

# THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION



**SUMMER 2009** VOLUME XXIV, NO. 1

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looking out.



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The background of the advertisement features a textured, light brown surface. In the foreground, several interlocking gears of various sizes are depicted in shades of yellow and brown. Three silhouettes of business professionals are shown: a man in a suit stands prominently on the largest gear in the center, while a woman in a business suit stands on a smaller gear to the left, and another man in a suit stands on a gear further to the left. The overall theme is industrial efficiency and professional expertise.

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# THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**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.

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## EDITOR'S MEMO

### Inspiration

How are campus dining, college athletics and Native American history related? Friend and mentor Bob Woodbury sees them as chapters in the eclectic story of New England higher education and economic development—a story he helped write as chancellor of the University of Maine System and in other key higher ed posts. Now a member of the *NEJHE* Editorial Advisory Board, he inspired the articles on those topics for this issue.

• In “Learning to Eat,” Bowdoin College executive chef Kenneth Cardone savors an overlooked asset of the college experience for students reared on fast food and hyperscheduled high school years: the development of taste buds and good dinner conversation—the *sobremesa*, as the Spanish call it.

• In “Double-Teamed,” Amherst College athletic director Suzanne R. Coffey urges college coaches and faculty to work together to bridge the divide between the classroom and “fields and courts that are humming with good minds processing complex patterns, reacting to variations, listening for cues, unpacking and reassembling the next moves (of the ball, the teammates, the opponents) before they happen.”

• In “The Dark Ages of Education and a New Hope,” Donna Loring, who represented the Penobscot Nation in the Maine Legislature for 12 years, describes the law she authored requiring Maine schools to teach Native American history and help heal the “Soul Wounds” that education has inflicted upon generations of Native Americans.

Bob broached all three angles and suggested the authors. They were the easiest story assignments I’ve made in two decades as editor. First of all, if anyone knows a good *NEJHE* angle, Bob does. Secondly, once I told each author Bob had suggested I contact them about writing the piece, they were *in*—no further negotiation needed. As Loring said, “Bob Woodbury is my friend as well.”

Recently, Bob has been battling cancer with the thoughtfulness and humor that have marked his career.

When we created the journal’s advisory board in 2003, Bob’s was the first name to come to mind. He had already chaired NEBHE. He had inspired the journal to devote itself to the nexus of higher education and economic development and had written perhaps the most requested piece in the journal’s history, his 2003 “How to Make Your College No. 1 in *U.S. News & World Report* and Lose Your Integrity in the Process.” The article described how the newsmagazine’s popular ratings issue encouraged colleges to produce an application deluge, reject as many students as possible, avoid nontraditional students and favor quick fixes over long-term improvement.

In 2004, Bob and I coauthored a chapter on “Academic Regionalism: Higher Education Cooperation in New England” for a book on *Regionalism in a Global Society*, and we got a good laugh out of dreaming up how we would spend the \$75 honorarium the publisher sent us. (*Bob is an avid and intelligent sports fan. We may have spent it on snacks at a Sea Dogs game.*)

When *NEJHE* celebrated its 20th anniversary a few years later, Bob noted that the journal had “codified the notion that economic development was and is ever more based on the quality and creativity of our higher education enterprise.”

When I was sick, Bob was a steady source of warmth and comfort for my family and me. Needless to say, we’re now pulling for Bob.

\* \* \* \*

For this issue’s Forum, we asked thinkers to assess President Obama’s goal to make the U.S. the world leader in college degree attainment. Authors include U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Capitol Hill education expert Terry Hartle, Muriel Howard (the first minority woman to lead one of the big D.C. higher education groups), and Nellie Mae Education Foundation President Nicholas C. Donohue. Notably, Donohue urges attention to another group lacking college attainment: “disconnected” young adults who are unemployed and not enrolled in school.

This issue also explores policy-oriented publishing in a blogging/Twittering age, and indeed the print-and-paper future of *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION*. We begin this exploration just as the tide seems to be turning against many print publications. Please weigh in, of course.

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**Room at the Inns**

The New England Board of Higher Education has conducted a student vacancy survey every spring since 1960 as a public service to college-bound New England residents and as a measure of college application trends.

This year, more than 70% of the 202 New England public and private colleges responding to the survey still had fall 2009 openings for freshman and transfer applicants as of the traditional May 1 deadline.

There had been much commentary this admissions season about growing interest in less-costly public institutions because of the difficult economy. But the 2009 NEBHE survey found little shift: 26 of New England’s public four-year colleges still had openings as of May 1, while 70 of the region’s private four-year campuses did—similar to past years. And despite speculation that admissions standards would rise at the best public institutions due to a shift from privates to publics, one source at a New England land-grant university noted that SAT scores indeed rose among students sending in deposits, but only modestly.

Among other findings: 42 New England colleges surveyed were closed to both freshman and transfer applicants as of May 1. Twelve reported openings for transfers only. Fully 95% of the colleges with openings indicated that financial aid was still available as of May 1. As in previous years, many community college programs in high-demand allied health fields, including nursing, were full and closed to new applicants.

One college president suggested that NEBHE repeat the annual survey as of June 1 to capture the admissions colleges make to fill seats after the traditional May 1 deadline.

**New England Reps**

NEJHE used to doggedly follow the ups and downs of New England representation on key national boards. In May, 13 business leaders were appointed to a new task force that

will improve outreach to the business community on behalf of the National Assessment of Education Progress, known as “The Nation’s Report Card.” NAEP was created by Congress to provide the public with information about the achievement of students at grades 4, 8 and 12 in core academic subjects, including reading, math, writing and science. Of the 13 task force members, just one comes from a New England company. He is Joseph E. Esposito, the retired CFO of Bedford, Mass.-based Solidworks Corp.

True, one in 13 exceeds New England’s 5% of the U.S. population and college enrollment, but falls short of the region’s perception of itself in education and economic policy. One has to wonder: Is New England’s historic over-representation on decision-making boards plunging with the economy?

**Boosting Native Retention**

The University of Maine at Presque Isle enrolls 65 Native American students—the highest percentage in the UMaine System. Early this year, UMPI was awarded up to \$750,000 over the next four years from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to develop and improve culturally responsive retention strategies that help Native American students transition from the Native community to the university community.

The grant was made through Project Compass, in which the foundation funds campuses to help narrow the achievement gaps for low-income students, students of color and students who are first in their family to attend college. The Presque Isle grant specifically calls for creating a Native American Center staffed with a retention team; review of academic affairs and curriculum to offer more effective support to marginalized students; and reconfiguration of the roles of student support and advising.

**The Way Life Should Be**

The University of Maine’s Lobster Institute offers its Lobster College

from Sept. 17 to Sept. 20 at the Kenniston Hill Inn Bed & Breakfast in Boothbay, Maine. Lobster College “students” will experience onsite learning about lobsters directly from people who work in the lobster industry, as well as UMaine faculty. Says the institute’s executive director Robert Bayer: “We’ll be taking a trip out to haul traps, we’ll visit a working lobster wharf, and we’ll provide lectures on a variety of lobster-related topics. We’ll even show you how to bait a trap.”

Lobster College doubles as a fundraiser for the Lobster Institute, whose research and outreach aim to protect, conserve and enhance the vitality of the lobster as a resource, and lobstering as an industry and way of life. For more on the institute, visit: <http://www.lobsterinstitute.org>.

**Well at Newbury**

In light of reports suggesting a big increase in obesity in young adults and a study showing obesity may be as lethal as smoking, Newbury College’s Wellness Fair this past spring focused on the weighty subject. A dietician spoke with students individually and a seminar addressed “Healthy Weight Loss: How to Lose Weight and Keep It Off.”

The fair also featured info on sexual health and specialists on ADD/ADHD and anxiety. Newbury’s Gay-Straight Alliance promoted self-exams for breast and testicular cancer. “Healthy behaviors are established early in life,” says Susan Chamandy, Newbury director of counseling and health education. “Time is of the essence.”

**Opiate of the People?**

The share of Americans claiming no religion rose to 15% in 2008, up from 8% in 1990, according to a survey by the Trinity College Program on Public Values. The state with the highest percentage of people claiming no religion: Vermont at 34%. View the survey report online at: [http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS\\_Report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf).

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## Strategies to Maintain New England's Education Advantage

MICHAEL K. THOMAS

**S**purred by recession and fiscal emergencies, individuals and organizations flooded New England's statehouses this past spring to lobby exhausted governors, legislators and staff to preserve worthy programs and policies.

While the paths of the national and state economies remain unclear, New England educators in K-12 and higher education know that now is the time to invest in people, their skills and their futures.

How? Just as today's students and tomorrow's workers need to work smarter and collaborate, New England's decision-makers should jointly develop tools to ensure that more New Englanders are prepared for college and career, and to help the region meet the goal of the Obama administration and major foundations to increase college attainment.

### Among key principles:

**Requiring Rigorous Statewide Curricula.** The New England states have increased the rigor of high school curricula and better aligned them with the expectations of postsecondary institutions. Yet such college- and career-ready curricula are not *required* for graduation, so many students—particularly underrepresented ones—are simply not ready for college.

Are New England leaders willing to accept that some students receive the courses and content knowledge they need to succeed after high school, while others (often unknowingly) do not? Twenty U.S. states have emphatically answered “No” and adopted graduation requirements aligned with entry standards to their state's public four-year

institutions. New England states must do the same, ending the guesswork of what it means to be academically prepared for college and career.

**Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems.** One can track a small parcel from a post office in Augusta, Maine, to a mailbox in Kuala Lumpur—real-time and point-by-point via the web—but cannot track an individual student's progress through the education pipeline toward a postsecondary degree. Several New England states have made progress, buoyed by strong leadership and national data standards, toward expanding and integrating data systems to these ends.

K-12 and higher education leaders must use the improved, integrated student-level data to drive policy. To markedly reduce postsecondary remediation and improve readiness and degree attainment, we must employ timely data to work smarter. Data must track individual students' progress toward key elements of readiness, provide early warnings and timely feedback on performance and inform teaching and learning. And the data must follow students into postsecondary institutions.

**Early Commitment Financial Aid Programs.** While progress has been made in closing the achievement gap between low-income and minority students and their peers, the gap will continue to erode New England's advantage in postsecondary attainment. Hitting the problem head-on, several states have created programs to engage low-income students (many of them minority) and their families in making an early commitment to college readiness and success. As early as sixth

grade, students pledge to take rigorous courses and to participate in activities to prepare for and get accepted to college.

The College Crusade of Rhode Island is an outstanding model. By fulfilling their part of the “contract,” students earn financial aid and tuition waivers at public institutions.

**Statewide Goals for Postsecondary Attainment.** Only one New England state has articulated statewide targets to expand postsecondary attainment in the coming decade or beyond. Maine's statewide goal calls for an additional 39,500 degree holders beyond the projected or “natural” growth rate by the year 2019.

