Launch Event
Wednesday, April 12, 2017
Rhode Island State House

12:00-12:45pm  Registration and Lunch  

12:45-1:00pm  Break and Transition to Governor’s State Room  

1:00-1:30pm  Welcome and Task Ahead  
Michael K. Thomas, President and CEO, NEBHE  
- Definition of Employability  
- Proposed Scope and Framework  
- Key Questions  
- Goals and Outcomes  

1:30-1:50pm  Remarks from Governor Gina Raimondo  
- Introductory Remarks  
- Charge of the Commission  

1:50-2:30pm  How Does the US Stack Up in Educational Attainment and Employability?  
Andreas Schleicher, Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)  

2:30-3:00pm  What Skills are Employers Seeking in Recent Graduates To Get a Good Job?  
Brandon Busteed, Executive Director, Education and Workforce Development, Gallup  

3:00-3:45pm  Discussion on Presentations – Takeaways for Commission  
- What are your reactions to the presentations?  
- What challenges related to employer demand do you face in your institution/state/sector/industry?  
- What exemplary initiatives related to employer engagement to improve recent college graduate employability do you see in your institution/state/sector/industry?  
- What outcomes do you hope the Commission will achieve?  
- What principals should guide the Commission’s work?  
- What key trends should the Commission take into consideration?  

3:45-4:00pm  Working Group Round Robin  
NEBHE staff to describe working group charges and key questions.
April 12, 2017

**Speaker Biographies**

**Brandon Busteed**

Brandon Busteed is a partner at Gallup and executive director of education and workforce development. His work integrates Gallup's research on talent, strengths, engagement and well-being to improve student success, teacher effectiveness and educational outcomes.

With Busteed's leadership, Gallup Education has released groundbreaking studies, including “State of America's Schools: The Path to Winning Again in Education,” which explores student and teacher engagement in public schools, and “Great Jobs, Great Lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index Report,” a comprehensive study of U.S. college graduates that focuses on their long-term outcomes in work and life.

In addition to his work at Gallup, Busteed has founded two companies and one nonprofit organization as a social entrepreneur. His Outside The Classroom pioneered adaptive online education in alcohol abuse prevention.


Busteed holds a bachelor's degree in public policy from Duke University. He is a trustee emeritus of Duke and has served on the board of visitors of the Sanford School of Public Policy.

**The Hon. Gina Raimondo**

Since her election in 2014 as Rhode Island's first woman governor, Gina Raimondo has prioritized rebuilding the middle class and creating opportunity for everyone. In her two years in office, has kickstarted the state's economy to create jobs, encourage business growth and foster innovation throughout state government.

Under Gov. Raimondo’s leadership, Rhode Island has attracted top companies like GE Digital, Johnson & Johnson, Virgin Pulse, and the Cambridge Innovation Center to relocate to Rhode Island, while also making critical investments in existing companies. When she took office, Rhode Island had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. Today, the state’s unemployment rate is the lowest since 2001 and below the national average for the first time since 2005.

Gov. Raimondo has made education central to her economic growth plans, with record investments in early education, computer science courses, and public school funding. Continuing her administration's work to invest in education and job training at every level, she has proposed the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship—a program to provide high school seniors with two years of in-state college tuition at Rhode Island's public institutions of higher education.

Gov. Raimondo is working hard to ensure that, together, we’ll meet the challenges and build a stronger, better future for every Rhode Islander.
Andreas Schleicher

Andreas Schleicher is director for education and skills, and special advisor on education policy to the secretary-general at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris.

As a key member of the OECD senior management team, Schleicher supports the secretary-general’s strategy to produce analysis and policy advice that advances economic growth and social progress. He promotes the work of the Directorate for Education and Skills on a global stage and fosters cooperation both within and outside the OECD. In addition to policy and country reviews, the work of the directorate includes the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), and the development and analysis of benchmarks on the performance of education systems (INES).

Before joining the OECD, Schleicher was director for analysis at the International Association for Educational Achievement (IEA). He studied physics in Germany and holds a degree in Mathematics and Statistics from Australia. He is the recipient of numerous honours and awards, including the Theodor Heuss prize, awarded in the name of the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany for “exemplary democratic engagement.” He holds an honorary professorship at the University of Heidelberg.

Michael K. Thomas

Michael K. Thomas is president and chief executive officer of the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE). He works extensively on higher education issues with governors, state legislators, K-12 commissioners, state higher education commissioners, college presidents/chancellors and other business, education and government leaders.

Thomas joined NEBHE in 2002 as director of policy and research and subsequently served as senior director and senior vice president. He has worked in corporate training and human resources and has held administrative positions at both public and independent higher education institutions, including executive assistant to the president at Lesley University.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Brigham Young University and master’s degrees in higher education from Teachers College, Columbia University, and Harvard University, as well as an MBA from Boston University and a doctorate in education and social policy from Harvard.

In 2008, Thomas was selected as a Millennium Leadership Initiative Fellow by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), recognizing the next generation of America’s higher education leadership. He serves as a senior fellow at the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).
OVERARCHING GOALS

Increase Graduate Employability
The Commission’s overarching goal is to increase the career readiness, employability and successful work transitions of graduates, benefiting their lifelong contributions to the economy and society. This will be supported by targeted recommendations and a strategic and collaborative action plan for higher education, policymakers and business/industry.

Expand Success & Equity
Similarly, the Commission will seek to utilize employability to increase postsecondary completion and attainment, particularly for underrepresented populations. As states confront notable college attainment gaps and the related personal and societal costs, the
Commission will consider specific employability strategies to benefit students at-risk of not completing postsecondary credentials.

**FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT**

**Prioritizing, Defining & Embedding Employability**
Employability should be a critical policy and institutional imperative—appropriately and meaningfully incorporated into the mission and vision statements, strategic plans and priorities and the work plans of key entities, including higher education systems and institutions.

Similarly, postsecondary institutions should engage boards, faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders in developing and implementing specific definitions and frameworks of employability that are consistent with their respective institutional missions. They should embed key elements of employability throughout the institution and be accountable of appropriate outcomes related thereto.

**KEY EMPLOYABILITY ELEMENTS**

**Work-Integrated, Cooperative and Internship-based Learning (WIL)**
Opportunities for work-integrated, cooperative and internship-based learning are critical to developing graduates’ employability and to bridging the worlds of study and work, the curricular and co-curricular. WIL provides both academic and professional benefits. Research shows strong relationships between participation in WIL and college completion, employment after graduation and employer satisfaction with graduates’ skills. It makes postsecondary learning deeper, more relevant and purposeful; increases career planning, awareness and readiness; speeds graduates’ transitions to the workforce; and can also aid affordability and completion.

**Planning, Advising and Career Services**
In postsecondary education, the planning, skills and knowledge that support career readiness and post-graduation transitions are sometimes experienced as opt-in, add-on support services—often accessed primarily in latter semesters or just prior to graduation. Research indicates that early and regular planning promotes, retention, degree completion and better labor market outcomes.

Digital technologies, expanded labor market information, big data and social media have changed how individuals look for jobs and how firms identify and recruit talent. The planning, advising and career services capacities postsecondary institutions must keep pace with such changes—and with emerging alternative service provision options.

**Innovation, Technology and New Economy “Skill Bundles”**
Career readiness and employability depend on students’ increased access to skills, knowledge and competencies that enable participation in a fast-changing, technology-driven and increasingly digital economy. These include skills and competencies in information technology, coding, data analytics, innovation and entrepreneurship. Such skills and competencies change quickly and can be inaccessible to students in unrelated majors and degree programs. Institutions should cultivate a lifelong learning orientation, utilize new delivery models and consider new credentials and certifications—as with
new non-institutional providers seeking to address increasing demand for such from students, professionals and businesses.

**Effective Use of Labor Market Data & Intelligence**
New technology, data systems and analytics have significantly increased the labor market information and intelligence available to postsecondary institutions and related stakeholders. Such data can be used to inform, prepare and advise postsecondary students; influence the development of major-specific curricula, new credentials and work-integrated learning; inform system and institutional policies, programs and retention interventions; reveal labor market dynamics, skill content and skill requirements; clarify employer needs and preferences; and document actual employment outcomes. Such resources can also support the collaboration and integration of policy makers, workforce agencies, postsecondary institutions and employers.

**Emerging Credentials & Credentialing Systems**
The traditional outputs or “currency” of higher education institutions—degrees, semesters, credit hours and grades—exist in a large and growing marketplace where institutional and non-institutional providers deliver new types of credentials (certificates, licenses, badges, or other sub-degree credentials), many grounded in demonstrated competency. They reflect the demand for just-in-time learning, quality credentials and new credential systems to keep pace with changing industries and professions—and which are transparent, portable, stackable, labor market relevant, recognize workplace learning and which create pathways to further postsecondary education.

**Targeted Higher Education/Industry Partnerships**
The region has multiple shared and pressing labor market gaps affecting key industries that threaten competitiveness and growth. These present critical opportunities for designing and executing industry-specific partnerships to increase the pipeline of potential workers, reduce skill mismatches and better align industry, higher education and state policy. Timely and effective partnerships require informed partners, collaborative leadership, adequate resources and effective models informed by successful examples and best practices.
FAQs

What if I am unable to attend a meeting?
- Pertinent materials will be available on the Commission website, including meeting summaries
- NEBHE will host a brief “catch-up” video conference after each Committee meeting to update those unable to participate
- In exceptional circumstances, a representative may attend

How can I provide input to the Commission’s work and deliberations?
- Input to the Commission can occur at both full and Working Group meetings
- The Chair and NEBHE staff will work to maximize discussion and deliberation during those meetings
- Input can be shared both verbally and electronically during a meeting (using an online polling tool)
- NEBHE will also regularly contact and/or survey Commission members for verbal and electronic input

How will the Commission receive “testimony” to inform recommendations and proposals?
- The Commission will seek to utilize varied strategies and tools for maximizing input
- Commission and Working Group meetings will seek testimony from experts and thought leaders
- Commission members may be invited to be part of virtual interviews with the same
- NEBHE staff will regularly summarize and submit “evidence” to Commission members for consideration
- Commission members are encouraged to submit evidence via NEBHE staff and to provide testimony

Where will Commission materials, evidence and documentation be available?
- All materials related to the Commission and its activities will be available at: nebhe.org/commission
- This will be a publicly available site and will allow for comments and input

What is the sequence of Commission meetings and activities?
- Please refer to the Commission schedule for an overview and specific dates

How will Commission and Working Group Meetings function?
- Each meeting will have a formal agenda that includes goals and key issues/questions to be addressed
- Each will include the review and consideration of testimonies and evidence
- Each will include deliberation and discussion
What is the role of Working Groups and how will they function?

- Working Groups will seek greater depth on key elements and issues related to the Commission’s work
- Working Groups will “set the stage” for further discussion and deliberation at full Commission meetings, including preliminary recommendations
- The first Working Group meeting will be virtual; the others will occur on the day of full Commission meetings
- Commission members will be asked to indicate which Working Group they prefer to participate in

What if I have additional process questions or suggestions?

- Please share your thoughts, advice and input directly with NEBHE staff members at policy@nebhe.org
- Visit www.nebhe.org/commission for more information
The Case for Employability

The New England Board of Higher Education has convened a Commission on Higher Education and Employability to bring together key regional decision-makers from higher education, government, and business/industry to identify and commit to an agenda for increasing the work readiness of New England’s college graduates.

Commission members see great urgency in tackling this challenge and charting a course for the future that puts employability front and center in how higher education, employers and the public sector collaborate to prepare New Englanders for a rapidly changing, increasingly complex economy and society.

What is behind this sense of urgency? A broad recognition that:

- Too many employers are struggling to find workers who can be productive in today’s technology-rich workplaces;
- Too few students leave college with information, skills, and attitudes they need to secure and succeed in jobs in their field—even as they pay more for their education;
- Demographic and labor market trends are making employability of all New Englanders more important, including those from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education
- Institutional and state policy rigidities often create barriers to promising innovations and improvement strategies; and, perhaps most important,
- Maintaining the status quo is likely to prove extremely costly as New England competes to attract and grow quality firms and jobs and keep up with the demands of the digital information economy.

Fortunately, the Commission’s sense of urgency also comes from the belief that it is not too late to act. There is a growing consensus within higher education on what it will take to improve communication and alignment among employers and higher education institutions to ensure the region’s workforce vitality. Acting now, New England colleges and universities can take the lead in driving toward better outcomes for individuals, firms, and the region.

To aid Commission members and the broader public, NEBHE has produced this brief background document on employability as both a challenge and an opportunity for New England higher education. Its sections cover:
- What “employability of college and university graduates” means
- Why this is a particularly critical time to improve employability
- What it will take to prioritize employability of New England’s college graduates, and
- How the Commission will approach its charge

I. What “employability of college and university graduates” means

Employability means being ready to successfully obtain and be productive in a job in one’s chosen field. The Commission starts from this definition:

Employability is a set of achievements—skills, understandings and personal attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, benefiting themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy.

Employability is about more than mastery of specific occupational skills. The concept captures a combination of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attributes and attitudes—what individuals know; what they can do; how equipped they are to navigate the labor market and seek out career-relevant information; how they identify and make use of social connections and relationships developed in or outside of school; and how well they can read what it takes to be a productive contributor to a given work group.

Because the Commission’s focus is the employability of college and university graduates, it is concerned with the choices and decisions of colleges and universities and will engage in a systematic exploration of the ways in which postsecondary institutions and programs are organized to contribute to graduates’ employability. Further, the Commission will address public policy and regional cooperation, in order to understand how they add to or constrain student progress during and after their undergraduate experience.

