



NEW ENGLAND BOARD
of HIGHER EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Mission

The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) advances equitable postsecondary outcomes through convening, research and programs for students, institution leaders, and policymakers.

Vision

Our vision is that everyone in New England will have lifelong access to affordable, high-value postsecondary education.

Strategic Priorities

The NEBHE Board of Delegates adopted these strategic priorities in March 2023:

- **Affordability:** Advance innovative, strategic alliances to increase affordability and financial sustainability.
- **Equity:** Expand equity-focused practices throughout postsecondary education.
- **Alignment:** Expand connections between postsecondary education and high-demand talent needs.

In pursuit of this mission and vision, NEBHE works across the six New England states to:

- Engage and assist leaders in the assessment, development and implementation of sound education practices and policies of regional significance.
- Promote initiatives and best practices that support states in implementing important regional higher education policies.
- Advocate for regional cooperation and programs that encourage the efficient use and sharing of educational resources.
- Provide leadership to strengthen the relationship between higher education and the economic well-being of New England.

From the President



Dear Friends:

In the past year, the New England Board of Higher Education has continued to deepen our work on critical issues facing every group concerned with higher education in the region – students and families, institutions and their faculty and staff, policymakers and employers. The fruits of our efforts over the last year have yielded a number of innovative models that we share with you over the pages of this report as well as plans for multi-year work that will address entrenched challenges.

I am pleased to share highlights with you of how we pursued our vision that “everyone in New England will have lifelong access to affordable, high-value postsecondary education” this year and forecast some work we will be pursuing in the years to come.

- The ground-breaking work of our New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison has galvanized a group of leaders across the region committed to improving and expanding higher education for incarcerated students and tailoring it both to shorter sentences and the identified needs of local and regional workforces. Please read inside about legislation passed and new projects beginning.
- A testament to the growing impact of our work in higher education in prison, we were awarded a five-year \$6.7 million grant from the Ascendium Education Group to support our stakeholders in implementing the core recommendations of the report of the Commission. This award is the largest in our organization’s history and it will enable NEBHE to play a major role in shaping the landscape of higher education in prison in the region.

- As we have since 1957, we brought the Tuition Break program to the students of New England, providing affordable access to attend the region’s public two-year, four-year, and graduate institutions at discounted tuition rates. This year the participating 9,001 students saved over \$65.8 million with an average savings of \$8,632 per student.
- The Connecticut Tech Talent Accelerator has fostered 15 technology-related pathways at 13 public and independent colleges and universities. These pathways focused on concentrations such as cybersecurity, data science, financial technology, bioinformatics, and game design represent a strategic response to the state’s and employers’ workforce goals.

Please read on about the launch of the New England Transfer Guarantee in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, a program which smooths the path for students from an associate degree to a four-year degree, and the third year of the North Star Collective’s work with 18 member institutions focused on racial justice work and lifting up Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) faculty.

We are grateful for the wide array of stakeholders who collaborate with us, and, in so doing, enrich our efforts with their perspective, knowledge, and experience. We invite you to join our work and share your ideas with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael K. Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael K. Thomas
President and CEO,
New England Board of Higher Education

From the Chair



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, it's clear that the landscape of higher education continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Rising costs, student debt, longstanding inequities, and demographic changes present significant challenges. However, these challenges also present us with opportunities to innovate and reimagine how we deliver higher education in New England.

Our mission at the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) has never been more critical. We are dedicated to making postsecondary education more accessible and affordable, knowing that a degree or high-value credential can transform lives and benefit families, communities, and society.

This year, NEBHE has focused on several strategic priorities to address these pressing issues. First, we are advancing innovative, strategic alliances to make higher education more affordable and financially sustainable. This involves partnering with institutions and stakeholders to explore new models and approaches that reduce costs and increase value for students.

Equity remains at the forefront of our efforts. We are expanding equity-focused practices throughout postsecondary education, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, can succeed. By addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusive policies, we strive to create a more just and equitable educational landscape.

Furthermore, we are strengthening connections between postsecondary education and high-demand talent needs. It is essential that our educational institutions offer programs with the skills and competencies required by employers. This alignment ensures that graduates are well-prepared for the rapidly changing workforce and can contribute meaningfully to our communities.