It's time for the other five New England states to thoughtfully develop specific goals to educate new degree-holders. Doing so will require creating a shared understanding of how a state produces graduates, as well as data-driven analyses of K-12 and higher education performance, demographic projections, migration patterns and regional, national and international comparisons. It will require examining the key junctions of the education pipeline and the condition of state and institutional policy levers that are most critical to reaching such goals.

Working smarter and more collaboratively, using better data and intervening with students earlier in the pipeline, New England can maintain its education advantage.

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## Readiness in Brief

JOAN MENARD



With support from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, NEBHE has published two new briefing papers with its partners in the College Ready New England initiative spotlighting innovative practices, policies and key steps to increase educational attainment for underserved students.

NEBHE's 2007 summit on college readiness identified college readiness as a shared endeavor and responsibility of students and families, K-12 education and higher education. NEBHE's approach then and now is to: catalyze ongoing policy dialogue on what it means to be "college- and career-ready"; identify graduation pathways and "blended models" of youth transitions to postsecondary education for diverse learners and nontraditional (low-income, first-generation college attendees, underrepresented minority) students; and promote "model" early college commitment programs for replication throughout New England and nationwide.

One of the new NEBHE papers, "Readiness Revised: State Strategies and Innovations to Improve College and Career Success for Underrepresented Students," notes that philanthropic foundations, corporations, federal and state government and private individuals each play a critical role to ensure that students and families receive the financial and academic supports necessary to succeed in postsecondary education.

The paper lauds New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and schools Chancellor Joel Klein for their work in promoting the city's Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, and Maine

Gov. John Baldacci for his efforts to boost college readiness in Maine.

"Readiness Revised" urges the six New England states to foster ways to transform educational attainment and dramatically increase outcomes for underrepresented student populations.

These innovative steps would include requiring active collaboration between local departments of education and community-based organizations to combat the dropout crisis. They would also create levers to hold higher education departments and institutions accountable for their role in impacting college readiness for incoming freshmen and use projects supported by foundations as a resource to impact work within schools and districts statewide. To guide and prioritize school interventions, the paper urges governors and state legislators to set measurable goals for college and career success and create "community education boards" to oversee and align community resources and strategic planning for program development. And it calls for aligning financial aid and state budget policies to create a shared investment and responsibility to support college and career readiness.

The companion paper, "Aligned by Design," aims to build upon the work of NEBHE and its regional partners by featuring best practices and lessons learned from deliberate K-12 and higher education partnerships in which both "segments" join to align standards, assessments, course content and expectations. The paper draws on national and regional examples of successful collaborations among districts, institutions and education systems and provides models for

achieving alignment that are "replicable" and suitable for statewide "scaling."

"Aligned by Design" draws upon interviews with policy experts and academics and data to measure improvement. The paper focuses on early assessment programs between K-12 and higher education to promote postsecondary readiness and success and alignment of K-12 and higher education in terms of standards, course content and knowledge, professional development, expectations and graduation pathways, including, for example, early college and dual-enrollment programs.

The authors urge state leaders in business, government and education across the region to recognize the potential contributions of community and technical colleges and set measurable goals for college and career success and work toward aligning financial aid and state budget policies.

States need to develop financial incentives to catalyze K-12 and higher education collaboration, rather than exacerbate the divide between the sectors as most state finance systems do. In addition, high school leaders need to present diagnostic information to students through early assessments so that students can have an idea where they stand with respect to academic preparedness no later than 11th grade, well before entering college and the workplace.

In many ways, college readiness begins with collaboration.

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

# Educators Without Borders

## Addressing New England's teacher shortages

R. CLARKE FOWLER

Schools throughout New England face a common problem: a shortage of teachers who are fully qualified to teach science, mathematics, special education, bilingual education, foreign languages and English. Shortages are expected to spread soon to other teaching fields due to a second common problem: New England has the oldest teaching force of any region in the country. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) recently estimated that in 2008-09, at least half of the working teachers in each New England state are age 50 or older: Specifically, 50% of the teaching force in Rhode Island is over age 50; 53% in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut; 55% in Vermont; and 56% in Maine. Consequently, an enormous percentage of the region's teaching force will retire within the coming years.

To address current and future teacher shortages, many New England states have established alternative, and typically faster, routes into the profession. Maine has developed Regional Teacher Development Centers that provide, among other services, support and guidance to individuals seeking to become licensed via nontraditional means. Massachusetts implemented its "Bonus Teacher" program, which provided \$20,000 bonuses to high-achieving individuals who taught after an intensive six-week summer training program. In fall 2009, Rhode Island will launch a similar fast-track initiative, the Rhode Island Teaching Fellows (RITF). Managed by the New Teacher Project, the same organization that managed the Massachusetts Bonus Teacher initiative, the RITF will also put individuals in charge of classrooms following a six-week summer program.

There are two problems, however, with relying on fast-track programs to respond to teacher shortages. First, because teachers leave their profession faster than most other professionals, especially early in their careers, teacher shortages are caused more by high rates of attrition than by low rates of supply. University of Pennsylvania professor of education and sociology Richard Ingersoll has compared responding to teacher shortages by accelerating teacher preparation to pouring water into a leaky bucket. Attempts to fill the bucket are doomed unless and until policymakers repair the holes. Ingersoll recommends multiple ways of addressing this

situation, beginning with providing more support to beginning teachers who, historically, have been left on their own to sink or swim—and far too many of them sink.

The other problem with fast-track teacher preparation programs is that they aggravate the already excessively high rates of teacher attrition. For example, between 1999 and 2004, 15% of Massachusetts' Bonus Teachers left the classroom after one year, 31% after two years, and 44% after three years. Attrition rates were even higher for those individuals who worked in high-need urban areas, where 28% left teaching or migrated to a non-high-need district after one year, 38% after two years, and a stunning 55% after three years. These attrition rates far exceed national attrition rates for traditionally trained teachers. The Bay State's much heralded fast-track into teaching turned into a fast track *out* of teaching.

What should policymakers do to address the regional teacher shortage? First, to reduce teacher attrition, policymakers should consider adopting an innovation recently proposed by the NCTAF: forming school-based "Learning Teams" composed of novice, veteran and semi-retired teachers who would work collaboratively on improving student learning. This approach would have at least three benefits. First, it would provide new teachers with the kind of support that is likely to reduce teacher attrition. Second, it would soften the coming loss of older teachers to retirement by giving them a way to exit the profession gradually. Third, Learning Teams would provide a collective focus on student learning in ways that occur too rarely in schools today.

To address the supply side of the teacher shortage problem, policymakers should consider nurturing another source of teachers they have often overlooked: individuals who prepare to teach in one state but then move to another. An analysis of the Title II database—the federal government's collection of national education data—shows that, between 1999 and 2007, 24% of all initial teaching licenses issued in the U.S. were awarded to individuals who prepared to teach in other states.

How successful are the New England states at recruiting teachers from other states? It varies dramatically. Between 2002 and 2007, New Hampshire issued 44% of its initial licenses to individuals who completed teacher-preparation programs in other states, Rhode Island 34%, Connecticut 34%, and Vermont 26%. By contrast, Maine issued only 15% of its initial licenses to teachers from other states, and Massachusetts issued just 10%.

Two factors, both related to teacher licensure testing, appear to contribute to the wide differences

noted above. First, testing programs vary across the New England states, with the most idiosyncratic being Massachusetts, which uses a unique set of tests, the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure, made by the Evaluation Systems group of the international media company, Pearson. The five other states use the Praxis series of licensure tests, made by the Educational Testing Service, which have been adopted by more than 40 states (and are offered in every state in the union). However, the five New England states that use the Praxis exams do not always require the same tests. For example, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont each require individuals seeking an elementary license to take the same exam; but Maine and Rhode Island each require a second, different exam. Connecticut requires two other tests.

The second factor that impacts the extent to which states attract teachers from other states is whether they accept other licensure tests. Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maine do not accept any other state's licensure tests, but New Hampshire and Rhode Island do.

It is not an accident that New Hampshire, which has both a nationally available test (Praxis) and a flexible policy toward other states' tests, issued 44% of its initial licenses to teachers from other states. Nor is it an accident that Massachusetts, which has both a unique

licensure test and an inflexible policy toward other states' tests, issued just 10% of its initial license to teachers from other states. Indeed, only three other states in the country issued a lower percentage of initial licenses to out-of-state teachers: Oklahoma 8%, Indiana 9%, and Arkansas 10%.

New England's policymakers should address their shared, regional problems with shared, regional responses. A regional approach toward licensure testing might begin with each New England state agreeing to accept one another's licensure test, or better yet, adopting a common set of licensure tests. A regional approach to implementing Learning Teams might begin with the formation of a consortium of universities to oversee a regionwide study of multiple ways of implementing this and other innovations.

Working together on a range of shared problems such as disparate student achievement presents a way for policymakers to improve education, but at a reduced cost, by pooling scarce resources to address common issues. Given the current gloomy fiscal status of all state budgets, now is an opportune time for increased regional cooperation.

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# Learning to Eat

## Who knew the Ivory Tower had a kitchen?

KENNETH CARDONE

I don't know about you, but I left college with an appreciation of two foods: coffee and beer. Times have changed. Since the *Princeton Review* started rating dining programs, residence halls and other college amenities, there has been increased attention paid by prospective students—and, therefore, administrations—to the once-lowly cafeteria.

If you read the press releases, beating the competition with restaurant-style dining, wood-fired pizza ovens, espresso machines and organic vegetables is one of many ways for colleges to attract and hold the best and brightest.

It also seems that fond food memories fuel alumni associations, which increase attendance at reunions and boost giving.

But is it just an arms race with escalating levels of gourmet ingredients? Or can a dining program make a legitimate contribution to the educational environment? At Bowdoin College, we think it can, and does.

Many factors contribute to the strength of the Bowdoin dining program: the intimate size of the campus and student body (1,700), the New England winters that encourage people to linger longer in the warmth and light of the dining halls and the college's traditional commitment to a strong residential community built on rich relationships—relationships reinforced over discussions and fellowship at the dining tables.

From their first day on campus, Bowdoin students experience a positive association between good community and wholesome food, one that sets many students on a lifelong path of healthy eating. First-year students arrive with diverse backgrounds and varied exposure to food. Many have survived the hyper-scheduled years of secondary school on grabbed meals of pizza and Pop-Tarts. The traditional sit-down meal with family was often sacrificed in the pursuit of a winning curriculum and extracurricular activities.

In the dining halls, first-year students find a haven from the confusion and dislocation of orientation week, knowing they can find friends and something great to eat each time they walk through the doors. Over time, the dining halls become a dependable source of comfort and community. College experiences start to add up and, little by little, the students realize they have stumbled into a place where everyone is looking out for them. They may be in rural Maine, but the food is world-class (#2 in the *Princeton Review*). The staff knows not only their names but their food preferences

and routinely anticipates their orders. This is especially true for the increasing number of students with special dietary needs who must develop a higher level of trust that the food is safe and healthy for them.