The public is fairly evenly split on whether the main purpose of college is to teach work-related skills and knowledge (47 percent) or to help a student grow personally and intellectually (39 percent) or both (14 percent) (Pew Research Center 2016). However, the public is in broad agreement that a degree or certificate beyond high school is important in order to get a good job (93 percent)—and that a good job is essential to a high quality of life (78 percent agree on strongly agree) (Gallup and Lumina 2014).

The Commission takes an expansive view of employability. The Commission rejects the false dichotomy that pits academic and vocational goals against each other. College has always been vocational, even as academic and technical content and mix have changed over the years. Everyone who enrolls in college intends to work after graduation—and they hope that the combination of experiences they have in college will equip them with better career and social options.
Moreover, employer expectations of new hires coming out of college are erasing the liberal arts/vocational education dichotomy. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2016) annual employer survey identified the following skills as the ones employers value most: leadership; the ability to work in a team; written communications; and problem solving. In a 2014 survey of 400 employers, the majority responded that employees need to have both broad skills and competencies that can be applied to a broad range of jobs and field-specific skills, not one or the other (Hart Research Associates 2015).

There are many different ways of characterizing the professional skills and attributes that employers increasingly look for in new hires. Here is one version (need cite):

According to Burning Glass CEO Matthew Sigelman, “The reality is that the liberal arts are really close” to what employers are looking for. In his view, his firm’s analysis of employer demand from millions of job postings nationally provides an opportunity “to get past the lazy debate over the value of [liberal arts] education. Employers really value soft skills that are the bedrock of a liberal-arts education.” (Blumenstyk 2016) According to Burning Glass, liberal arts graduates can be more employable in today’s labor market with a modest investment in courses or experiences in STEM or technical areas. Similarly, technical program graduates are far more employable if they can demonstrate a range of professional skills that correlate with effective contribution to complex work environments.

This expansive definition of employability has significant implications for colleges and universities and the programs they offer students. Focusing on improving
employability has to be institution-wide, not relegated to vocational programs or to non-academic staff in Career Services. Nor can it be an add-on activity just before graduation. Employability is increasingly an essential purpose of college, one that needs to be prioritized at the institution level and supported by effective policies, programs and practices, such as better measures and data, more robust partnerships engaging regional employers and educational institutions, and more effective learning activities in school and at the workplace or in the community.

II. Why this is a critical time to improve New England graduates’ employability

Higher education in this country is a remarkable success story. For decades, American colleges and universities have been the envy of other nations and, in terms of both overall quality and the breadth of mass higher education, the U.S. has a lot to be proud of.

However, signs of frustration and discontent with higher education are becoming more common among the public, the employer community, state and federal funders of higher education, and students themselves. At the root of the dissatisfaction is the concern that the value of higher education is less obvious as costs climb, debt increases, and educational and economic outcomes for students resist improvement, particularly for low-income and first-generation students. Add in demographic trends toward a more diverse society and intensifying competitive pressures on firms and industries, and past confidence in our higher education institutions and system is being shaken.

The economic value of higher education remains strong. For four-year degrees, the evidence is overwhelming of high economic returns. In 1980, a college graduate earned 34 percent more than a high school graduate. This “college wage premium,” as it is called, rose dramatically through 2010 when it reached a plateau of 78 percent. It is no longer rising, but this stable level is higher than at any time in our history (Valetta 2016).
The returns to an associate degree are also positive and significant (though smaller than for a BA) and it persists over time, as a recent rigorous study using data from eight states confirms (Belfield and Bailey 2017). For men, the annual earnings gain from an associate degree is $4640 and for women it is $7160.

But despite this evidence, a number of factors are contributing to the real and growing concern:

- **Public fears about the rising cost of college:** A majority of Americans (57 percent) no longer believe that higher education in the U.S. provides students with good value for the money spent, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey (Brown 2016). Tuition increases have been outpacing inflation, as states have reduced their commitment to investing in higher education since the Great Recession and college costs continue to climb. The public is more alarmed by the aggregate increase in student debt than it should be, but this also contributes to parent and student angst about the value of their investment.

- **Employer dissatisfaction with student preparedness for work:** Employers and colleges do not see eye to eye on how well higher education is preparing graduates for the workforce. A 2014 survey of employers and college academic officers found an extreme polarization: while 96 percent of college representatives felt confident in their institution’s ability to prepare students for the workforce, only 11 percent of business leaders agree that today’s college graduates have the skills and competencies that business needs (Gallup and Lumina Foundation 2014). Employers and students have very different views as well: while 64 percent of students think college graduates are highly prepared to work well in teams, only 37 percent of employers agree; similarly, while 62
percent of students think that graduates have adequate oral communications skills, only 28 percent of employers concur. Wide disparities exist in student and employer assessments of ethical judgment, locating and organizing information, working with numbers and statistics, written communications, critical and analytic thinking, and being creative (Hart Research Associates 2015).

- **Growing evidence that the economic value of credentials varies greatly, both within and across institutions:** In the past decade or so, researchers have taken advantage of improved data on sub-baccalaureate degrees and certificates to develop a more nuanced understanding of the value of different degrees and certificates. Some associate degrees have higher returns than some baccalaureate degrees; and some certificates have stronger labor market payoff than many associate degrees. A nursing degree from a community college has a higher return than a terminal sociology or political science associate degree. A vocational certificate in a field that does not value certificates or where demand is weak will result in lower earnings gains than a better designed and aligned certificate. There is some evidence that certificates that require more credits result in higher earnings gains. (Xu and Trimble 2016)

- **The recognition by firms and students that high growth, high wage jobs require more preparation and strong social and analytic skills:** Although productivity growth has been sluggish and the pace of technological change is not as dramatic as many pundits claim, the U.S. labor market is in a period of steady movement away from jobs that require repetitive and routine skills, both manual and cognitive, and toward jobs that require more non-routine social and analytical skills. This shift shows no sign of abating and while the heralded triumph of the robots may be slow in coming, the public understands that the bar for entry-level employment that can pay decent wages will continue to rise—and that with this trend comes increased competition for employment in high growth, high wage fields.
Together, these factors heighten the concern that colleges and universities are not responding effectively to new demands, expectations, and needs—at just the time when better postsecondary learning options are more and more crucial.

In New England, where human capital and talent are at the heart of the region’s competitive advantage and economic prospects, demographic and technological trends further underscore the challenge. Slow population growth, a projected 14% decline of high school graduates by 2032, and migration from some New England areas exacerbate workforce pipeline gaps in growing industries. More than other regions around the country, New England faces a shortage of workers with education beyond a high school diploma but below a baccalaureate degree, the “middle skill” jobs that will be an increasingly important component of job demand across the region (Brett and Clayton-Matthews 2015).

III. What it will take to prioritize employability of college graduates

To address both perceived and real weaknesses in the readiness of New England college graduates to find and succeed in good jobs in the region, the Commission believes it necessary to drill down to identify and disseminate the best information possible in three areas:

- Definition of employability in its many dimensions for New England graduates
- Identification of innovative, evidence-based approaches to improving graduate employability
• Specification of actions that New England colleges and universities, employers, and other stakeholders are taking and can strengthen and expand to promote employability across the region’s graduates

Clarify what employability means for New England colleges and universities and their students: As noted above, employability as a concept and a goal needs to be defined clearly, so that it serves as a guide to the Commission’s solution set. Too narrow a definition runs the risk of over-vocationalizing and marginalizing the challenges that New England higher education and employers face. Too broad a definition runs the risk of failing to provide adequate guidance on top priorities for action across New England higher education institutions and their partners. To this end, the Commission will synthesize the best research on the mix of skills, knowledge, experiences, behaviors, connections that are required to improve student options and decisions, institutional support for those choices and for post-graduation success, and employer investment and engagement with students during and after graduation. This synthesis will be tested with regional leaders through the full Commission and several committees.

Identify strategies and actions that can improve graduates’ employability: A significant role of the Commission will be to educate itself and come to consensus on promising and evidence-based practices and policies that can help more graduates of New England colleges and universities leave school ready to succeed in their chosen field. For now, the Commission sees these strategies clustering into three primary areas of inquiry and action:

• How to help students make better choices: Choosing a postsecondary program is the first substantial investment decision many people make. There is broad agreement in the field that higher education institutions and systems need to do a better job helping students understand the choices available to them when they enroll—and the implications of choosing (and not choosing) programs of study and majors based on a combination of interests, likelihood of success, and economic value (More than 30 percent of young adults do not receive information about jobs and careers in college, according to a 2015 Federal Reserve Board survey). This is the first step toward improving employability: helping students think about what comes after graduation from the moment they enter college, through better advising and career counseling, more transparent and accurate information about the short- and long-term value of different certificates, degrees, and programs.

The Commission will draw lessons from the success of integrated structured programs like CUNY’s ASAP program for community college students; the innovative approaches at Florida State University and other large public research schools to create and make available program maps that explain both where the program leads and what completion entails complete; growing experience with Guided Pathways program redesign in
community colleges and four-year institutions.

• **How to ensure that learning programs align curriculum and student experiences with employer employability skill needs:** Across the country, colleges and universities are rethinking their interaction with regional employers to improve feedback loops on curriculum and to increase student exposure to workplaces and employer needs. The Commission will identify practices and policies that can pay off in better alignment of student learning and experience and employer expectations and needs.

Innovations that the Commission will assess carefully include: internships and work-integrated learning (26 percent of young adults who held an internship during college said that the internship led to a paid job, according to a Federal Reserve survey); competency-based learning (including models like prior learning assessment and College for America); regional and sectoral partnerships led by employers and their associations (e.g., TAACCCT grant consortia; SkillWorks in Massachusetts, the Cincinnati Health Professions Pathways Consortium); and more systematic approaches to credentialing that align college curricular priorities with employer expectations and skill requirements.

• **How to help students increase the likelihood of completing their chosen programs:** National organizations such as the Community College Research Center, Complete College America, the University Innovation Alliance and others have made significant progress identifying reforms that can help students persist in college and be far more efficient in meeting program requirements and graduating ready for success in their field.

The Commission will assess the most promising of these in use (or development) in New England and nationally. These will include: technology-based intrusive advising systems that take advantage of predictive analytics and rely on proactive early warning systems; program mapping that show students how to graduate in a timely fashion and with minimal extra credit hours; experiential learning or employment that aligns, rather than conflicts, with student programs of study.

Specify actions that New England higher education institutions and their partners in business and industry, government, and other education and social service sectors: The Commission will prioritize strategies that strengthen employability across the region. Recommendations will be targeted to colleges and universities, their systems, and their partners. In addition, though, the Commission will pay particular attention to state and regional solutions, such as: regional mechanisms for improved labor market information about demand and economic value of different programs; more seamless and predictable transfer of credits within and across states; cost-saving
and efficiency strategies (e.g., back office function consortia; collaboration in program offerings); removal of disincentives to regional collaboration and regional mobility of students; and statewide and regional venues for strategic conversations and action.

How the Commission will approach its charge

Through its meetings and deliberations between meetings, the Commission on Higher Education and Employability will advance the college graduate employability agenda in New England through the following strategies. The Commission will:

- Convene the region's key decision-makers from higher education, government, and business and industry to tackle a focused agenda related to increasing work readiness and employability;

- Examine existing policies, practices, and agendas within higher education, business and industry, government, and other important sectors that affect the workforce readiness and employment transitions of New England postsecondary students;

- Identify and assess evidence-based innovations and promising practices—local, regional, national and international—that can help improve employability of New England college graduates;

- Formulate actionable recommendations for specific reforms, policy changes, and strategic priorities that can be implemented by New England colleges and universities, higher education systems, state governments, and regional partnerships;

- Align the efforts of key stakeholders to advance a talent and human capital agenda that drives economic growth and prosperity; and

- Define and promote a powerful cross-state policy and collaboration agenda to support a more effective role for higher education institutions in preparing New Englanders for productive careers and contributions to society that keep New England competitive and vibrant in the long-run.

To accomplish its work, the Commission will establish three working groups, each one addressing two building blocks for improving employability that have been identified to date:

- Labor Market Data and Intelligence & Advising and Career Services
- Higher Education/Industry Partnerships & Work-Integrated Learning
- Next Generation Technology Skills & Competency-based Education
SOURCES


Great Jobs. Great Lives. The Value of Career Services, Inclusive Experiences and Mentorship for College Graduates
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Introduction

For many Americans, higher education has acted as a gatekeeper to the workforce and financial prosperity. Since 2010, 86% of incoming freshmen have said that getting a better job represents a critical factor in their decision to enroll in college, compared with 73% of incoming freshmen between 2000 and 2009 who said the same. Yet Gallup has found that barely one in 10 business leaders in the U.S. feel strongly that a college education equips graduates with the skills and competencies their business needs, demonstrating a need for colleges and universities to innovate in order to prepare graduates for life outside of college.

In 2014, Gallup partnered with Purdue University and the Lumina Foundation to quantify outcomes for bachelor’s degree holders nationally and to identify the critical undergraduate experiences that are related to these positive outcomes. The research is designed to provide universities with a road map for continuous improvement, focusing on those outcomes prospective students expect to achieve as a result of obtaining a bachelor’s degree, including a great job and a great life. In its inaugural report, Gallup provided practitioners with six practical collegiate experiences that are strongly correlated with important outcomes, including employee engagement and well-being later in life. In its second administration in 2015, Gallup provided new data about the relationship between these key experiences and graduates’ perceptions that their degree was worth the cost. Many institutions across the country’s diverse higher-education landscape have already used findings from the Gallup-Purdue Index to improve the student experience in deep and meaningful ways — emphasizing more long-term projects, mentoring and internship experiences linked to classroom learning. More than 50 colleges and universities have sought Gallup to measure their own alumni for comparison with the national and cohort-level findings from the Gallup-Purdue Index, allowing them to have a relative understanding of their graduates’ success. In October 2016, Furman University announced $47 million in new grant funding to implement the key collegiate experiences identified through this research.