In Connecticut, my home state, NEBHE has partnered with stakeholders on the Tech Talent Accelerator initiative. And we have identified new areas of partnership that include collaborating with NEBHE to improve post-secondary opportunities for incarcerated individuals. These efforts, along with similar initiatives across New England, serve as valuable models for addressing our region's challenges.

NEBHE's unique position allows us to facilitate the sharing of these lessons and best practices among the New England states. We are fostering cross-sector collaboration, forming new partnerships, and developing policies that will support our institutions and students.

As we move forward, our focus remains on championing the values that define us, inspiring the next generation of learners, and demonstrating that higher education is a cornerstone of a vibrant and progressive society.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our shared mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregg Haddad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Gregg Haddad
*Representative, Connecticut General Assembly
Chair, New England Board of Higher Education*

Tuition Break

In 2023-24, over 9,000 New England residents were beneficiaries of NEBHE's flagship program, Tuition Break. Since its inception in 1957, Tuition Break has served students who attend the region's public two-year, four-year, and graduate institutions by providing them a reduced tuition rate when they enroll in one of 2,700 credential programs. This year alone, the total tuition savings for regional students and their families exceeded \$65 million.

While Tuition Break is a boon for students, it is also a critical tool for partner institutions, who rely upon the message of Tuition Break to help enroll and retain students, particularly for their unique academic programs. Critically, Tuition Break students contributed approximately \$162 million in total revenue for the region's public colleges and universities in the past year.

In its 67th year, Tuition Break continues to support New England students on the path to an affordable and meaningful postsecondary education. The program's relevance is felt across the region, evidenced by an increase in participation of 1.8% over the previous year. This pillar of NEBHE's various initiatives remains singularly critical to the success of the mission to enable equitable, affordable, and relevant postsecondary experiences for New England students and families.



"At the University of Southern Maine, we've seen the NEBHE Tuition Break program move the needle with students. We are able to engage and meet the needs of students we would not have been able to previously."

Meaghan Arena, EdD

*Vice President for Enrollment, Marketing and Student Retention,
University of Southern Maine*

A Parent's Voice

"Our son researched his college options extensively.... Fortunately, he applied to and was granted admissions to the Data Science program at the University of Vermont.... Our son is excelling in his classes, taking advantage of clubs and outdoor activities, and meeting new friends.... We are so grateful that the New England Tuition Break Program affords our son this opportunity. As a school counselor and a school counselor educator, I have promoted the New England Tuition Break and will continue to do so given our personal experience as parents of a college student benefiting from this exceptional opportunity."

**2023-2024
Impact Summary**

\$65,884,984

Total tuition savings for students

\$162,129,786

Total tuition and fee revenue
to New England colleges
and universities

9,001

(1.8% increase)

Total participating students

\$8,632

Average savings per student

2,700+

Total academic programs
available to New England
students

66

Participating institutions

Higher Education in Prison

Since the publication of the 2023 annual report, NEBHE has continued to expand its higher education in prison work, building upon the successful work of the New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison.

Engaging Stakeholders around Commission Report Recommendations

Following the June 2023 commission report launch, NEBHE focused its efforts on sharing report recommendations with key stakeholders including higher education leaders, state legislators, and federal policymakers including leadership at the U.S. Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (part of the U.S. Department of Education) and relevant staff for members of the New England federal delegation. In October 2023, NEBHE organized a well-attended legislative briefing at the Massachusetts State House for state senators and representatives and their staff, with sponsorship from the Black and Latino Caucus, the Criminal Justice Reform Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, and the Women Legislators Justice-Involved Women Task Force. NEBHE presented on the work of the Commission at the November 2023 National Conference on Higher Education in Prison and at the December meeting of the Northeast National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities State Executives. Later that month, NEBHE hosted a virtual convening of Legislative Advisory Committee members to share relevant report recommendations.

The Next Phase of NEBHE Higher Education in Prison Work

In February 2024, NEBHE successfully secured \$6.7 million in grant funding from the Ascendium Education Group to conduct five years of ambitious work to support the region in implementing the Commission report recommendations. The five-year project is comprised of three main workstreams: one focused on cross-sector state strategic planning, another concerned with engaging higher education institutions around their multiple roles supporting current and formerly incarcerated learners, and a third devoted to facilitating progress towards a more robust data ecosystem to better track student access and success in higher education in prison.