**For many students, college offers development of a sometimes-overlooked asset: taste buds. How can they not become more adventurous when everyone at their table is enjoying the sweet and sour tofu and the kimchee.**

Undergraduates can spend four years with their heads a little bit in the clouds. Disconnected from structures of home and not yet subject to adult responsibilities, they are free to pursue their interests. Sometimes, this freedom leads to bad habits and poor self-care. In many ways, dining imposes a healthy rhythm on students who may be burning the candle at both ends. Bowdoin students report through comment cards and advisory committee discussions that having a dependable source of tasty, healthy food helps them concentrate on learning, studying and athletics. An overheard remark at the beginning of the school year is, "I'm so glad to be back at school. I haven't had a home-cooked meal all summer."

For many students, college offers development of a sometimes-overlooked asset: taste buds. How can they not become more adventurous when everyone at their table is enjoying the sweet and sour tofu and the kimchee, especially if their Korean roommate helped the chef perfect the recipe? If every day, students have the choice of four soups made from scratch with fresh ingredients, how will canned soup taste after that? After four years, their taste buds develop a new benchmark for what constitutes good food.

Not just an amenity, the cafeterias serve as an important gathering place where people from different disciplines can exchange ideas in an informal, relaxed environment. The largest dining hall at Bowdoin, Thorne Hall, has soaring ceilings, avant-garde lighting, wooden refectory tables and views of the tall pines that tower over the campus. At dinner time and during the late-night meal called SuperSnack, Thorne takes on the feeling of a noisy block party. Music plays, and young people chat and move among tables. Because students spend most of their day in intense classes or in front of their laptop computers, they look forward

to the opportunity to mix and mingle. Many students say that after graduation they will miss the feeling that every night, they can just walk into a place and know there will be friends to sit with—a sense of community they fear will be largely absent in post-academic life.

Some companies are doing what they can to create more community. High-tech firms in Silicon Valley try to replicate the flavor of the college experience—an intellectual community, verdant quads, exercise facilities and gourmet cafeterias—because they know these surroundings stimulate creativity.

In addition to existing as the hub of the campus, the food operations help ground students in the local community. Each year, the dining department recruits approximately 25% of the first-year class to work in the dining halls and cash operations. Many stay on throughout their four years and have a good start on their working resume. Even those who don't stay form relationships with dining employees that personalize their daily visits to the dining halls and connect them to the local culture.

At Bowdoin, employees stand out as people, not functionaries. Mother Nature usually throws two or three whopping snowstorms at the Maine campus each winter. These storms blanket the quads with deep drifts, and hazardous driving conditions keep most employees home. Dining employees, though, are considered “essential” to the daily operation of the college, and they come to work and stay through howling blizzards and power outages to make hot chocolate and comfort foods for the students. Students show their appreciation with thank you cards and sometimes standing ovations.

### **A Bowdoin education includes an appreciation of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry Longfellow, but also Downeast standards like lobsters, creamy fish chowder, baked beans, anadama bread, hermits and whoopie pies.**

The dining operation is often used by faculty to illustrate the “real” world for the students. The organic chemistry class may make bread in the bakeshop. Plant physiology students might be on their knees in the dirt in the organic garden. Sociology students will sit down with cooks and dishwashers to measure their happiness quotient. Art students paint a cubist homage in the cafe. Making these connections allows students to broaden

their knowledge and pull their heads out of their books, and brings dining employees even closer to students. At Bowdoin, it isn't just that dining service employees know the students as people and not just as customers, but that they are, in turn, known by the students as more than servers, but members of a community.

There is a real effort to connect Bowdoin students to their Maine “home away from home.” The campus Outdoor Leadership Center provides guided adventure outings to every corner of the state. The Center for the Common Good provides opportunities to volunteer for local nonprofits, and local “friends” of the college take students under their wing and into their homes. You can't get much closer to Maine than working at the college garden, where students' sustainability ideas find fertile ground.

The organic garden supplies vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers to the kitchens, with excess harvest donated to local hunger-prevention efforts. The gardeners plant common veggies like cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, peas and carrots, but also push the culinary envelope with radicchio, arugula, husk cherries, beet greens and celery root. On Fridays in February, local farmers who supply the college with blueberries, apples, tomatoes, poultry and other foods are invited to join faculty, staff and students for lunch and conversation about varied topics, further personalizing the food they eat.

The dining program has a strong emphasis on local cuisine. A Bowdoin education includes an appreciation of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry Longfellow, but also Downeast standards like lobsters, creamy fish chowder, baked beans, anadama bread, hermits and whoopie pies. Truly, the Maine experience wouldn't be complete without lobsters, which are pulled from the sea just down the road off Harpswell Neck. Bowdoin kicks off each academic year with an authentic lobster bake, and graduating seniors say their final goodbyes over lobster, corn and blueberry cake.

If the goal of a liberal arts education is to prepare students to make thoughtful life choices from a broad base of information, then it seems appropriate to have a dining program with aspirations to expose students to a life of healthy eating habits, a variety of foods from all different cultures, the integrity of a local community and the importance of sharing quality time with friends. If, in the process, a lot of delicious food is consumed and new favorite dishes are found, that's all the better.

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# Double-Teamed

College coaches and faculty share a joint interest in the development of student-athletes

SUZANNE R. COFFEY

“There are now more than 400,000 NCAA student-athletes ... and almost all of them will go pro in something other than sports.”

This commercial hooks me every time. If you’ve witnessed another March Madness season, you know the ad I mean. The image is black and white. The message is one of anonymity. These students grew up in your town, participate at your alma mater and will eventually work in every profession. The NCAA wants us to know that there are hundreds of thousands of college men and women doing what they’ve done since grade school: transporting themselves emotionally and intellectually between classrooms and athletics venues.

Consider the earlier version of the NCAA’s campaign to promote *student-plus-athlete*. In 2003, the association rolled out its first of these advertisements. It said simply, “360,000 student-athletes, and each one of us is getting two educations.” It was more representative of, or should I say more consistent with, what athletes and coaches know and what faculty resist. Two educations are available to those who are fortunate enough to continue their athletic careers at our nation’s colleges and universities. The first kind, the most obvious and most important, is the education garnered when students are challenged to excel, experiment and stretch intellectually. Many faculty colleagues see this principal education as exclusively important. But for college athletes, it’s one component of a full education.

The other education the NCAA ad refers to is that which is also common in college sports. The references: excel, experiment and stretch are all reciprocally significant in the athletics setting. College athletes do not swap their minds for tennis shoes when they enter the gymnasium.

The intellectual vibrancy sought after in the classroom is alive and well in the last place faculty would think to look. Our fields and courts are humming with good minds processing complex patterns, reacting to variations, listening for cues, unpacking and reassembling the next moves (of the ball, the teammates, the opponents) before they happen.

The better the mind, the better the athlete. It’s no surprise that Stanford University leads the race again this year for the cup that signifies the top all-around athletic program in Division I. A scan of last year’s Top 10 also includes Berkeley. The Division III race annually includes Amherst and Williams colleges in the Top Five. Not a lightweight in the crowd. And yet, these are the very places where faculty members are most likely to

be dismissive of not only the teaching and learning that happens on the fields outside their ivy-sheathed windows, but also disdainful of the intellectual competence required to compete at the top of collegiate sport. I have a theory about this.

Faculty colleagues are envious. They covet the passion plainly exhibited in the eyes of an athlete attentively taking in every word during a 30-second timeout. They begrudge the voluntary extra workouts. They envy the edge-of-the-chair eagerness athletes demonstrate in team meetings.

They’re also jealous of the intensity of the relationships created and sustained, some for decades beyond the athlete’s college career. Coaches who spend their tenure at places like Amherst choose to work with students who question everything, analyze both strategy and training and bring considerable intellectual *joie de vivre* to the field and court. Athletes are perceptive and focused. And they possess the capacity to work hard even when other factors might distract them. Faculty colleagues see this intensity and work ethic in athletes and rightly wish this were expressed in all students in their classrooms.

It’s up to the athletics community to create the bridges between two educations, to move faculty friends from dismissive to collaborative. No one else is going to do this for us. After all, to coach is to teach. Successful coaches must master the ability to engage each student regardless of preparation, learning style and capacity. Faculty colleagues and coaches are doing the same work in their discrete disciplines.

To encourage professors to value what happens inside this athletics education, coaches and athletics administrators (and student-athletes) have to be willing to make a few adjustments.

**For starters, demystify coaching.** Invite faculty inside the huddle by employing a faculty-liaisons model. Recruit and assign faculty members to serve as team advisors and mentors; one faculty member per team is a good start. Include that colleague in as many team activities as their time and energy will allow. Some professors will participate in fitness work, others in team meetings, still others as bench coaches. All forms of involvement are appropriate. When this works well, the professor and the coach work together on a range of team-centered issues from group dynamics to academic and life advising to recruiting. Coaches and faculty members want the same outcomes including attracting and supporting the very brightest students. When they work together, these goals are achieved more readily, and the act of coaching as teaching is underscored.



**Select coaching professionals with broad intellectual interests.** Evaluate them on the application of those interests in their coaching. Former Duke University and Wellesley College President Nannerl Keohane suggests, “One of the traditional justifications for a liberal education has been that the leaders of a society should have some common reference points” such as *excel*, *experiment* and *stretch*. Coaches and teachers, having chosen this life of educating college students, come equipped with both the interest in and the capacity for mutual interests. Connecting the specialization of the neuroscientist and the offensive coordinator is the commitment to continued learning. Hire coaches whose academic background and continued education is grounded in the liberal arts. Ask of these same coaches that they share these interests with their students. Under the coaches’ guidance, teams should go beyond the bus-ride-length political debate and extend their discourse to shared reading. Our Amherst teams went home this summer with reading lists. Come fall, they’ll share their impressions with one another in meetings set aside just for this purpose. This encouragement of team activities which blur the lines between two kinds of education serves us all well.

**Puncture the barriers that define (and ghettoize) athletes.** Coaches and professors should insist that students end the self-diminishing prophecy, “I’m a basketball player,” and replace it with, “I’m a chemistry major, and I play basketball.” We can all do more to

disabuse recruits of the notion that they must present themselves on just one dimension. William Bowen claims one of the experiences that prompted him to co-write *The Game of Life* was an encounter with a Princeton student who when asked why she chose Princeton, rather than cite all the academic opportunity and her considerable intellectual talent, told her university’s president that she came to play softball. It seems benign enough, but the question of how one identifies herself or himself speaks volumes in a setting where faculty members crave constant affirmation of the primacy of the core educational mission.

We need to feed the faculty’s appetite for affirming a student-first educational model that respects that valuable learning happens on both sides of this equation, and that excellent teachers armed with whistles or whiteboards have something to learn from each other

Our most talented student-athletes have chosen colleges and universities where they can continue their education in both realms of their academic and athletic lives. When our classroom colleagues appreciate the complementary education the college athletics experience provides, we’ll have a better chance of extending a dialogue that explores how the minds of the best and brightest are most successfully developed through many forms of education.