In its third year, the national Gallup-Purdue Index explored several new topics relevant to higher education institutions, including the extent to which students are taking advantage of career services’ offerings; how helpful these offerings are to graduates; who mentored these students and connected them to important internship and work experiences; and how inclusive their campus was to racial and ethnic minorities and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

The results detailed in this report provide university leaders with important information about how they can continue to improve their policies and programs to give current and future students the experiences required to be successful outside of college.

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From College to Career

Americans with a bachelor’s degree can expect to earn about $1 million more than those with a high school diploma over the course of their careers. However, the unemployment rate for college graduates aged 25 and older is now nearly double what it was in 2000, requiring schools to adopt new programs and policies to better prepare their graduates for a competitive job market. Career services offices often provide this support, which can include stimulating student interest in disciplines they have previously not considered, helping students select a major field of study, helping students secure employment while enrolled in college and preparing students for finding a job upon graduation through mock interviews and resume workshops. Through all of these experiences and interactions, career services offices play a critical role in preparing students for life after college.

To better understand who participates in career services’ offerings and the quality of these experiences, Gallup asked college graduates if they visited the career services office during their undergraduate experience and how helpful the career services office was to them.

Half of college graduates visited their career services office as students.

About half of college graduates nationally (52%) report that they visited the career services office during their undergraduate experience. Recent graduates are particularly likely to have visited career services. Over six in 10 graduates who obtained their degree between 2010 and 2016 say they visited their school’s career services office as undergraduates — more than graduates from any other time frame since 1940. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this study and because longitudinal data do not currently exist for graduates who obtained their degree in earlier decades, it is difficult to determine if these changes stem from differences in graduates’ ability to recall visiting career services or reflect changes in students’ interaction with career services over time.

### While attending [UNIVERSITY NAME], did you visit the career services office at least once?

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17% of 2010 to 2016 graduates report that their career services office was very helpful.
Few recent graduates view career services as very helpful.

Although recent graduates are more likely than graduates from prior decades to have visited the career center, they are no more likely to report that their interactions were very helpful or helpful than are graduates from previous decades. About two in five graduates who received their degree in each time period between 1980 and 2016 say that the career services office was very helpful or helpful to them.

How helpful was the career services office to you? Among those who reported visiting the office.

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<td>% Helpful</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

Career services experiences do not vary by type of institution. Graduates of public and private institutions and of large and small universities are all equally likely to have visited their career services office during their undergraduate experience. The quality of their experience with career services also does not depend on the size or control of institutions. Graduates of public, private, large and small universities are all equally likely to rate their experiences with career services as very helpful or helpful.

Graduates with engineering and business degrees are most likely to have visited their career services office.

Engineering graduates (62%) are the most likely graduates of all fields of study to say they visited career services as undergraduates, followed closely by business majors (58%). A slight majority of graduates with social science degrees (53%) say they visited career services as undergraduates, while just under half of arts and humanities majors (48%) and sciences majors (45%) say the same.
While attending [UNIVERSITY NAME], did you visit the career services office at least once?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Arts and Humanities</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
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</table>

Graduates with engineering and business degrees also rate their experiences with career services the most positively, with just over half of each group saying the career services office was very helpful or helpful to them. Graduates in these fields also boast some of the lowest unemployment rates among bachelor’s degree-holders, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 estimates, potentially explaining some of their more positive retrospective evaluations. Meanwhile, arts and humanities graduates nationally rate their career services experiences the most negatively, with about a third (32%) saying the career services office was very helpful or helpful.

How helpful was the career services office to you? Among those who reported visiting the office.

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<thead>
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<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Arts and Humanities</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Very helpful</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Helpful</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Not at all helpful</td>
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<td>6</td>
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First-generation college graduates and transfer students are less likely to say they used career services.

Transfer students and graduates whose parents do not have a college degree (first-generation graduates) are less likely to graduate on time or at all.\(^9\)\(^10\) However, according to data from the Gallup-Purdue Index, transfer and first-generation students who do graduate are just as likely as their peers to say they received support from professors and mentors — highlighting the importance of institutional support to the success of these two groups.

But among graduates nationally, those who transferred from a two-year or four-year institution and those who are first-generation college graduates are less likely to say that they visited their career services offices as undergraduates. These findings complement prior research demonstrating that first-generation college students disproportionately encounter challenges when navigating the college system, and they can find it both confusing and intimidating.\(^11\)

Less than half of graduates from both groups visited career services, even though both groups are equally likely as their peers to rate their experiences with career services as very helpful or helpful. These findings suggest that what the career services office provides these students is valuable, but their access to these services remains lower. These data also indicate that colleges and universities may need to adapt their communication and outreach strategies for students who face a steeper learning curve on college campuses.

While attending [UNIVERSITY NAME], did you visit the career services office at least once?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National Graduates</th>
<th>First Generation</th>
<th>Non-First Generation</th>
<th>Transfer Students</th>
<th>Non-Transfer Students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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Minority graduates are more likely than non-minority graduates to say they visited career services and to rate their experience positively.

Minority graduates are more likely to have visited career services as undergraduates and more likely to find their services very helpful or helpful compared with non-minority graduates. While more than six in 10 minority graduates visited their career services office, half of white graduates did the same. Additionally, minority graduates nationally rate their experiences more positively: 21% of black graduates, 22% of Asian graduates and 19% of Hispanic graduates say the career services office was very helpful, compared with 15% of white graduates.

How helpful was the career services office to you? Among those who reported visiting the office.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National Graduates</th>
<th>First Generation</th>
<th>Non-First Generation</th>
<th>Transfer Students</th>
<th>Non-Transfer Students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

Graduates with the largest undergraduate student loan debt amounts are most likely to say they visited career services and more likely to say it was not at all helpful.

Graduates who borrowed large amounts of student loans to obtain their undergraduate degree are the most likely to report they visited their career services office as undergraduates. Sixty-five percent of college graduates who borrowed more than $40,000 say they visited career services as undergraduates, compared with 45% of graduates with no undergraduate student loan debt.

Although those with the largest amounts of undergraduate student debt were the most likely to visit the career services office, they were also the least likely to rate their experience positively. Twenty-one percent of those borrowing more than $40,000 indicated that their experience was not at all helpful, compared with 17% of those who borrowed $20,001-$40,000 and 15% of those who borrowed less than $20,001 to obtain their degree.
The most heavily indebted college graduates require more support in navigating the transition from college to career, as they enter the workforce at a financial disadvantage relative to those with less or no undergraduate debt. Although they access career services at a greater rate, their experiences lag behind those of other graduates. This may be because these types of graduates require higher-paying jobs to meet their financial commitments, restricting the opportunities available to them, or due to differing expectations among these graduates of their alma maters.

**Delivering a high-quality career-services experience to students is more important than getting them in the door.**

In many cases, graduates who visited their career services office are no more likely than those who did not to view their undergraduate experiences positively. However, graduates who had a high-quality experience with career services are dramatically more likely to believe their university prepared them well for life outside of college, to say their education was worth the cost, to recommend their university to others and to report making donations to their alma mater.

Graduates who visited career services are somewhat more likely than those who did not visit to believe their university is passionate about the long-term success of its students. However, graduates who rated their experiences as very helpful are more than six times more likely than those who said their interactions were not at all helpful to believe their university is passionate about the success of its students.

Similarly, graduates who visited career services are only slightly more likely to feel prepared for life outside of college, recommend their university to others and donate to their alma mater. But graduates who had very helpful career-services experiences are 5.8 times more likely to say their university prepared them well for life outside of college, 3.4 times more likely to recommend their school to others and 2.6 times more likely to donate to their alma mater than those who said their career-services experiences were not at all helpful.

Graduates who visited career services are no more likely than those who did not visit to believe their education was worth the cost. Still, those who said the career services office was very helpful are nearly three times more likely to say their education was worth the cost than those who said career services was not at all helpful.
Graduates who visited the career services office and said their interactions were very helpful are

5.8x

more likely to say their university prepared them well for life outside of college.
While attending [UNIVERSITY NAME], did you visit the career services office at least once?

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<th>% Very helpful</th>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>[UNIVERSITY NAME] is passionate about the long-term success of its students (Strongly agree)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Yes</th>
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<th>% Very helpful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[UNIVERSITY NAME] prepared me well for life outside of college (Strongly agree)</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>My education from [UNIVERSITY NAME] was worth the cost (Strongly agree)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likelihood to recommend their university to family, friends or colleagues (Report a 10 on scale of 1-10)</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Have made a financial donation to their alma mater in the past 12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a good job awaiting them upon graduation</td>
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Perhaps most importantly, graduates who visited career services are more likely to be employed full time for an employer or for themselves (67%) than are those who did not visit career services (59%). This is particularly true for black graduates — a 12-percentage-point gap in full-time employment separates those who visited career services (66%) from those who did not (54%).

Graduates with particularly helpful experiences at their career services office also find their current work more fulfilling. Simply visiting career services was not enough, as those who report visiting the office are no more likely than those who did not visit the office to strongly agree that they are deeply interested in the work they do. However, half of those who report the career services office was very helpful to them strongly agree that they are deeply interested in their work, compared with 34% of those who say it was not at all helpful.

Further, graduates who visited the career services office were just as likely as those who did not visit to report they had a good job awaiting them upon graduation; however, graduates who had a quality career-services experience found a good job more quickly. Forty-nine percent of graduates who say the career services office was very helpful also report that they had a good job waiting for them when they graduated, while 15% of those who say it was not at all helpful report the same. These graduates’ more positive experiences transitioning from college to career likely influence their evaluation of their career services office and its helpfulness to them.
49% of graduates who say the career services office was very helpful report that they had a good job waiting for them when they graduated while only 15% of those who say the career services office was not at all helpful say the same.
Internship and Mentorship Sources

Gallup-Purdue Index research has demonstrated the importance of supportive relationships and experiential learning opportunities to a successful undergraduate experience. For example, Gallup has shown that mentorship and applied internship experiences are strongly linked to increased employee engagement, higher well-being later in life and graduates’ feeling that their degree was worth the cost.

Other research has also established the positive effects of these undergraduate experiences. For example, undergraduate internships have been linked to more job offers upon graduation and higher starting salaries for graduates. Meanwhile, mentorship is positively associated with career planning and active, persistent job search behavior.

Comparatively little research, however, has examined the sources of internships and mentorships and the ways in which the internship or mentorship source affects the quality of the experience. To answer this question, Gallup asked college graduates who reported having mentors and internships who their mentor was and who helped them obtain their job or internship.

**College graduates received support from both institutional and social mentors.**

About a quarter of college graduates nationally strongly agree they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams while obtaining their undergraduate degree. To identify mentors, Gallup asked recent graduates who strongly agree or agree that they had a mentor who their mentor was. Graduates could select multiple types of mentors in cases in which they had more than one mentor during their undergraduate experience.

Among recent graduates who obtained their degree from 2010 to 2016 and who strongly agree or agree that they had a mentor, about four in five indicate that their mentor was one of their professors and a third report that another university staff or faculty member served as their mentor. Additionally, about one in 10 say their mentor was an extracurricular activity adviser.

Graduates of private not-for-profit universities are more likely to say that one of their professors acted as a mentor (87%), compared with 79% of graduates from public universities. Additionally, more than nine in 10 students who graduated from smaller universities (1,000 to 4,999 students) say a professor was their mentor, compared with more than seven in 10 graduates from large universities (20,000 students or more).

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12 Year 1 and Year 2 GPI National Reports.
Friends and family members also represented a key source of mentorship for college graduates. Over a third of graduates say they had a friend who mentored them, and over a quarter said a family member acted as their mentor. Given that social support from friends and family has been linked to student persistence in college, friend- and family-based mentorship is a critical component of a successful college experience.\(^{16}\)

Gallup investigated whether students with different types of mentors were more or less likely to have different educational experiences or perceptions, including the evaluations of the value of their degree, how prepared they felt for life outside of college and the time it took to acquire a good job upon graduation. Across these measures, graduates were equally likely to respond positively or negatively regardless of who their mentor was, suggesting that it is less important who mentors students and more important that students are mentored at all.

**Professors and university staff members are the most common source of applied jobs and internships.**

Just over half of college graduates nationally (55%) say they had a job or internship as an undergraduate that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom. These jobs and internships are more prevalent among recent graduates than older graduates, with 63% of 2010 to 2016 graduates reporting they had this type of job or internship, compared with 52% of those who graduated in the 1980s and 57% of those who graduated in the 1990s.

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<tbody>
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<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
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</table>

College graduates accessed their applied job or internship predominantly through university sources. Just under a third say they acquired their internship through a professor, and about three in 10 say they found theirs with the help of a university faculty or staff member.
As with the source of mentorship, the source of graduates’ applied jobs or internships did not make them more or less likely to have different educational experiences or perceptions of those experiences. Regardless of how graduates obtained their applied job or internship, they were no more or less likely to say their education was worth the cost, to say their university prepared them well for life outside of college or to acquire a good job quickly upon graduation — implying again that having an applied learning experience is far more important than the source through which students obtain these experiences.
Diversity on Campus

College students and graduates exposed to people from different backgrounds learn key analytic and social skills and have a greater commitment to democratic values.\(^17\) Additionally, Gallup research demonstrates that college graduates who regularly interact with people from different backgrounds during their undergraduate experience are more than twice as likely to believe that their degree was worth the cost.

