



The Community College System of New Hampshire: Evolution, Challenges and Opportunities

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The Community College System of New Hampshire has evolved continuously in its fifty year history. As the needs of the State, its businesses, industries, communities, and citizens have changed, the System has transitioned to maintain and increase its critical economic and social relevance.

In many respects the evolution described in this chapter, from trade schools and “voc techs” to comprehensive community colleges, has occurred later in New Hampshire than in other states. It has occurred in a state that takes its motto “Live Free or Die” seriously, with significant pride in being frugal with public funding including the funding of public higher education. New Hampshire has historically ranked last or near last of the 50 states in funding for higher education operating costs per \$1,000 of personal income. This has resulted in the highest or near highest tuition in the nation for state residents at public colleges.

New Hampshire is the only state, other than Alaska, without a broad-based personal income or sales tax. This limits the funds available for the state government to support public higher education. For CCSNH, in its various forms, this has meant that the percentage of operating funds from state support has consistently been approximately one-half the national average. In 2012, approximately 30 percent of CCSNH’s operating budget was funded by the state, with the balance coming from tuition and other revenue. CCSNH receives no municipal or local funding.

While New Hampshire’s frugality has made for a difficult operating environment, the challenge of garnering state support has in some ways made CCSNH a stronger and more resilient institution. In its transition to a system of comprehensive community colleges, CCSNH has had to make a particularly strong case to garner state support. This has been accomplished by partnering with industry and successfully expanding access and affordability of higher education in NH, and making growing contributions to the skilled workforce that is critical to the economic well-being of the state.

Over the course of the first decade of the 21st century, CCSNH doubled its student enrollment, initiated the creation of online offerings which now have more than 10,000 registrations annually, and launched the award winning Running Start dual

enrollment program which has grown to more than 5,000 course registrations annually. Transfer relationships with New Hampshire's four-year colleges and universities have significantly expanded, and CCSNH is widely recognized as a partner with New Hampshire industry to strengthen the state's skilled workforce.

History and Evolution¹

New Hampshire's community college system since its establishment has been marked by the steady evolution of its mission, name, geographic coverage, programs, enrollment and governance. From its post-World War II origin as two trade schools serving a few hundred students, today's Community College System of New Hampshire has evolved into an independent statewide system of seven comprehensive community colleges serving more than 27,000 students annually, offering a broad range of associate degree and certificate programs that provide pathways to skilled employment and transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

Timeline of Major Developments

- 1945 – Trade schools established (Portsmouth and Manchester) under State Board of Education
- 1949 – Trade schools renamed New Hampshire Technical Institutes
- 1961 – NH Legislature authorizes establishment of schools in additional locations; moves toward the creation of a statewide system
- 1965 – NH Technical Institute opens in Concord
- 1966 – Vocational Institute² opens in Berlin
- 1968 – Vocational Institutes opens in Claremont and Laconia
- 1970 – NH Vocational-Technical College opens in Nashua
- 1983 – Legislation establishes the NH Department of Post-Secondary Vocational Technical Education outside the NH Department of Education, with governance of the 2-year colleges and a 7-member Board of Governors
- 1995 – System reorganized into “regional” colleges and renamed the NH Department of Regional Community Technical Colleges
- 1999 – Legislation replaced Board of Governors with Board of Trustees with increased oversight role
- 2005 – Legislation passed “uncoupling” the regional colleges and vesting greater authority in the Board of Trustees
- 2007 – Legislation passed establishing the Community College System of NH as a body corporate and politic, a self-governing entity under its Board of Trustees

¹ The early history related herein is drawn from a document entitled “New Hampshire’s Invisible Colleges: A History of the New Hampshire Technical Institute and the New Hampshire Vocational-Technical Colleges, 1945 to 1977” by Walter A. Ryan, a former instructor in the then-New Hampshire Vocational-Technical College, Claremont.

² During this period the names of the colleges evolved along with their scope and locations. By 1971 all of the existing schools were named “Vocational Technical Colleges” except the Concord school, which remained the “New Hampshire Technical Institute.”

