



Legislative Tracking

March 2026 Legislative Advisory Committee Report

NEW ENGLAND BOARD
of HIGHER EDUCATION 

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Executive Summary

During the 2025 legislative session, New England states enacted 13 higher education-related bills spanning a broad range of policy priorities. The enacted legislation reflects a particular focus on institutional accountability and fiscal transparency, expanded access and student support, and public health and safety on college campuses. Connecticut enacted eight bills that addressed financial oversight of public universities, the expansion of dual enrollment and remedial support programs, the formalization of a statewide data infrastructure for tracking educational and workforce outcomes, and technical modernization of the state's higher education statutes. Maine enacted two bills aimed at broadening postsecondary access, one establishing a grant program for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, and another creating a commission to comprehensively review and update the state's higher education policy framework. Rhode Island's enacted legislation addressed opioid overdose prevention in campus housing and a printing procurement preference for public institutions. These bills signal a legislative agenda that prioritizes institutional governance, equitable access, and student wellbeing.

Of the 13 bills enacted across the region, six involved the direct sponsorship or co-sponsorship of NEBHE Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) members, representing 46% of all enacted legislation. LAC member engagement was particularly concentrated in Maine, where all three enacted bills were sponsored or co-sponsored by LAC members including, Representative Holly Sargent, Representative Kelly Noonan Murphy, and Senator Teresa Pierce. Their work advanced two significant pieces of legislation: the Inclusive Higher Education Grant Program, which creates new pathways for students with disabilities to participate in postsecondary education, and the Commission to Update Maine's Public Policy on Higher Education, which will conduct a comprehensive review of the state's higher education laws and issue legislative recommendations by late 2026. In Rhode Island, LAC members were involved in all three enacted bills, including legislation mandating opioid antagonist training and supplies in campus housing and a state printing facilities preference applicable to public higher education institutions.

Introduction

This report provides all enacted higher education-related legislation during the 2025 legislative session in New England. Enacted legislation is defined as bills that have been signed by the Governor or otherwise enacted into law.¹ Other types of legislation, such as those that are in progress and failed, are not included in this report. For a complete report including all bill types, please contact the Policy and Research team (policy@nebhe.org).

Legislation was identified through the Legiscan database—an online legislative tracking service that collects, standardizes, and updates information on legislation from all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Higher education-related legislation was identified through keyword searches including "higher education," "college," "postsecondary education," "postsecondary," "university," and "universities" in bill titles and summaries.

Enacted bills reported below also specify if the bill involved a NEBHE Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) member. The NEBHE LAC membership is show in Table I below.

Table I: NEBHE LAC Membership

State	Count	LAC Member Names
CT	3	Sen. Mae Flexer (State Lead); Rep. Gregory Haddad; Rep. Gary Turco
MA	0	NA
ME	3	Rep. Holly Sargent (State Lead); Rep. Kelly Noonan Murphy; Sen. Teresa Pierce
NH	3	Sen. David Watters (State Lead); Sen. Timothy Lang; Sen. Ruth Ward
RI	5	Rep. June Speakman (State Lead); Sen. Louis Dipalma; Sen. Hanna Gallo; Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee; Rep. William O’Brien
VT	4	Rep. Peter Conlon (State Lead); Rep. Scott Beck; Sen. Thomas Chittenden; Rep. Carol Ode

¹ In some states such as Maine, bills can become laws without the Governor’s signature if a certain period of time has passed following the approval of both legislative chambers.

Table 2 summarizes the legislative activity in the region by reporting the total number of higher education-related bills, and the number and percentage of the total legislation involving NEBHE LAC members shown in parentheses.

Table 2: New England Higher Education Legislation Summary

State	Enacted	In Progress	Failed	Total
CT	8 (1, 13%)	83 (11, 13%)	0 (0, 0%)	94 (13, 14%)
MA [†]	0 (0, 0%)	152 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	152 (0, 0%)
ME	2 (2, 100%)	9 (4, 44%)	15 (2, 13%)	27 (8, 30%)
NH	0 (0, 0%)	16 (6, 38%)	0 (0, 0%)	16 (6, 38%)
RI	3 (3, 100%)	52 (18, 35%)	0 (0, 0%)	55 (21, 38%)
VT	0 (0, 0%)	20 (2, 10%)	0 (0, 0%)	20 (2, 10%)
Total	13 (6, 46%)	332 (41, 12%)	15 (2, 13%)	360 (49, 14%)

[†] Note: At the time of this report, Massachusetts does not have any LAC members. Therefore, the number and percentage of legislation involving LAC members in parentheses for Massachusetts is 0 for all cells.

