

## Budget Highlights for Fiscal Year 2024 – 2025

*Prepared for NEBHE's Legislative Advisory Committee, October 2024*

### Introduction

This report contains a snapshot of higher education investments in proposed and enacted Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 - 2025 state budgets in the six New England states. All states demonstrated a commitment to advancing higher education support and funding. Major investments in FY 2024 – 2025 budgets included funding for community colleges, student loan forgiveness, wraparound and health services, and aligning higher education opportunities with in-demand career pathways. This document does not contain an exhaustive list of all higher education investments in FY 2024 – 2025.

### Connecticut

Connecticut advanced its commitment to higher education in FY 2024 – 2025 by funding student scholarships, supporting the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) Career Center, and funding retirement costs for all higher education employees via the Higher Education Alternative Retirement System.

#### **Highlights from Governor Lamont's [Proposed Adjustments to the FY 2025 Budget](#):**

Since FY 2019, state appropriations for public higher education have increased by 29%, and the state has provided \$1.3 billion in one-time operating support from federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and one-time state funds to higher education institutions. Investments include:

- \$88.3 million for the **Higher Education Alternative Retirement program**. Beginning in FY 2024, the Office of the State Comptroller funds retirement costs for all higher education employees, and institutions cover non-retirement fringe benefit costs.
- \$23.5 million was allocated in FY 2024 for the Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT) program, Connecticut's **debt-free community college program** that provides last-dollar scholarships to eligible community college students. A \$28.5 million annual investment in PACT beginning in FY 2025 will enable the program to expand to adult and returning learners.
- \$18 million was allocated in one-time funding for the **Roberta Willis Scholarship Program**.
- \$6.5 million is sustained in annual funding for **Guided Pathways**, a structured approach to increasing retention through academic advising for students enrolled at Connecticut State Community College.
- \$1.4 million is dedicated to **expanding student health services** to students on the University of Connecticut's campuses.

- \$500,000 for the **Student Loan Financial Literacy Initiative**, which will support a campaign to provide outreach and educational materials to prospective students planning to take on student debt. Building on recent policy initiatives to increase FAFSA applications and expand financial literacy education among high school students, this program seeks to empower students to make informed decisions about student loans with an emphasis on improving equity of access to such information.
- \$100,500 and an additional position to **establish a Career Center in the CTECS system**, housed at Vinal Tech. This center will serve the entire CTECS system, helping to maximize employment opportunities for students.

## Maine

Maine advanced its higher education investments in FY 2024 – 2025 in notable ways, including extending free community colleges for Maine students, increasing funding levels for Maine’s public higher education institutions, and creating a Workforce Attraction Pilot targeted at recruiting recent college graduates.

**Highlights from Governor Mills’ FY [2024 - 2025 Biennial Budget](#):** The FY 2025 budget is \$445 million and includes the following investments:

- \$15 million to continue providing up to **two years of free community college education** for all students from the high school graduating classes of 2024 and 2025 who enroll in a Maine community college.
- \$5 million increase to the **Maine Economic Improvement Fund at University of Maine System**, which provides ongoing investments for research and development in Advanced Technologies for Forestry and Agriculture, Aquaculture and Marine Sciences, Biotechnology, Composites and Advanced Materials Technologies, Environmental Technologies, Information Technologies, and Precision Manufacturing.
- \$2.75 million in one-time funding for a **workforce attraction pilot program** aimed at recent graduates, expanding the Maine Career Exploration program for paid work experiences to additional high school students and enhancing recruitment and job-related supports for groups that are underrepresented in Maine’s workforce, including older workers and people with disabilities.
- \$1.8 million in ongoing funding for the **Maine Apprenticeship Program** to support training programs designed to meet the specific needs of Maine employers through on-the-job learning and related classroom instruction.
- \$2 million per year for **Maine Maritime Academy**, permanently increasing its share of state funding.
- A 4.5% **increase in funding for Maine’s public higher education institutions**, including the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System, and Maine Maritime Academy.

## Massachusetts

Massachusetts expanded its higher education investments in several notable ways, including the establishment of free community college for all students, MassReconnect, support for mental health and at-risk populations, and funding for nontraditional learning programs.

### Highlights from Governor Healey's FY 2025 Enacted [Budget](#):

- \$173.4 million for the Massachusetts **State Scholarship Program**, which includes the MASSGrant Scholarship, early educator scholarships, and several other Massachusetts scholarship programs.
- \$93.5 million for free community college, covering tuition, fees, and some additional expenses for Massachusetts residents via the **MassEducate** program.
- \$80 million to **expand financial aid** to Massachusetts students enrolled in and pursuing a higher education program at any public institution of higher education in the state.
- \$24 million for **MassReconnect**, a financial aid program which provides financial assistance to students who are enrolled at a Massachusetts public community college, at least 25 years old, have not previously earned a college degree, and are enrolled in at least 6 credits.
- \$14 million for the Community College **SUCCESS** fund and \$14.7 million for the State University SUCCESS fund (Supporting Urgent Community College Equity through Student Services). Grants are administered to community colleges to provide wraparound supports and services to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations, including students who identify as low-income, first-generation, members of the LGBTQ+ community, students of color and students with disabilities.
- \$13.1 million for the **Dual Enrollment Grant and Subsidies**, through which the Department of Higher Education will administer the dual enrollment program allowing qualified high school students to take college courses.
- \$10 million for targeted scholarships to provide financial assistance to students who are enrolled in and pursuing higher education at a public institution for **in-demand professions**, as defined by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's study on labor market conditions.
- \$5 million for **Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment**, which provides funds to school districts and public institutions of higher education partnering to offer inclusive concurrent enrollment programs for students with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22.
- \$4.2 million for state university and community college **mental health services** at state universities, community colleges and municipally owned colleges including, but not limited to: crisis services, therapy, the assessment of learning disorders,

responses to sexual assault, substance use disorder services and assistance to students struggling with stress, anxiety or other mental health needs.

