

NEBHE's Regional Student Program "Tuition Break" saves New England college students an average of \$7,000 a year on tuition when they enroll at out-of-state New England public colleges and universities and pursue one of 700 approved degree programs not offered by any public college in their home state. New England students and families save about \$48 million annually. And the states save money because they don't have to operate academic programs offered in other New England states. The NEBHE program has launched careers for pharmacists, meteorologists, occupational therapists and many other specialized professionals. But it's not the only example of cooperation in New England higher education. Higher education consortia dot the New England landscape with benefits ranging from cross-registration to shared shuttle busses to transfer articulation between two-year and four-year colleges. Funders increasingly hinge grants on evidence of collaboration. We asked New England college presidents to submit short pieces on ways regional collaboration can expand student access and success, bolster the competitiveness of New England's higher education enterprise at home and internationally, and advance regional workforce development.

Crossing State Lines

New models for cooperation in the 21st century

SELMA BOTMAN

American higher education is the envy of the world, and it also is the world's most democratized system.

But originally, colleges and universities were created for affluent students ages 18 to 22. They were socially, racially and ethnically homogenous. These young people attended full time, and they matriculated and graduated from the same institution in four years.

We all know that this is no longer the case. In fact, this world has long passed. Today, our universities are filled with students of all ages, social classes, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations and abilities. They are mobile and technologically sophisticated, and not surprisingly, they often live very complicated lives.

Yet we maintain the same higher education infrastructure that came into being in 1857 when U.S. Sen. Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont submitted the Land Grant Act to Congress. Signed into law in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln, this law enabled the creation of the land-grant university system that led to the establishment

of the great public research universities that serve each individual state.

Our challenge in the 21st century is to figure out how to break out of that outdated box, to create partnerships and articulation agreements with educational institutions not only within but also across states. We must think of new ways to reach students. One approach that works, and is being employed at colleges and universities throughout the United States, is the early college program that provides college courses and credits for qualified high school students, building the K-16 pipeline. Another strategy is to work more closely with community colleges. When I was executive vice chancellor and university provost of the City University of New York (CUNY), we developed 2+2 programs designed to provide community college students in that system clear pathways into its four-year colleges. This work was important not only because it translated into natural transitions for students between the two- and four-year institutions, but also because it brought faculty together to discuss curricula and pathways

from the community college to more advanced study. Similarly, it drew together academic support professionals who would act as advisors to the students.

We need to start thinking of ways to extend models like these across state lines in our region. That is the only way to enable the success of today's typical student, who attends multiple institutions on the path toward graduation. The National System for Educational Statistics (NSES) found that as of 2001, 59% of first-time bachelor's degree recipients had attended more than one institution. More recent data from NSES confirms this trend, offering a compelling rationale for prompt efforts to address the needs of such students. In response to growing awareness that today's college students are typically multi-institutional, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) has received funding from the Lumina Foundation for research into articulation and transfer between two- and four-year institutions. This 20-month-long Lumina-funded WICHE project,

entitled *Best Practices in State Transfer and Articulation Systems*, will review policies and practices of all 50 states.

How might we apply these insights into student mobility across institutions in New England? Students could be admitted to specific degree programs that span universities across New England and that guarantee smooth transitions between those institutions, dependent on a student completing a prescribed set of courses. This coursework would include agreed-upon classes in the major discipline, a set of general education courses and acceptable electives. Students would have to pass all courses and maintain an approved grade average in their major. Faculty at the participating universities would co-design the curricula and agree to accept all courses from their partner institutions in the major as well as general education coursework. This substantive cross-institutional collaboration would ensure that the approved curri-

cula and designated courses would be accepted seamlessly to fulfill the requirements of the given major. The chief academic officers of each institution would oversee this process, reporting back to their presidents.

At CUNY, 2+2 programs brought together faculties in such areas as criminal justice and business as well as in general education areas to ensure that specific courses corresponded in their rigor and learning outcomes. Overseen by the chief academic officers of collaborating CUNY institutions, these efforts provided revealing insights into the many ways in which differing institutional cultures and disciplinary expectations inadvertently placed obstacles in the way of student transfer and degree attainment. The 2+2 approach moves beyond the conventional articulation agreement since students are co-enrolled in both the community college and baccalaureate programs, and they earn direct admission into the bachelor's program upon

the successful completion of their associate degree. They carry their credits from their community college coursework and they have demonstrated to faculty that they have met expectations about their learning and academic performance.

New England's challenge—and an arena in which it can play a nationally important leadership role—is in truly placing the student at the center of our work, not only within universities or within university systems but across the whole region. We can do that by enabling our faculties and disciplines across our institutions to collaborate creatively in service of the intellectual substance of their programs as well as the academic aspirations of our students. That is how we can best ensure the success of our students.

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tuition break

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