Robert E. Miller

a tribute
This tribute was assembled in April 2019 after the NEBHE staff learned of Bob’s resignation from the board due to health reasons, ending a total tenure of 36 years of service. It was to be shared with him to commemorate his substantial leadership and contributions to NEBHE and to higher education in the New England region—but its delivery to Bob was unfortunately preceded by his passing. Many of the tributes speak of Bob in present tense—and we now share it with his family and friends to reflect his abiding influence.
A Man for All Seasons

Remembering Bob Miller

NEBHE colleagues from across New England were saddened to learn of the passing of NEBHE board member Robert E. Miller, a distinguished and long-serving member of the Connecticut delegation.

Bob passed away on Thursday, April 25, 2019, after a number of health challenges in the preceding months. He is survived by his wife, Sylvia (who many NEBHE board and staff members know well from her regular participation in board events over many years) and their five children, which include three sons and two daughters.

I had a chance to speak with Bob via phone about four weeks prior to his passing. He regretted that due to his declining health he would no longer be able to participate in NEBHE board work and expressed sincere regard for his fellow board members.

Bob served two distinguished terms of service on the board, the first from 1972 to 1994 (including as chair from 1981 to 1983) and then again from 2005 to 2019. Throughout those 36 years, Bob had a notable impact on NEBHE programs and policy. He was always a prepared and thoughtful contributor to board and committee discussions. He was often one of the latter people to speak, having listened closely to others’ comments and input. His voice and contributions were always valued by NEBHE leaders, myself included, and by his fellow board members. He was the epitome of a true gentleman.

Bob’s personal and professional accomplishments were considerable. He was the founding president of Quinebaug Valley Community College (serving from 1971 to 1992 and again from 2012 to 2013). He was asked to lead as an interim president at Connecticut Community Colleges on five different occasions. He was a “go-to” person in every way, known for his leadership, intelligence, warmth and good humor.

After serving in the U.S. Army in the early 1950’s in Europe, Bob returned home and began a long and distinguished career in higher education, first as an assistant to the Dean of Men and a Foreign Student Advisor at the University of Connecticut. After a period with the Connecticut Commission for Higher Education, Bob became an associate academic officer with the Central Office of the Community Colleges, signaling the beginning of a long career in service of Connecticut’s public two-year institutions. Through his final days, he remained a vocal advocate for community colleges.

Bob was very dedicated to Sylvia and their family, including his three sons and two daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchild. I always enjoyed receiving an update regarding the most recent global travels that he and Sylvia had undertaken. Beyond higher education, he made significant leadership contributions to his church and faith communities, and to countless other groups and organizations in Connecticut and beyond – too numerous to mention them all.

NEBHE is better for his having served – and Bob’s presence, intellect and character will be greatly missed.

Michael K. Thomas
President and Chief Executive Officer
New England Board of Higher Education
Dr. Robert E. Miller Appointed to New England Board of Higher Education

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BOSTON, MASS. — Connecticut state Sen. President Pro Tempore Donald Williams has appointed Dr. Robert Miller as a delegate to the nonprofit New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE).

This will be Miller’s second appointment to the NEBHE board. He served previously from 1972 to 1994 and chaired the organization from 1981 to 1983.

"Bob Miller served Connecticut higher education with tremendous integrity for more than three decades," commented NEBHE president and CEO Dr. Evan S. Dobelle. "We’re delighted to see him return to the board."

Miller was the founding president of Quinebaug Valley Community College, where he served from 1971 until his retirement in 1992. During that time he also served as interim president of Mohogan (now Three Rivers) Community College from July 1985 to July 1986 and Manchester Community College from July 1979 to June 1980. Miller came out of retirement to serve as interim president of Middlesex Community College from August 1995 to July 1996.

Miller was an adjunct professor of higher education at the University of Connecticut from 1970 until 2002 where he taught in the master’s and doctoral programs. He received his bachelor’s degree in political science, master’s degree in education and doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Connecticut. He resides in Pomfret Center.

NEBHE is a congressionally authorized, six-state agency whose mission is to promote greater educational opportunities and services for residents of New England. NEBHE programs are principally focused on the relationship between New England higher education and regional economic development. The agency is now in its 50th year.

NEBHE’s Regional Student Program (RSP) provides New England residents with a major tuition break at out-of-state public colleges and universities in the six-state New England region if they pursue certain academic programs not offered by their home institutions. In the 2003-04
Dear Bob,

It is a great honor to have the opportunity to share a few thoughts about your extraordinary commitment and service as a leader and member of the Board of Delegates of the New England Board of Higher Education. It is my understanding that you have set a new milestone as the longest serving member of the Board, having been originally appointed in October 1972. While your longevity as a Board member is truly remarkable, and I can’t imagine ever being replicated, the impact of your commitment to NEBHE and quality of your participation warrants even greater recognition.