**Most college graduates say their university was a good place for racial and ethnic minorities to study, but fewer say the same about LGBT students.**

More than two-thirds of college graduates nationally who obtained their degree between 1990 and 2016 say that their university was a good place for racial and ethnic minorities, while significantly fewer say the same for LGBT students (42%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good place</th>
<th>Not a good place</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial and Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT Students</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few college graduates say their university was a bad place for racial and ethnic minorities (7%) or LGBT students (9%). Instead, large shares of college graduates indicate that they do not know whether their alma mater was a good or bad place for those groups to study. In fact, nearly half of 1990 to 2016 college graduates nationally (49%) say they don’t know whether their university was a good place for LGBT students to study, and a quarter say the same for racial and ethnic minorities.

Black, Asian, and Hispanic graduates from 1990 to 2016 all express greater certainty than white graduates that their universities were good places for racial and ethnic minorities to study. More than three-fourths of all three minority groups state that their university was a good place for minorities to enroll, and no more than one in 10 indicate that they don’t know if it was a good place for minorities. White graduates, alternatively, are not only less likely to say that their university was a good place for racial and ethnic minorities to study, but nearly three in 10 also say they do not know if their university was a good place for those groups to study.


Was [University Name] a good place or not a good place to study for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities?
*Asked of 1990-2016 Graduates

Graduates who regularly interacted with people from different backgrounds at their university are more likely to believe their university was a good place for racial or ethnic minorities and LGBT students to study.

Gallup asked graduates about the extent to which they interacted with people from different backgrounds on a regular basis during their undergraduate experience. For recall purposes, Gallup only asked graduates who obtained their degree from 2010 to 2016 this question. Among these recent college graduates, 44% strongly agree that they interacted with people from different backgrounds on a regular basis during their undergraduate experience.

Those who were exposed to diversity as undergraduates are now more likely to say that their alma mater was a good place for minority groups. Nearly nine in 10 recent college graduates (88%) who say they regularly interacted with people from different backgrounds as undergraduates strongly agree that their university was a good place for racial and ethnic minorities to study, compared with 42% of those who strongly disagree they had these interactions.
88% of recent graduates with exposure to diversity in college believe their alma mater was a good place for minorities to study.
While attending [UNIVERSITY NAME] I interacted with people from different backgrounds on a regular basis.

Asked of 2010-2016 Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Good place</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Not a good place</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptions about LGBT students follow a similar pattern. Just over seven in 10 recent graduates who regularly interacted with people from diverse backgrounds as undergraduates say their alma mater was good place for LGBT students to study.

In 2015, Gallup identified a strong relationship between exposure to diversity and other important long-term outcomes, including the extent to which graduates believe their degree was worth the cost. In Year 3 of the Gallup-Purdue Index study, Gallup evaluated the relationship between exposure to diversity and other outcomes, including likelihood to recommend the university to a friend, family member or colleague and likelihood to donate to the university. Graduates who regularly interacted with people from different backgrounds are 2.2 times more likely than those who did not to report that they were extremely likely to recommend the university to others and are more likely to have donated to their alma mater.

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Methodology

Results for the Gallup-Purdue Index are based on web surveys conducted Aug. 22-Oct. 11, 2016, with a random sample of 11,483 respondents with a bachelor’s degree or higher, aged 18 and older, with internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The Gallup-Purdue Index sample was recruited via the Gallup Daily tracking survey. The Gallup Daily tracking survey sample includes national adults with a minimum quota of 60% cellphone respondents and 40% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using RDD methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the next birthday. Gallup Daily tracking respondents with a college degree who agreed to future contact were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online.

Gallup-Purdue Index interviews are conducted via the web, in English only. Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. bachelor’s degree or higher population.

For results based on the total sample of those with a bachelor’s degree, the margin of sampling error is ±1.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The reported margin of sampling error for the Gallup-Purdue Index of all college graduates includes the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.
About

About Gallup

Gallup delivers forward-thinking research, analytics and advice to help leaders solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 75 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of the world’s constituents, employees and customers than any other organization. Gallup consultants help private and public sector organizations boost organic growth through measurement tools, strategic advice and education. Gallup’s 2,000 professionals deliver services at client organizations through the web and in nearly 40 offices around the world.

About Purdue University

Purdue university is a vast laboratory for discovery. The university is known not only for science, technology, engineering and math programs, but also for our imagination, ingenuity and innovation. It’s a place where those who seek an education come to make their ideas real — especially when those transformative discoveries lead to scientific, technological, social or humanitarian impact.

Founded in 1869 in West Lafayette, Indiana, the university proudly serves its state as well as the nation and the world. Academically, Purdue’s role as a major research institution is supported by top-ranking disciplines in pharmacy, business, engineering and agriculture. More than 39,000 students are enrolled here. All 50 states and 130 countries are represented.

Since the inception of the Gallup-Purdue Index study, Gallup has partnered with over 50 colleges and universities to understand the experiences of their own alumni and implement changes that will improve outcomes for current and future students. If you are a college or university leader who would like to learn more about Gallup’s work with institutions of higher education, please visit our website.
**Working Groups**

**Overview**
To expand the Commission’s capacity to address an important range of issues and topics, the Commission will employ three Working Groups. Each will be charged with undertaking further analysis, discussion and consideration of best practices and model policies. It will also be charged with helping to articulate action steps, potential follow-ups, and formal recommendations for inclusion in the Commission report. The working groups will be:

- Effective Use of Labor Market Data & Intelligence and Planning, Advising and Career Services
- Work-Integrated, Cooperative and Internship-based Learning (WIL) and Targeted Higher Education/Industry Partnerships
- Innovation, Technology and New Economy “Skill Bundles” and Emerging Credentials & Credentialing Systems

**Process & Activities**
A Chair or Co-chairs, appointed by Gov. Raimondo and/or President Thomas, will lead the each working group. NEBHE will determine membership of the working groups taking into consideration individuals’ background and preferences. The working groups will be composed of approximately 12 members, with representation from HEIs, policymakers and business/industry.

The working groups will meet four times over the course of the Commission on Higher Education and Employability’s (Employability Commission) duration. Two meetings will be paired with a full Employability Commission meeting and the others will be conducted via Zoom. With assistance from NEBHE staff, the Chair/Co-chairs will create meeting agendas; identify questions to be answered, speakers and lead meetings. Meetings will consist of presentations and testimony from regional and national experts and discussions of New England states’ challenges and successes. NEBHE staff will prepare data and resources as needed.

At the conclusion of the working group’s convenings, the Chair/Co-chairs will identify key information and recommendations to inform Employability Commission’s final report.

**Goals of the Working Groups**
Over the course of three meetings, the working groups will identify:

- Recommendations to state policy makers and HEI’s to make more effective use of skill and labor market data & transform advising and career services
- Model practices, partnerships, programs and policies exhibited by states, HEIs and business/industry within the region and where applicable, outside of the region
- New credentials and skills bundles and their impact on employability
Effective Use of Labor Market Data & Intelligence and Planning, Advising and Career Services

Effective Use of Labor Market Data
New technology, data systems and analytics have significantly increased the labor market information and intelligence available to postsecondary institutions and related stakeholders. Such data can be used to inform, prepare and advise postsecondary students; influence the development of major-specific curricula, new credentials and work-integrated learning; inform system and institutional policies, programs and retention interventions; reveal labor market dynamics, skill content and skill requirements; clarify employer needs and preferences; and document actual employment outcomes. Such resources can also support the collaboration and integration of policy makers, workforce agencies, postsecondary institutions and employers.

Key Questions:
- What sources and forms of labor market data, including supply/demand and skill-related information, are most useful in 1) designing programs and courses, 2) informing career services and advising, and 3) developing higher education-industry partnerships to ensure that students are developing employable skills?
- What industries in the region are growing and projected to continue to grow through the next decade? What skill profiles will be required for these positions?
- What are effective practices and exemplars for state and HEI use of labor market data?

Planning, Advising and Career Services
In postsecondary education, the planning, skills and knowledge that support career readiness and post-graduation transitions are sometimes experienced as opt-in, add-on support services—often accessed primarily in latter semesters or just prior to graduation. Research indicates that early and regular planning promotes, retention, degree completion and better labor market outcomes. Digital technologies, expanded labor market information, big data and social media have changed how individuals look for jobs and how firms identify and recruit talent. The planning, advising and career services capacities postsecondary institutions must keep pace with such changes—and with emerging alternative service provision options.

Key Questions:
- What does the average career services department look like in New England in terms of staffing, practice, and efficacy?
- What innovations in delivery and technology should institutions consider in order to ensure that career services is adaptive to a changing student body and labor market?
- What are best models/practices for delivering these services in high-mid- and low-resourced higher education institutions?
Work-Integrated, Cooperative and Internship-based Learning (WIL) and Targeted Higher Education/Industry Partnerships

Work-Integrated, Cooperative and Internship-based Learning
Opportunities for work-integrated, cooperative and internship-based learning are critical to developing graduates’ employability and to bridging the worlds of study and work, the curricular and co-curricular. WIL provides both academic and professional benefits. Research shows strong relationships between participation in WIL and college completion, employment after graduation and employer satisfaction with graduates’ skills. It makes postsecondary learning deeper, more relevant and purposeful; increases career planning, awareness and readiness; speeds graduates’ transitions to the workforce; and can also aid affordability and completion.

Key Questions:
- What constitutes high quality work-integrated learning in postsecondary education?
- What are the best policies and practices related to high-quality work-integrated learning and how can they be successfully implemented or expanded?

Targeted Higher Education/Industry Partnerships
The region has multiple shared and pressing labor market gaps affecting key industries that threaten competitiveness and growth. These present critical opportunities for designing and executing industry-specific partnerships to increase the pipeline of potential workers, reduce skill mismatches and better align industry, higher education and state policy. Timely and effective partnerships require informed partners, collaborative leadership, adequate resources and effective models informed by successful examples and best practices.

Key Questions:
- What are the characteristics of strong, successful university-employer workforce-focused partnerships?
- What innovative partnership models among educators and employers can tackle nagging skills mismatches?
Innovation, Technology and New Economy “Skill Bundles” and Emerging Credentials & Credentialing Systems

Career readiness and employability depend on students’ increased access to skills, knowledge and competencies that enable participation in a fast-changing, technology-driven and increasingly digital economy. These include skills and competencies in information technology, coding, data analytics, innovation and entrepreneurship. Such skills and competencies change quickly and can be inaccessible to students in unrelated majors and degree programs. Institutions should cultivate a lifelong learning orientation, utilize new delivery models and consider new credentials and certifications—as with new non-institutional providers seeking to address increasing demand for such from students, professionals and businesses.

Key Questions:
- What technology skills “bundle” or baseline skills should graduates acquire? Examples include coding, entrepreneurship, data analytics, cloud computing, cyber security, etc.

Emerging Credentials & Credentialing Systems

The traditional outputs or “currency” of higher education institutions—degrees, semesters, credit hours and grades—exist in a large and growing marketplace where institutional and non-institutional providers deliver new types of credentials (certificates, licenses, badges, or other sub-degree credentials), many grounded in demonstrated competency. They reflect the demand for just-in-time learning, quality credentials and new credential systems to keep pace with changing industries and professions—and which are transparent, portable, stackable, labor market relevant, recognize workplace learning and which create pathways to further postsecondary education.

Key Questions:
- How can HEIs improve the ways in which they frame, assess, document and interpret the knowledge, skills and competencies their students/graduates acquire? How can they engage industry and employers in the process?
- How can states and HEIs better document the employment transitions, readiness and outcomes of students/graduates?
Commission Member Information:

Name: ________________________________________________

Title: ________________________________________________

Organization: _________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________

City: ____________________________ Zip Code: ______________

State: ___________ Zip Code: ______________

Phone: _______________

E-mail: ________________

Assistant’s Name: ______________________________________

Assistant’s Telephone: ______________

Assistant’s E-mail: ________________

Commission Working Group Section

Please select one Working Group that coincides with your expertise and interest.

☐ Effective Use of Labor Market Data & Intelligence + Planning Advising & Career Services

☐ Targeted Higher Education/Industry Partnerships + Work-Integrated Cooperative and Internship-based Learning

☐ Innovation, Technology and New Economy Skill Bundles + Emerging Credentialing Systems
Schedule of Meetings

- **June 28th**
  - Providence, RI
  - 2nd Full Commission Meeting
    - (In person)

- **June 28th**
  - Providence, RI
  - 3rd Working Group Meeting
    - (In person)

- **June 28th**
  - Employability Summit

- **August**
  - 3rd Full Commission Meeting
    - (In person)

- **September**
  - 3rd Full Commission Meeting
    - (In person)

- **October**
  - Final Full Commission Meeting
    - (In person)

- **May**
  - 1st Working Group Meeting
    - (Zoom)
SAVE THE DATE!

Second Commission Meeting

Renaissance Providence Hotel
Providence Place
5 Avenue of the Arts, Providence, RI 02903

Wednesday, June 28, 2017
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Member Biographies

Connecticut

Andrea Comer
Andrea Comer is the executive director of the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA) Education & Workforce Partnership and director of CBIA's workforce development and training. She manages initiatives designed to help the state’s businesses become more competitive by developing a skilled workforce.

