.

In New England, Maine’s Compact for Higher Education appears to lead the way. Its mandate is to make Maine residents among the best-educated in America by 2019. The goals include: increasing the percentage of Maine high school graduates who enroll in college directly from high school from the current 52 percent to 75 percent by 2014; and helping 11,000 of Maine’s 112,000 working-age adults with previous college enrollment to complete their degrees over the next decade.

Leaders in all six New England states consistently speak of the importance of addressing our growing competitiveness crisis, but without a firm, shared mandate and measurable goals, little progress can be expected.

### Statewide collaboration

A uniform message from those we studied was that states must get “everybody at the table” and bridge gaps between education systems, institutions and program providers. In fact, mandates and goals for improving readiness and success have proven a catalyst for developing and institutionalizing statewide collaborations and partnerships.

North Carolina realized that mounting a statewide readiness and success campaign necessitated that policies be revised to better integrate K-12 and higher education. The governor established an “Education Cabinet,” uniting K-12 and higher education leaders, that resulted in several innovations: standardized high school transcripts, grading systems and course requirements; and comprehensive articulation and transfer agreements. Subsequently, the state created partnerships of K-12 institutions, public and private colleges, state student financial aid programs, GEAR UP counselors, early college awareness programs, high school guidance counselors and college admissions officers. These partners worked together to inventory existing college readiness resources but also to design and implement new programs, policies and resources.

The New England states have made important strides in recent months in expanding statewide collaboration and alignment. Three states—Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island—recently received million-dollar-plus National Governors Association grants to bring together K-12, higher education and government leaders and policymakers to reconsider high schools and improve college readiness.

Similarly, some New England states have pursued or implemented formal P-16 councils. These councils bring together the key groups and institutions that

form each segment of a state’s “education pipeline”—and unite them in removing barriers to student readiness and success.

### Branded resources

Have you noticed the varied organizations offering advice to students preparing for college? How does a student or parent know which ones to use or how to remember and access them?

Propelled by a statewide mandate and goals—and with key stakeholders, resources and programs aligned—several states have successfully launched branded college readiness campaigns. These campaigns use well-crafted messages, slogans and logos that consistently identify them, their marketing resources and outreach tools. Savvy corporations market this way and states increasingly are following their lead.

The sharpest campaigns also have a single, well-branded and publicized contact point—usually a website and a toll-free phone number—through which integrated resources can be accessed. Essentially, they provide students, parents, educators and counselors with “one-stop shopping” for college readiness and success. While the “back-end” of this system is complex, aggregating information and resources from multiple organizations, institutions and education systems across a state, the “front-end” is made relatively seamless for the user.

North Carolina created a branded, single-source web portal to, in the campaign’s own words, “Help students plan, apply, and pay for college.” With time, the web portal was complemented by a resource center providing toll-free call-in advising and resources for first-generation students. The primary goal: to bring together in one location, and under one brand, all the information about higher education opportunities in North Carolina, tailored to the three primary user groups of students, parents and school counselors.

In New England, Maine has begun branding a statewide “College for ME” campaign, while Connecticut and Massachusetts employ online systems similar to North Carolina and other states. Ask yourself: “Do I know of one primary, easily identifiable source of comprehensive college readiness resources in my state?”

### College access marketing

Messages about the importance of college readiness and success must effectively compete in a media-saturated society. It is about getting “mindshare” and motivating specific behaviors. Accordingly, several leading states have adopted the sophisticated marketing strategies used in successful, cutting-edge efforts like the “Truth” anti-tobacco campaign.

In 2000, for example, Kentucky’s General Assembly requested a statewide public information and marketing campaign aimed at adults and employers to increase awareness of education and training opportunities. The

campaign used cable and broadcast television as well as radio to reach a target audience of less-educated adults statewide. The results were notable: over the course of a year, the number of individuals completing GEDs grew; nearly 10,000 additional workers enrolled in workplace education programs; and adult education enrollments grew by more than 20,000.

The seeds of college access marketing campaigns exist in some New England states, including Maine and Massachusetts. But media development and sustained dissemination are costly. The New England states must work together, as 15 southern states now do, to share media resources and save time and money.

### Grassroots organization

Successful statewide campaigns also must reach down into the communities and neighborhoods in which future college-goers and their families live, work, worship and play—to provide grassroots support for improving readiness and success.

College for Texans built a statewide network of community-based organizations (CBOs) including Boys and Girls Clubs, churches, Parent-Teacher Organizations, social service and health agencies, Scouts, 4-H groups, service clubs and business groups. The network mobilized thousands of community leaders in outreach activities aimed at both parents and students. It also made small grants to more than 500 CBOs, trained thousands of volunteer presenters and provided free outreach kits with ready-made presentations for use with parents and students.

### Standing together

Despite competitiveness challenges, New England’s inventive spirit is increasingly evident as key stakeholders come together to create initiatives for increasing college readiness and success. This integrated framework can serve as a benchmark for measuring the adequacy of states’ efforts.

There is also a growing understanding of the importance of regional collaboration, in which CRNE will seek to play a key role: leveraging the resources, experiences and best practices of the six states—and others outside the region; sharing costs and expertise to develop cutting-edge campaigns, tools and resources; and building public will and a shared commitment to change and improvement.

Long known for its brainpower, New England has some catching up to do. College Ready New England will help the six states compete more effectively by collaborating to improve readiness and success.

---

*Michael K. Thomas is NEBHE’s senior director of policy & research and the project director for the College Ready New England P-16 Alliance. Email: mthomas@nebhe.org.*

# College Graduation Is the Bottom Line

GREG JOHNSON

*“On a scale of 1 to 10, how prepared are you for college level work?”*

This is one of the questions that college counselors at Boston-based Bottom Line ask each student during an initial interview. By the time the counselors get to this question, they know where the student goes to high school, have heard about her past grades, listened to her talk about senior-year classes and know her standardized test scores. An experienced counselor can help them fill in the answer. Some confident students say they feel ready. Others seem to know they aren't and will give themselves a low rank. However, many of the students upon hearing this question look up with a blank stare asking “What do you mean?” These are the students we worry about.

Bottom Line was founded in 1997 to help disadvantaged Boston students get into college, graduate from college and go far in life. In our first year, we supported 25 students through the college admissions process. This year, we are helping more than 350 Boston high school seniors from the class of 2006 to get into college and providing support to more than 375 students who are already enrolled at colleges across the country. Because we begin working with students from the time they begin the college application process, and maintain that relationship until they graduate from college, we have developed a unique perspective on whether students are “college-ready.”

Every May, after students have been accepted to college, our counselors sit down and discuss which of the students whom we helped “get in” are the least likely to finish college. We do this to determine which students need our continued support while they are pursuing a degree. Economics dictate that we can't serve everyone, so we try to predict which students are the most likely to drop out before they finish and focus our resources toward them. Surprisingly, this is not very hard.