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*Suzanne R. Coffey is director of athletics at Amherst College. Email: scoffey@amherst.edu*

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# What do 1 in 3 institutions in New England have in common?

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# The Dark Ages of Education and a New Hope

## Teaching Native American history in Maine schools

DONNA LORING

In 2001, I authored legislation that required all public schools in Maine to teach Maine Indian history. On June 14 of that year, Gov. Angus King signed “An Act to Require Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine’s Schools” into law—the first of its kind in the U.S.

What makes the law unique is its requirement that specific topics be studied, such as: 1) tribal governments and political systems and their relationship with local, state, national and international governments; 2) Maine Native American cultural systems and the experience of Maine tribal people throughout history; 3) Maine Native American territories; and 4) Maine Native American economic systems.

The most important piece of this legislation was the creation of a Native American History Commission to help schools gather a wide range of materials and resources to implement the law. This led to creation of the Wabanaki Educational Curriculum, which tells the story of the Wabanaki people of Maine from the Wabanaki perspective. It is leading us out of the “dark ages” of education.

“Dark ages” because education has been a two-edged sword for Native people. On one hand, it has opened opportunities. On the other, it harmed us physically, psychologically and spiritually. It inflicted spiritual wounds upon Native people lasting for generations. We call these wounds “Soul Wounds.”

Richard Henry Pratt, who founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania in 1879, had a saying, “kill the Indian and save the man.” The intention was to kill the cultural core within Indian children through boarding-school education and forced assimilation that included prohibitions on speaking their Native language or practicing Native traditional religion. Justification for this came from the notion that Indians were less than human. This view is abundantly evident in the way Indians were depicted by the press at the time. Among many 19th-century cartoons of Indians, one in particular comes to mind. It can be found today on the cover of John M. Coward’s book, *The Newspaper Indian*, published by University of Illinois Press in 1999. In this drawing we see a Union soldier who has just shot Lakota Chief Sitting Bull (1831-1890). Depicted as half-man, half-beast, Sitting Bull has clawed hands and a lower body comprised of the back-end and legs of a buck deer. The caption of the original cartoon read: “The Right Way to Dispose of Sitting Bull and His Braves.”

Indians were simply seen as subhuman savages to be disposed of. Thus began Indian education from the white man’s perspective: Educate the Indian in white man’s culture and values, and he will become for all intents and purposes a productive member of white society. Indian children were forcibly taken from their mothers and fathers on the reservations and were mentally, physically, psychologically, spiritually and even sexually abused. Native people call this cultural genocide.

The first off-reservation boarding school in the U.S., Carlisle became a model for schools in other locations, which echoed its efforts to forcibly assimilate Native American children. Canada also utilized residential schools, many operated by the Catholic church. I have seen films and read books on the abuse these schools perpetrated on the Indian children in their effort to “kill the Indian.” I recently read *Out of the Depth* by Isabelle Knockwood chronicling the trauma she and other Mi’kmaq Children experienced at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. It is one of the most powerful accounts I have ever read. Knockwood, who attended the school from 1936 to 1947, writes:

*I remember a nun shaking a girl by the shoulders and yelling, “Look at me, look at me” ... [even though] direct eye contact between child and adult was considered arrogant in the Native culture. We were being forcibly disconnected from everything our parents and elders had taught us. We sang songs in honor of Christopher Columbus who discovered America. Apparently our ancestors had been “discovered” by this white man who was lost on his way to find spices. No one told us that the Hurons shown scalping the missionaries in the textbooks wanted their children to learn and to keep their own Native spirituality and their own land.*

In some ways the experience I had in the public and private educational system in the U.S. was like Knockwood’s. I was never abused in the same way as the Indian children who were forced to go to residential schools, but the purpose was the same: to assimilate me into the white man’s world. And I have learned well how to walk in that world.

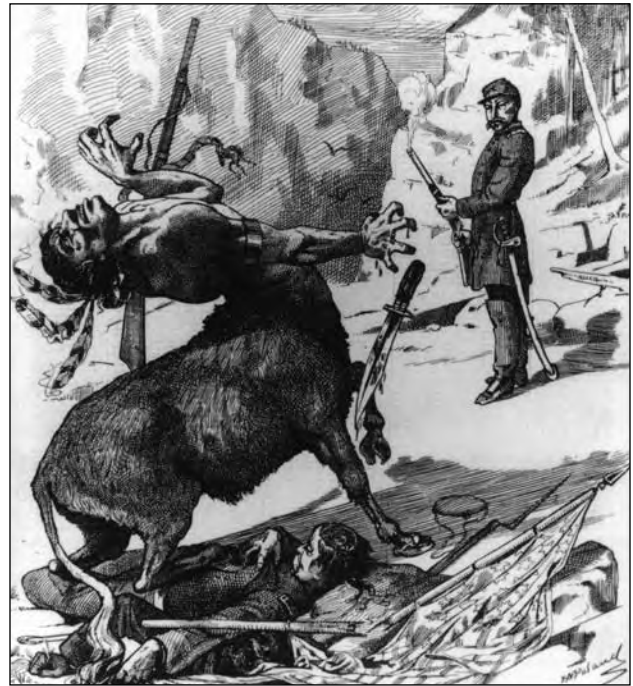
I attended elementary school, junior high school and one year of high school in Old Town, Maine, a non-Native community just across the river from where I lived on the Penobscot reservation at Indian Island. It was during those years that I learned what it was like to be discriminated against both overtly and subtly. Various students called me a “filthy squaw,” and teachers who for the most part ignored me made a point of calling on

me to answer questions pertaining to what they thought all Indians should know—such as which paw prints belonged to which animals. When I had enough of being treated like a second-class citizen, I asked my very religious, non-Native grandmother to get me into a religious school. I thought if I went to one of those schools I would be treated better and there would be no discrimination or racism. I was wrong on that count as well.

Like Isabelle Knockwood, I was taught a history centered on white men, such as George Washington and Christopher Columbus. I never had a class on Native American history. I had no sense of my own history or the contributions made to this country by my ancestors. My people and my race were made invisible by the educational system by the simple act of omission. I find it ironic that the First Nations of this continent were not only made invisible by the educational system but were disadvantaged and discriminated against because of it. I guess you could call the early years of “kill the Indian and save the man” the dark ages of education. Those dark ages have spilled into this century.

The failure to include Native American history in our educational system leads to low self-esteem among Native American students and a lack of respect among their peers. It also contributes to a low retention rate in high schools and colleges. Native Americans graduate high school at lower rates than all other ethnic groups and account for less than 1% of college students enrolled in New England, according to national data recently published by *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION*. [See “Trends & Indicators in Higher Education, *NEJHE*, Spring 2009.] But Native American statistics are rarely included. Native people are left out of the history pages and are left out of research and statistics. I read the newspapers and listen to media reports that give statistics about various subjects such as population growth or health issues. We are simply non-existent.

Education is supposed to be a shining light of knowledge and a gateway to a better life. Why has this gateway opened only one way for Indian people forcing us to learn only about white society? By omitting Native history, we continue to cheat countless students—Native and non-Native alike. Indian history is so interwoven into the very fabric of this country from George Washington and the Revolutionary War through Andrew Jackson with his Indian termination philosophy and his Indian Removal Act and Chief Justice John Marshall whose legal opinions based on the papal bulls “Right of Discovery” and “Manifest Destiny” have kept Native people in poverty because we cannot own our own land. Even though we could not own our own land, we have fought in every war to defend this country. Native people have the highest rate of military service compared to any race in the nation.



Cartoon attributed to *New York Graphic*, Aug. 15, 1876, courtesy of Sandy Barnard Collection.

Every student in this country needs to know the full story of the First Nations. The Maine Native American History and Culture Act holds great promise for our state. While work to carry it to fruition is ongoing, it has already proven to be one of the most important bills in history for Maine’s Native people. Eight years after the bill passed, there has been a renaissance in Native voices through Native-authored books, poetry, art, plays, museum exhibits and documentary films. The fact that Native history is required to be taught in public schools in Maine has begun to give Native people a strong, clear voice, a voice that they never had. The state of Maine is slowly learning from these voices.

An honest, truthful and inclusive educational system needs to emerge from the dark ages and into the light of full knowledge. Native history must be a required subject not only in public elementary schools but also in colleges across this country. It needs to be part of the core requirement, not just a token program of Native Studies or help for Native Nations. It is time our story is told and the educational system unlocks that one-way gate and allows us to take our rightful place in the history of this continent. It is the right thing to do, and I guarantee the results will be amazingly powerful and healing.

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**Donna Loring** is the author of *In the Shadow of the Eagle: A Tribal Representative in Maine* (Tilbury House, 2008). Loring served in the Maine Legislature as a tribal representative of the Penobscot Nation for 12 years and advised former Gov. Angus King on women veterans’ affairs. Previously, she was police chief for the Penobscot Nation and director of security at Bowdoin College. Email: [dldb@roadrunner.com](mailto:dldb@roadrunner.com)

# Re-engineering Engineering Education

Today's graduates do not have the broad background necessary to understand, take charge of and drive large-scale projects

BERNARD M. GORDON AND MICHAEL B. SILEVITCH

In 2005, leaders gathered by the National Association of Manufacturers declared yet another "STEM" emergency. In the face of global competition, they argued, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded annually to U.S. students in science, math and engineering must double by 2015.

In fact, the need for STEM talent is even more critical today as the nation claws its way back from a deep recession. Furthermore, reports such as *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* (National Academies Press, 2005), indicate that the U.S. is in danger of losing its historic preeminence in creating and manufacturing advanced products due specifically to problems with *engineering* education—a critical subset within the STEM world. The problems facing engineering education, the report suggests, go beyond a need to simply educate more students or raise performance on exams. Instead, when it comes to engineering, what is even more critical than quantity is *quality*. Too often, U.S. engineering is not cost-effective because the majority of today's engineering graduates do not have the broad background necessary to understand, take charge of and drive large-scale projects to completion in an economic fashion. [See "Engineering Education Must Get Real," Bernard M. Gordon, *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION*, Summer 2007.]

## A Fresh Start at Northeastern

Within the region, progress is being made through initiatives of the Gordon Foundation, with an established engineering leadership program in place at Tufts University, enhancements to the engineering program at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and new engineering leadership programs at both MIT and Northeastern University.

The Gordon Engineering Leadership Program at Northeastern, launched in fall 2007, aims to ensure that engineering leaders develop the *mindset* required to assume full responsibility for their success and the success of their organizations. The program's first group of graduates emerged in summer 2008, and a second cohort is close to completing the program.

Borrowing a concept from the medical profession, the notion pursued at Northeastern is that an equivalent of the doctor's internship year is vital for bringing the

theoretical and academic achievement of the prospective engineer into practical alignment with the needs and necessities of the real world and into fuller engagement with the individual's sense of self and sense of purpose.