A former elected member of the Hartford Board of Education and State Board of Education, Comer has spent the past two decades working to improve the lives of children and strengthen communities.

Prior to joining CBIA, she served as chief development officer for an education management organization, where she oversaw communications, outreach and fundraising.

Comer has worked in various municipal government roles, serving as project manager and communications director for the cities of Hartford and New Haven, as a senior program officer for The Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, and as a consultant on youth initiatives for the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

As the first female president of the Greater Hartford African American Alliance, Comer developed The Connect, a mentoring project that paired male Hartford middle school students with young professional males of color.

Comer serves on the boards of the Capital Community College Foundation and Teach for America Connecticut. Her community efforts have been recognized by the Connecticut Commission on Children, the YMCA, the Urban League of Greater Hartford and the CT NAACP, which named her among the 100 Most Influential Blacks in the State.

Maura M. Dunn
Maura M. Dunn has been vice president of human resources & administration for General Dynamics' Electric Boat since May 2014.

Previous to joining Electric Boat, Dunn spent nine years at General Dynamics' Advanced Information Systems (AIS), where she was vice president of human resources & administration. AIS is a business within General Dynamics focused on providing intelligence, surveillance and cyber services to a variety of U.S. government agencies.

Prior to joining General Dynamics, Dunn served in a variety of leadership roles at KBR, including chief operating officer of the Infrastructure Americas business unit and vice president of global strategy & marketing for the operations and maintenance and vice president of administration.

Dunn holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond and an MBA from Averett University.
Mae Flexer

Mae Flexer is a Connecticut state senator representing the 29th District, which includes eight towns in Northeastern Connecticut. She is currently serving in her second term in the Senate, first taking office in January 2015. She previously served three terms in the Connecticut House of Representatives, from 2009 to 2015.

Flexer currently serves as the Senate Chair of the legislature’s Government Administration and Elections Committee and the Veterans’ Affairs Committee. She also serves as Vice Chair of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee and the Environment Committee, and is a member of the Judiciary Committee and Appropriations Committee. In January 2017, Flexer was appointed Deputy President Pro Tempore and the legislature’s federal relations liaison, helping represent Connecticut’s interests and views on matters of federal policy with its Congressional delegation.

Flexer has been a leader on a range of policy issues that affect women, children, college students, veterans, senior citizens, the environment, and rural communities. She is one of the Legislature’s strongest advocates for victims of family violence and sexual assault, leading passage of sweeping reforms to Connecticut’s domestic violence and sexual assault laws.

Over the last year, Flexer has focused heavily on economic development in Northeastern Connecticut, working with municipal, higher education and business leaders in her district on an initiative that seeks to leverage local resources and coordinate development in the region. She is currently leading efforts in the legislature to create a state-based Paid Family and Medical Leave system, maintain protections for women’s health benefits covered under the Affordable Care Act, and to enter Connecticut into the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

Flexer has been recognized for her accomplishments by the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Reserve Officers Association and Military Officers Association of America, the Connecticut Farm Bureau, the League of Conservation Voters and the AARP.

Dorsey L. Kendrick

Dorsey L. Kendrick is president of Gateway Community College.

Kendrick’s drive for excellence began at an early age. She was one of three African-American students to forge integration at Union University.

Under her leadership, Gateway became the largest of Connecticut’s 12 community colleges, while program offerings and community partnerships were significantly expanded in response to community workforce needs. To date, the crowning achievement of her tenure in Connecticut is the realization of Gateway’s new campus in downtown New Haven. This was ultimately accomplished through an unprecedented collaboration of city, state and private enterprise.

In 2010 and 2015, the NAACP recognized Kendrick as one of the 100 most influential African-Americans in Connecticut and in 2011, she received its Distinguished Educator Award. The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce honored her with their Community Leadership award in 2013. This was followed with the Community Partnership Award in 2014.

In 2015, Yale University President Peter Salovey and New Haven Mayor Toni Harp honored Kendrick with the prestigious Elm-Ivy Award, for “building of a boundary-free community of learners in New Haven that unites the talents of a community college and its research university neighbor.”

Kendrick holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Union University, a master’s in business management from Cardinal Stritch University, and a doctorate from Walden University. She is also a graduate of the Institute of Education Management at Harvard University.

Elsa M. Núñez

In August 2016, Elsa M. Núñez began her 11th year as the president of Eastern Connecticut State University. She came to the University in 2006 following more than 20 years as a senior administrator at such institutions as City University of New York (CUNY) and the University of Maine System.

Núñez has been a tenured faculty member of English at Ramapo State College, the College of Staten Island (CUNY), and Lehman College (CUNY). She also holds a faculty position as Professor of English at Eastern.

Author of two books Pursuing Diversity (1992) and Hanging Out and Hanging On: From the Projects to the Campus (2014), Núñez also has published numerous articles on language acquisition, diversity and other education issues.
Núñez has firmly established Eastern’s reputation as Connecticut’s only public liberal arts university. Academic enhancements range from an increase in full-time faculty positions to the development of new majors. Under Núñez’s leadership, Eastern is ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as the 26th top public university in the North; is recognized by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as a “Great College to Work For”; is included in the U.S. Green Building Council’s list of the nation’s top green colleges; and is recognized as one of the Top Workplaces in Connecticut by the Hartford Courant. Núñez holds a bachelor's degree from Montclair State College, a master’s from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a doctorate from Rutgers University.

**Mark E. Ojakian**

In September 2015, Mark E. Ojakian was appointed of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) System, which includes 12 community colleges, four state universities and Charter Oak State College.

Ojakian has spent 35 years in public service, most recently as chief of staff to Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy. Prior to that, he was deputy secretary of the state’s Office of Policy and Management and for 16 years deputy comptroller under Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, when she served as the state’s comptroller. In the Comptroller’s Office, Ojakian was responsible for overseeing more than 250 employees and more than $1 billion in state accounts. From 1988 until 1994, Ojakian served as the senior assistant to the higher education commissioner.

Ojakian holds a bachelor's degree in history from St. Anselm's College and a master’s in international relations from the American University in Washington, D.C.

**Jennifer Widness**

Jennifer Widness is president of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), a voluntary association of 15 private, nonprofit colleges and universities located in Connecticut.

CCIC provides public policy leadership and support of higher education, fosters cooperative efforts among colleges and universities and serves as a liaison between the state and the independent institutions. Widness served as vice president of CCIC from January 2011 until she was named president in June 2015.

Prior to joining CCIC, Widness worked at the Connecticut Department of Education’s legal division as a staff attorney and legislative liaison. Before that, she worked as an associate in the litigation practice group at Carmody and Torrance, LLP. Before attending law school, she worked on public policy for a national nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C.


Widness holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Virginia and a law degree from American University.
Maine

Laurie Lachance

Laurie Lachance is Thomas College's fifth president and the first female and alumna to lead the college in its 122-year history. From 2004-2012, Lachance served as president and CEO of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF). Prior to MDF, she served three governors as the Maine State Economist, and before joining state government, she served as the corporate economist at Central Maine Power Company.

A frequent author and speaker on leadership, education and the economy of Maine, Lachance was inducted into the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame in 2014 and has been the recipient of several awards, most recently being recognized by Maine Magazine as one of the 50 Mainers Charting the State’s Future and making the Mainebiz NEXT list as a trailblazer in her industry. She chairs the board of Educare Central Maine, is a trustee of Foxcroft Academy and a board member of Educate Maine.

Lachance holds an undergraduate degree from Bowdoin College and an MBA from Thomas College.

Cary Olson Cartwright

Cary Olson Cartwright is the assistant vice president of corporate social responsibility at Unum and oversees the company's community relations efforts in Chattanooga, Tenn., Portland, Maine, Columbia, S.C., Worcester, Mass., Baton Rouge, La., Glendale, Calif., and the UK and Ireland.

Prior to joining Unum in 2004, Olson Cartwright worked at Fleet/Bank of America, handling the community relations for Maine. A main area of focus was education and she created statewide partnerships with education partners and nonprofit organizations. She began her career in television at WCSH in 1985 working in the news and promotion areas. When she left WCSH, she was marketing director of the station overseeing the promotion, marketing and public service efforts.

Currently she serves on several boards that are focused on supporting Maine’s youth and education. She is on the executive and governance committees of Jobs for Maine’s Graduates, serves on the Great Schools Partnership and Olympia Snowe Women’s Leadership Institute board of directors, and is a trustee of Thomas College.

In 2013, she received the Governor Ken Curtis Leadership Award from the Maine Development Foundation. The Maine Children’s Alliance recognized her efforts on behalf of children with its Giraffe Award. The State of Maine Department of Human Services presented her with the Commissioner’s Award for her work with children and youth. She was recognized, along with Unum, for a National Education Leadership Award at the Jobs for America’s Graduates annual meeting for her work with Jobs for Maine’s Graduates. She was also honored with a second award from Jobs for America’s Graduates when she was recognized as an honorary ‘Specialist.’

She holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Maine. She attended the executive management program at Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management.

James H. Page

James H. Page is chancellor of Maine’s Public Universities, as well as a business owner and Maine employer. As chancellor, he is leading Maine’s One University Initiative, a pioneering change effort in higher education that seeks to bring the resources and expertise of Maine’s mission-differentiated universities to bear in service to our state and its students.

Born in Caribou, Maine, and earning a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Maine at Fort Kent, Page became the first Maine native and public university graduate to lead the University of Maine System upon his appointment in March of 2012. Under his leadership, Maine has become the only state in the country to reduce the real cost of public higher education and the universities have improved access to educational opportunity with comprehensive credit transfer, early college initiatives in most of Maine’s high schools, and established an adult degree completion scholarship program that is helping adult learners from nearly 100 Maine communities resume their progress toward a college degree.
Janet Sortor

Janet Sortor is the chief academic officer for the Maine Community College System.

Prior to that, she served as the vice president and dean of academic affairs at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland, Maine, and led its transition to a comprehensive community college.

Sortor has worked in higher education for over 30 years, beginning her career in Boston. She served as a Vista Volunteer in Kansas City, Kansas, prior to graduate school. She serves on the boards of the Maine Space Consortium and MMSA.

Sortor holds a bachelor's degree from Eastern Michigan University, a master's from Boston University and a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Massachusetts.

Paul Stearns

Paul Stearns served on the Maine Legislature’s Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. He also was president of the Maine School Superintendents Association and served as a School Leadership Task Force member.

His 37-year career in public education included teaching and coaching in SAD #4 in the Guilford area before becoming principal of Upper Kennebec Valley Jr./Sr. High School in Bingham in 1996. He then served as principal in SAD 68 (Dover-Foxcroft area) from 1999 to 2003 when he returned to SAD #4 to serve as superintendent of schools for 10 years.

Stearns holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Maine-Presque Isle, a master's and a certificate of advanced study in Educational Leadership from the University of Maine.

Judy West

Judy West joined Maine Medical Center in March 2007 as vice president of human resources for the 637-bed tertiary care, verified level one trauma center and teaching hospital affiliated with the Tufts University School of Medicine located in Portland, Maine.

In 2012, she transitioned to the role of senior vice president and chief human resource officer for MaineHealth System, which includes Maine Medical Center and now employs over 18,000 employees. MaineHealth is a multi-healthcare delivery system that includes, hospitals, lab services, physician services, home health services, long-term care, ambulatory services and behavior health.

Prior to joining Maine Medical Center, West was vice president of human resources at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in Englewood, N.J. Englewood is a 520-bed community teaching hospital. West was responsible for all human resource and organizational development functions as well as for patient satisfaction and managing and resolving patient incident reporting.

Prior to Englewood Hospital and Medical Center, she served as vice president of administrative services at The Westerly Hospital, a 125-bed community hospital that has an affiliation with Yale-New Haven. West's responsibilities included human resources, information systems & technology, physical plant, engineering, hospital construction, security, food services and housekeeping.

West has served as a faculty member at Roger Williams University, Springfield College and Rutgers University College of Nursing. West holds bachelor's and master's degrees from New Hampshire College. She is certified as a Labor Relations Specialist through Cornell University.
Mohamad Ali

Mohamad Ali is president and CEO of Carbonite Inc., a leading provider of cloud and hybrid backup and recovery solutions for businesses. He is a leader who believes there are very few things that can’t be achieved with focus and determination. Under his leadership, the global team is fully engaged in developing and delivering the next generation of business continuity solutions for small and midsized businesses.

Driven by a passion for technology and growth, Ali served as chief strategy officer at Hewlett Packard, where he played a pivotal role in the company’s turnaround. At IBM, he led the creation of the firm’s $8 billion business analytics software unit, and at Avaya, he oversaw the company’s $2 billion services group. He was also the CEO of the Workforce Optimization division of Aspect Software.

Ali holds a bachelor’s degree in computer engineering, a bachelor’s in history, and a master’s in electrical engineering from Stanford University. He serves on the boards of iRobot, City National Bank, Oxfam America, and the Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council.

Davis Baird

As provost and vice president for academic affairs, Davis Baird is the chief academic officer of Clark University. Reporting to the president, the provost oversees all undergraduate and graduate academic programs, as well as athletics, student affairs, sponsored research, university libraries and the registrar’s office.

Baird is a principal architect of Clark’s new model for undergraduate education, Liberal Education and Effective Practice, and is also working on a significant expansion of Clark’s graduate studies footprint. He was a primary driver behind the creation and launch of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Baird came to Clark in 2010 from the University of South Carolina, where he was dean of the South Carolina Honors College for five years and the Louise Fry Scudder Professor in the Philosophy Department since 2004. Prior to his time as dean, he chaired the Philosophy Department for 13 years.