Of the hundreds of high school seniors in our program (roughly 15 percent of Boston's college-bound seniors) the neediest become clear very quickly. They are the individuals who have required the most support through the admissions process over the previous nine months. They are the students taking an academic risk by choosing a top school, or taking on a large financial burden, or who struggle the most with reading and writing English or have little or no alternate support network.

We typically rank students across three categories when determining their level of need. The most common

problem by far is that students are not academically prepared for the rigors of a college education. In some cases, they are not even close. The second biggest problem is that students are not ready to make the financial commitment to college. Finally, there are many students who will struggle with the social and emotional adjustment to college.

**Academic readiness.** Most of the students graduating from Boston public high schools (I would exclude Boston Latin School, and if you twist my arm, Latin Academy, O'Bryant and some of the pilot/charter schools) are not ready for college academics. They do not have the study habits. They don't understand the concept of a college syllabus. And they are not aware of or ready for the volume of reading and writing that will be required. They also don't have the knowledge base to make them competitive in the college environment.

To increase diversity on their campuses, colleges are often willing to take a gamble on students from Boston and other urban areas. Contrary to the findings of the 2001 *Diversity Among Equals* study conducted by University of Massachusetts researchers for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, we see academic preparation take a back seat as universities make the effort to address the racial, economic and geographic diversity of their campuses. As a consequence, state colleges and private universities accept students who don't meet their typical academic standards, and we help students take advantage of these policies.

This would make more sense if those colleges would also provide more significant academic support for students when they arrive. However, this isn't always the case. At Bottom Line, we have become experts at steering students to schools that are likely to accept them, but we are equally conscientious about recommending schools to students that will be a good fit and have support programs in place.

There are several effective programs at public and private colleges in the Boston area where the academic support systems for students are obvious and effective. The Options Through Education program at Boston College, for example, has been remarkable in helping students adjust to academics on campus. The program combines a six-week summer academic program with follow-up advising and mentoring, and Bottom Line students who can get into Boston College tend to make it through. There is also a precedent for state institutions to run successful programs for students who enter college from our at-risk population. The College Now program in the University of Massachusetts at

Dartmouth and the Learning Center program at Salem State have been successful in making students from our program feel at home on campus and provide academic support through this crucial transition.

### Most of the students graduating from Boston public high schools are not ready for college academics.

The most obvious lack of college preparation exists among the 15 percent of our students bound for community college. These are students who typically have GPAs less than 2.0, poor standardized test scores and limited English skills, but still have a goal of graduating from college. Upon taking the required community college entrance examination, they often place directly into remedial English and math classes. This means they aren't reading or understanding math at a community college level. Students who fall into this category soon find themselves paying for and attending college classes, but not receiving any credit toward a college degree. In simple terms, they aren't "ready" for community college. As bills pile up and no progress is made, it is obvious why after a semester or two, they are reluctant to continue.

**Financial readiness.** Few Boston students are ready for the financial realities of college. Many of their families live paycheck to paycheck. There is usually no savings account to fall back on to help pay for college or related expenses, so the students must rely totally on grants and loans to pay for their education.

In some cases, the top students across the city find the right combination of school, federal and state aid and a scholarship and will attend college without paying out of their pocket. For example, an African-American student who is the first from her low-income family to go to college and is accepted to Smith College or some

other competitive liberal arts college is typically going to receive a financial aid package that will cover all her costs. The financial reality hits hardest though on the student who is a tier or two below Smith in competitiveness. While the cost may be less, after federal aid it is more difficult to round out the package with scholarships. These students take out as many government loans as possible and in some cases apply for additional Parent Plus loans or private loans to meet their expenses. Few Boston students are prepared for the short-term or long-term consequences of this financial burden.

**Social adjustment.** Managing the social transition to college is challenging for just about any 18-year-old. The average college-bound student from the Boston Public Schools attends high school in a building where more than 90 percent of his classmates are ethnic minorities. Except in the case of a Historically Black College, the highest percentage of students of color to be found on a college campus will be around 30 percent. That level of minority enrollment may be lauded in academia, but for the average kid from Boston, that is still overwhelmingly white. At Bottom Line, we don't use that as an excuse, but to think that these students don't have to make a social adjustment is naïve.

In addition, venturing from the familiar surroundings of the inner city to a college environment usually changes the economic climate for an individual very quickly. Not only might they be surrounded by grandiose architecture and newly built, technologically equipped dormitories, but their roommate will be middle- or upper-class and will have the ability to purchase goods that he or she finds out of reach. Again, not an excuse, but a reality. We find that few students enter college prepared to deal with this difference.

Bottom Line's experience has shown that the average Boston high school student isn't ready for college. Whether accepted to highly competitive universities, state colleges or community colleges, these students find themselves swimming upstream, competing with students who are better prepared than them academically, financially and socially. Helping students clear these readiness hurdles is not easy. Continuing to improve the high schools will help, and colleges must invest in effective bridge programs to support students when they arrive on campus. We also believe strongly in the community's role in this effort. At Bottom Line, we recognize the extent of the support that is needed and we have built a holistic program that helps students select "the right" school to attend and when they arrive on campus we provide a support network to help them stay in school and graduate.

---

**Greg Johnson** is executive director of Bottom Line, a nonprofit based in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood. Email: [Greg@bottomline.org](mailto:Greg@bottomline.org).

## Fundraising 53, Student Life 28

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently asked college presidents how much time they spend on various activities and who they meet with on campus.

More than half (53 percent) of the 764 presidents and chancellors who responded said they attended to some aspect of fundraising every day, while just 28 percent reported attending to student life matters daily. Moreover, 49 percent of presidents reported meeting with their chief financial officers daily, but just 18 percent met with the head of student affairs every day.

# Adults Must Be College-Ready Too

## ABE-to-College Transition Project Inspires Lives

BLENDA J. WILSON

Most people think of “college readiness” as an issue for teenagers. I want you to hear the voices of adults whose lives have been changed by their enrollment in a set of innovative college readiness programs geared toward adults. These women and men have overcome obstacles between them and college that they believed were insurmountable—fear, inadequate academic preparation, lack of information about college and academia’s expectations, lack of confidence.

Until the 1970s, a high school diploma or its equivalent, the GED, was seen as terminal, sufficient preparation for a good job and a middle-class life. The economy has changed dramatically. Today, adults with only a high school education are seriously handicapped in the job market and are hard-pressed to take care of a family, have choices and keep a safe distance from the poverty line. New England’s economy will be handicapped unless we help those adults find their way into college.