This new grant funding and the activities it will enable will transform NEBHE into a regional hub for the diverse array of stakeholders whose efforts are crucial to increasing access to higher education in prison across the six New England states. Even at this early juncture, NEBHE is occupying an expanded role, for example, supporting stakeholders in the use of federal funding to support efforts to increase postsecondary programming in prison. In this vein, planning is underway for a virtual cross-agency convening related to National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Digital Equity plans. NEBHE was also invited to provide a letter of support for a successful federal Pathway Home V grant application focused on preparing formerly incarcerated individuals for the workforce; the application was submitted by a former Commission member.

Also during this time, new staff members who will be exclusively focused on the higher education in prison portfolio have been hired. Given the expansive scope of the five-year project, all NEBHE staff will have the opportunity to play some role in the successful realization of the project goals.

2023-2024 Impact Statement

\$6.7 million

Grant dollars awarded to NEBHE for a five-year project to expand access to higher education in prison across the region

17

Staff members of New England Congressional delegation and federal government departments briefed on NEBHE work on higher education in prison

40

State government leaders and staff briefed on NEBHE work

Over 50

Attendees at October 2023 Massachusetts State House briefing on Commission report and next steps

2

Pieces of state legislation successfully passed that were inspired by recommendations from the Commission report (Connecticut and New Hampshire)



“The collaborative approach of the New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison is the right model for our continued efforts to increase access to education for the incarcerated population. By offering them opportunities to pursue a postsecondary education, we can help position them for a successful reentry to the community.”

Wayne T. Salisbury Jr.
Director, Rhode Island Department of Corrections

Impact – Legislation

New Hampshire Senate Bill 376 – *An Act Relative To Establishing A Corrections Education And Vocational Planning Group* - Signed into law May 31, 2024

“There is established a corrections education and vocational planning group (CEVPG) to consider opportunities for career and educational programming in the New Hampshire state prison, including higher education pathways that have demonstrable benefits including facility safety, public safety, lower recidivism, self-efficacy, intergenerational improvement, and employability.”



State Senator James B. Eldridge, co-chair of the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Reform Caucus, made opening remarks at the Beacon Hill briefing on the recommendations of the New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison.



State Representative Carlos González addressed the Beacon Hill briefing from the perspectives of a member of the New England Commission and as co-chair of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security.

Policy & Research

NEBHE's Policy & Research team informs leaders in higher education and government through research, policy analysis, and capacity building. In 2023-2024, Policy & Research grew to a seven-member team. The team expanded their grant-funded work related to NEBHE's strategic priorities in tech talent pathways and open education resources. The team members bring expertise in quantitative and qualitative research, policy analysis, data management and analytics, strategic planning, grant and project management, event planning, and open education.

Tech Talent Accelerator

The Connecticut Tech Talent Accelerator (TTA) grant program supported by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development and the Office of Workforce Strategy enables strategic partnerships between Connecticut businesses and higher education institutions to meet the evolving talent needs of the state. This collaborative initiative ensures that faculty members and corporate leaders work together to create and revise academic program offerings, reflecting the immediate and projected needs of Connecticut's technology industry.

Since 2022, TTA has supported the creation of 15 technology-related pathways at 13 higher education institutions and systems, focusing on concentrations such as cybersecurity, data science, financial technology, bioinformatics, and game design. This program equips students of all educational and career stages with the industry-validated competencies needed for career success. By leveraging local resources, TTA supports the state's technology industry and broader workforce vision.

2023-2024 Policy & Research Impact Statement

20

Collaborative convenings of stakeholders across education, government and business

\$520,000

Grant dollars directed to postsecondary Institutions through NEBHE for Open Educational Resources and Tech Talent Accelerator

24

Business and industry partners engaged in developing in-demand digital technology credentials

20

Active partnerships with higher education institutions

46

Active working relationships with government leaders



"With technology driving every aspect of how we live and work, individuals with technology skills are, and will continue to be, in high demand. And the more skilled our technology workforce, the more innovative and competitive our companies and our economy will be. It is imperative that we are creating a robust supply of talent with the technical and

professional acumen, including the ability to learn and adapt, that will ensure that businesses in every industry can keep up with the increasingly rapid pace of change.