To reinforce the real-world nature of learning, each student admitted into the program must be sponsored either by industry, a government agency or through Northeastern's Center for Subsurface Sensing and Imaging Systems. Each student conducts a challenge project on behalf of his or her sponsor. As in a medical internship, the experience requires not only the successful application of engineering knowledge but also development of the commitment required to deliver results and overcome difficulties that manifest themselves on both a personal and technical level.

Those who complete the program not only earn a master's degree in a core engineering discipline, but also acquire a deeper understanding of "Engineering Leadership" and the ability to do rapid, back-of-the-envelope technology trade-off analyses. In short, they have begun to hone their engineering instincts.

Matthew Dickman, who received his bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Northeastern in 2007, went to work for NeuroLogica Corp. in Danvers, Mass., a medical imaging company. In fall 2007, he entered the

**An equivalent of the doctor's internship year is vital for bringing the theoretical and academic achievement of the prospective engineer into practical alignment with the needs of the real world.**

Gordon leadership program where his challenge project focused on improving computed tomography images. He received a graduate certificate in Engineering Leadership and a master's in Electrical and Computer Engineering Leadership from Northeastern in August 2008. Now back as a manager at NeuroLogica, one of Dickman's key roles is working with medical organizations to develop new products.

"In my first work experience as a co-op, I looked to other knowledge holders to help me analyze engineering challenges," explains Dickman. Since completing the program, however, Dickman says he feels empowered and encouraged. "If I'm facing a challenge, I will rely on

my own coursework and knowledge to identify a solution,” he says. What’s more, he has taken on more of a “big picture” perspective. He recently incorporated material properties coursework to develop a radiolucent neuro-surgical cranial-fixation system that surgeons now use to take intraoperative CT scans directly in the operating room. “This gives the surgeons confidence that their procedure is complete and, in my opinion, provides a better level of care for the patients,” says Dickman.

Another example is Anthony Serino, a 2007 graduate of Northeastern, who earned a bachelor’s in Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering, then went on to receive the graduate certificate and master’s. He is currently employed by Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems in Tewksbury, Mass., as a systems engineer where he focuses on signal, video and image processing, algorithm development and optimization, coding and systems engineering. Through the Gordon program, Serino conducted an independent challenge project to develop a multimodal explosives-detection system that would provide reliable explosive material detection at safe ranges.

Raytheon, which has sent eight students to the Gordon program, is pleased. “We see the returning employees better prepared to work in industry because they come

up to speed quickly in the industrial setting and, with their breadth and depth of technical knowledge, they can contribute to and lead teams to develop technology and integrate it to solve problems,” says Mark Russell, corporate vice president for Engineering, Technology & Mission Assurance at Raytheon. Other organizations sponsoring students have included Analogic Corp., Analog Devices, the U.S. Army Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate, Textron Systems, IMI and the U.S. Air Force Research Labs.

Solving STEM challenges in general goes beyond the scope or ambition of the Gordon program at Northeastern. As one observer has noted, there are many *Paul Reveres* raising the alarm on the subject. However, we hope the Gordon Engineering Leadership Program will show how academic excellence can be more effectively linked to practical, real-world capabilities.

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# Education Policy Journalism in a New Media Age

*To print, or not to print: that is not the whole question ...*

As a blogger told Northeastern University's *Huntington News*: "A story breaks tonight at midnight. By 12:10, I can get details on the web. With papers, I have to wait until the next morning when the news is stale."

That sentiment is not surprising in an era when people are busy sending 140 characters max via Twitter, and some are claiming "social networking fatigue."

We asked a few experts to consider the future shape of education policy-related publishing in a blogging/Twittering age, and by association, the future of *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION*.

## Prepare for Impact

As media digitizes, the information and experiences become more a reflection of the community than a product delivered to the audience

BRIAN REICH

We all want to have an impact—to fix the problems that exist in our society, to address the seemingly intractable issues that plague our communities or just to feel as if something we are doing is helping to change the world for the better. Lately, we have been looking at how the Internet can support that important work. But the Internet has not helped us realize the kind of change we know is possible—at least not yet. Organizations send millions of emails but they are settling for ridiculously low response rates. People sign petitions online every day with one click of a mouse, but those petitions rarely change minds or impact the outcome of a vote. And groups raise millions of dollars online, but cannot seem to solve the problems they aim to address.

NEBHE and its *NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION* can be different.

NEBHE sends emails, writes blog posts, hosts events, publishes interviews and issues other notices on a daily basis. Increasingly, NEBHE is looking at ways to support this work across dozens of different platforms online, and offline as well. And many of these efforts have been successful—more people are aware of NEBHE's work, have considered ways to contribute their thoughts on the issues and want to participate in the process of making real change that NEBHE is helping to foster. To get to the next level, however, NEBHE and *NEJHE* have

to do more. Raising awareness is important, and it's a necessary step in the process of generating measurable and sustainable impact—but it is not impact in itself. Other steps are needed, and those steps won't happen without some kind of directed action.

### How We Got Here

The rise of the Internet and the ubiquity of technology has dramatically changed the way people get and share information and the expectations of what audiences want when it comes to ... well ... everything.

Audiences do not rely on a single source for information. They don't get their news from one place, all read the same books and magazines, watch the same television show day after day, nor even visit the same websites. Technology gives each of us the opportunity to create our own personal connection to something, online and offline. At the same time, the Internet has taught us that we can get everything we want, customized to meet our personal needs or satisfy our particular interests, have it available on demand or delivered in near-real time, all in return for a price we want to pay (which is often very little). Those high expectations apply to everything: retail, nonprofit organizations and charities, politics and government, media and education—whether online or offline.

Because the audience believes it has control over its media experience, anything less than what it views as total value results in disappointment and frustration. Those high expectations play out every single time a user logs on, picks up a paper, sits down in front of a television, buys a product or ventures out to a concert or event. And when you try to create policy or teach

people about a serious issue, the diversity in approaches and opinions only grows.

The shift in behavior means groups must offer as much choice and customization to their audience as possible. Failure to provide compelling information or engaging experiences will result in audiences tuning out. And though technology allows information to be collected or created and then distributed faster and more cost-effectively than ever, more choice does not come easily—particularly when you need to offer a very diverse audience a limited set of information and make it relevant, timely and compelling.

Today, anyone with a blog, cell phone, flip cam or any number of other tools can compete for attention. It is the end of the monopoly of institutional content. In the past, content came from institutions, and audiences were expected to tune in and consume what was available. Today, content comes from both institutions and non-institutions, and audiences recognize the opportunity to learn from a variety of sources. Rather than sit around, they go looking for that information, wherever it is offered. In fact, almost all the growth in the production and distribution of content is in non-institutions—meaning people like us, armed with an Internet connection and an idea. Organizations now face the challenge of competing for attention with anything and everything that is available.

### Technology Is Not the Answer

Our tendency is to look to technologies to meet the needs of our audiences. But we must do more than simply log on or build out if we want to have an impact on how people learn and what actions they take. Technology is evolving, audiences continue to shift and the implications of all these massive changes are just beginning to be felt and understood. Technology can be a critical tool in understanding and managing what we do going forward. But technology is just the facilitator of whatever actions are needed. We all have to do more to recognize how quickly everything is changing and what that means to our work. And we all have to do more to embrace change and adapt our behavior accordingly.

How people use technology is more important than what the technology itself provides. You couldn't communicate like we do today without technology, but technology wouldn't have much purpose if we didn't want to communicate. Consider:

- **Blogs have millions of uses.** There is a perception that blogs represent one thing, one format, one type of voice. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every blog is unique. There are individual blogs, community blogs, blogs that just feature pictures and blogs that are updated only by mobile phone. So forget what you've heard or think about blogs. Blogging software has taken online communications out of the hands of the IT experts of the world and placed it in the hands of anyone with an Internet connection. As a result, it has invited you to

have a different kind of conversation with your audience. A blog can help you push information about a specific topic in an ongoing way or drill deep into a specific event. Blogs can give you a consistent voice on an issue or foster a conversation with your audience that helps expand your community and strengthen your argument. Almost anything is possible if the focus and content exist.

- **Your phone is for more than calling.** Not long ago, people didn't have to ask "where are you?" when they called because your phone was most likely in your kitchen, not in your bag or pocket. Now, mobile phones have allowed you to call and receive calls virtually any time or any place. And there is much more this one piece of technology can do. Text messaging is the dominant activity that people do on their mobile phone: 160-character conversations back and forth billions of times over a year. But people also use their phones to check the weather or search for directions, ask questions of lawmakers, create and share content, buy things and donate to causes they support. If there is a need to engage your audience or invite their participation, the mobile phone is one way to meet them halfway.

- **Games are for more than playing.** Video games are incredibly innovative and far-reaching. They are just now beginning to scratch the surface in terms of what you can do to support organizations, tell stories and engage audiences. There are all sorts of games: first-person shooters, casual games, sports and adventure games. There are also serious games and simulations that help people learn about important issues. These games spawn communities online and offline, some for competition, other simply for social interaction. Games have even become part of the curriculum in some schools to help kids learn about health, get exercise or explore complex math and science topics. The implications of games for education policy and discussions about complex topics or serious issues are significant.

- **Everything is social.** Everyone talks about Facebook and Twitter, but there are thousands of niche social networks that are relevant to particular communities. There are social networks for moms, business people, crafters and communities around all different languages and cultures. Amazon.com is one of the most influential social networks in the world because its developers figured out before anyone else that customers were more likely to buy a book that everyone said was good than a book that everyone said was terrible, and they institutionalized rating systems and comment areas to help convey those opinions. That same concept has been applied to everything from stocks to medical choices to the delivery of individual grants to schoolteachers. All this is driven by social interaction, networking and the power of people communicating with each other—facilitated by technology and the web. And all of it is reputation-driven, meaning what friends and community say is what's most important.

These are just a few of the examples of how different channels and tools can be viewed more broadly. Don't be afraid. Be excited. The organizations that will succeed are those who have relevant, timely and compelling content. Education institutions have always had that content—it's a matter of adapting the delivery to meet the needs and expectations of the audience, be they fellow educators, students, policymakers or other media.

As media digitizes, fragments and moves closer to the audience, the information and experiences become more a reflection of the community than a product delivered to the audience. The very nature of how we get and share information and experience things has changed, so naturally the individuals and organizations who create, consume and share that media need to change as well.

### Putting Theory Into Practice

Before any content is created, it's important to understand how your audience uses technology to get and share information. How people create, consume and share information is what defines the media experience for the individual. With the monopoly on content broken, there is simply more information available for audiences to consume than hours in which to consume it, so there will be more than enough options from which to choose.

*NEJHE's* role should be less about covering what is available to all and instead focus on helping prioritize stories and issues that only a handful of people realize are important, but whose impact is greatest or will be felt by most. Audiences want the privilege of deciding for themselves what information is relevant, how they feel or what they care most about. At the same time, because we can quickly become overwhelmed by the number of choices that are available to us, even the most committed individuals need help interpreting the volumes of information they are exposed to.