Baird’s research interest is the philosophy of science and technology. In the area of nanotechnology, as principal investigator, he has received more than $3 million in funding from the National Science Foundation. Prior to his work on nanotechnology, Baird’s research focused on the history and philosophy of scientific instruments. He is interested in the epistemology of scientific instruments, or how the things that we make express our knowledge. He is the author of *Thing Knowledge: A Philosophy of Scientific Instruments* (University of California Press, 2004), which won the 2006 Paul Bunge Prize. Baird is also the author of *Inductive Logic: Inferring the Unknown* (Prentice Hall, 1992; Pearson Publishing, 1999) and is co-editor of *Discovering the Nanoscale* (IOS press, 2004) and of two collections published in the Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science series: *Heinrich Hertz: Classical Physicist, Modern Philosopher* (Kluwer, 1994) and *Philosophy of Chemistry: Synthesis of a New Discipline* (Springer, 2006).

Baird holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and philosophy from Brandeis University and a doctorate in philosophy from Stanford University.

Susan Brennan

Susan Brennan is executive director of corporate relations and career services at Bentley University. She has more than 20 years of experience managing career development and employer outreach programs in business higher education.

Brennan provides strategic direction to undergraduate, graduate and alumni career services functions. She is recognized for her ability to build and maintain strong relationships with employers, alumni, parents, faculty, and staff to increase placement and expand Bentley’s reputation in the global marketplace.

Under her direction, Bentley’s Office of Career Services is regularly recognized as among the best in the nation.
Alec Carstensen

Alec Carstensen is Vice President of Human Resources for Carbonite Inc., a leading provider of cloud and hybrid backup and recovery solutions for businesses. He is responsible for leading its human resources and talent teams in recruiting and retaining quality employees. He is passionate about creating environments where every employee can maximize their potential and performance.

Before joining Carbonite as Director of Talent Management in 2013, Carstensen was a Group Human Resources Manager and a District Human Resources Business Partner at Target. He also held District Manager positions at Brookstone and Gap.

Carstensen holds a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Vermont.

Christine Yip Cruzvergara

Christine Yip Cruzvergara started at Wellesley College in January 2016 as the first associate provost and executive director for career education, charged with building a comprehensive career model that engages the entire college ecosystem and leading the college’s effort to create greater opportunity for women in the 21st century and to empower the next generation of women leaders. In this newly developed role, Cruzvergara has oversight of career services, internships, fellowships & scholarships, and community engagement. She has a reputation of being a creative problem-solver and enjoys the challenge of leading a team to embrace and drive change.

Prior to joining Wellesley, Cruzvergara served as the assistant dean and executive director at George Mason University, where she led an office of 20+ professionals to re-envision career education achieving institutional, regional and national recognition. She has previously worked in career services at Georgetown University and in new student orientation and student activities at The George Washington University. She holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology from James Madison University and a master’s in college student personnel from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Cruzvergara was recently elected to serve a two-year term on the board of directors for the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and is currently serving on its Conference Committee. She recently concluded her service as the co-chair for the NACE Career Readiness Strategic Initiative Committee and chair for the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Commission for Career Services. She has participated in the NACE Management Leadership Institute (MLI), received the ACPA Commission for Career Services Innovation Award and the NACE Rising Star Award.

Kerry Healey

Kerry Healey took office as Babson College president in July 2013. Under Healey’s leadership, Babson has further strengthened its reputation and position as the recognized global leader in entrepreneurship education. In September 2016, U.S. News & World Report ranked Babson College the No. 1 undergraduate school for entrepreneurship in the U.S. for the 20th consecutive time.

Internationally recognized for her nearly three decades of service in academia, government and humanitarian work, Healey served as the 70th lieutenant governor of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2007. She introduced, enacted and implemented a wide range of policy and legislative initiatives for the Romney-Healey administration highlighted by a bipartisan effort to successfully craft Massachusetts’ first-in-the-nation healthcare reform legislation.

In 2008, Healey was appointed as a founding member of the Executive Committee of the U.S. State Department’s Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan (PJRA), and has led numerous philanthropic initiatives both in the U.S. and abroad. She has been a visiting researcher at Harvard Law School’s International and Comparative Legal Studies Program.

Healey holds a bachelor’s degree in government from Harvard College and a doctorate in political science and law from Trinity College, Dublin.
Ellen Kennedy

Ellen Kennedy is the president of Berkshire Community College (BCC).

She previously held the position of chief financial officer at BCC. Prior to joining the college, she served as the interim chief operating officer of the National Patient Safety Foundation, director of development at WFCR-Public Radio for Western New England, the chief advancement officer for Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and president of the MCLA Foundation.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (formerly North Adams State College), an MBA from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, an MPA from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a doctorate from Northeastern University.

Jacqueline Moloney

Jacqueline Moloney is a national leader in innovation in higher education and the first woman to serve as chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Lowell in the institution’s 122-year history. Her October 2015 inauguration raised $1.5 million for student scholarships.

Moloney has provided more than 30 years of service to the university, most recently as executive vice chancellor before being named chancellor in August 2015. Her predecessor, Marty Meehan, selected her as the first member of his executive team in 2007, beginning a period of unprecedented growth and transformation at the university that continues today under Moloney’s leadership.

UMass Lowell has realized astonishing gains as a result of the strategic-planning process led by Moloney that engaged more than 200 faculty, staff and students in creating UMass Lowell 2020: A Strategic Plan for the Next Decade. The strategy to enhance nearly every aspect of the campus, from business practices and the physical plant to student life and alumni relations, has been a resounding success. Guided by the plan, the university has achieved record gains in student enrollment, retention, selectivity and diversity. Faculty hiring, research expenditures, fundraising and economic development activities have all grown to unprecedented levels. The addition of 13 new buildings has transformed the campus. As a result of the university’s advancement in nearly every important measure of higher education, UMass Lowell is the second-fastest rising school on U.S. News & World Report’s national universities list over the last six years, as well as the ninth-fastest growing public doctoral institution in the country, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education.

Moloney is active in the Lowell community, where she has served on many boards and been recognized with numerous awards including Woman of the Year. She holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology and doctorate in education from UMass Lowell and a master’s degree in social psychology from Goddard College.

Carlos E. Santiago

Carlos E. Santiago is commissioner of higher education for Massachusetts, appointed to this position by Gov. Charlie Baker in July 2015. Working with the Board of Higher Education, he is responsible for providing overall direction to public higher education in Massachusetts and helping shape state-level policies that maximize the benefits of higher education to the Commonwealth and its citizens.

Santiago joined the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education in April 2013 as the senior deputy commissioner for academic affairs.

His past academic appointments include that of chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Wisconsin’s second largest research university). He brings over 30 years of experience in public higher education. Santiago also served as provost and chief operating officer at the University at Albany, (SUNY). He was a professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and SUNY-Albany.

Santiago is also the author or co-author of six books and has published dozens of articles and book reviews, of which many focus on economic development and the changing socioeconomic status of Latinos in the U.S. On two separate occasions, in 1996 and 2011, Santiago has been named one of the 100 most influential Hispanics in the United States by Hispanic Business magazine.

He holds a doctorate in economics from Cornell University.
Ronald L. Walker II

As Massachusetts secretary of labor and workforce development, Ronald L. Walker, II is responsible for directing and executing Gov. Charlie Baker's agenda on workforce development and unemployment assistance, job creation, business services and labor.

He oversees five labor and workforce development regulatory agencies: the departments of Unemployment Assistance, Career Services, Labor Standards, Industrial Accidents and Labor Relations.

In addition, Walker manages Commonwealth Corporation, the secretariat’s quasi-public state agency charged with administering over $22 million in workforce training funds. He also oversees the Joint Task Force on the Underground Economy and Employee Misclassification, which coordinates the efforts of multiple state agencies to eliminate fraudulent employment activities and level the playing field for all employers.

The governor appointed Walker to lead two initiatives that will advise him on meeting the needs of employers and targeted populations of unemployed residents. As chair of the Workforce Skills Cabinet, Walker joins his counterparts in Education and Economic Development in examining the state’s workforce development system and aligning economic and educational resources to the labor needs of employers.

Prior to his appointment to Gov. Baker’s cabinet Walker was managing partner and president of Next Street, the merchant bank he co-founded.

Walker brings extensive experience in retail and commercial banking to the Baker administration. Beginning in 1990, he served in several senior executive positions at Sovereign Bank, Fleet Financial Group and Bank of New England.

He has received numerous recognitions for his business and community contributions, including CEO of the Year Social Leadership Award from the Boston Business Journal, the 2013 Harry Dowd Community Service Award from the Central Boston Elder Services; Heroes in Health Care Award from the Visiting Nurse Association of Boston, and the Boston Chamber of Commerce’s Under 40 Leadership Award. Walker has served on a number of nonprofit boards, including The BASE—the mentoring program for African-American and Latino student athletes.

A Mattapan native, Walker holds a bachelor’s degree in marketing and finance from Prairie View A&M University of Texas and has completed Executive Education programs: Finance for Senior Executives and Governing for Nonprofit Excellence at Harvard Business School.
Ross Gittell

Ross Gittell is well-known in policy circles for economic analysis and forecasting. With an extensive background in university teaching, strategic planning and management, Gittell’s focus has been on applying economic, organizational and management theory to regional, state and community economic development issues. For many years, as a distinguished professor at the University of New Hampshire’s Whittemore School of Business and Economics, Gittell has frequently been a resource for government, nonprofit and business decision-makers in New Hampshire and nationally on such issues as economic policy, workforce development, job creation strategies, community development and the business climate.

Prior to his appointment as chancellor at of the Community College System of New Hampshire, he was the James R. Carter Professor in the Department of Management at the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire. His teaching career in management and economics spans 20 years and includes, in addition to the Whittemore School, teaching at the Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan, and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Gittell is vice president, forecast manager and board member of the New England Economic Partnership, a director of the Exeter Trust Company, a board member of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and a board member of Exeter Hospital and the Foundation for Healthy Communities. He was appointed by New Hampshire Gov. Hassan and Gov. Benson to the New Hampshire Consensus Revenue Estimating Committee, by Gov. Lynch to the Economic Development Advisory Council and to the Shipyard Advisory Council, and worked with Gov. Shaheen on economic policy. He served on the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation’s Task Force for Philanthropy and was a board member of the New England Higher Education Public Policy Collaborative. Gittell is also co-founder and co-director of the Green Launching Pad, an innovative and highly successful business accelerator program in New Hampshire.

Gittell holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Chicago, an MBA from the University of California, Berkeley, and a doctorate in public policy from Harvard University.

Rick Ladd

Rick Ladd represents Haverhill, N.H. in the New Hampshire House of Representatives, where he chairs the House Committee on Education.

Ladd also serves on the: Administrative Rules Committee, the Public Higher Education Study Committee, the Statewide Education Improvement & Assessment Program Legislative Oversight, as well as the Council of State Governments Education Committee and the National Conference of State Legislatures Education Committee. From 1986 to 2002, Ladd was a school administrator in Alaska and was recognized as a National Distinguished Principal in 1988. He also 10 years of teaching and administrative experience in Maine, where he published the Maine Studies Curriculum and DownEast Magazine.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Maine and a master’s degree from the University of Southern Maine.

Todd J. Leach

Todd J. Leach is the seventh chancellor of the University System of New Hampshire (USNH), New Hampshire’s four-year public higher education system comprising the University of New Hampshire, Plymouth State University, Keene State College and Granite State College. The system touts one of the best public returns on investment with the lowest per-capita state support and one of the highest degree attainment rates of any public system, as well as the lowest student loan default rates of any public system in the country.

Prior to serving as chancellor, Leach was president of Granite State College, the primary public provider of online education in the state of New Hampshire. During his tenure as president, the college became the fastest growing public college in New England, achieving record enrollment levels. It also transformed from undergraduate programs only to offering its first master’s programs. Granite State achieved a top 30 national ranking from US News for online colleges and was ranked in the top five institutions nationally on the metric of social mobility by Washington Monthly.

Prior to his presidency at Granite State, Leach served as the senior associate dean of the College of Professional Studies (CPS), where he oversaw all CPS academic programs and faculty and led the development of over 20 master's and doctoral degree programs. He also provided oversight for Northeastern Online and served as the executive director of the School of Education.

Leach holds an associate degree from Mass Bay Community College, a bachelor’s from Worcester State College, an MBA from Bentley University and a doctorate from Northeastern University. Both institutions honored Leach in 2012 and 2011, respectively, with Distinguished Alumni Awards. In addition, Leach completed higher education programs at Harvard University.
Paul J. LeBlanc is president of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). Under the 13 years of his direction, SNHU has grown from 2,500 students to over 80,000 and is the second largest nonprofit provider of online higher education in the country, and the first to have a full competency-based degree program untethered to the credit hour or classes approved by a regional accreditor and the U.S. Department of Education.

In 2012, the university was #12 on *Fast Company* magazine's “World’s Fifty Most Innovative Companies” list and was the only university included. LeBlanc won the 2015 NH Entrepreneur of the Year Award, *Forbes Magazine* has listed him as one of its 15 “Classroom Revolutionaries” and one of the “most influential people in higher education” for 2016. *Washington Monthly* named him one of America’s 10 most innovative university presidents.

He most recently served as senior policy advisor to Under Secretary Ted Mitchell at the U.S. Department of Education, working on competency-based education, new accreditation pathways, and innovation. He also serves on the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) and on the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine’s Board on Higher Education and Workforce (and served on its Committee on Quality in Undergraduate Education).