The remainder of this report will provide a summary of all enacted higher education-related legislation in New England during the 2025 legislative session.

Enacted Legislation by State

Connecticut

Act 25-3 (HB7095): An Act Requiring an Action Plan for the University of Connecticut to Become a Member of an Association of Research Universities

Sponsor: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

LAC Member(s): Gregory Haddad

Summary: Mandates that the University of Connecticut (UConn) create a strategic roadmap to secure membership in a prestigious national association of research universities. It achieves this by requiring the university to develop a formal action plan that identifies specific performance metrics to be tracked, outlines the resources and timeline necessary to achieve them, and analyzes the potential statewide economic benefits of such membership. Additionally, the university must propose legislative recommendations to support these goals and submit the finalized plan to the General Assembly's higher education committee by January 1, 2026.

Act 25-8 (SB1259): An Act Concerning a Study of Strategies to Support and Encourage Student Enrollment at the University of Connecticut, Waterbury Campus

Sponsor: Commerce Committee

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Initiates a formal evaluation of the University of Connecticut's Waterbury campus to identify and implement methods for increasing its student population. It accomplishes this by mandating that the University of Connecticut conduct a comprehensive study and develop specific recommendations, which must include plans for dual enrollment programs, expanded online course offerings, and new workforce development initiatives tailored to the campus. To ensure legislative oversight and future action, the act requires the university to submit a formal report of its findings and strategic recommendations to the General Assembly's commerce and higher education committees by February 1, 2026.

Act 25-22 (SB 1297): An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Higher Education Statutes Concerning the Establishment of the Connecticut State Community College and the Board of Regents for Higher Education

Sponsor: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Makes extensive technical and minor substantive revisions to the Connecticut higher education statutes to reflect the formal establishment of the Connecticut State Community College and the consolidated oversight of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. It primarily functions as a "cleanup" bill that replaces outdated references to individual "regional community-technical colleges" and their specific boards with the unified system name and the Board of Regents' authority. By updating these statutes, the act ensures that existing laws—ranging from state investment funds and financial aid foundations to workforce training and campus safety—correctly apply to the newly consolidated community college structure and its centralized administration.

Act 25-24 (SB 114): An Act Concerning the Legislative Commissioners' Recommendations for Technical Revisions to the Higher Education Statutes

Sponsor: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Makes a series of technical, clarifying, and conforming updates to Connecticut's higher education-related statutes based on recommendations from the Legislative Commissioners, without changing underlying policy intent. The bill works by correcting language, updating timelines, refining definitions, and aligning statutory references across multiple areas connected to higher education and workforce policy, including technical and career education planning, university–industry partnerships, automatic admissions notifications, credential reporting requirements, University of Connecticut (UConn) governance and financing authority, and limited data-sharing for program evaluation. Overall, it cleans up and modernizes existing law to improve clarity, consistency, and administration of higher education and workforce systems rather than creating new programs or mandates.

Act 25-71 (HB6887): An Act Concerning Higher Education Management and Fiscal Accountability

Sponsor: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Strengthens financial oversight and management accountability within Connecticut's public higher education institutions. It accomplishes this by requiring the Board of Regents and the University of Connecticut (UConn) Board of Trustees to implement rigorous policies governing the use of state-issued purchasing cards and vehicles, including mandatory training for staff and clear consequences for misuse. The act further mandates that the UConn president and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) chancellor reside within the state for any contracts negotiated after July 1, 2025, and creates a dedicated compliance officer to conduct regular audits of expenditures, financial reporting, and internal controls. Finally, it increases fiscal transparency by requiring higher education constituent units to submit detailed expenditure, payroll, and pension data to the state Comptroller's searchable online database.

Act 25-99 (HB6445): An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Office of Higher Education, Expanding Dual Credit Opportunities and Concerning College Readiness and Remedial Support Programs at the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Information Reported to the Credential Database

Sponsor: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Implements several recommendations from the Office of Higher Education to expand educational opportunities and transparency in Connecticut. It accomplishes this by formalizing state reciprocity agreements for distance learning, establishing stricter authorization and renewal standards for private career schools, and mandating that the Department of Education notify parents about available postsecondary credit opportunities for students in grades eight through eleven. Additionally, the act defines and regulates "dual enrollment" and "concurrent enrollment" courses—requiring specific national accreditation and annual data reporting—while also refining the requirements for a statewide credential database to ensure clear public information regarding the skills and costs associated with various degrees and certifications.