The Tech Talent Accelerator is demonstrating how to meet this challenge head-on by pairing the expertise of Connecticut's public and independent colleges and universities with the insight and know-how of businesses within the IT sector. Through these dynamic collaborations, students are mastering cutting-edge tech skills through enhanced curricula and hands-on experiences, earning industry-recognized credentials, and are graduating well-prepared to fill some of our state's best technology jobs."

Kelli-Marie Vallieres, PhD

Chief Workforce Officer, Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy



"The TTA program attracts and engages with a pool of exceptionally talented students who have earned industry-recognized credentials from Unity Technology, ensuring a foundation of cutting-edge skills. By involving these bright minds, Pleiadian Systems Corporation can thoroughly explore and study the feasibility of integrating

cutting-edge technologies that have already demonstrated immense value in their products. The program goes beyond knowledge exchange, extending the opportunity to hire these outstanding students for capstone projects, internships, and even full-time positions as specialized software engineers in interactive and real-time software development."

Fred Caserta, Founder and CEO, Pleiadian Systems Corporation

Open Educational Resources

NEBHE supports the use of open educational resources (OER)—teaching and learning materials such as textbooks that are free to use, customize, and share. This year, with the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and in collaboration with four independent institutions in the Northeast—Johnson & Wales University (Providence, RI), New England College (Henniker, NH), St. John Fisher University (Rochester, NY), and Thomas College (Waterville, ME)—NEBHE supported the implementation of a pilot of marking courses that require low-cost or no-cost materials. Course marking assigns specific, searchable attributes to courses in the student information system, enabling students to make informed decisions about their course schedules based on financial considerations. This initiative is crucial to promoting the use of OER, as it alerts students to courses with low-cost or no-cost materials during registration. NEBHE’s support has enabled these institutions to significantly expand student awareness and use of no-cost learning materials.

NEBHE’s current open education work involves supporting practitioners, facilitating dialogue among key decision-makers, raising leadership awareness and engagement, and collaborating with other regional compacts as part of the National Consortium for Open Educational Resources (NCOER). Building on all these efforts, NEBHE will continue to support institutions with significant Pell-eligible student populations in implementing course marking, developing comprehensive resources and guides, and conducting research on the impact of course marking on various student populations.



“The initiative underscored our experience that immediate access to low-cost/no-cost materials helps our first-generation, low-income, and Pell-eligible students. That focus on access and equity is mission-congruent and supports student success. At the same time, being explicit about the strategy through course marking helps inform and encourage faculty discussions on pedagogy and open course design.”

Thomas Edwards, PhD, Provost,
Thomas College

Higher Education and Workforce Dashboards

In 2023-2024, the Policy & Research team embarked on building a new, modern data infrastructure to provide stakeholders with higher education and workforce information on-demand through multiple dashboards. NEBHE partnered with Lightcast, a labor market analytics company, to bring key insights on New England’s workforce to the NEBHE Board. The Data Hub website is scheduled to launch publicly in the fall 2024.



Economic Impact of Higher Education

For the second year, NEBHE’s Policy & Research team partnered with the New England Council to develop a series of one-page briefs that communicate the economic impact of higher education on each New England state and the region. The New England Council used these briefs in interactions with federal policymakers and shared them widely via their blog.

Regional Highlights from 2023:

- **490,000 jobs** were created in New England from the higher education sector
- **1,072,000 students** were served, including 255,000 Pell Grant recipients
- **\$1.1 billion** in federal taxes came from New England’s higher education sector



Sample dashboard (above) showing trends, forecasts, and opportunities in the New England labor market.

Left: Example of Higher Education Economic Impact brief for New England.

Regional Convening on FAFSA Delays

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a tool to increase college affordability for students. And yet complexity has often been a barrier to completion for students and families who would otherwise qualify for aid. To address this, a streamlined FAFSA was introduced by the U.S. Department of Education in December 2023.