From 1993 to 1996, he directed a technology startup for Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company, was president of Marlboro College from 1996 to 2003, and became president of SNHU in 2003.
Rhode Island

Brenda Dann-Messier

Brenda Dann-Messier became Rhode Island Acting Commissioner of Postsecondary Education in April 2017. Throughout her career, Dann-Messier has focused on promoting student success and developing the workforce at every level. Under President Obama, she served as assistant secretary of education of career, technical, and adult education, where she led the U.S. Department of Education’s efforts in adult education and career and technical education and helped shape the administration’s policies on community colleges and correctional education.

In 2013, Dann-Messier was named acting assistant secretary for postsecondary education. She has also worked as an education consultant, most recently with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), where she helped states develop integrated pathways for college- and career-readiness.

Dann-Messier began her career in higher education at the Community College of Rhode Island, before taking a position in the Education Department of the Clinton administration and later serving as president of Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center in Providence. She served on the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education from 2006 to 2009 and on the Board of the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority from 2007 to 2009.

Dann-Messier holds a bachelor's degree in history and secondary education and a master's in instructional technology from Rhode Island College. She holds a doctorate in educational leadership from Johnson & Wales University.

Louis P. DiPalma

Louis P. DiPalma is a Rhode Island state senator representing Little Compton, Middletown, Newport and Tiverton. He is employed as a technical director for Raytheon.

DiPalma is currently involved with the Middletown School Facilities Core Committee; the Rhode Island Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Advisory Committee; the Aquidneck Land Trust; the Sakonnet Preservation Society; the United States Navy League; the Physics First Advisory Board; the St. Philomena School Board of Trustees; the Rhode Island Science and Engineering Fair; the Rhode Island Space Grant consortium; the UMASS Dartmouth Computer and Electrical/Computer Engineering Advisory Committee and serves as a lector and eucharistic minister at St. Lucy's Church.

DiPalma served on the Middletown Town Council from 2004 to 2008, when he was elected to the Rhode Island Senate. He also serves on the Middletown Democratic Town Committee.

He holds a bachelor's degree in computer engineering from the University of Bridgeport and a masters in computer science from Brown University.
Donald J. Farish

With more than 40 years of experience in higher education, including 11 as a full-time faculty member, scientist and attorney, Donald J. Farish became the 10th president of Roger Williams University in June 2011.

A respected scientist in his field, Farish is the author of six biology textbooks and has authored and co-authored numerous articles on entomology and animal behavior. Farish joined Roger Williams following 13 years as president of Rowan University in Glassboro, N.J., where he transformed the respected regional institution into a world-class university known for its innovative academic programs. At Rowan, Farish was responsible for the physical expansion of the campus, including the construction of new academic facilities for science, medicine, teacher education and technology research; almost 2,000 additional student residence beds to accommodate rapidly expanding enrollment; and a 26-acre downtown redevelopment project to connect the borough of Glassboro with the university.

Throughout his career in higher education, Farish has demonstrated tremendous commitment to teaching and learning, always considering himself a member of the faculty who also provides administrative leadership. During his tenure at Rowan, Farish elevated the institution from second tier to top tier, where it was ranked third among public master’s level universities in the North by U.S. News & World Report. He also created incentive programs to enhance student-faculty interaction and established a plan to bring an additional 50 tenure-track faculty members to the university.

Prior to assuming presidency of Rowan University in 1998, Farish held academic and administrative positions at Sonoma State University, the University of Rhode Island and the University of Missouri. A sought-after voice in higher education, Farish served as one of 20 sitting presidents and chancellors at a July 2010 Presidential Roundtable organized in Washington, D.C., by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education to discuss the future of higher education in the U.S.

Since joining Roger Williams in 2011, Farish has guided the university community in articulating an agreed-upon identity that defines the distinctive elements of an RWU education. As a result of that conversation, he launched the Affordable Excellence initiative, which has positioned Roger Williams at the leading edge of the national dialogue regarding cost, debt and job-preparedness for today’s college graduates. One of the most visible elements of Affordable Excellence is an expanding focus on meaningful experiential learning projects for students across the academic disciplines, many of which are facilitated through the Community Partnerships Center, created shortly after Farish joined the university.

Daniel P. Egan

Daniel P. Egan is the fifth president of the 36-year-old Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Rhode Island (AICU Rhode Island).

Egan leads AICU Rhode Island efforts in the area of advocacy and consortium activities. Responsible for AICU Rhode Island outreach on the federal, state and local level, he represents the collective interests of Rhode Island’s independent colleges and universities before numerous external constituencies.

Through AICU Rhode Island peer groups and committee structure, he encourages and facilitates consultation and cooperation among association members regarding academic programs, research and community service; joint study with member institutions and appropriate public and private organizations; as well as policy discussion participation with regard to the current and future ability of independent institutions of higher education in Rhode Island to meet the educational needs of the state.

Egan has extensive experience in government relations, communications and higher education administration. Before taking on the role of AICU Rhode Island President, he was chief of staff in the Office of the Dean of Medicine and Biological Sciences in the Division of Biology and Medicine at Brown University. In this capacity, he handled a wide range of issues related to faculty, staff, students, hospital teaching partners and public affairs, and served as a conduit with senior university administrators and local, government and community officials.

Prior to Brown, Egan served as vice president for government relations at the Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI). Before that, he was vice president of government relations for the local firm; Trion Communications (currently divided into two local firms: Advocacy Solutions and New Harbor Group).

He has also enjoyed various management and communications careers as associate director of athletics at Brown University and assistant director of championships and sport administration at the BIG EAST Conference. He was assistant director of athletic media relations at his alma mater, Providence College. He also served as a graduate assistant in the Media Relations and Marketing Department at Boston College, where he received his master’s degree in higher education administration.

His governmental experiences include serving on the staff to the Mayor of the City of Warwick for two administrations, from 1985 to 1991. He also served as campaign scheduler and media and print projects coordinator with two Rhode Island gubernatorial campaigns in 1990.
A native of Winnipeg, Canada, Farish immigrated to the U.S. in 1963 to pursue his graduate education after receiving his bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of British Columbia. He holds a Master of Science degree in entomology from North Carolina State University, a doctorate in biology from Harvard University and a juris doctor from the University of Missouri.

Janet Hasson

Janet Hasson is regional vice president for GateHouse Media, which includes president & publisher of The Providence Journal, a subsidiary of GateHouse Media, Inc., located in Providence.

As president and publisher of the Journal, Hasson oversees a portfolio of media products and printing and distribution services that serve the Rhode Island market. They include, The Providence Journal, the oldest continuously published daily newspaper in the U.S. and top-read daily newspaper in Rhode Island, along with providencejournal.com, the most visited local news site. Other products include, BestRide.com, Monster.com, and a suite of digital marketing solutions in partnership with PROPEL Marketing services. She has also assumed Regional Publishing responsibilities, overseeing publications in Nantucket and Norwich.

Before joining The Providence Journal, she was publisher and president for Journal News Media in White Plains, N.Y., owned by the Gannett Company. She has more than 30 years of publishing experience working in advertising, marketing, distribution, consumer sales, audience development and publisher roles. She started her media career in Spokane, Wash., working for the Cowles Publishing Company for 15 years, later joining the Gannett Company for 18 years. She has worked in various roles driving growth and digital transformation on brands that include The Spokesman-Review, The Cincinnati Enquirer, The Idaho Statesman, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, and the Detroit Free Press.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Eastern Washington University and the American Press Institute's Executive Development Program.

Meghan Hughes

Meghan Hughes became the fifth president of the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) on Feb. 1, 2016. CCRI is the largest community college in New England with four main campuses and two satellites across the state. The college serves 15,000 students, and its workforce division trains an additional 20,000 Rhode Islanders annually. A state landmark for 51 years, CCRI boasts more than 66,000 alumni.

A Rhode Island resident since 1999, Hughes served as executive director of Year Up Providence from 2009 through 2015. During that period, she doubled the size of the program, and the Providence site consistently led Year Up nationally in key metrics, including student retention and positive outcomes. She served on Year Up’s National Management Team, National Senior Leadership and National Investment Committees.

Prior to joining Year Up, she taught at Tufts University from 2003 to 2009 and received the school’s Excellence in Teaching Award. She led new curriculum development and helped build a partnership with Northeastern University.

Hughes is an Aspen Institute Fellow for Community College Excellence. She was recognized by the Rhode Island Foundation with its Community Leader award in 2015 and was named an “Outstanding Woman of the Year” by U.S. Rep. David Cicilline in 2014. She completed the Harvard Business School's "Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management" in 2013, was a fellow at the Rhode Island Foundation in 2012, and was a member of the Rhode Island School of Design’s Museum of Art’s Board of Governors, where she chaired the Education Committee and was a member of the Executive Committee. She serves on the Year Up Providence board and also on the board of the Rhode Island Foundation.

Hughes holds a bachelor's degree from Yale and a doctorate from New York University.
Kim Keck

Kim Keck brings more than 25 years of health insurance experience to her role as president and CEO of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, the state’s largest health insurer. She leads the company’s ongoing efforts to drive a simplified customer experience and advance coordinated, patient-centered and affordable healthcare for Rhode Islanders.

Keck served as president of the northeast region and interim president of the southeast region of Aetna and was responsible for $20 billion in revenue and approximately five million members in the individual, small and middle markets. Under her leadership, she was responsible for strategy and business development initiatives, sales and distribution, operating performance and network development. She was instrumental in Aetna’s development of value-based reimbursement programs, models for accountable care and population health, and utilization management.

As chief of staff to Aetna’s CEO, she drove resolution of critical business, financial and strategic issues. Keck also held additional roles as head of enterprise strategy and head of mergers and acquisition integration. While at Aetna, she also held a variety of broad-based financial roles, including leading investor relations, treasury, tax, actuary, controllers, and planning.

Keck was an analyst with Fidelity Investments in Boston prior to joining Aetna.

Keck serves as a director of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, Rhode Island Quality Institute, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, and Prime Therapeutics, LLC.

Keck graduated holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Boston College and an MBA in Finance from the University of Connecticut. She is a CFA charter holder, and a member of both the Hartford CFA Society and the CFA Institute.

Stefan Pryor

Stefan Pryor is Rhode Island’s first secretary of commerce. He oversees and coordinates the state agencies and offices responsible for economic development, business regulation, housing, workforce development and tourism.

Pryor helped craft a substantial package of initiatives and incentives that are aimed at promoting economic growth in Rhode Island.

From 2011-2014, he served as the commissioner of education for the State of Connecticut. During his tenure, Connecticut passed landmark education reform legislation. Graduation rates increased each year and Connecticut achieved the highest score in reading among participating states on the Grade 12 National Assessment of Educational Progress, which also showed significant narrowing of the black-white gap in reading achievement.

Before his work in Connecticut, Pryor served from 2006 to 2011 as deputy mayor and director of economic and housing development in the City of Newark, N.J. Before that, he was president of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which was created in the aftermath of September 11th by the State and City of New York to plan and help coordinate the physical rebuilding and economic revitalization of Lower Manhattan. From 2002 to 2006, he was vice president at the Partnership for New York City, the city’s leading business organization.

Pryor holds undergraduate and law degrees from Yale University.

Frank D. Sanchez

Frank D. Sánchez became the 10th president of Rhode Island College (RIC)—the state’s first public college—in July 2016. Sánchez oversees the college with an annual operating budget that exceeds $190 million, supports approximately 12,000 students on campus and across the state.

Working with the Postsecondary Education Council, he is convinced RIC will strengthen its position as a first-choice institution and continue to meet the needs of Rhode Islanders and the region.

For over two and a half decades, Sánchez has advanced higher education policy, programs and services to improve college completion and success. He has consulted, presented and spoken at numerous national forums focusing on student success. He previously served as the vice chancellor for student affairs at The City University of New York, the nation’s largest urban public university serving over 500,000 students.

A native of Wyoming, Sánchez holds a bachelor’s in psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a master’s in student affairs and higher education from Colorado State University and a doctorate in higher education administration with a concentration in learning, cognition and instruction from Indiana University-Bloomington.
Rosanne Somerson

Rosanne Somerson is a furniture designer/maker, educator, and Rhode Island School of Design’s 17th President.

She previously served in the role of provost and chief academic officer. She simultaneously maintains a creative practice, designing and creating furniture for exhibitions and commissions. Additionally, she consults on innovative educational and creative practice for institutions and industry. As a sought-after international lecturer, juror, exhibitor, and evaluator, she applies both local and global perspectives to her work. She has received numerous awards and citations for her work as a designer, artist, and teacher.

Margaret M. Van Bree

Margaret M. Van Bree is president of Rhode Island Hospital and its pediatric division, Hasbro Children's Hospital.

Dr. Van Bree also has responsibility for psychiatry and behavioral health services, including Bradley Hospital, the state's only child psychiatric hospital, and Gateway Healthcare, a community mental health organization.

Prior to joining Rhode Island Hospital in January 2015, Dr. Van Bree was senior vice president and chief executive officer for St. Luke’s Medical Center in Houston, Texas. She has also been chief operating officer at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics, the University of Virginia Health System, the University of Minnesota Medical Center and the University of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital. She is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, a member of the Standards Committee of the Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Management Education, and on the boards of Bryant University, Providence Chamber of Commerce, the University of Minnesota MHA Alumni Association/Foundation, and Crossroads Rhode Island.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in community health education from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, a masters in healthcare administration from the University of Minnesota, and a doctorate of public health in health systems management from Tulane University.
Joyce Judy

Joyce Judy became president of the Community College of Vermont (CCV) in 2009, having previously served as dean of students and provost of the college.