About six years ago, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, in partnership with the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC), created a grant initiative to support adult basic education (ABE)-to-college programs.

The ABE-to-College Transition Project is designed to inspire and support adult GED recipients, many of whom have been out of school for a while, to pursue postsecondary education. The project creates a bridge to college for capable but underprepared adult learners. The women and men who have enrolled in ABE-to-college transition programs struggle with many barriers including academic preparation and challenging lives. It is a testament to their desire to achieve and create a better life for themselves and their families that they took the risk to prepare for college.

“A lot of these students have internalized a belief that that they are not worthy or capable,” says Reno James, the foundation vice president who manages the ABE-to-College Project. “They don’t just need to acquire skills; they need to believe that they can achieve.”

Consider the case of Carline Lesperance of Manchester, N.H., who had worked in a hospital office job for a few years in her 20s when she decided to go to college: *“It wasn’t easy to get a job with just a high school diploma, at least a good job, a job where you weren’t a peon. I had had it by then as a secretary. But I had always concentrated on what I couldn’t do, and that held me back.”*

Or listen to Katrina Jones of New Haven, Conn., a single mother of four who was living with her mother, when her

boss urged her to consider college: *“I was like, I don’t know if I’m as academic as I thought I should be.”*

For students like Lesperance and Jones, going to college is entirely different from going to high school. Jessica Spohn, director of the center’s College Transition Project notes that the difference between studying for a GED and studying for college is “the difference between learning to look for right and wrong answers, and learning to be creative, learning for problem solving, learning for critical thinking.”

Another barrier for these adults is lack of knowledge about college and its expectations. These smart and capable adults did not know how to navigate the college admissions process or tap available financial aid resources. They could be overwhelmed by the academic expectations and intimidated by the foreign vocabulary of college. *“What is a syllabus, and do you have to read everything on it the first week?”* For young people who enrolled in college-prep courses, or whose parents went to college, these expectations may not be daunting. But “second-chance” adults, even when they have the ability and the drive to succeed in college, need more help.

Insufficient academic preparation is another barrier for some GED recipients. New England’s adult learners often need help refreshing their English and math skills and reorienting themselves away from rote learning toward critical thinking. ABE-to-college transition programs also help students learn to handle stress better, manage their time and become familiar with the culture of higher education. *“I was very much uncertain if I could handle being in nursing school. I really struggled with math,”* explains Marcia Samuels of Randolph, Mass.

The ABE-to-College Transition Project is a five-year funding commitment by the foundation to 25 ABE programs, based on their meeting annual performance goals. Each program commits to meeting rigorous standards and implementing a program strategy with explicit annual goals for recruitment, program planning, educational counseling and graduation results. However, the programs retain sufficient flexibility to meet the unique needs of their students and the relationships they have developed with more than 40 participating postsecondary institutions. NELRC provides technical assistance to individual programs and convenes the cluster as a whole to encourage peer learning and program improvement.

Just by listening to the students, we know our investment has been worthwhile. Hear 42-year-old Yalem Yihdego of Cambridge, Mass., the mother of three

children: *"I don't know how I can express how much the bridge program teaches! How to take notes on a lecture, how to apply for financial aid, how to apply for college, how to write an essay, how to be confident!"* After graduating from the Cambridge Community Learning Center Bridge to College Program, she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in environmental science at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Listen to Corinna Eaton of Surry, Maine, who at age 29 enrolled in the Sumner College Transitions Project, and is now getting her bachelor's degree in social studies at the University of Maine: *"They give you everything you need, all the things I didn't know when I started [and dropped out of] college the first time. Things you wouldn't think would be a big deal, like: how do you get books out of the library? How do you open an email account?"*

Marcia Samuels found a college-prep program for adults in Boston's Dorchester section called the Odwin (an acronym for Opening Doors Wider in Nursing) Learning Center. Even with that support, when working on math, *"There were days when I would cry,"* she says. Today, having graduated from the transition program, the 40-year-old maintains a 90 average in nursing school, while her son completes a master's degree at Howard University.

These adults tell us over and over again that because of their teachers' unyielding support, they aim much higher now. *"The teachers at Odwin were awesome. Awesome! They really cared for you. They went the extra mile, they were not ordinary teachers, they wanted you to learn,"* says Samuels. *"There is not a day that goes by that I don't say to myself: Thank you, Odwin, thank you!"*

Katrina Jones says the college-transition program at New Haven Advanced Adult Education gave her "the boost" she needed. *"The instructors were so supportive that it encouraged me to continue on. They taught me how to communicate better with people, how to ask questions, challenge myself, and not be afraid of not getting the right answers."* After graduating from the program, Jones entered Gateway Community College with the goal of becoming a case worker in the public schools. She is currently enrolled at Southern Connecticut State University and has raised her sights, aiming at a master's degree in psychology.

We have been inspired by the many examples of how an investment in the potential of one adult can change the aspirations and trajectory for the entire family, a housing project or even a community. These students exemplify the most moving examples of accomplishment and resolve that I have ever known. Katrina Jones, for example, completed the college transition program while working full time, caring for her mother through a heart attack and quadruple bypass, and successfully

running for election as a city alderwoman! And talk about role models—her 24-year-old daughter holds a full-time job at Wachovia Bank and is pursuing a bachelor's degree; her son has completed an associate degree; and her middle-school daughter is taking AP math classes in high school. Both Corinna Eaton and Carline Lesperance report that their college success encouraged their husbands to go to college as well—after first completing the transition program, of course.

An independent external assessment of the project by Julia Gittleman of Mendelsohn, Gittleman & Associates confirmed that these investments in New England's workforce have been remarkably successful. Of the 2,532 students who have enrolled in the past five years, 63 percent successfully completed the program, and fully 90 percent have applied to or enrolled in postsecondary education. The study also revealed that the majority of these students—half of whom had a nontraditional high school credential—were working more than 35 hours per week while enrolled in the program, demonstrating the students' remarkable level of motivation, discipline and purpose.

Most foundations hope their successful grant programs will be sustained beyond the period of their funding, but that is rarely guaranteed. We already have good indications, however, that the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's and the states' investment in the ABE-to-College Transition Project has catalyzed funding into the future. Massachusetts currently funds 10 college transition programs; the state of Connecticut is funding nine; and Maine is seeking support from a national foundation to support three programs next year. Meanwhile, 38 states and four countries have joined the newly formed National College Transition Network, which, with leadership from NELRC, aims to help create and support ABE transition programs throughout the country.