Many in the media believe that distilling information down will allow them to please a larger audience. But in practice, the media too often go to the extreme: Either they focus too narrowly and the content fails to interest the audience at all or they over-generalize and are unable to demonstrate a unique value to their audience. *NEJHE* should be careful not to make that same mistake. The challenge is to meet the audience's interests. For policy journals like *NEJHE*, that means exploring issues that other media won't consider or in ways that other media can't devote sufficient time and space to. Embrace the opportunity to tell a unique or important story, resist the urge to please everyone and make sure every piece of content you create is must-read. If you do, not only will the smaller audience that cares most about your issues spend more time and show greater interest in what you provide, the likelihood they will help to share and introduce your content to a larger universe will grow.

How? There is no system or model that will work for everyone, but there are some key considerations that will help you create that must-read content on a regular basis.

- **Build community.** The notion of bringing people with shared interests together has been at the heart of the Internet since its early days and "community" has become a necessary element for any successful online venture. No single entity is able to control, create or know everything, so community allows you to "co-create." Community allows us to consider more stories, more issues, more voices and gain more access to information around the globe. Still, inviting the community to contribute content and perspective does not mean ceding control to the mob, as many media companies have done by providing blogs or feeds to their audience with no significant filtering. Don't open the floodgates and let anyone post: review the submissions and ensure that the conversation remains focused and the contributions constructive. Support your audience by asking questions, providing feedback and guidance to help them get the most out of the discussion. Don't forget to reward people whose submissions enhance the discussion by promoting and calling attention to their views, and know that you can remove people from a conversation if they cross a line. Real value will come from providing people with the ability to interact with one another, and channelling their support toward creating more and better content.

- **Support "aggregation."** With so many sources of news and other information, aggregation allows us to bring the best related content into one place and set up users to have a more complete understanding of something they care about. Fueled by technology, we'll have the ability to learn or discuss whatever we believe is relevant—any time, any place with a more diverse (and deeply invested) audience and through any device. And the closer readers are to a story or event, the more they want to know about it and the less overloaded they'll feel. Still, aggregation requires more than just good technology. You must both embrace the idea of collecting content from various sources—many of which you don't control or even contribute to—and help guide the process so the result is useful to the audience.

- **Be a steward.** Beyond culling good content is the commitment to invest in growing the relationship with each person in your audience. The possibility exists to treat every member of the audience like they are valuable and provide them with the flexibility and control to find value in what you offer. If you take care of the relationship with your audience, loyalty and commitments increase and revenue will follow. Put another way, tending to the relationship makes your audience want to buy, become members or show their support.

Content has always been central to the success of media outlets. In the digital age, the basic need for more and better content must be addressed. You have to be "must-read" in all aspects of what you do: the delivery of information (is it updated regularly?), the creation of experiences (is your offering evolving as the audience provides feedback and guidance?) and more. There are so many opportunities for your audience to look else-



where to have their questions answered or their needs met. Perhaps even more than being able to demonstrate expertise or quality service at the start, media outlets must ensure that the information and experiences they deliver are relevant and timely always.

### Three Ideas

- **Tell me what I must read.** Help your audience find the information—newspaper and magazine articles, research reports, blog posts and more—that they must read and understand if they want to participate in your work. Do the reading for them, then use your site/blog to summarize and offer the important context to those readings your audience wants and needs.

- **Facilitate discussions.** So much of our media today comes in bits and pieces. In those formats, it's difficult to understand an issue in depth or learn what motivates people to pursue certain lines of thinking. *NEJHE* should facilitate discussions about issues with key voices and representatives of different perspectives. Those conversations should be given the time and attention that the complex subjects that inspire them deserve. Identify a few smart people, spark a conversation, record it and consider distributing it via podcast.

A podcast allows you to have a longer conversation—it's tough to read thousands of words online, but people have shown a willingness to listen to good discussion for extended periods of time.

- **Give a listening tour.** A common activity online today is to ask for comments—to post an article and expect the audience to find it, read it and have thoughts they want to share. In reality, that is too much effort, and the likelihood that audiences will take time to comment in large numbers is proving to be increasingly low. So make listening a priority—create online and in-person listening opportunities. Have your audience—including policymakers, teachers, students, parents, researchers, the media and others—talk about their interests and perspectives. Record and share those stories and ideas, their concerns and opinions. Not only will it serve as good content on its own, it will provide you with a rich outline of the topics and areas of interest that your audience expects you to cover.

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*Brian Reich* recently created a new venture called "little m media" borrowing from his 2007 book, *Media Rules! Mastering Today's Technology to Connect With and Keep Your Audience*. Email: [brian@littlemmedia.com](mailto:brian@littlemmedia.com)

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# Policy Publishing in Print and on the Web

Readers in academia are probably the most “Interneted/World Wide Webbed” group of all

ROBERT WHITCOMB

What happens to print publishing, such as this journal, in the age of blogging? College students, faculty and staff swim for hours each day in the Internet, especially via search engines, the blogosphere and social-networking groups—perhaps more than do any other parts of society.

Indeed, college campuses live on the Internet, however good or bad this may be for developing interpersonal skills and developed thought. These inventions may be causing massive attention-deficit disorder, but the genie is out of the bottle, and we must deal with it.

Certainly, the New England Board of Higher Education must embrace this world. After all, readers in academia are probably the most “Interneted/World Wide Webbed” group of all.

So print-on-paper’s role will continue to decline. The speed, infinite space, immediate interactivity and cheapness of Internet publishing are huge competitive advantages against print-on-paper publishing.

But there are drawbacks to the Internet for academic life. Much of the stuff is put on the web unedited and rife with extreme agendas and thoughtlessness. The ease of using the Internet, and the ability to camouflage identity, encourage the transmission of error and hyperbole. This isn’t exactly healthy for the life of the mind (not that I favor censoring it).

On the other hand, the very openness and fluidity of the Internet provide for quick correction of factual errors and the presentation of much-needed countervailing arguments in response to absurd positions. Nice for students and teachers—if they can keep up with the Internet’s ever-accelerating expansion.

The virtually infinite expanse of space on the web also should be seen as a boon, in some ways, to scholars. Besides at-your-fingertips accessibility to global sources of information and analysis, it lets people consult experts directly to quickly try out ideas and then revise them.

Still, there are only 24 hours in a day, and one can easily get lost in the Internet, and especially the endlessly churning blogosphere. I wonder, watching my colleagues spending their days online, how much of that time is wasted. I’d say a lot. Indeed, some measures of productivity may be falling now because of time-wasting on

the Internet, including of course *email*, an overused tool whose volume has become so great it has become more of an inconvenience than a convenience for many people.

Using an old-fashioned library with books and periodicals on paper can be a more disciplined and orderly way to research than using the Internet. And reading and putting things on paper tends to encourage more intellectual rigor than using the attention-deficit-disordered computer world.

Further, there’s the likelihood that people reading information on paper retain it better than they do reading it on a screen. After all, even young people who have grown up on the World Wide Web print out content, especially if it’s more than a screenful.

And it has repeatedly been shown that something printed on paper has more authority than that on a screen. There is something about the gravitas of paper—the physicality of it. A major announcement hardly has weight until it goes on paper.

To save money, publications like *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION* will be tempted to go all-digital. But that would be a mistake. Certainly, blogging will be an increasingly important part of the package, but I suspect the importance of the topics discussed will mandate continuing with at least several issues a year with the validation and authority of print on paper. To think that reading a publication online is just the same as reading it on paper is just not neurologically accurate.

Enthusiastic use of the Internet can only expand a journal’s influence, but print won’t go away. The two media play related but different roles, and our journal must use both of them.

In any case, while maintaining a printed presence, *NEJHE* should create a family of blogs, written by staffers, members of the editorial advisory board and others, to report on and comment on higher education developments in the region.

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*Robert Whitcomb is vice president and editorial-page editor of The Providence Journal and a member of the NEJHE Editorial Advisory Board. He has also been secretary of the Aga Khan University media thinking group. He is also former financial editor of the International Herald Tribune and a former writer and editor for The Wall Street Journal. And, yes, he blogs, at <http://thisnewenglandblog.projo.com>*

# An Educated Audience

A typical reader of a hard-copy publication belongs to a mere audience, while a typical reader of a website can belong to a community

RALPH WHITEHEAD JR.

For more than a decade, proponents of online communication have held out a vision of how a hard-copy publication can complement itself by creating a website and making proper use of it. *THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION* might be well-equipped to be among the first to actually fulfill this vision.

The proponents have based this vision on their analysis of the differences between a hard-copy publication and its web presence. Their analysis has gone as follows: A hard-copy publication and its web presence are fit to perform significantly different tasks. The first is fit for hub-to-spoke communication, with room to print only a bit of spoke-to-hub feedback, such as a few letters to the editor. And a hub-to-spoke model seems to be relatively hierarchical. This isn't because hard-copy editors are imperious by nature and so seek to hurl thunderbolts down on their readers without offering many readers a chance to hurl thunderbolts back into the hard-copy publication. It's just because paper is costly and so a hard-copy venue can't afford the space to print a lot of comments from its readers. But a website can offer an infinite amount of space for relatively little cost. So it can publish both a lot of material that runs from hub-to-spoke and a lot of material that runs from spoke-to-hub. This model can be less hierarchical than print and more collegial. A typical reader of a hard-copy publication belongs to a mere audience. A typical reader of a website can belong to a community. The website reader can be not only a consumer of information and analysis and opinion, but a producer of it as well.

Given this analysis, the vision is that the website can add a valuable complement to the hard-copy publication: If a hard-copy publication is akin to a town crier, its website can enable the people in the public square to respond to what the town crier says, comment on it and discuss it with one another. In this way, the site can build community and collegiality. It can be a marketplace of ideas, a forum that puts evidence and arguments to the test of different perspectives.

Turns out, though, it's far easier to express this vision than to implement it. Where there have been conspicuous efforts to follow it, as in the websites of national magazines and major newspapers, they have rarely worked as envisioned. Web readers aren't uniformly likely to speak up. To speak up, they must write in, and

many can't write clearly. Others write in, but chiefly to fire off insults or slurs. Far from civil discussion, this is electronic graffiti. So much for community and collegiality. And still others who join the discussion always grind the same axe or otherwise ignore the topic on the table. So much for a marketplace of ideas. To be sure, a website can screen for such lapses if it is closely and frequently moderated. But that level of moderation is expensive.

The readers of *NEJHE*, the hard-copy publication, share a strong and probably professional interest in the same subject. Exceptionally well-educated, they can write well. Indeed, a number of academics have already established widely read websites. In content, their sites usually focus on topics other than higher education. In style, however, they set an instructive example. Their writing consists of relatively brief observations that are made frequently and expressed colloquially. Also, *NEJHE* readers each know a lot about some facets of higher education, and can teach it to others. But they don't know everything about it and, as lifelong learners, are willing to add to their own knowledge.