A special focus of her work since becoming president has been to help people understand the value CCV brings to Vermonters and to Vermont businesses. She has overseen the expansion of a broad number of workforce-education programs and has been a statewide leader in the development of Vermont’s dual-enrollment program for high school students.

By expanding CCV’s relationship with the philanthropic community, Judy has achieved significant growth in private support for CCV initiatives, including several scholarship programs the Introduction to College Studies program to improve the college-going rate of Vermont high school students and enhance service to Vermont’s military veterans.

Judy currently serves on several boards, including the Central Vermont Medical Center, the Center for Financial Literacy at Champlain College, the Vermont Higher Education Council and the Vermont Business Roundtable. She has also been a member of several New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation teams.

She holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of New Hampshire, a master’s from Antioch New England Graduate School. She is a recipient of the Vermont Women in Higher Education’s Jackie Gibbons Leadership Award.

John J. Neuhauser

John J. Neuhauser was named president of Saint Michael’s College in 2007 after serving as University Professor of Boston College. Neuhauser was academic vice president and dean of faculties at Boston College from 1999 to 2005 and, before that, dean and professor of Boston College’s Carroll School of Management from 1977 to 1999. He has an impressive record of publications in creative computing and business.

During Neuhauser’s tenure at Saint Michael’s, the campus has undergone significant improvements and been able to reduce its carbon footprint. The Dion Student Family Center, the Quad Residence Halls and the Pomerleau Alumni Center all were built to improve the student and alumni experience with minimal environmental impact. Neuhauser has led the College successfully through the 2008 recession and has been noted in higher education media outlets for his plan of “shrinking strategically” in response to fewer high school graduates in the Northeast. In 2012, Saint Michael’s became a founding member of the Green Mountain Higher Education Consortium, a collaborative of colleges created to reduce costs and improve services to its members.

Through Neuhauser’s support and leadership, the college also has made great strides in linking the lifelong benefits of a liberal arts education with applied, experiential learning through initiatives like mentored summer research that offers students in all majors opportunities to learn alongside faculty doing projects more typical for graduate-level students. In recent years, the college also made a concerted effort to help make its exceptional education affordable for disadvantaged, promising students. Saint Michael’s became a member of the American Talent Initiative and the Coalition for Access Affordability and Success, two important national initiatives. The college also created Saint Michael’s Accelerated Summer College, which provides students a way to lower their cost of attendance by taking courses outside of the regular semester schedule. Neuhauser has been a member of the Saint Michael's College Board of Trustees since 2001.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Neuhauser earned a bachelor's degree in physics from Manhattan College, a master's in operations research and statistics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and a doctorate in operations research and statistics: mathematics, also from Rensselaer.
Peter Pollak

Peter Pollak has worked for Dynapower since 1976. As general manager through 1980, he was responsible for engineering management, semiconductor specification and procurement as well as the introduction of a perpetual inventory system. In 1980 he assumed the role of president and took full engineering, manufacturing and sales responsibility. Additionally, he introduced the first full-scale ERP system and coordinated the first of two plant expansions.

Pollak became president and CEO in 1986. During his tenure he has acquired Kirkoff Electric’s cast coil transformer division, Rapid Power Technologies, DP Converters and iTherm technologies. Under his strategic vision Dynapower successfully completed the first high precision power systems to Fermi National Laboratory and became a key supplier to all of the high-energy physics laboratories in the country. He recently led the initiative into the energy storage and grid tied energy storage systems market.

Pollak holds dual degrees in applied mathematics and physics from the University of Michigan’s College Of Engineering. He went on to work in the graduate research laboratory in high-vacuum thin-foil technology, where he co-authored several research papers on electron time of flight. He later moved to Vermont and was a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Vermont before joining Dynapower.

David V. Rosowsky

David V. Rosowsky, was named provost and senior vice president of the University of Vermont, effective August 1, 2013.

Rosowsky came to UVM from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where he served as dean of engineering. Prior to that, he served as head of the Zachry Department of Civil Engineering at Texas A&M University, where he also held the A.P. and Florence Wiley Chair in Civil Engineering.

A recognized expert in structural reliability, design for natural hazards, stochastic modeling of structural and environmental loads, and probability-based codified design, Dr. Rosowsky has authored or co-authored more than 150 papers in peer-reviewed journals and more than 140 papers appearing in conference proceedings. He has been invited to present his research work around the world including invited lecturers in France, Italy, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. He has supervised more than 20 Masters and Doctoral students. He is the recipient of the ASCE Walter L. Huber Research Prize, the T.K. Hseih Award from the Institution of Civil Engineers (UK), and the ASCE Norman Medal.

Rosowsky currently serves on the Editorial Board of the journal Structural Safety and is a past editorial board member of the ASCE Journal of Infrastructure Systems, the ASCE Journal of Structural Engineering and the journal Natural Hazards Review.

Rosowsky maintains an active research program in wind and earthquake engineering and continues to supervise graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. He is a registered professional engineer, and holds the rank of Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers and Fellow of the Structural Engineering Institute.

Rosowsky holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering from Tufts University, and a doctorate in civil engineering from Johns Hopkins University.
Jeb Spaulding

Jeb Spaulding began his tenure as Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges System in January 2015. Since becoming Chancellor, he has focused on creating a more comprehensive and interconnected system of distinctive institutions, in order to increase opportunities and supports for students, create a stronger more diverse community of faculty and staff, and ensure a stronger financial foundation for all VSCS institutions.

From 2011 to 2014 Spaulding served as Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Administration, the senior cabinet position in the Executive Branch, under Governor Peter Shumlin. In 2003, he won his first of five elections to become Vermont State Treasurer, and was honored by his peers in 2009 as President of the National Association of State Treasurers. As State Treasurer, Spaulding served on the boards of the Vermont Economic Development Authority, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the Vermont Housing Finance Authority, the Vermont Municipal Bond Bank, the Vermont Education and Health Building Finance Agency, and the Vermont Pension Investment Committee.

Spaulding was a Vermont State Senator from 1985 to 2000, chairing, at various points, the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senate Education Committee, Joint Fiscal Committee, and Joint Administrative Rules Committee. During his time as a State Senator, he was a trustee of the New England Board of Higher Education and a Commissioner of the Education Commission of the States.

Early in his career, Spaulding served as the Director of Career and Workforce Development at the Vermont Department of Education, and as Director of the VAST (Vermont Academy of Science and Technology) Program at Vermont Technical College. After graduating from college, Spaulding entered the radio broadcasting industry and became a founder of WNCS-FM.

Spaulding earned his bachelors degree in Mass Communications in 1975 and an M.Ed. in Administration and Planning in 1993, both from the University of Vermont.

Kate Webb

Kate Webb is a member of the Vermont House of Representatives, representing Shelburne, Chittenden County. She served as assistant majority leader from 2014 to 2016 and as deputy assistant majority leader from 2011 to 2014. She also served on the Sexual Harassment Prevention Panel in 2016.

She has worked as a special education case manager and speech-language pathologist, as a University of Vermont clinical professor supervising graduate students-retired and as a real estate broker.

She was born in Lewiston, Maine, and grew up in Chappaqua, N.Y., moving to Vermont to ski in 1971.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s in communication science and disorders from the University of Vermont.
Regional

James T. Brett

James T. Brett is president and chief executive officer of The New England Council.

The council, a nationally respected and influential regional organization, was established in 1925. It is an alliance of schools, hospitals, corporations, and other private organizations throughout New England, working together to promote economic growth and a high quality of life in the region. It identifies and supports federal policies of importance to all six states, and advocates for its membership regionally and nationally.

Brett has been a leading voice in advocating for public policy issues such as healthcare, education, financial services and energy throughout New England and Washington, D.C.

The council’s membership and financial growth have been impressive under Mr. Brett’s leadership. In the past four years, revenues have doubled and net assets have significantly exceeded historical levels. Brett is co-host of D.C. Dialogue, a monthly public affairs program broadcast on New England Cable News.

Before joining the council, Brett served for more than 15 years as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He held a succession of important leadership positions, including the chairmanship of two of the most significant committees in the Massachusetts Legislature, Banking and the Committee on Taxation. In these positions, he brought together various constituencies to create economic opportunity for the Commonwealth’s citizens and businesses.

While serving as chair of the Joint Committee on Taxation, for example, Brett co-authored legislation granting tax relief to the Commonwealth’s mutual fund companies, in return for the creation of 11,000 new private-sector jobs in Massachusetts over a five-year period. He also sponsored the “Single Sales Factor” legislation designed to help Massachusetts manufacturers remain competitive, and keep high-skill and high-wage jobs in the state.

Kurt Heissenbuttel

Kurt Heissenbuttel joined Fidelity as the vice president and head of university relations in the Enterprise Talent Group in March 2016. He heads the university relations team, determining and executing the nationwide college recruiting strategy for the firm. With a focus on developing strategies for the next generation of college recruiting, Heissenbuttel leads the team in the areas of marketing and communications, school selection, early engagement and internship programs, conversion planning and executive engagement.

Prior to joining Fidelity, Heissenbuttel spent his career in academia, most recently at Northeastern University. Having held a variety of roles from marketing and programming, to domestic and international recruitment, he brought all those experiences to his role as director of admissions at Northeastern. With an eye toward creating highly personalized experiences for students and families, he led a team of admissions professionals on recruiting, selecting and enrolling Northeastern’s undergraduate class.

Heissenbuttel holds a bachelor’s degree from Johnson & Wales University, a master’s from Suffolk University and is near completion of a doctorate in Law & Policy from Northeastern University.
**Student Representatives**

**Heather Bollinger**

Heather Bollinger graduated in 2009 from Nute High School of Milton, N.H., with a class of just 48 students. After taking a year to work full-time as a customer service representative for a local telecommunications company, she quickly realized the difference between a job and a career. She decided to enroll in Great Bay Community College (GBCC) to pursue her ambition of working in the business world. Bollinger immediately became involved in extracurricular activities by forming the college’s first outdoor activity club, serving as the vice president of the Student Government Association, and serving as a student ambassador. Outside her educational studies and extracurricular activities at Great Bay, Bollinger graduated from Leadership New Hampshire and from the National Education for Women Leadership New England in 2012. These training programs were designed to develop leadership skills, establish networking strengths, and promote civic engagement. Bollinger graduated from GBCC in 2013 with a degree in liberal arts with a concentration in business, and a certificate in management. After gaining a great deal of professional experience holding various jobs within the college, she started working at Liberty Mutual Insurance in 2015 as a senior financial operations representative tasked with analyzing the economic impact of bankruptcies to commercial insurance. Bollinger is actively pursuing a bachelor’s in finance with Southern New Hampshire University and will graduate in 2018.

**Desirae LeBlanc**

Desirae LeBlanc is a Dean’s list student at the University of New England. She will graduate to pursue her Master’s degree in Occupational Therapy. She is a four-year student-athlete on the women’s varsity field hockey team, a member of UNE’s Student Athlete Advisory Committee, and secretary of UNE’s Alpha Chi Honor Society Chapter. She is an active Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation volunteer, and also has volunteer experience at a number of Maine organizations, including Camp Sunshine, Biddeford Primary School, The Atria Senior Living Community, and the St. Louis Child Development Center.

LeBlanc has found an interest in research at UNE, and has assisted as a volunteer researcher for two faculty research studies: a cardiovascular health intervention program (C.H.I.P) for local elementary school students, and a head impact study exploring the cognitive effects of concussions in UNE athletes. In addition, she is pursuing her own qualitative research study about the impact and meaningfulness of adaptive skiing/snowboarding as a part of her senior internship experience with Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation. Aside from volunteering and researching, she works for UNE’s Student Academic Success Center as a peer tutor and supplemental instructor for three courses: Anatomy and Physiology, Pathophysiology, and Neuroscience.

**Brendon Loranger**

Brendon Loranger is a student at Manchester Community College and will be graduating with an associates degree in business studies in the fall of 2017 with plans to continue onward to obtain his bachelors degree. Upon finishing his degree, Brendon has interests in pursuing work in the human resources field particularly looking towards recruiting. He has work experience in both and white and blue collar jobs due to having worked at an accounting firm for 3 years and working for a tire warehouse for the last four years. This experience gives him a view of qualifications, experiences, similarities, and differences between the two different fields of work. He took

**Mariela Lucaj**

Mariela Lucaj is a nursing student at the Community College of Rhode Island. She immigrated to the United States at five years old with her family in the hopes of achieving the American Dream. She has been Student Government president of her campus for the past year and is running again for the 2017-18 term. It has been her mission to aid other students to achieve their potential and to serve as an advocate. Her long-term goals include serving in a nursing leadership role and advocating for women and children.
Alexandria Steinmann is a Presidential Scholar at Bentley University, graduating in 2018 with a major in finance and a double minor in economics and entrepreneurial studies. During the summer after her freshman year, she studied abroad in London while also participating in an internship at a wealth-management firm. During her sophomore year at Bentley, she completed a long-year internship at UBS while maintaining a full-academic schedule. She was also selected to participate in the Morgan Stanley Sales & Trading Enrichment Program and Credit Suisse Top Talent Women's Program. The summer after her sophomore year, she interned at a stock brokerage, Weeden & Co. She will be interning at Credit Suisse in the Sales & Trading Division of the NYC Investment Bank this summer. On campus, she is the student director for the Bentley Career Services office, vice president of the Bentley Wall Street Club, program manager and committee member for the Bentley Service-Learning Center and co-founder of the Bentley Venture Capital Club.