Unfortunately, the rollout of the “Better FAFSA” was marked by numerous delays and glitches that contributed to a steep decline in FAFSA completion rates. According to the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), FAFSA completion rates among high school seniors in spring 2024 were 30% lower than the previous year’s rates.

As the higher education community grappled with time-sensitive FAFSA challenges, NEBHE convened regional higher education leaders for dialogue and information-sharing. Representatives from government and higher education financing agencies shared updates on current roadblocks and successful strategies for increasing their state’s FAFSA completion rates. Approximately 40 leaders attended via Zoom.



“The delayed rollout of the ‘Better FAFSA’ this year has posed serious challenges to students’ ability to file and receive federal financial aid. Institutions are also concerned about how declining FAFSA completion rates will affect college access for the upcoming academic year. Given the broad scale of this challenge, it has been more important than ever for New England’s higher education and government leaders to connect with and learn from one another in support of the region’s students, families, and higher education institutions.”

Jennifer Widness, *President*, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges

Legislative Advisory Committee

The Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) is comprised of legislative delegates to the NEBHE Board and additional sitting legislators from each New England state who have an interest in higher education. NEBHE convenes the LAC semi-annually to strengthen state higher education policymaking in New England, promote interstate collaboration and inform NEBHE’s policy analysis, research and program activities.

Over the past year, NEBHE convened LAC members to consider timely topics including:

- Equitable admissions strategies in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision to ban affirmative action
- The report and recommendations of the New England Commission on the Future of Higher Education in Prison, which concluded in June 2023 and proposed 15 recommendations for policymakers and other leaders for expanding high-quality, workforce-aligned postsecondary education
- State strategies for supporting postsecondary access and success for adult learners



“The Legislative Advisory Committee is the essential forum for legislators to learn about NEBHE’s policy work and initiatives on issues affecting each of our states. We also share legislative ideas, especially about expanding access to education, growing a modern workforce, and addressing financial challenges.”

David Watters, *Senator*, New Hampshire General Court, *Co-Chair*, NEBHE Legislative Advisory Committee



Legislative Advisory Committee members, from left to right. Back row: William O'Brien (RI), Peter Conlon (VT), Thomas Chittenden (VT), Mae Flexer (CT), Carol Hagan McEntee (RI), June Speakman (RI). Front row: Holly Sargent (ME), Kelly Murphy (ME), Rebecca Millett (ME), Gregg Haddad (CT).



Legislative Advisory Committee discussed the topic, *Equity in College Admissions: Guidance for State Policymakers* at the fall 2023 meeting. Pictured left to right are, ME State Representative, Rebecca Millet, CJ Powell, Director of Advocacy, National Association of College Admission Counseling, Twink Williams Burns, Strategic Adviser for Admission and Financial Aid, Williams College, Akil Bello, Senior Director of Advocacy and Advancement, Fairtest, Dean Libuti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success, University of Rhode Island, and CT Representative Gregg Haddad, NEBHE Board chair.



Panel discussion on *State Approaches to improving Postsecondary Access and Success for Adult Learners* at Legislative Advisory Committee meeting included, left to right, CT Representative Gregg Haddad, NEBHE Board chair, Joanne Pokaski, Assistant Vice President of Workforce Planning and Development at the Beth Israel Lahey Health system, Jack Mills, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the Council of Adult and Experiential Education (CAEL), LAC Co-Chair NH Senator David Watters, Greg Ebner, Rhode Island Assistant Commissioner of Postsecondary Education, Omar Reyes, Director of Adult Programs and Policies at Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, Michael Thomas, President and CEO, NEBHE. Participating virtually, Noe Ortega, Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education.

Transfer Guarantee

The New England Transfer Guarantee—now operationalized in all six New England states—unifies statewide transfer for students with an in-state associate degree.

Scaling the Guarantee to Northern New England

With generous support from the Teagle Foundation, the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, the Davis Educational Foundation, and the Balfour Foundation, the Guarantee was expanded to the northern New England states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In total, 16 public and private institutions across these three states signed Memorandums of Agreement to join the program. Fall 2024 will likely see a small first cohort of Transfer Guarantee students enroll at participating institutions in northern New England with increases in enrollment expected in subsequent semesters.