**To speak up, web readers must write in, and many can't write clearly. Others write in, but chiefly to fire off insults or slurs. Far from civil discussion, this is electronic graffiti.**

They form an already-existing community of interest that is cohesive, yet displays many different kinds of diversity. It shares a tradition of debate that is civil—but is debate nevertheless. To be sure, some moderation by the editor would be necessary. But it wouldn't have to be close and frequent. It could consist of suggesting topics for discussion and helping to direct and focus the discussion. For these purposes, the editor would act as an impresario. Finally, although the national *Chronicle of Higher Education* might at some point devote a portion of its website to fulfilling the same vision, it probably would be unable to overcome *NEJHE*'s franchise in the New England region. That portion of its website might do well instead to link to the corresponding portion of *NEJHE*'s site.

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In his first address to Congress, President Barack Obama pledged to help the U.S. achieve the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020. Others such as the Lumina and Gates foundations have made similar calls. Are the goals realistic? How can they be reached? More support for less-expensive community colleges? More focus on *completion* rates, rather than enrollment? Improved productivity? Then there's that 800-pound gorilla in the room: persistent inequity in who gets in to college and who graduates. *NEJHE* asked the U.S. secretary of education and others to offer a prognosis on the degree-attainment goal.

## Historic Opportunity for Action

In a single generation, we have fallen from second to 11th place in the percentage of students completing college

ARNE DUNCAN

When President Obama took office, he pledged to revitalize an economy in the midst of the deepest recession in a generation. Working with Congress, he acted quickly to enact an \$878 billion package to stimulate the economy in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). More than \$100 billion of that will be for education, spanning from early childhood programs to college aid.

The ARRA's primary goal is to help the economy emerge from the current recession. But the president is pursuing other policies, both in the short and long term, to ensure economic growth. At the heart of these policies is the goal of making college affordable and accessible to millions of students who otherwise might not be able to go.

In the FY 2010 budget, the Obama administration will propose a historic increase in student aid of \$32 billion over fiscal 2008. The budget also will save \$21 billion over the next five years by cutting bank subsidies and making loans directly from the U.S. Department of Education. These changes also will make student loans easier to obtain and easier to pay back.

Of all of the changes, the shift in the Pell Grant program is the most significant. The ARRA increased the maximum size of the Pell Grant for low-income families from \$4,850 to \$5,350. The FY 2010 budget will increase it again to \$5,500. Every year thereafter, the size of the grant will increase by the Consumer Price Index, plus 1%. The changes will ensure that an additional 1.5 million students receive Pell Grants.

More importantly, the Pell Grant will become an entitlement, meaning low-income students can be assured that the award will be there for them when they go to college, whether that's in six months or six years. Low-income families need to know that this program is a federal priority over the long term.

The president also is committed to making federal student loans affordable and accessible. By changing the federal student loan program, the budget will eliminate the costs of subsidizing banks and paying other intermediaries in the student loan process. The changes will save almost \$4 billion a year for taxpayers while streamlining the process of making loans.

President Obama is relying on his higher education budget to be the engine that will drive the nation's economic recovery. Our nation's economy won't continue to grow without an educated workforce. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that 90% of the nation's fastest growing jobs of the future will require some postsecondary education or training. Today, only one-third of Americans have a college degree. In a single generation, we have fallen from second to 11<sup>th</sup> place in the percentage of students completing college. In a speech to Congress on Feb. 24, the president challenged the country to lead the world in college completion by 2020.

But financial assistance alone will not ensure success. Students have to be prepared to meet rigorous academic programs in college. At the K-12 level, the Obama administration is promoting reforms that ensure they will succeed in college.

Under the ARRA, states will be working on four core areas of reform:

- Implementing college- and career-ready standards and assessments;
- Creating comprehensive data systems that track students throughout their education career and measure which teachers are having the best impact on student performance;
- Recruiting, preparing and rewarding outstanding teachers—paying more to teachers who work in tough schools and those who have a positive impact on their students' achievement; and
- Turning around chronically underperforming schools by encouraging states and districts to take whatever actions are needed to fix them, even shutting down some schools and re-opening them with new leadership and staff.

By making these and other changes to increase funding for higher education and driving reform throughout the education system, we will ensure that more students have access to a college education and the support they need to succeed.

Increased demand, unprecedented funding and heightened expectations have placed the nation's system of higher education at the forefront of change for a better America. This is a historic opportunity to answer the president's call to action.

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# Driving American Economic Renewal

Bold actions are required, including expanding Pell Grants and education tax credits, streamlining the federal student aid process and facilitating college access for undocumented students

MURIEL A. HOWARD

Surmounting a national—indeed global—recession in the wake of war is not new to America or its leaders. Born out of one of the nation's darkest moments of the 20th century were bold initiatives to empower those who served their country as well as all who sought to enter the American middle class. The GI Bill of Rights was one such measure, as was the remarkable expansion of publicly financed postsecondary education systems throughout the U.S.

The unfolding story of the current recession will again include the need to increase the educational attainment of our nation's citizens as a core theme. The dismantling and restructuring of our domestic automakers is symbolic; the time for America to compete strictly on brawn has faded. America must instead compete on talent nurtured as part of a systematic and public policy-driven mandate to “grow” human capital. As was true after World War II, it is institutions of the knowledge economy—our colleges and universities—that will power a rejuvenated America.

Our nation's elected leaders today are demonstrating far greater foresight than their predecessors when it comes to recognizing the value inherent in our public postsecondary institutions and the central role these entities can play in a rebirth of economic vitality. Whereas the original GI Bill and the expansion of the nation's public postsecondary system needed more than a decade after the Great Depression to take root, today's leaders moved prior to the conclusion of two foreign wars and at the onset of the current recession to position colleges and universities and the millions of

students they serve as catalysts for innovation, renewal and sustained growth.

Recognition that a skilled, educated workforce will be the foundation of the new American economy was evident in the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill last year. The legislation will make earning a college degree possible for tens of thousands of military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, helping them translate their skills to civilian employment.

The unprecedented and far-reaching American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed earlier this year illustrates the central role public colleges and universities will play in beating the recession. It embeds several measures to increase college access and affordability; it also more fully harnesses institutions' applied research and technology-transfer capabilities.

The one-time measures contained in the massive federal stimulus package will help jumpstart economic renewal on Main Streets across the U.S. However, what is needed to sustain this renewal is a public partnership between the federal government, the states and their public postsecondary institutions to increase our citizens' educational attainment. By calling in his February address to Congress for the U.S. to regain top standing in educational attainment by 2020, President Obama has underscored the centrality of a well-educated America to its future standing in the global economy. His words have been backed up by several bold proposals that will, if acted on by Congress, greatly expand educational opportunities, especially for traditionally underrepresented

students: those from low-income households as well as those who are first-generation college-goers, minorities, or returning adults who may have some postsecondary education but have not acquired a credential or degree.

Bold actions are required to clear a path toward prosperity for millions of Americans. These include expanding the federal Pell Grant program and making it a fully funded entitlement, increasing and making permanent a universal and straightforward American Opportunity Tax Credit, vastly streamlining the federal student aid application process, ensuring access to and increasing the efficiency of federal loan programs, enhancing the Federal Work-Study program, and facilitating college access and citizenship for undocumented students.

There may be no more effective booster shot for American economic renewal than an increased public—federal and state—investment in our nation's colleges and universities. Let us capitalize on this recession by proclaiming that we will lead the world in knowledge, skill and talent generation. We can achieve this through a federally led, state-driven strategy of promoting and funding access to American colleges that are continually striving for greater efficiency, productivity and accountability. Let us make the most of now.

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*Muriel A. Howard has served as the president of Buffalo State College, State University of New York (SUNY) since 1996 and will assume the presidency of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in August. Email: info@aacscu.org*

## Ambitious Goal

Over the last generation, we have increased access to higher education for low-income and underprepared students—now we must ensure those students finish what they start

TERRY W. HARTLE

In its first hundred days, the Obama administration demonstrated a strong commitment to expanding access to higher education. The economic stimulus package, known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), increased funding for the Pell Grant program and over the next two years, the maximum award will grow to \$5,550 in 2010-11—the largest two-year dollar increase in the program's 35-year history.

In addition, the president's FY 2010 budget plan calls for making the Pell Grant an entitlement, revitalizing and expanding the Perkins Loan program, simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and creating a new \$2.5 billion program to improve "graduation and success" in higher education. It is too early, of course, to know if Congress will approve these ideas, but it clearly demonstrates the administration's strong commitment to helping low-income students pursue and complete postsecondary education.

But the administration's most far-reaching higher education proposal came in the president's Feb. 24 speech to Congress in which he committed the U.S. to be first in the world in the percentage of adults with postsecondary education by the year 2020. In the president's words, "We will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world."

This is an extraordinarily ambitious goal. The U.S. once had the world's second-highest percentage of young adults with a college education but has slipped to 11th place. This is not because we are doing worse than before—graduation rates in the U.S. have remained stable. Rather, it is because other nations have expanded their commitments to higher education and have steadily improved. In the coming decade, the challenge will only

increase. Most of the countries with a higher percentage of college graduates have small and relatively stable populations, compared with the U.S. This means that America must significantly increase the number of college graduates if we hope to move up in the rankings. The status quo will only leave us further behind.

Our calculations suggest that the U.S., which currently produces roughly 2.3 million associate and bachelor degrees a year, will need to produce an additional 5 million degree holders above what we would normally produce by 2020 to reach the 55% attainment rate of Canada, the top country at the current time. However,

if, as the Lumina Foundation for Education projects, the top-degree producing country in 2020 has a 60% degree attainment rate, the U.S. would have to produce 7.3 million more degree-holders—more than 700,000 *additional* degree recipients a year every year for a decade—to reclaim the top space.

Achieving the president's goal would be extraordinarily beneficial to the nation's long-term economic growth and social progress. But there is no way we will do it without a broad-based national effort. At a minimum, reaching the goal will require five things.

First, we need better-prepared high school graduates. According to the U.S. Education Department, 72%

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of students who have taken a college-preparatory curriculum in high school (four years of English, three years of math, two years of science and social studies) graduate from college within six years of starting or are still enrolled. But for those who have not taken such a curriculum, the comparable figure is 46%. Many efforts are underway to improve educational performance at the elementary and secondary school level—most notably provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act that require increased accountability and assessment from elementary and secondary schools. If these efforts prove successful, the nation will see increased college enrollments and higher graduation rates.

Second, students and families need better information about postsecondary education opportunities. Extensive research shows many students and their parents lack timely and accurate information about preparing for and financing a college education. Absent that information, families are not as

prepared to plan for postsecondary education as they might be. Extensive efforts are underway to address this lack of information—such as the KnowHow2Go campaign sponsored by Lumina, the American Council on Education and the Ad Council—and the initial results are promising. Other proven initiatives such as federal GEAR UP and TRIO programs have already demonstrated their effectiveness. And the redesign of the FAFSA will be an enormous step in the right direction.