The First Half-Century: Trade Schools, 1945-49

A public post-secondary system of two year colleges in New Hampshire originated in 1945 with the establishment of Trade Schools in two of the state's largest cities, Manchester and Portsmouth, both with a significant concentration of manufacturing and technical employment. These schools were established to provide trade and vocational training, with admissions preference given to veterans as they were demobilized after WWII. The State Board of Education was charged with overseeing the schools, which opened in donated spaces. Programs included machine tool, electricity and electronics, drafting and blueprint reading with other programs added over time. Initially, Manchester enrolled 200 students and graduated 50, while Portsmouth enrolled an average of 100 students and graduated 20. High school graduation was not an admissions requirement. The graduates typically found employment in the state's manufacturing industries and in the trades.

Over time the programs at the trade schools became more technical, and in 1949 the schools were renamed New Hampshire Technical institutes.

Emergence of a Statewide System, 1961-70

Building on the growth in the first two schools, in 1961 the NH Legislature through the Technical Institutes and Vocational Technical Schools Act declared the intention of the State to establish additional facilities to prepare young people and adults for productive employment. A new facility was established in the capital city of Concord, to be called the New Hampshire Technical Institute, which included a dormitory in addition to classrooms, labs and administrative offices. The focus of the NH Technical Institute, which accepted its first class in the fall of 1965, was to "...prepare qualified high school graduates as technicians who may serve as assistants to professionally trained personnel." The schools in Portsmouth and Manchester were renamed Vocational Technical Institutes, and assigned a role "...to prepare qualified high school graduates or the equivalent as skilled workers to meet the occupational needs of the state."

The expansion of the system during this period included the addition of vocational-technical institutes in Berlin (in the north), Claremont (west), Laconia (central) and Nashua (south). With the completion of these colleges -- officially adopting the name Vocational-Technical Colleges instead of Vocational Technical Institutes in 1971 -- the State for the first time had a statewide system of public two-year higher education institutions. Governance remained under the Department of Education, but was administered through a newly-created division called the "Division of Post-Secondary Education."

Maturing as a Post-Secondary System

A significant shift in governance occurred in 1983 with the creation of the New Hampshire Department of Post-Secondary Vocational Technical Education, separate from the Department of Education, to oversee the two-year college system. The Department was overseen by a seven member Board of Governors. In 1989, the term “vocational” was dropped from the names of the six vocational-technical colleges, and these colleges all became known as New Hampshire Technical Colleges. These six, together with the New Hampshire Technical Institute (NHTI) in Concord, formed NH’s system of two-year public colleges.

In 1995, as a result of a State budget crisis and as an effort to achieve administrative savings, the System was reorganized to “pair” colleges under shared administrations – Berlin with Laconia, Nashua with Claremont, and Manchester with Stratham. The largest college, NHTI in Concord, remained a single administration. The System was renamed the “New Hampshire Department of Regional Community Technical Colleges.” The rationale for the reorganization was the “one college concept” which reflected the hope that the newly combined colleges would function with less total cost as one college, a vision that never materialized, due to the logistical difficulties of administratively coupling colleges that were separated by significant distance in miles and in the economy and demography of the local communities served.

The 1995 legislation creating the Regional Community Technical College System expanded the role of the colleges to include general education transfer programs. This broadening of mission led to the colleges moving towards accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission for Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) rather than NEASC’s Commission on Career and Technical Institutions (CTCI).

Over the first half century after the founding of NH’s first trade schools, the state’s economy changed significantly. By the end of the 20th century the state had moved into a top ten (among the fifty states) ranking in the percentage of employment in high technology industries with the migration north of many businesses and industries started in the Greater Boston/Cambridge Massachusetts technology corridor.

As New Hampshire’s economy grew in high technology and other high value-added industries (including professional and business services, health care and finance), demand for high skilled workers increased as did the importance of public higher education in providing an appropriately skilled workforce. The state’s cautious fiscal approach remained a factor in the system’s capacity to meet the increased demand for higher education and training. Ultimately, however, the state passed additional legislation that enabled the system to further evolve. In 1999, Senate Bill 503 replaced the NH Regional Community Technical College System Board of Governors with a new Board of Trustees which had a larger and broader membership with significant connection to the state’s leading industries. And in 2005, Senate Bill 79 reversed the consolidation of a decade earlier and uncoupled the colleges, creating

again a system of seven colleges better able to focus on local student and industry needs.