NEBHE coordinated statewide press releases for each Transfer Guarantee launch. News coverage appeared in all three states in media outlets that rarely cover the transfer topic. The story was featured in print, radio, and television outlets such as the New Hampshire and Vermont Business magazines, WABI 5 Bangor, and the Concord Monitor (NH) —to name a few.

Southern New England Progress Report

In February 2024, NEBHE published its second annual Guarantee enrollment report highlighting program trends in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Data from this report was presented at the April 2024 New England Transfer Association (NETA) conference and shared in a March 2024 issue of Inside Higher Ed's Beyond Transfer blog.

NEBHE Transfer Initiatives on the Road

Because of their experience facilitating the Guarantee, NEBHE was invited to present at the U.S. Department of Education's Raise the Bar Summit on the topic of college/university transfer in November 2023. Hosted by Northern Virginia Community College, this event convened a select group of state and national higher education leaders to set ambitious goals for increasing baccalaureate completion among community college transfer students.



"By ensuring that associate degree holders who seek a baccalaureate won't lose credits, the Vermont Transfer Guarantee saves students time and money. Simultaneously, it helps colleges that face a demographic decline and seek to diversify their campuses. For these reasons, I see the Vermont Transfer Guarantee as a true 'win-win.'"

Kimberly Jessup
President, Association of Vermont Independent Colleges

2023-2024 Impact Summary Northern New England

16

Four-year institutions joined the Guarantee in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont

14

Transfer Guarantee launch stories published by media in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont

1 Op-Ed

In *The Keene Sentinel* promoting the New Hampshire Transfer Guarantee

2024 Impact Summary Southern New England

786

Community college graduates participated across Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island as of Spring 2023

\$12.4 million

Scholarship and grant dollars awarded to transfer students in the same timeframe

45%

Percent of Guarantee students who received Pell grants

43%

Percent of Guarantee students who identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)

3.66 GPA

Average cumulative grade point average upon baccalaureate completion for Guarantee students

4

Average number of semesters of enrollment for baccalaureate completion for Guarantee students

Reparative Justice and the North Star Collective

Launched in 2021, the North Star Collective is a group of colleges and universities in the New England region that are committed to transforming their institutions and uplifting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty on their campuses. The Collective is a reparative justice initiative that supports institutional leaders in their racial justice work (through institutional programming) and creates spaces that nourish and restore BIPOC faculty (through the North Star Faculty Fellowship). The Collective grew to 18 member institutions in 2023-24. The North Star Collective is funded by institutional members and generous support from the Hildreth Stewart Charitable Foundation and the Boston Foundation.



Institutional Programming

The North Star Collective creates opportunities for institutional partners to collaborate, share best practices, and problem-solve on issues related to faculty racial equity on their campuses. In 2023-24, the North Star Collective hosted two in-person convenings that each brought together at least thirty institutional leaders from across the Collective to share, develop, and refine initiatives to recruit, hire, and retain BIPOC faculty on their campuses.

North Star Collective Faculty Fellowship

The North Star Collective Faculty Fellowship, which grew to 31 faculty fellows in the 2023–24 year, is a semester-long fellowship that provides a nourishing community of care, peer mentorship, and restoration for BIPOC faculty in New England. Guided by principles of healing racial trauma, the Fellowship is created by BIPOC faculty for BIPOC faculty to support their overall health and mental wellness as well as their scholarship through structured programming and immersive experiences such as writing retreats and virtual writing groups. The Fellowship provides a support network for BIPOC faculty to help navigate the challenges they face in their academic careers, including isolation, lack of community and mentorship, and barriers to publication, which are the primary reasons that many have left their institutions (or academia at large) either by force or by individual decision. To date, a total of 80 faculty have participated in the fellowship.

Recognition for the North Star Collective

The North Star Collective and its two founding co-directors, Dr. Tatiana Cruz and Dr. Kamille Gentles-Peart, were honored by the ACE Women's Network Massachusetts with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Justice Award. The award was presented at a ceremony held at Salem State University in Salem, MA on International Women's Day 2024 (March 8, 2024). Cruz is Assistant Professor and Interdisciplinary Program Director of Africana Studies at Simmons University in Boston, MA and Gentles-Peart is Associate Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI.