- \$3.6 million for the **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Starter Academy** to be implemented through the Department of Higher Education at Massachusetts community colleges. The programs will specifically benefit students who have expressed interest in STEM careers yet are underperforming on STEM academic assessments.
- \$2.5 million for community college and state university **wraparound services**. This funding is dedicated to higher education persistence and basic needs programs at state universities and community colleges.
- \$1.4 million for a program of financial aid to support the matriculation of **youth in foster care** at public and private institutions of higher education.
- \$500,000 for “Bridges to College,” an **adult college transition service** program focused on low-income populations and entry-level workers.

## New Hampshire

New Hampshire increased its higher education funding for FY 2025. Notable investments are targeted towards the Community College System of New Hampshire and the University System of New Hampshire, as well as a focus on fostering talent for high-demand fields.

### Highlights from Governor Sununu’s Enacted [Budget](#)<sup>1</sup>:

- **Statewide:**
  - \$5 million is dedicated to new **student loan repayment assistance** for recent graduates pursuing careers in high-demand fields, such as healthcare, biotechnology, social work, and others.
  - \$4 million to establish a **Computer Science Educator Program** to encourage the professional development of New Hampshire certified educators in the field of computer science.
- **Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH):**
  - \$124.7 million in **block appropriations** for the upcoming biennium (up from \$113.5 million in the current biennium).
  - \$5.0 million for the **Dual and Concurrent Enrollment** Program.
  - \$3.0 million to support the **CCSNH Promise Program**, which will provide targeted tuition assistance to Pell-eligible students.
  - \$2.0 million to **expand workforce credential programs**, which will be designed to provide individuals with short-term training that leads to employment in high-need career fields.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes information drawn from the Senate Finance Committee’s FY 2024 – FY 2025 [budget report](#), published in June 2023.

- \$1.0 million for the **Law Enforcement Officers, Professional Firefighters, and Emergency Medical Technicians** Career Development, Recruitment, and Retention Program, as proposed by S.B. 153.
- \$400,000 for the **Math Learning Communities Program**, a partnership with New Hampshire high schools.
- **University System of New Hampshire (USNH):**
  - \$190 million in **block appropriations** for the upcoming biennium (up from \$177 million in the current biennium).
  - \$6 million for **renovating and expanding the Whittemore Center Arena**. The overall project cost is estimated to be \$30 million; the remaining funds will come from the University of New Hampshire and private philanthropy.
  - \$3 million in general support for **Plymouth State University and Keene State College** (with a required match of \$3 million by USNH, for a total of \$6 million).

## Rhode Island

Rhode Island demonstrates a continued commitment to investing in higher education, notably through workforce development and career alignment efforts, higher education infrastructure, and supporting foster care youth in their pursuit of higher education.

**Highlights from Governor McKee's FY 2024 – 2025 Budget:** The state budget includes a total increase of \$7.2 million in general revenue for public higher education.

- \$160.5 million bond request for two facilities: \$87.5 million for a Biomedical Sciences Building at the University of Rhode Island Kingston Campus and \$73 million to **renovate Whipple Hall at Rhode Island College** to become the home of the Institute for Cybersecurity and Emerging Technologies. These bond requests will be placed on the ballot in November 2024 for voter approval.
- \$2.4 million in FY 2024 and \$3.4 million in FY 2025 to **add two years to the HOPE Scholarship** pilot program, a last-dollar scholarship that provides for the final two years of a four-year degree at Rhode Island College at no cost to students.
- \$1 million to create a last-dollar **scholarship program for foster care youth** exiting the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' care to attend Rhode Island College. The program is funded with State Fiscal Recovery Funds and will provide tuition, room, board, and support services, including during the summer.
- \$4.1 million to the **Wavemaker Fellowship program** to student loan repayment tax credits, of which \$500,000 is dedicated for awards to primary care doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants.
- \$900,000 for the **Innovate Rhode Island Bioscience & Engineering Internship Program** to be administered by Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) to promote workforce development and education in the bioscience and engineering fields by reimbursing eligible bioscience and engineering companies for internship stipends.

## Vermont

Vermont saw increased higher education investments, notably for loan forgiveness/repayment for individuals pursuing healthcare, nursing, and teaching professions in Vermont, along with funding for nontraditional learners, such as dual enrollment, early college, and adult students.

**Highlights from Governor Scott’s FY 2025 [Enacted Budget](#)** include the following investments:

- \$2.5 million for the **Vermont Teacher Forgivable Loan Incentive Program** via the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to provide forgivable loans to students who meet certain eligibility requirements. The goal of the program is to encourage students to enter teaching professions, with an emphasis on recruitment of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, New Americans, and other historically underrepresented groups within the teaching profession.
- \$3.05 million in funding was sustained for the **Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive Program**, administered by VSAC, which awards up to \$16,280 in forgivable loans to students for tuition, fees, room, board, books and supplies for students enrolled in an approved nursing program at a public higher education institution in Vermont.<sup>2</sup>
- \$4.6 million was designated for **Early College** programs for low-income students.
- \$921,500 was designated for **dual enrollment** programs.

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<sup>2</sup> Information about the Vermont Nursing Forgivable Loan Incentive program can be found in a [report](#) to the legislature entitled “Review of Workforce Incentives, Loans, and Scholarship Programs” (Langweil & Carbee, 2024).