Today's Community College System

The realization of a true Community College System for New Hampshire was achieved with the passage of Senate Bill 82 in 2007. While SB82 was arguably the most significant legislation affecting the System since its inception in 1945, many important elements remained unchanged. The System would remain focused on career and technical education, general education transfer, workforce training and linkages with businesses, the K-12 System and other institutions of higher education. A single Board of Trustees, appointed by the Governor and Executive Council, would oversee the System. Capital and operating budget funding requests would still be developed and presented to the Governor and the Legislature. While these key elements remained constant, SB 82 provided for several major changes that combined to transfer the stewardship of the system from State of NH administrative structure to the Board of Trustees.

- CCSNH was established in State law as a body corporate and politic, no longer a State agency
- The name was changed to the Community College System of NH (CCSNH)
- The Board of Trustees was given authority over operational policies and procedures, including the authority to approve and enter into contracts, the authority to establish finance and purchasing policies and the authority to manage capital projects
- The Board of Trustees was given authority over personnel policies and procedures for CCSNH employees, and to negotiate collective bargaining agreements with covered employees.
- The Board of Trustees was given authority to appoint the chief executive officer (Chancellor), who would no longer be subject to appointment/reappointment by the Governor and Executive Council

Recognizing that a transition away from state administrative, financial, legal and other services would take more than the initial two-year period set forth in SB82, CCSNH obtained passage in 2009 of Senate Bill 149 to extend for an additional two years certain services from the state that would have expired in July of 2009. These included legal services from the Office of Attorney General that are provided to state agencies, financial services from the State Treasurer, and administrative services from the Department of Administrative Services. By June 30, 2011, CCSNH had assumed responsibility for all of these functions.

A follow-up piece of legislation in 2010 transferred title for real estate and other property to CCSNH.

CCSNH in the Second Decade of the 21st Century

There is significant need for CCSNH to increase its enrollment and economic impact in the state. Nationally, in 2010 47% of public undergraduate enrollment was at community colleges, as compared to 28% in New Hampshire. Additionally, about 50% of New Hampshire high school graduates leave the state to attend college compared with a national average of 18% and a New England average of 39%.

Part of the out-migration of students is due to the relatively high cost of public higher education in the state and the high tuition has contributed to New Hampshire students graduating college with the highest debt burden in the nation. Increasing access to community colleges and increasing educational programs aligned with industry need are essential parts of the state's efforts to improve affordability of higher education and to help to ensure an adequate supply of high skilled workers.

The mission of CCSNH, with a focus on student academic and economic success and alignment with industry needs and opportunities, positions the system well to support the state's economic future. CCSNH provides access to learners throughout the state, offering associate degree and certificate programs and specialized training to a broad spectrum of the population. CCSNH acts as a bridge: for individuals and families to educational advancement and economic opportunity; for students from secondary to post-secondary levels; from certificate and industry-based education to associate and baccalaureate degrees; and for the state of NH generally as a bridge between education and a strong economy.

Each of the Colleges has evolved within its own distinctive region, serving local industry and community needs, maintaining core strengths in career and technical education while taking on the characteristics of comprehensive community colleges with a broad range of programs designed to prepare students for professional attainment and for transfer to four year colleges and universities.

Engagement with Business and Industry

CCSNH prioritizes partnerships with industry and New Hampshire employers. The system board of trustees includes members who represent particular industry sectors. Each college has an advisory committee consisting of regional civic and business leaders, who work with college leadership to ensure industry engagement at the local level. Nearly every academic program at colleges in the system has a program advisory board comprised of local industry leaders, who assist in shaping curriculum, strengthening education-to-career pathways, and providing input on employment opportunities and industry trends.

A 2011 Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant created the opportunity for CCSNH to ramp up its education and training of the advanced manufacturing workforce in New Hampshire. Through CCSNH, the

state has access to nearly \$20 million in federal funding to create advanced manufacturing training programs across New Hampshire. Training pathways will include entry-level through more advanced positions and specialized skills, all aligned to job opportunities in New Hampshire.