2024 Impact Summary The North Star Faculty Fellowship

100%

Faculty fellows said they would enthusiastically recommend the North Star Collective Fellowship to other BIPOC faculty.

100%

Fellows said they were drawn to the Fellowship because of the community of care and support, **95%** because of the writing retreat, and **65%** because of the biweekly writing groups.

95%

Fellows found the writing retreat and midpoint writing getaway the most valuable and **78%** valued the biweekly writing groups.

82%

Fellows felt they received moderate to strong support from their institutions.





In May 2024, **North Star Collective Faculty Fellows** were recognized individually and gathered in their writing groups to mark the completion of the fellowship.

Fellows describe the experience:

“Thank you for an amazing experience. I have a newfound appreciation for research/scholarship and writing. I also learned about new ideas and creative ways of writing. The support and friendships developed will have a lasting impact on me.”

“For me, the retreats were the most important experience of the fellowship. In addition to providing time to write/read/rest, they also were instrumental in creating a sense of group and belonging.”

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, known as SARA, provides a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education. When states join SARA, they agree to follow standardized processes for approving participation for eligible institutions in their state. They also agree to work with other states' SARA institutions in a common way when those institutions conduct activities in SARA states other than their own. NEBHE oversees the SARA membership of the six New England States, plus New Jersey and New York. This role is performed in conjunction with a national coordinating body, the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and in collaboration with the country's three other regional education compacts.

2023-2024 Impact Summary

8

States for which NEBHE manages SARA membership

360+

Colleges and universities in New England, New York and New Jersey that participate in SARA, represented by NEBHE

552,657

Students in NEBHE region SARA institutions enrolled in distance education

\$100 million

Estimated amount that institutions in the eight NEBHE SARA-participating states would have paid in initial authorization fees to states without SARA

\$34.6 million

Estimated amount that institutions in the eight NEBHE SARA-participating states would have paid in annual renewal fees to states without SARA

Follow SARA regionally and nationally at the NEBHE website and at <https://www.nc-sara.org/>

Raising the Bar

This year's policy revision cycle saw 41 proposals, with themes of empowering states and aligning policy for the current distance education landscape. The NEBHE region remains focused on the importance of consistent access to up to date information on institutional financial stability and the ability for states to take action in the best interests of their students. To review changes to the policy manual resulting from last year's cycle review Version 24.1 here: <https://nc-sara.org/sara-policy-manual>

Connecting the Community

NEBHE hosts monthly regional SARA leadership meetings of state, institutional, and accreditor representatives. In addition to their operational function, these meetings serve the purpose of building connections across stakeholder groups and an active collegial environment. Members are encouraged to bring emerging topics for discussion and share best practices.

Keeping up with SARA

Five of the eight states in the region applied for and received an NC-SARA State and Territory Mini Grant. Using these funds Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maine opted to host statewide convenings to bring together SARA participating institutions. These convenings addressed timely topics such as professional licensure, negotiated rulemaking, and data. These convenings also provided institutions with the opportunity to become familiar with the resources available through the state and NC-SARA.



"SARA provides significant cost savings to Connecticut institutions, who can utilize the agreement to offer distance education to the majority of the United States. The work of NEBHE and their SARA staff provides invaluable support to New England SARA member states ensuring the success of SARA through the region."

Dr. Sean Seepersad

Division Director, Academic Affairs, Connecticut Office of Higher Education

Cost Savings

The New England Board of Higher Education supports higher education institutions in the region through cost savings opportunities in partnership with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), including MHECare student health solutions with access to programmatic options for fully insured school-sponsored plans and virtual mental health services. In addition, technology contracts are available to New England higher education institutions; K-12 districts and schools; cities, states and local governments.

For more information visit <https://nebhe.org/costsavings/>

Our People

BOARD OF DELEGATES

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Representative **Gregg Haddad**
Connecticut General Assembly

Vice Chair
Senator **Mattie Daughtry**
Maine Legislature

Connecticut Delegates

Senator **Mae Flexer**
Connecticut General Assembly

Representative **Gregg Haddad**
Connecticut General Assembly

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