The project's success was made possible by the tremendously talented and devoted ABE educators who believed in these students and understood the contribution they could make to our region. We hope that the programs' success will inspire many other states to include adult learners in their plans for achieving higher standards of educational attainment and a more competitive workforce. Listen to one last ABE-to-College success story from Carline Lesperance: *"I'm a lot more intelligent than I thought I was. I have more energy than I thought I did. Growing up, my parents didn't know about college. Not that they told me not to, but they just didn't know how important it was. But I learned that not only the Huxtables can go to college; I can too."*

---

**Blenda J. Wilson** is president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Email: [bwilson@nmefd.org](mailto:bwilson@nmefd.org).

# Our students take a different path to the top.

## The Nation's Leading College for Students with Learning Disabilities and AD/HD

Serving talented and bright students with learning differences and AD/HD, Landmark College's accredited associate degree and summer programs offer a proven course for academic success.

Landmark has one of America's lowest student-faculty ratios, enabling us to create innovative learning strategies and employ the latest technology for academic success.

Our approach works. Nine of every ten Landmark College graduates go on to pursue their baccalaureate degrees at such institutions as American University, Boston College, Brown University, Occidental College, Quinnipiac University and the University of Denver.

### DEGREE OPTIONS:

- A.A. in General Studies
- A.A. in Business Studies



**LANDMARK COLLEGE**

Putney, Vermont

[www.landmark.edu](http://www.landmark.edu)

Phone: 802-387-6718



## No-fee loans for graduate students

- Competitive interest rates
- Great service

**A student loan provider you can count on!**



[accessgroup.org](http://accessgroup.org)

800-227-2151

**accessgroup**  
The nonprofit graduate loan specialist

© 2005 Access Group, Inc.  
Terms and fees subject to change.

# College Material

## Tapping Rural Areas for the Next Generation of College Students

STEPHEN E. ABBOTT

While many efforts to reform high schools target large cities, a quiet minority located at the fringes of American culture has been relatively overlooked. Low-income, rural students suffer many of the same social maladies—such as severe poverty and widespread drug abuse—as urban minority children, and they are comparably disadvantaged when it comes to college access. Further aggravating the situation, these students also endure geographic and cultural isolation as well as the fallout from stagnant local economies.

Today, cautiousness and skepticism about college remain powerful forces in many rural schools and communities. The reasons for this are far more complex than simple obstinacy or unwillingness to accept economic and technological change—it usually has more to do with local values and traditions.

Promoting college without seeming to disparage other options or career choices is an ongoing challenge. “Not everyone is going to become a doctor or lawyer” is a sentiment often expressed in rural America. Behind this statement is the tacit assumption that a college degree is useful only as means to attaining high-status, white-collar jobs. Yet this reasoning is no longer an accurate reflection of either today’s diverse job market or the increasingly higher qualifications needed for even entry-level positions in industries that have not historically required a postsecondary degree. The sentiment also exposes a deeper problem: college education is not always seen as an asset; in some communities, it may even be viewed as an act of hubris.

It has been apparent for many years that the old industries that once supported rural areas are not only vanishing but are also unlikely to ever return. Still, the consequences of this trend have been slow to saturate public awareness, which means that a compelling pro-education message must do far more than relay information—it must cultivate a sense of urgency regarding the need to radically improve our public schools and send more of our students on to college. But this sense of urgency has yet to percolate through many communities.

### Maine’s challenge

In Maine, we have 130 publicly funded high schools, and fewer than 12 percent of them serve more than 1,000 students. Most of the high schools are located in low-income, rural areas that face dwindling enrollments, budgetary cutbacks, high faculty-turnover rates and other significant challenges. Maine has never had a strong college-going tradition or a large number of college-degree holders—only about one-fourth of Maine’s

population age 25 or older has earned at least a bachelor’s degree, which is well below the New England average. The state needs bold, imaginative solutions or this self-perpetuating legacy will continue unabated.

Since 2003, the Great Maine Schools Project, a statewide high school reform initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has been working to strengthen Maine high schools and send more Maine students on to higher education. Our organization is guided by the belief that *every student has the right to graduate high school prepared to enter and succeed in college*, and that promoting college has to be engineered from the bottom up. In other words, a pro-college message cannot simply be tacked on to 13 years of public schooling that may vary dramatically in quality. We also believe that effective school reform cannot take hold in a vacuum, which is why we have adopted a “schoolhouse to statehouse” approach that concentrates as much on changing the culture of our public education *system* as it does on reforming individual schools.

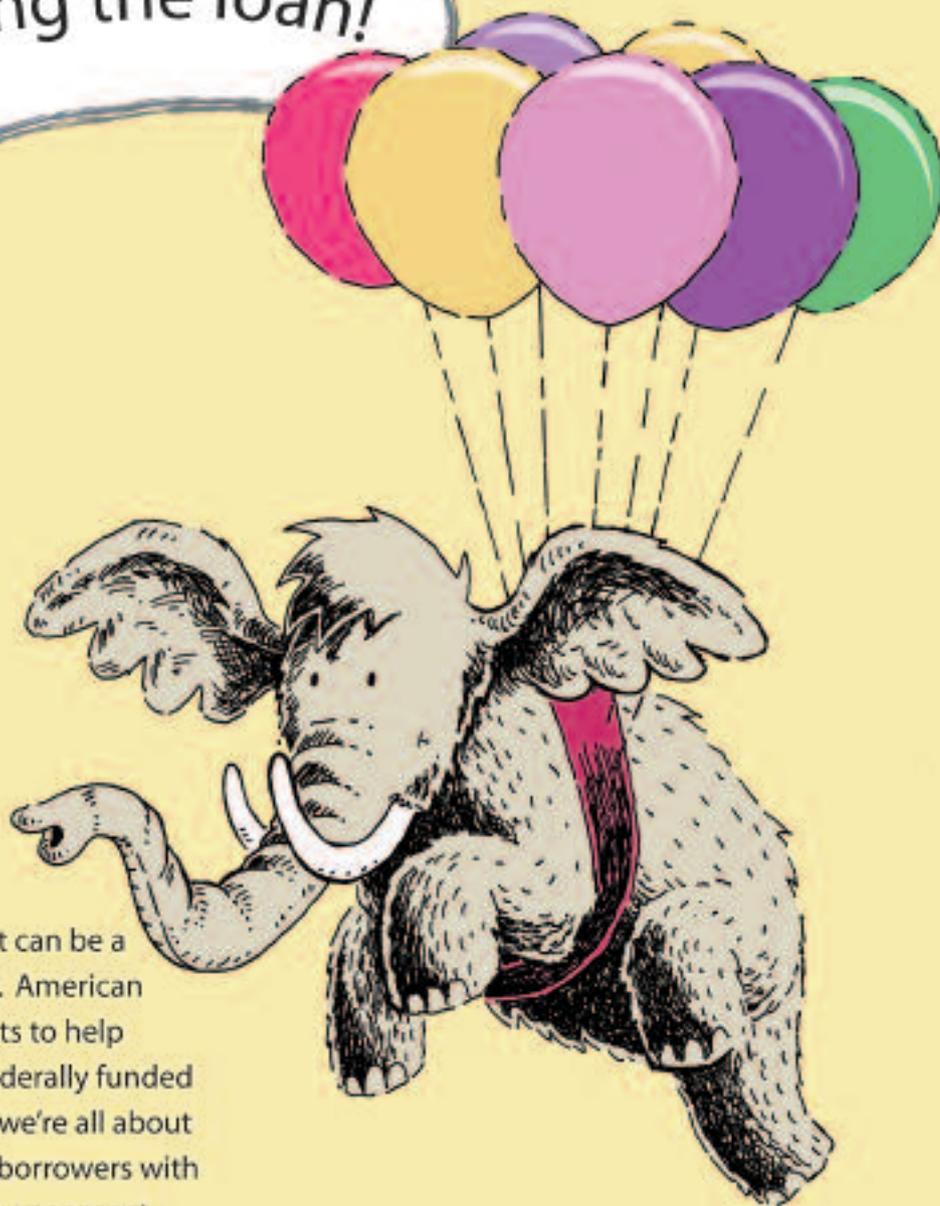
### De-tracking classrooms is as much about promoting equity as it is about improving achievement.

