



Summary

The newly formed **Commission on Higher Education and Employability** was a regional endeavor of the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) chaired by Governor Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island. The Commission began its work in early 2016 and completed its report- *Learning for Life and Work* in March 2018.

While New England is world-renowned for its high-quality colleges and universities, the region's employers remain concerned about a lack of qualified, skilled workers, particularly in technology-intensive and growth-oriented industries. The challenges of low population growth and increasing global competitiveness require policymakers, business leaders and higher education to collaborate to maximize the region's human capital potential, ensure the economic productivity of its workforce and improve the well-being of its residents.

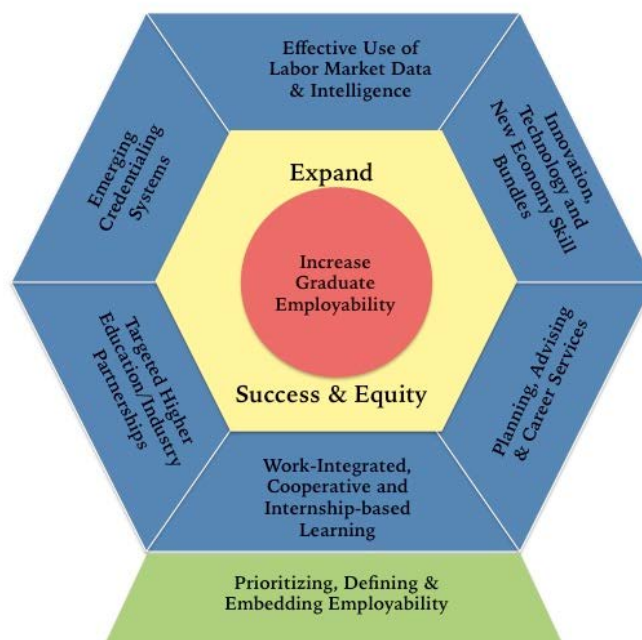
Purpose

The Employability Commission developed an action agenda, policy recommendations, strategies and next steps to align institutions, policymakers and industry to increase the career readiness of graduates of New England colleges and universities—and facilitate their successful transitions to work and sustained contributions to the well-being and competitiveness of the region.

Focus

Accordingly, key areas for investigation and deliberation by the Employability Commission included:

- Increasing postsecondary opportunities for work-integrated, experiential and cooperative learning (for example, internships, field placements), including via policy incentives and student-aid programs
- Effective use of labor market data and other information to inform programs, policy and practice
- Re-envisioning advising and career services offered by colleges to better align supply and demand and implement best practices and “disruptive” approaches
- In-demand skill “bundles” that might include fundamental IT and coding skills, knowledge of the digital economy, data analytics, cloud computing, technology security and entrepreneurship or other essential 21st century skills
- Policies related to new credentials, including the recognition and aggregation of postsecondary and non-postsecondary training and the work experiences of working adults and veterans.



Commission Working Groups

Commission members participated in Working Groups each looking at two major areas:

- Effective Use of Labor Market Data & Intelligence in Planning, Advising and Career Services
- Innovation, Technology and New Economy “Skill Bundles” and Emerging Credentials & Credentialing Systems
- Work-Integrated, Cooperative and Internship-based Learning and Targeted Higher Education /Industry Partnerships

Key Questions

The Commission’s work and final report and recommendations sought to answer several critical questions, including:

- What are the respective roles of higher education, business/industry and government in increasing employability?
- What are the best models for linking Higher Education Institutions, workforce data and business/industry?
- Where are the most acute needs—in terms of student/graduate populations, industry/sector and demand/supply?
- What new and/or crosscutting skills that employers seek, for maximum employability of graduates?
- How should institutional and public policy be informed and improved to address such needs and issues?
- How can states better align public policy with institutional policy and practice to increase employability?
- How can states and Higher Education Institutions better document the employment transitions, readiness and outcomes of students/graduates?
- What are the primary ways in which New England Higher Education Institutions can improve the career readiness, employability and work transition successes of their students—and rethink the ways in which they address such issues?
- How can Higher Education Institutions improve and clarify the ways in which students/graduates acquire work knowledge, skills and competencies? How can they engage industry and employers?
- What best practices, cutting-edge policies or leading strategies can be adopted in the six New England states and in both public and independent Higher Education Institutions?
- What rubrics, frameworks or self-study tools can assist Higher Education Institutions to assess and improve practices and policies related to employability?

Whom may I contact with questions or for additional information?

- View www.nebhe.org/commission for Commission Membership and additional information