As a Connecticut community college campus administrator in the 1970s I knew of NEBHE because of the “Apple Program” and my need to understand the tuition discount for NEBHE students. In the early 1980s when I joined the System Office, I learned of the broader importance of the New England Compact, being educated by your reports to our Council of Presidents about the most recent NEBHE meeting and the current policy issues being discussed. Fast forward to the 21st century and I had the honor to serve with you on the Board of Delegates for a mere 14 years. It was during my time with you on the Board that I gained an even greater appreciation for your perspective of the broader issues affecting higher education and your unwavering commitment to provide educational opportunity for all students. Your commitment to excellence, collaboration, cooperation and mutual respect set an example for all of us on the Board to not only cherish but to follow.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention just how honored I continue to feel in having had the opportunity to serve as the NEBHE Chair thanks in large part to your confidence in me and your ongoing support. I am very proud to have followed you as one of the Connecticut delegates to serve as the Board Chair. You taught me much about leading this unique New England institution, and I am forever grateful for your guidance, trust, and support.

I know that I join all of our colleagues in being extremely grateful to you for your decades of involvement, dedication and commitment to NEBHE. Your leadership and participation have been exceptional and have assisted in advancing NEBHE to be the well-respected and valued organization that it is recognized as today, certainly benefiting all of the New England states and its students. Your participation will be missed but your legacy will hopefully guide the organization for generations to come.

Marc S. Herzog
Chancellor Emeritus
Connecticut Community Colleges
Bob Miller is one amazing gentleman. A class act. Totally dedicated to insuring the best in higher education for students. It was impressive to serve with someone so dedicated.

The Hon. Roberta B. Willis
Former Representative
Connecticut General Assembly
It was 20 years ago this summer when I began an adventure that relatively few people experience — founding and leading an institution of higher education. Connecticut Valley Community College opened its doors in September 1971, and I have been president ever since.

The college was a product of the Connecticut Valley Regional Planning Commission, which had been established in 1967 to develop a regional approach to higher education in the northwestern corner of Connecticut. The commission was a collaborative effort among the state’s five community colleges, the University of Connecticut, and the State University of Connecticut.

The college was chartered in 1971 and began offering courses in 1972. It was designed to provide a two-year Associate in Arts degree in a variety of fields, including business, technology, and health professions.

The college’s campus is located in Middletown, Connecticut, and it serves a diverse and growing student body. The college offers a range of programs and services, including traditional classroom instruction, online courses, and alternative learning environments.

In recent years, the college has expanded its offerings to include more specialized programs and has increased its focus on workforce development and economic sustainability.

Connecticut Valley Community College is committed to providing high-quality education and training to its students, and it is dedicated to serving the needs of the communities it serves. The college’s mission is to foster a diverse and inclusive educational environment that prepares students for success in their personal and professional lives.
Bob,

Congratulations on your extraordinary service to New England higher education through your many years of service to NEBHE. As with all of your endeavors, you have served with your customary grace and dignity motivated by a deep commitment to advancing the cause of educational opportunity.

Thousands and thousands of students may never know your name nor how much they are indebted to you for all that you have done to enable them to fulfill their talents and their aspirations. But we do know, and we thank and applaud you on their behalf for all that you have done to help them, through education and training, to enlarge their understanding of the world and to better equip themselves to meet its challenges. Best wishes.

Andy McKirdy
Former NEBHE Board delegate

It has been my great pleasure to know Bob and to serve with him on the NEBHE Board. He is respected as an educator, and a champion of community colleges, institutions that are dear to me. I wish Bob and his family the very best in the days ahead.

The Hon. Joan Menard
Former Senator
Massachusetts General Court

Mr. and Mrs. Miller were wonderful friends and colleagues while I served on the New England Board of Higher Education. I wish him nothing but the best and thank him for his friendship and service to the Board. I can’t think of anyone who resembled Walter Peterson more. Two great men who I was honored to serve with. Extend my very best wishes to Bob and his wife on his retirement from the Board. He will be missed yet his legacy will live on.

Sen. Lou D’Allesandro
New Hampshire General Court

The Providence Journal, April 5, 1982
My memories of Bob Miller begin with my first years at NEBHE. I started working at NEBHE in the fall of 1979, and Bob already had been on the NEBHE board for seven years. No doubt he was a champion of the Regional Student Program and NEBHE. I will especially remember him for his (and Sylvia’s!) warm smile and kindness and the genuine interest he took in me and the other staff.

Thank you, Bob.

Wendy A. Lindsay
NEBHE Staff
Bob Miller has been a strong, committed advocate for higher education in the state of Connecticut and New England. He served with distinction as President of Quinebaug Community College and as Chairman and longtime member of the New England Board of Higher Education. I had many opportunities to talk with Bob and Sylvia and what I remember most is how proud he was of his large family and how much he and Sylvia enjoyed traveling. I will also always remember the great comraderie he enjoyed as a member of the NEBHE Board. We will miss you Bob and we thank you for your service.

Carolyn Morwick
NEBHE Staff
You are cordially invited to
Quinebaug Valley Community College's
Ground-Breaking Ceremony
Friday, November 6, 1981
3 o'clock pm
Maple Street Campus Site
Danielson, Connecticut

Reception following at
H.H. Ellis Vocational Technical School
Maple Street
Danielson, Connecticut

Parking facilities at the Technical School
near the campus site

QUINEBAUG VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DANIELSON, CONNECTICUT 06239

July 31, 1989

REMO TO: John Hoy, President, NEBHE
FROM: Robert E. Miller
SUBJECT: Letter to Governor Dukakis

Attached is a copy of my letter to Governor Dukakis. Although I am not sure he will ever see it or be enormously moved by it, at least I feel better for having written it.

REM/rp
Att.