The assumption that some students are simply not “college material” can become ingrained in every level of the public education system, as evidenced by common practices such as sorting students according to perceived ability. Since poor children, minorities and students whose parents did not attend college usually make up the bulk of lower-track ability groups, de-tracking classrooms is just as much about promoting equity as it is about improving achievement. Increasing college-going rates—and, just as importantly, college-persistence rates—must begin with an academically challenging, college-preparatory curriculum for every student. Still, a common fear expressed by secondary educators is that droves of students will drop out if expectations are raised or if some peripheral electives are phased out to make room for core academic courses. The goal becomes “keeping students in school,” not educating them well. The result: some students graduate knowing calculus; others leave high school without even basic math skills.

### Getting creative

One of the most promising strategies for increasing student achievement and postsecondary enrollments is “Early College,” an experience that can dramatically increase achievement and college aspirations while

Lightening the loan!



Student loan repayment can be a mammoth undertaking. American Student Assistance wants to help lighten the loan. As a federally funded nonprofit organization, we're all about providing student loan borrowers with the education and encouragement they need to successfully manage their debt. Together with higher education institutions, we teach borrowers the money management skills that turn college debt into a conduit to good credit – helping to secure the "American Dream."



Visit [www.amsa.com/thinkabouttomorrow](http://www.amsa.com/thinkabouttomorrow) to learn more or call 800.999.9080.

American  
Student  
Assistance  
The Best Source

keeping students in school. The many Early College programs we support have been remarkably successful in engaging at-risk youth, and they present strong evidence that raising expectations does not inherently lead to widespread failures or greater numbers of dropouts. There are many forms of Early College, but the model we advocate allows juniors and seniors to take classes at a nearby college for both high school and college credit. This on-campus immersion experience has been crucial to the success of our programs, which all specifically target underperforming and low-income youth who may not intend to enroll in higher education or who may also be the first in their family to attend college.

Although counter-intuitive, “promoting” struggling secondary students into college classes works—the experience gives them a greater sense of autonomy and maturity, and can defuse hostilities they may feel toward their high school. Far from discouraging these students, the tougher college coursework usually rekindles their interest in learning and builds a greater sense of self-confidence. We have also seen students in our programs find a renewed motivation to improve their high school grades, and the partnerships created between public schools and colleges present new opportunities to reshape academic expectations at the secondary level. When high school educators observe their students succeeding—even thriving—in college classes, it can stimulate schools to rethink the course of studies they offer students.

Because Early College programs are embedded within the high schools and communities that are already familiar to students, they present a less intimidating transition between high school and higher education. By investing

in additional support systems, offering financial incentives and marketing the program to underperforming and underrepresented students, an Early College program can attract a diverse cross-section of students, including those who had never considered college an option.

Although we have seen firsthand the enormous potential of Early College, our organization is still searching for ways to make these programs more sustainable. Much of this work can be accomplished by postsecondary institutions as a matter of enlightened self-interest. At one of our Early College sites, students from a single high school now make up 12 percent of the institution’s total enrollment. Because Early College students can be placed into under-enrolled classes and program-coordination costs are usually minimal—and since students often choose to attend institutions they are already familiar with—subsidizing these programs can be a wise long-term investment strategy for colleges and universities.

Our ultimate goal is to extend Early College opportunities to students in every corner of Maine—but we cannot accomplish this alone. Early College is a strategy that will benefit both public schools and institutions of higher education, as well as the students they both serve. The fates of higher education and public schools are intertwined. If we truly want to increase the aspirations and educational attainment of more students, we need to start thinking more creatively and embrace new ways of working together.

---

*Stephen E. Abbott is director of communications for the Great Maine Schools Project at the Senator George J. Mitchell Scholarship Research Institute. Email: sabbott@MitchellInstitute.org.*

## New Hampshire’s Get Ready for College Initiative STEPHEN RENO AND RENÉ A. DROUIN

New Hampshire’s population is projected to grow only slightly between 2005 and 2015, with much of the growth in the age 55 and over segment. The state’s large employers are concerned about where they will find college-educated individuals to fill a myriad of positions in new or rapidly growing industries.

Meanwhile, though New Hampshire is tied for first among all states in per-capita income, four in 10 Granite State residents have not earned a high school diploma. We cannot rely on importing educated people to meet future employment demands, nor do we want to see jobs exported elsewhere.

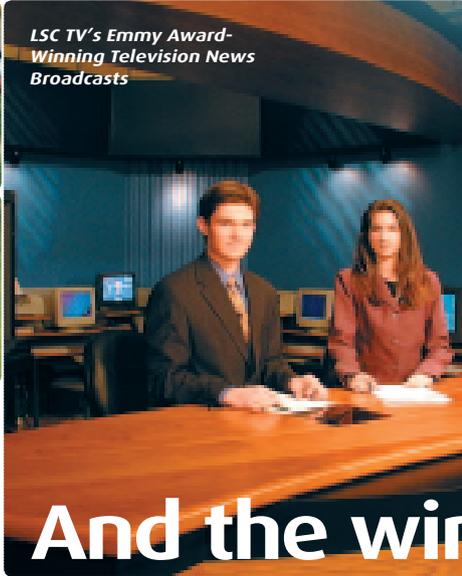
To ensure that New Hampshire is able to “grow our own” future employees, the University System of New Hampshire in October launched a “Get Ready for College” initiative, with support from the New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF) Network Organizations. Get Ready for College is a comprehensive effort to

encourage students in grades 6 through 12 to aspire to and prepare for college.

