

# CONNECTION

NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL

OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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The **New England Board of Higher Education** is a nonprofit, congressionally authorized, interstate agency whose mission is to foster cooperation and the efficient use of resources among New England's approximately 260 colleges and universities. NEBHE was established by the New England Higher Education Compact, a 1955 agreement among the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

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## EDITORIAL MEMO

Ever since the lead story in CONNECTION's Spring 1986 debut issue declared New England "the most knowledge-intensive region in the world," the journal has remained remarkably faithful to that premise, consistently featuring current thinking on higher education policy, technological capacity, workforce development and the regional economy. We have stayed *on message*, as communications strategists like to say.

Still, as CONNECTION begins this 12th year of publication with a fresh look at the region's "knowledge economy," it may be useful to revisit the definition of that somewhat worn term.

Noted New England economist Jim Howell — who proclaimed the region's knowledge-based competitive edge in the New England Board of Higher Education's benchmark 1982 report, *A Threat to Excellence* — has more recently described knowledge economies as those combining:

- highly skilled, specialized workforces with large numbers of engineers, scientists, managers, technicians and other professionals;
- an "intellectual infrastructure" of world-class research and educational institutions such as hospitals and universities that train and employ skilled workers and entrepreneurs;
- technology transfer from these institutions to new entrepreneurial companies;
- an indigenous venture capital industry, aggressive commercial banking network and high-quality business and professional services to finance and serve new enterprises;
- an efficient, up-to-date transportation and communications infrastructure;
- superior environmental and cultural quality in commercial, residential and recreational areas, maintained by good public services; and
- diverse economic activities highlighted by clusters of rival and related firms and industries that compete vigorously and exchange information and ideas as well as goods and services.

Clearly, New England has developed and nurtured these qualities with varying degrees of success. Moreover, we trust that our distinguished authors have added to Howell's list — and we urge readers to do so — for surely another characteristic of knowledge economies is that they must be continually *redefined*.

\* \* \* \*

The knowledge economy is also an information economy. In keeping with this transformation, NEBHE and CONNECTION increasingly offer New England students, faculty, policymakers and others vital information on-line at <http://www.nebhe.org>.

Our Web-surfing readers may also be interested to know that I have begun contributing a monthly op-ed column on higher education and economic issues to *BusinessToday.com*, a new on-line business news service owned by a subsidiary of the *Boston Herald*. Each column is accompanied by a "hot link" connecting readers directly to NEBHE's Web site.

We do hope you will visit.

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