Third, adequate financial aid for low- and middle-income families is absolutely critical. This administration has already demonstrated its strong commitment to student financial aid. The increased Pell funding and the new American Opportunity Tax Credit in the stimulus package, the proposal to make the Pell Grant program a full entitlement and to revitalize the Perkins Loan program are hugely important steps. Other forms of financial assistance, such as the much-anticipated new GI Bill, which is designed to enable a veteran to attend any

public college or university tuition-free, will also help meet the needs of students and families.

Fourth, state governments need to meet their responsibilities. It's no secret that state support for public higher education has been falling for the past 25 years. Just last year, the National Conference of State Legislatures chastised its own members for treating higher education as the "balance wheel" of state budgets, receiving whatever is left after other priorities like K-12 education and transportation have been funded.

Unfortunately, the recession has meant another round of deep budget cuts for many public institutions. Unless we maintain state support for public campuses to minimize tuition increases, boosting federal student aid will have little lasting impact. It now appears the federal government is prepared to do its part on student aid. Will the states? There is simply no way we will produce 700,000 more college graduates a year if we keep cutting funding. Indeed, we will need to increase higher education's capacity, and that will require more money.

Finally, sharply increasing the number of college graduates will require a renewed commitment to student graduation and success by colleges and universities. Many academically able students leave college without getting a degree. The reasons vary. But too many students fall through the cracks when intervention and support services by the institutions could enable them to finish their education. Over the last generation, we have dramatically increased our efforts to expand access to higher education for low-income and underprepared students. Now we must make a similar effort to ensure that those students finish what they start.

The president's goal will require a long-term effort by multiple actors, particularly higher education institutions themselves. It remains to be seen if America and its colleges and universities have the energy, wisdom and commitment to achieve it.

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# Our Most Valuable Population

## The case for disconnected young adults

NICHOLAS C. DONOHUE

In May, President Obama stated the need for every American to have at least one year of postsecondary education. That sentiment echoes the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's 2008 report, "What It Takes to Succeed in the 21st Century—and How New Englanders Are Faring." The report cites a growing consensus that reveals the minimum indicator of the skills and knowledge necessary for success as a two-year postsecondary credential of some kind. Working toward this goal becomes even more challenging when you consider the large number of young adults, ages 16 to 24, across the region who are unemployed and not enrolled in school. If we are to maintain—or hopefully improve upon—our current level of collective prosperity, we must begin to better engage this growing demographic with the goal of attaining some postsecondary credential. And we must begin to expand our current notions of what that credential could look like and which institutions facilitate its attainment.

The need to propel large numbers of citizens toward postsecondary degrees contrasts with New England's changing demographics. Actually, we say "changing demographics" but we've said "changing" for years now. It's time to admit that our region has *changed*. We have been fortunate to see an influx of immigrants and young people of color arrive and mature here. They have played a vital role in the workforce, as our overall population growth has stagnated. (From 1990 to 2000, the population of the U.S. increased by 11.5%, but grew by only 2.5% in New England). However, the growth of these populations has added emphasis to the fact that all our citizens are not educated equally or sufficiently.

Students of color and those from low-income families graduate high school at unacceptably low rates. A recent study by Northeastern University's Center

for Labor Market Studies and the Alternative Schools Network of Chicago looked at the 12 largest states, and discovered that one of five African-Americans and three of 10 Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 24 have left school.

For the young people from these populations who do graduate high school, the current economic downturn has spurred a trickle-down effect that further reduces the limited postsecondary options available to them. Two-year colleges are seeing an influx of students who previously would have attended four-year public colleges (which themselves are seeing an influx of student who in a better economy might have enrolled at more expensive private institutions) leaving fewer spots at two-year colleges for many students already at risk of becoming disconnected. Turned away from college, disconnected young adults enter the workforce where they must now compete for employment with those possessing four-year or even graduate degrees.

As a result, we now have far too many disconnected young adults across the region and nationally. While more likely to be from underserved populations, disconnected young adults are still a diverse group: teen parents; adolescents in the foster system; youth involved with the juvenile justice system; recent immigrants struggling to learn English; high school students who are one or more years behind their graduating class; and youth who have already dropped out. These are our sons, our daughters, our relatives and friends and neighbors who have been inadequately prepared academically and cast out into an unstable economy that increasingly demands the higher skills provided by a postsecondary credential.

The longer young adults are disconnected, the less likely they will ever

engage with the postsecondary opportunities that could turn their lives around. Currently, 22% of 25- to 29-year-olds are unemployed and out of the labor force nationwide. Today's disconnected young adults are at high risk of spending the rest of their lives as members of the working poor. To reverse this trend, we must work harder to engage this population with postsecondary opportunities.

President Obama himself recognized the importance of education for disconnected populations this past spring, saying: "Our unemployment insurance system should no longer be a safety net, but a stepping stone to a new future" as he ordered his labor and education departments to help make Pell Grants more readily available to those out of work.

Still, the landscape awaiting those young adults trying to re-enter the education system is treacherous. The good news is there is a growing regional history of shared accountability around successful transitions to postsecondary opportunities. One example is the Nellie Mae Education Foundation-supported Adult Basic Education (ABE)-to-College Transition Project. The project has successfully prepared thousands of New England adults who have earned a GED or external diploma program certificate for postsecondary education by helping them bridge the chasm between high school equivalency and college. These kinds of efforts must continue. But we must do more.

A growing group of organizations is attempting to engage New England's disconnected young adults with postsecondary opportunities. In New England, the Hyams Foundation recently launched its *Teen Futures* initiative, which aims to help unemployed high school dropouts, ages 16 to 22, "gain their high school credential and commence a path toward higher

education or a career-focused training program.” The initiative works to achieve this through direct, three-year grants to organizations that use a three-point model of education, skill development and employment in their programs serving this important population. Hyams also supports the organizations’ evaluation capacity to prove and improve the efficacy of the programs, and makes it a goal to share information back with other organizations and policymakers through convenings and briefings.

The combination of education and employment is not new to organizations serving disconnected young adults. However, the emphasis on postsecondary credential attainment has increased. The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) is a national contributor to this trend through its Postsecondary Plus pilot program. This program, supported by the Gates Foundation and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, works to create or enhance existing partnerships between community-based youth/young adult intervention organizations and community colleges to improve access and persistence for disconnected young adults. The program aims to lay the groundwork to establish shared accountability among community-based organizations, community colleges and other partners via memoranda of understanding and other detailed agreements that will formalize the responsibility all parties have for the success of the young people involved.

While we must ramp up the intensity of programs that focus on disconnected adults, we must also ensure that high schools and postsecondary educators work together to help prevent their ranks from growing. In Rhode Island, the Providence Plan aims to keep underserved urban students in school by developing pathways that will enable them to successfully graduate from a high-quality career or technical school and seamlessly enter postsecondary education or registered trade apprenticeships.

More recently, efforts are underway to test the notion that it is actually possible to corral a “system” of workforce development opportunities within a locale. Led by Bob Schwartz, academic dean at Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Kennedy School of Government economist Ron Ferguson, the effort suggests doing something about the “Forgotten Half” who do not fit into the traditional “dreams” of a four-year degree that so many of us who focus obsessively on a very narrow definition “college-ready” hold dear. Instead, the effort asks the question: What if the various training, certificates and other work-related opportunities were better understood and better coordinated? It is a simple notion that depends on a broader view of postsecondary success. Many graduates of four-year institutions are in good jobs that may not have required a four-year degree. Yet, we continue to put most of our emphasis on four-year completion

as the only goal, despite the prohibitive barriers that exist for much of the population. As a result, and while our region ranks high in bachelor’s degree attainment, we see weak associate degree attainment and continued low college participation among low-income and minority students.

The “Forgotten Half” work, the Providence Plan and the Hyams *Teen Futures* initiative—which all include secondary, postsecondary and workforce training—are the types of inclusive interventions that may one day serve as models for stemming the tide of high school dropouts that populate our disconnected young adult population.

New England should relish the riches bestowed upon us by our increasing diversity. We must now, however, address how to engage a growing number of disconnected young adults who the education system has failed and offer them postsecondary options without repeating the mistakes of “tracking” and the low expectations that come with it. If we are vigilant and rigorous, we can and should explore and promote the greater variety of high-quality postsecondary opportunities to ensure strong futures for these learners in question and the region as a whole.

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### Funny Numbers: Corrections

With its 60-plus tables and charts brimming with data, a few numbers in *NEJHE*’s Spring 2009 special report on “Trends & Indicators in Higher Education” raised questions with readers.

For the full set of updated tables and charts exploring New England’s demography, high school performance, college enrollment and graduation, higher education financing and university research, visit NEBHE’s website at [http://www.nebhe.org/info/pdf/nejhe/trends/2009/NEJHE\\_Trends\\_2009.pdf](http://www.nebhe.org/info/pdf/nejhe/trends/2009/NEJHE_Trends_2009.pdf).

Specifically, in Fig. 14, the final column showing “the Percent of High School Graduates Going Directly to College” was not fully updated in the hard-copy issue,

but has been revised on the website. In Fig. 34, “Graduation Rates by State, Race/Ethnicity and Type of Institution, 2007,” the total percentage for “Public Land Grant in New Hampshire” should be 73%, and has also been revised on the website.

A reader at Merrimack College noted that in Fig. 15, “Migration of First-Time Freshmen to and from New England, 2007,” the number of freshmen from New England states is much smaller than the number from 2006. The reason is the U.S. Education Department asks institutions to complete this item “voluntarily” in odd years. In the future, we will spell out whether a reporting year is optional or mandatory.

To make additional clarifications, please email us at: [nejhe@nebhe.org](mailto:nejhe@nebhe.org).

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## Briefing College Readiness

The New England Board of Higher Education and the College Ready New England initiative present two briefing papers on model efforts to ensure that students are *college-ready* and *career-ready*.

With support from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the papers address postsecondary readiness as a shared endeavor among students and families, K-12 and higher education.

**Readiness Revised: Strategies and Innovations to Improve College and Career Success for Underrepresented Students** highlights national and regional collaborations among districts, higher education institutions and education systems to increase college readiness and attainment for underserved students. *Readiness Revised* focuses on two types of high school-to-college transitions: early college commitment financial aid programs and multiple graduation pathways. The paper draws upon interviews with key participants and compelling data to measure improvement.

**Aligned by Design: Models and Lessons for Linking K-12 and Higher Education to Define and Achieve Readiness** features best practices, case studies and lessons learned from deliberate K-12 and higher education partnerships aimed at reducing remediation and formalizing alignment of curriculum and assessment to create seamless transitions to college and career success.

For more information regarding these briefing papers, please call Amanda Silvia at 617.357.9620, ext. 105, or email: [asilvia@nebhe.org](mailto:asilvia@nebhe.org).

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