In the first phase of the initiative, organizers sent every guidance office in the state colorful posters explaining why it’s never too late to prepare for college and what sixth-through 12th graders can do to “get ready.” The posters were followed by brochures geared to students and families and a website with resources categorized by grade ([www.yourusnh.com](http://www.yourusnh.com)). In addition, a 20-minute “School is Cool” video targeted to eighth-graders will feature students at USNH institutions talking about obstacles they overcame to get into college, provide a look at life on a college campus, and offer messages about the earning potential of a college graduate versus a high school dropout.

---

*Stephen Reno is chancellor of the University System of New Hampshire. René A. Drouin is president and CEO of the NHHEAF Network Organizations. Email: sreno@unh.edu.*



LSC TV's Emmy Award-Winning Television News Broadcasts



The experiences make the education

And the winner is ...you



It's nice to be part of a winning line-up.

From our Emmy award-winning broadcast team that brings home a slew of honors and accolades every year, to the top, nationally ranked student forecasters in meteorology, each and every LSC program is designed to help you succeed. We give you the tools to achieve your personal goals earlier, building your skill set and resume along the way.

rewarding experiences around every turn. From our state-of-the-art facilities on campus, to internships in professional settings and opportunities to learn abroad, LSC packs your college career with a wide range of hands-on experiences right from the start.

To have a rewarding LSC experience, call us at **1-800-225-1998** or visit us online at **www.lyndonstate.edu** for more information.

At LSC, it's about putting your education on the inside track with



Lyndon STATE COLLEGE VERMONT

DEGREE PROGRAMS AT LSC

- Accounting
- Environmental Science
- Nursing
- Adventure-Based Programming/ Outdoor Recreation
- Exercise Science
- Physical Education
- Athletic Training (4+2)
- Fast Track Business
- Physical Therapy (3+3)
- Business Administration
- GIS Mapping & Planning/ Natural Resources
- Psychology
- Computer Information Systems
- Global Studies
- Secondary Education
- Digital Media
- Graphic Design
- Ski Resort Management
- Early Childhood Education
- Human Services
- Small Business Management & Entrepreneurship
- Elementary Education
- Liberal Studies
- Social Science
- English Journalism & Writing
- Mathematics
- Special Education
- English Literature & Cultural Studies
- Meteorology
- Sports Management
- Natural Science
- Television Studies

NEBHE eligible

# AN OUTSTANDING RESEARCH PROGRAM FOR OUTSTANDING *students*



**UGSP Scholar Yvette Pittman**  
B.S., Delaware State University  
Ph.D. Candidate,  
Rutgers/Univ. of Medicine and Dentistry  
of New Jersey Joint Program

## NIH UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

### SCHOLARSHIP

Up to \$20,000 per year for:

- Tuition and fees
- Room and board
- Books
- Transportation

### SUMMER RESEARCH TRAINING

At NIH in Bethesda, MD, you will receive:

- 10-week paid internship
- Mentoring
- Skill-enhancement activities
- Scientific seminars

### EMPLOYMENT AFTER GRADUATION

You will receive a one year commitment for each scholarship year which is deferrable to obtain a terminal degree.

### PLEASE APPLY IF YOU ARE:

- Committed to a biomedical research career
- From a disadvantaged background
- Have a GPA of 3.5 or better or are in the top 5% of your class
- A U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Enrolled or accepted at a 4-year accredited institution



The National Institutes of Health is our nation's premier biomedical research and research training institution, located minutes from Washington, D.C.

NIH is dedicated to building a diverse community in its training and employment programs.

**CALL 1-888-352-3001 OR  
E-MAIL [UGSP@NIH.GOV](mailto:UGSP@NIH.GOV)  
FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit our Web site at <http://ugsp.info.nih.gov> for an online application.

Annual application deadline: February 28th



# Fix Higher Education ... Before It Breaks!

## Challenges and Opportunities for New England

KEVIN B. SULLIVAN



**B**rainpower really is New England's only renewable natural energy resource. Yet New England has never been a generous public supporter of higher education. My wife Carolyn Thornberry's doctoral work reveals that New England's base political culture persists in seeing higher education as a *private* commodity. We are spared the crisis of states like California when the expectation of higher education entitlement crashes up against the demand for fiscal limits. Instead, our challenge is to even notice as the enterprise rusts.

In good times and bad, we expect and, therefore, accept relatively low levels of public support for and investment in higher education. And when we do invest, it is more likely to be in buildings than students and faculty. Meanwhile, our faith in the marketplace assures us that mounting disparities in college preparation, access, affordability, completion and indebtedness will all somehow sort themselves out. We New Englanders are afflicted by the corrupted maxim that "government which governs least governs best" and the wrongheaded advice, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

If it's difficult to move our political culture, it's next to impossible to move the ancient, institutional culture of higher education. Academe is complex, diffuse, prickly about prerogatives and reflexively suspicious of internal change and external engagement with its "organized anarchy." For all our good intentions, higher education is deeply challenged in its capacity for change and action. And to be fair, asking higher education to change its mission or do what it is not traditionally prepared to do is risky. We must not sacrifice

breadth and depth in teaching and scholarship, for example, to embrace ease in training and credentialing.

Colleges and universities must continue to serve Thomas Jefferson's belief that education is the soul of citizenship. The learned and practiced skills of civic awareness, debate and consensus are all the more important at a time when so many of us, in Robert Putnam's metaphor, are "bowling alone"—and doing so in our separate blue and red lanes. The virtual citizenship of web-based interactions is no substitute for the virtuous citizenship of actual contact.

---

**It may be time to broaden the 50-year-old New England Higher Education Compact that created NEBHE into a reinvigorated Northeastern partnership including New York and New Jersey.**

---

Higher education is a bridge to opportunity. It was when I was the first in my family to go to college. It's more so in today's knowledge-based global economy where every year of educational attainment is a proven multiplier of well-being.

Higher education is also a vital source of renewal. New England colleges and graduate schools are a vital national and international draw for those who come here to learn and help counter the demography of a region aging in place. As businesses and employers as well as centers of research and development, New England campuses are economic engines whose everyday decisions add to or subtract from the common good.

Higher education is, or can be, a tremendous force for engagement in and improvement of society. Among scholarship's most important lessons is the ethic of thinking globally and acting locally. Colleges and universities can be powerful partners with their communities, especially in renewing cities and school systems. They can form more effective partnerships with other colleges, universities, businesses, associations and foundations to reduce our separate disadvantages and multiply our shared advantages. And we can all build on the partnership represented regionally by the New England Board of Higher Education. Indeed, while Red Sox and Yankees fans weep in their beer over their mutual fate this past season, it may be time to broaden the 50-year-old New England Higher Education Compact that created NEBHE into a reinvigorated *Northeastern* partnership including New York and New Jersey.