Within its advanced manufacturing initiative, CCSNH is developing a common core advanced manufacturing curriculum across its seven colleges and developing specialized manufacturing training programs to meet defined regional needs. The advanced manufacturing initiative stemming from the federal grant had engaged more than 100 industry partners statewide by mid-2013.

To help to address the need for more advanced technical workers, CCSNH is partnering with the University System of NH to enhance STEM curriculum and transfer pathways, with the goal of doubling the number of STEM graduates from NH's public colleges and universities by 2025.

Academic Programs

CCSNH offers a wide variety of programs in allied health, business, information technology, construction and industrial technologies, education, engineering technologies, environmental science, graphic arts and design, hospitality and tourism, life sciences, public safety, social services, transportation/technician technologies, and general studies/liberal arts.

As CCSNH has strengthened transfer pathways with baccalaureate institutions, the colleges have experienced significant growth in their general studies/liberal arts programs, which are typically used as a foundation for “two plus two” transfer into a baccalaureate program. Additional program trends are outlined below.

Program Area	% Enrollment Change, 2007-2012	% of Total Enrollment
Liberal Arts/General Studies	62%	40.5%
Health Professions	5%	13.2%
Business, Management, Marketing	17%	11.5%
Teacher and Early Childhood Education	24%	6.7%
Computer and Information Systems	60%	6.0%
Law Enforcement and Fire Services	11%	4.3%
Mechanic and Repair Technology	(1%)	4.3%
Engineering Technologies	14%	3.5%
Social Services and Public Administration	29%	2.1%
Precision Manufacturing/Production	64%	1.4%

Looking Forward

Starting in 2012, under the leadership of Chancellor Ross Gittel, CCSNH initiated a review of its mission statement and created a strategic plan focused on the system priorities of student success, economic alignment and fiscal sustainability. Today's CCSNH educates and trains traditional aged college students and older students returning to advance their education and income earning potential. Sixty percent of students are 24 or younger, 20% are 25 to 34 and 20% are 35 and older. Ninety-five percent of CCSNH students are NH residents. CCSNH also offers dual enrollment programs in most of NH's high schools enabling secondary students to earn high school and college credits concurrently. And increasing numbers of CCSNH students use their community colleges as affordable "stepping stones" to education beyond the associate degree. The colleges also have a significant number of students in career and technical programs who obtain their associate degrees or certificates and use them to advance in the labor market. NH's community colleges are especially important to those students at the economic margins, who are place-bound, who cannot afford or access "traditional" college options.

The colleges and their students across the state benefit from a strong system, with colleges developing unique and exemplary courses, curriculum and programming and sharing these with other colleges and students across the system. There are clear benefits in NH for individuals from enrollment in the community colleges, as well as to the state in its ability to cost-effectively provide a skilled workforce for employers looking to expand employment in New Hampshire. CCSNH graduates are rewarded with higher earnings, with associate degree holders in NH earning on average 28% more than with a high school terminal degree, resulting in a \$.5 million differential of lifelong earnings. The "bump up" from a high school degree to an associate degree is more significant in NH than the increase from associate to bachelor's degree, which is 20%.

Recent findings from Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce show that in order to maintain current levels of economic strength, New Hampshire must increase the percentage of its population with a college degree (associate or bachelor's) from 46% in 2011 to 64% by 2018.³ CCSNH provides a cost effective way to achieve this goal. Furthermore, many of the requirements of industry are for so-called "middle-skilled" workers, positions requiring more than a high school degree, but less than baccalaureate education. In New Hampshire, it has been estimated that just under 50 percent of jobs in 2016 will require middle skilled training and education⁴ which the community colleges are uniquely suited to provide.

Even with significant growth in enrollment and contributions over time, the data highlighted in this chapter indicates how community colleges in New Hampshire have been relatively underutilized relative to other states. This creates particular opportunity for CCSNH in the second decade of the 21st century to grow and increase its role in education and in the state's economic future.

³ Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, "Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018," 2011.

⁴ National Skills Coalition, Middle-Skill Jobs State-By-State: New Hampshire, 2013.