Act 25-119 (SBI 250): An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Higher Education

Sponsor: Kenneth Gucker

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Strengthens the state's ability to track and improve educational and economic outcomes by formalizing and expanding the Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network (P20 WIN). It achieves this by mandating that public higher education institutions and regional workforce boards regularly submit performance data—such as graduation and employment outcomes—into this centralized, secure system managed by the Office of Policy and Management. The act also removes administrative barriers to education by requiring colleges to update their policies regarding "accounts receivable holds," ensuring that justice system-impacted students can enroll in postsecondary programs without being delayed by past financial debts.

Act 25-129 (HB6277): An Act Concerning the Adoption of Animals from Certain Institutions of Higher Education

Sponsor: Environment Committee

LAC Member(s): NA

Summary: Requires Connecticut colleges and universities—public and private—to offer certain animals used in research (specifically cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, and ferrets) for adoption through a qualified animal adoption or rescue organization once the research is complete, provided the research does not require the animal's destruction and the institution no longer needs the animal. The law works by obligating institutions of higher education to transfer eligible animals to nonprofit or qualified rescue organizations for placement, and it allows institutions to enter into formal agreements with those organizations to manage the adoption process, ensuring animals that can safely be rehomed are offered that opportunity rather than being euthanized.

Maine

Chapter 519 (LD46): An Act to Establish a Grant Program to Increase Postsecondary Educational Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder

Sponsor: Kelly Noonan Murphy

LAC Member(s): Teresa Pierce, Kelly Noonan Murphy, Holly Sargent

Summary: Establishes the Inclusive Higher Education Grant Program to expand postsecondary opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, or autism spectrum disorder. It achieves this by authorizing the Department of Education to award competitive grants to state institutions of higher education for the development of "program plans" that integrate these students into standard academic courses and campus life. To qualify, institutions must provide supports for competitive employment, offer peer mentoring, and adopt flexible admission standards that do not require a high school diploma or traditional entrance exams. Furthermore, the act mandates that 25% of grant funds be used for student scholarships and requires participating institutions to submit biannual reports to ensure program sustainability and the identification of best practices.

Chapter 120 (LD1558): Resolve, Establishing the Commission to Update Maine's Public Policy on Higher Education

Sponsor: Holly Sargent

LAC Member(s): Teresa Pierce, Kelly Noonan Murphy, Holly Sargent

Summary: Establishes the Commission to Update Maine's Public Policy on Higher Education to modernize the state's educational framework and improve student success. It achieves this by assembling a 14-member commission—including state legislators, educational system leaders, and faculty representatives—to conduct a comprehensive review of existing higher education laws and rules. The commission is specifically tasked with analyzing future goals for expanding access to affordable, high-quality education and must submit a final report with legislative recommendations to the Legislature's education committee by November 4, 2026.

Rhode Island

Chapter 21 (H5595/S0464): The Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act of 2016

Sponsor: Michelle McGaw (H5595), Melissa Murray (S0464)

LAC Member(s): June Speakman (H5595), Hanna Gallo (S0464)

Summary: Aims to reduce opioid overdose fatalities within higher education communities by ensuring life-saving medication is readily available in campus housing. It achieves this by mandating that all public and private colleges and universities provide opioid antagonist training to every resident assistant and maintain a sufficient supply of these antagonists in all university-owned or operated housing units. To further support emergency response, the act allows institutions to designate additional trained staff to administer the medication on a voluntary basis and provides broad legal immunity—protecting individuals and entities from civil, criminal, or administrative liability when acting in good faith to prevent an overdose.

Chapter 167 (S0668): State-Owned and Operated Printing Facilities Preference Act

Sponsor: Susan Sosnowski

LAC Member(s): Louis DiPalma

Summary: Aims to prioritize the use of internal government resources for large-scale printing projects. It achieves this by requiring all state agencies, public higher education institutions, and quasi-public agencies to use an existing state-owned or operated print facility whenever they need to produce more than fifty copies of documents such as contracts, brochures, or promotional materials. This requirement applies whenever using such a facility is practicable and the facility is capable of handling the specific manufacturing and processing needs of the project.