Finally, let us reach back to our New England collegiate roots and imagine again the city on the hill that was once our higher horizon. Getting there will require greater vision and investment. Both the College Board and the Committee for Economic Development this past fall warned of real and growing "cracks in the education pipeline." Higher education costs continue to outpace family income and financial aid. Unacceptable levels of debt are a deterrent first impression for many would-be college graduates and an immediate negative return on investment for many more. With the shift to non-means-tested tuition tax credits and merit aid, students in the upper half of wealth distribution now benefit more than those in the lower

half. And the slowly narrowing gaps in high school preparation between whites and nonwhites and rich and poor is unmatched by any less disparity in access, retention, completion and the added cost of delayed completion.

Moreover, colleges and universities are still not leading by example with good pay and benefits for non-professional staff. We continue to underestimate the need for our own professional development, believing instead that some magical process turns good professors into good managers. We are still generationally mismatching technology-savvy students with non-technology-savvy campuses. Higher education remains wholly unprepared for another looming demographic tidal wave: the aging that will drastically reduce our traditional age cohort and public priority. And the National Center for Policy and Higher Education's 50-state report card

reminds us that higher education is still not "measuring up" in terms of providing the evidence of learning that will be demanded by consumers. Will we answer the center's call to shape these outcome standards ourselves or let others make a Procrustean bed for us?

At the same time, colleges and universities are too disconnected from broader education policy. The continuum of learning that begins in early childhood should lead through higher education seamlessly. In New England, beyond the usual suspects, we are not yet maximizing our potential as research and development engines of innovation, invention and job creation. We are not partnering enough with school systems or workplaces or the communities where we are neighbors but often far from neighborly. Higher education also shrinks too much from advocacy, lest someone take offense and carve at our own little piece of the pie.

Connecticut and all New England remain blessed with an extraordinary array of colleges and universities. The region's campuses house enormous caches of talent and continue to attract students from around the world. By refocusing our institutional missions and the common mission of groups like the New England Board of Higher Education, we can create still more world-class opportunities in teaching, learning, scholarship and service. We just might make ourselves greater than the sum of our parts.

---

*Kevin B. Sullivan is lieutenant governor of Connecticut and former president pro tempore of the Connecticut Senate. He is also an adjunct professor in public policy at Trinity College, where he served nine years as vice president of community and institutional relations. Email: Kevin.B.Sullivan@po.state.ct.us.*

The financial resource for not-for-profits.

Like your organization, Webster has a mission. Our is to *Find a Way* to help not-for-profits reach their financial goals. We understand your unique challenges and our dedicated not-for-profit specialists can offer you a full array of financial services tailored to managing your finances, people and risks.

Learn more about how Webster finds a way for not-for-profits. Contact **Nancy Riddle Scirocco, VP, Not-for-Profit Banking** at (860) 692-1619 or [nsirocco@websterbank.com](mailto:nsirocco@websterbank.com).

**Webster**  
We Find a Way

WebsterOnline.com

The Webster Symbol and We Find a Way are service marks of Webster Financial Corporation. Webster and Webster Bank are registered in the U.S. Patent Trademark Office. Member FDIC. Equal Opportunity Lender.

**An email news service only for Friends of NEBHE**

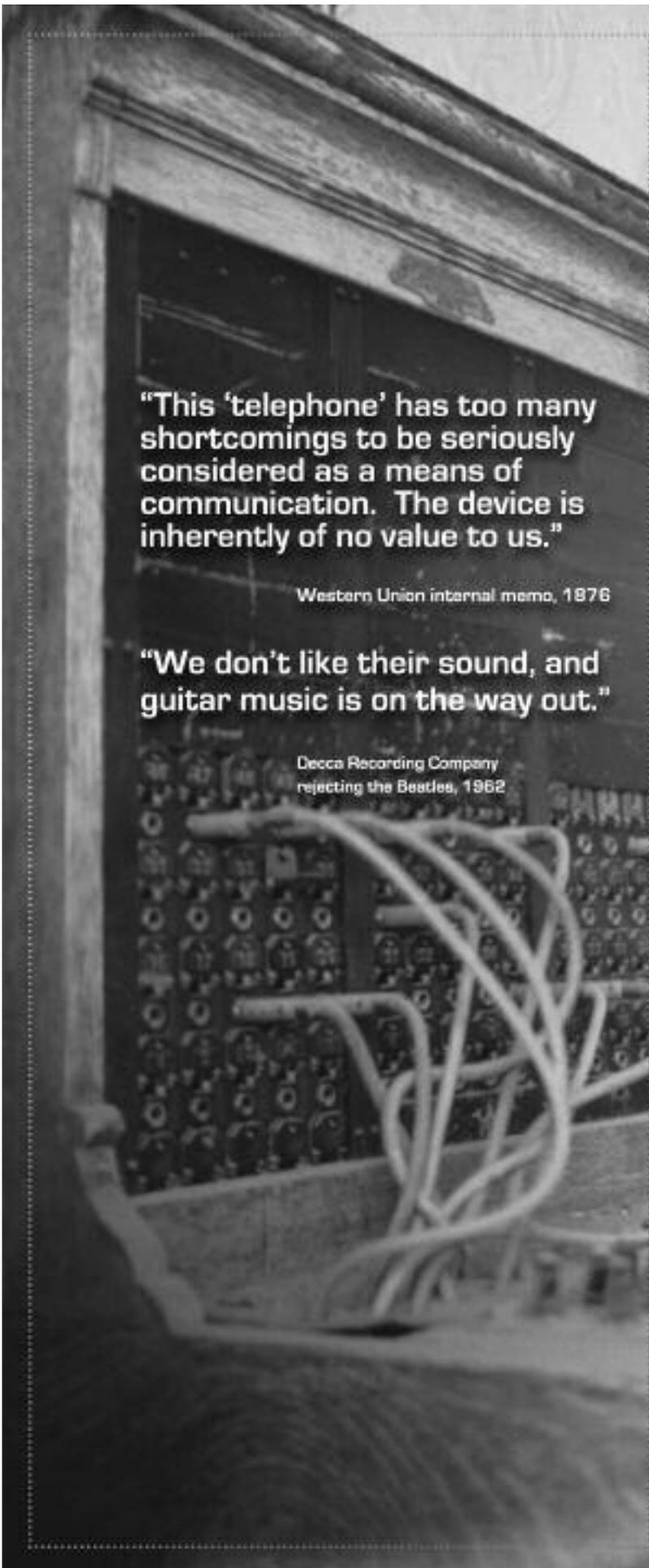
Stay connected to New England higher education news and events online with

**CONNECTION'S Campus Newslink**

...brought to you by

*CONNECTION: THE JOURNAL OF THE NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION.*

For more information on how to become a Friend of NEBHE and receive CONNECTION'S Campus Newslink and other benefits, visit [www.nebhe.org/friends](http://www.nebhe.org/friends), email [friends@nebhe.org](mailto:friends@nebhe.org) or call 617.357.9620.



**"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us."**

Western Union internal memo, 1876

**"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."**

Decca Recording Company  
rejecting the Beatles, 1962

**The future is  
often hard  
to see...**

**But we get a glimpse  
of it every day.**

It takes a rare combination of luck and insight to predict what the future will bring. That may be why even experts often get it wrong — dismissing innovations that may signal big changes in their industries.

At HEFA we are privileged to glimpse the future from a unique vantage point. Every day we work with forward-thinking, higher education clients who have the vision to see what is possible. This past year with tax-exempt HEFA financing, a leading university built a high-tech facility to enable cutting-edge learning, a world-renowned research institution invested in advanced microscopes to drive tomorrow's medical breakthroughs, and a local college built a new residence hall to house the students of the 21st century.

With our help, our nonprofit clients secure the financial resources to implement their dreams. For information on how HEFA can help your organization, visit [www.mhefa.org](http://www.mhefa.org).

**Together we build the future.**

MASSACHUSETTS  
**hefa**  
Health & Educational  
FACILITIES AUTHORITY

- Of the 25 largest foreign-owned firms in Massachusetts, number whose parent company is based in Europe: **18**
- Number whose parent company is based in Asia: **1**
- Estimated number of Internet users in China: **130,000,000**
- One-year percentage increase in value of Massachusetts exports of computers and electronic equipment to China, 2003 to 2004: **72%**
- Percentage of Chinese adults in New England who have advanced degrees: **30%**
- Percentage of native-born adults in New England who do: **11%**
- Percentage of Chinese adults in New England who have not finished high school: **30%**
- Percentage of native-born adults in New England who have not: **14%**
- Percentage of U.S. population that is non-white: **31%**
- Percentage of public, academic and school librarians who are non-white: **13%**
- Percentage of Worcester, Mass., school students who are non-white: **54%**
- Percentage of Worcester, Mass., schools with all-white faculties as of spring 2005: **25%**
- Percentage of U.S. college presidents who believe there is “still an important place for affirmative action in college/university admissions”: **77%**
- U.S. rank of Vermont in number of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan per 100,000 state residents: **1st**
- Rank of Connecticut: **46th**
- Percentage of 10- to 24-year-old Americans who report being in a physical fight in the past 12 months: **33%**
- Number of New Englanders on U.S. secretary of education’s new 19-member Commission on the Future of Higher Education: **1**
- Women as a percentage of New Hampshire four-year college graduates: **58%**
- Women as a percentage of New Hampshire workers who earn at or near the minimum wage: **67%**
- Percentage of faculty at major business schools worldwide who published research on topics related to ethics or social and environmental perspectives in leading peer-reviewed management journals in 2003 and 2005: **4%**
- Number of U.S. business schools ranked among top 30 worldwide based on social, environmental and ethical perspectives: **12**
- Respective ranks of business schools at Boston College and Yale University: **15th, 21st**
- Number of Boston University alumni who have won Pulitzer Prizes in journalism since 1972: **22**

Sources: 1,2 CONNECTION analysis of *Boston Business Journal* data; 3 Weida Communications Inc.; 4,5,6,7,8 Federal Reserve Bank of Boston; 9 U.S. Census Bureau; 10 American Library Association; 11 Massachusetts Department of Education; 12 Worcester Indy Media Center; 13 *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; 14,15 *The Nation*; 16 Centers for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System; 17 U.S. Department of Education (MIT President-emeritus Charles M. Vest is the only member affiliated with a New England-based institution.); 18,19 Ross Gittell, University of New Hampshire/New Hampshire Women’s Policy Institute; 20,21,22 World Resources Institute and the Aspen Institute; 23 Boston University

# Your Partner in Student Health Insurance

## Coverage and Services With You and Your Students in Mind



**The Chickering Group, an Aetna Company,** a full-service insurance administrator, provides health insurance for over 350,000 students and their dependents at colleges and universities across the country. As an independent subsidiary of Aetna, one of the nation's leading providers of health care insurance benefits, we offer a nationwide network of physicians, hospitals and pharmacies to higher education institutions across the nation.

### Coverage and services include:

- Customized benefit plans coordinated with campus student health centers
- Access to Aetna's National Network of health care professionals
- Web-based client and member products
- Emergency Travel Assistance Services with Unlimited Medical Evacuation and Repatriation Benefits
- Aetna Navigator™: An online member self-service website available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Students can access claims, coverage, and general health information as well as decision-support tools.
- Vital Savings by Aetna<sup>SM</sup>: An elective dental and vision discount program offered on a voluntary basis at a low cost to all students.\*\*

*\*\*It is not necessary to purchase the student health plan to purchase this additional discount program.*



Contact us today to learn more about our products and services.

phone: 1-877-480-3843

fax: 1-617-218-5700

e-mail: [communications@chickering.com](mailto:communications@chickering.com)

website: [www.chickering.com](http://www.chickering.com)

Student Health Insurance Plans are administered by Chickering Claims Administrators, Inc. and offered by Aetna Life Insurance Company. The Chickering Group is an internal business unit of Aetna Life Insurance Company. Health Insurance Plans contain exclusions and limitations. While this material is believed to be accurate as of the print date, it is subject to change.

The New England Board of Higher Education gratefully acknowledges the following sponsors whose financial support makes our programs, conferences, events and CONNECTION magazine possible.

**TD Banknorth Higher Education Group**

**The John H. and H. Naomi Tomfohrde Foundation**

**Nellie Mae Education Foundation**

**American Student Assistance**

**Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Vermont**

**College Bound Fund**

**Dalkia International**

**Gilbane Building Company**

**JPMorgan Chase Bank**

**Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority**

**Massachusetts HEFA**

**MassDevelopment**

**The Mohegan Tribe**

**National Institutes of Health**

**New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation**

**Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund**

**TERI**

**Topham Foundation**

**Webster Bank**

Citizens Bank

The College Board

Connecticut Community Colleges

Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education

Fairfield University

Hartford Steam Boiler

MPTN Human Potential Development

Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority

University System of New Hampshire

For information on NEBHE's sponsorship program, call 617.357.9620 x121 or x125

**CONNECTION**

THE JOURNAL OF THE NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

New England Board of Higher Education  
45 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111-1305



Nonprofit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Hanover, NH 03755  
Permit No. 91