



State of New Hampshire

GENERAL COURT

CONCORD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 1, 2017

TO: Honorable Shawn N. Jasper, Speaker of the House
Honorable Chuck W. Morse, President of the Senate
Honorable Paul C. Smith, House Clerk
Honorable Tammy L. Wright, Senate Clerk
Honorable Chris Sununu, Governor
Michael York, State Librarian

FROM: Senator John Reagan, Chairman

SUBJECT: Final Report of the Public Higher Education Study Committee.
RSA 187-A:28-a (HB 401, Chapter 292:2, Laws of 1995)

Pursuant to RSA 187-A:28-a (HB 401, Chapter 292:2, Laws of 1995), enclosed please find the Final Report of the Public Higher Education Study Committee.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I would like to thank those members of the commission who were instrumental in this study. I would also like to acknowledge all those who testified before the commission and assisted the commission in our study.

Enclosures

cc: Members of the Committee

FINAL REPORT

Public Higher Education Study Committee.

RSA 187-A:28-a (HB 401, Chapter 292:2, Laws of 1995)

November 1, 2017

Senator John Reagan, Chairman
Senator Lou D'Allesandro
Senator Ruth Ward
Representative Mary Gile
Representative James Grenier
Representative Rick Ladd
Representative Kenneth Weyler
Representative Terry Wolf, Clerk

Committee Charge:

The committee is charged with the following duties pursuant to 187-A: 28-c:

I. The committee shall study, among other things, the following:

- (a) The operation of public higher education.
- (b) The goals and purposes of public higher education.
- (c) The organization of public higher education.
- (d) The size of public higher education.
- (e) The financing of public higher education.

(f) Any other areas which will act as a guide to the legislature and trustees in formulating policies for the future.

(g) The economic effects of student activities on higher education campuses as reported in studies by the university system of New Hampshire and municipalities. The committee shall study possible solutions and recommend legislation. Possible solutions for the committee to study include payments to the municipalities by institutions of higher education in lieu of taxes; additional fees or assessments; and any other remedy suggested by the municipalities affected by higher education campuses.

I-a. In addition to the duties set forth in paragraph I, the committee shall study the feasibility of granting state franchise rights to the providers of on-line education courses which may include but is not limited to, the institutions of the university system of New Hampshire and the regional community-technical college system. The committee may consult with any individual or organization with information or expertise relevant to this aspect of the committee's duties.

II. The committee shall act as liaison between the university system, the regional community-technical colleges, the general court, and the public to promote better understanding and communications between public higher education, the general court, and the public.

III. The committee shall hold at least 4 meetings per year to be called by the chairperson.

Process and Procedures:

The committee organized on Tuesday, July 11th. As established by statute, the committee chair for the 2017-2018 biennium is the chair of the Senate Committee on Education, Senator John Reagan. He appointed Representative Terry Wolf as committee clerk.

The committee met seven times throughout the study period. The following is a review of each meeting. The minutes are attached with more in depth information.

July 11: The committee organized and heard a presentation from Catherine Provencher, Vice Chancellor and Treasurer of USNH on the status and value of the system, student costs, budgets, and state funding.

July 18: The committee heard a second presentation from Catherine Provencher, Vice Chancellor and Treasurer of USNH. She answered questions and provided data in response to inquiries made at the July 11 meeting.

September 19: Ross Gittell, Chancellor of CCSNH and Shannon Reid, Director of Communications of CCSNH responded to questions about the Office of the Legislative Budget Assistant's Performance Audit of the system.

September 26: USNH presented on its capital planning process.

October 3: Alison Stebbins, Jeremy Hitchcock, and Rebecca Clerkin, Trustees of CCSNH, presented and answered questions.

October 10: The committee discussed its work this study period. This discussion was the basis for the committee's final report.

October 17: The committee reviewed and revised a draft final report.

Findings and Recommendations:

After thorough study and discussion, the committee finds as follows:

- 1) There is currently no need to make changes to the University System of New Hampshire (USNH) Board of Trustees, the system's upper level management structure, or the system's footprint by way of campus consolidation. While the committee acknowledges issues at certain institutions which have manifested in troubling enrollment figures, among other

concerns, the committee is reassured that those entities are engaged in ongoing reviews that aim to bring about improvement.

- 2) Affordability is the paramount concern for higher education in the state, particularly within USNH. A number of underlying concerns were voiced as possibly contributing to the high costs including questionably low professor work load, failure to operate programs at full capacity, and reluctance to fully utilize campus space and resources through early morning and weekend course offerings. The committee also acknowledged the tension borne from USNH's research work. While sufficient capital funds infusion is necessary to maintain quality laboratory and other facilities vital to the mission of any research institution, there is a reasonable expectation that the research program be productive and generate a certain level of revenue through royalty payments. Further, the committee has concerns about USNH campuses striking the proper balance in expending funds for education and for research.
- 3) There are laudable innovations coming from USNH campuses. Plymouth State University deserves recognition for its excellent nursing program and new learning model based on academic clusters. The learning model promises to provide a well-rounded experience that exposes students to real-world projects and community business partners. The University of New Hampshire's focus on incorporating the use of data across various fields of study—beyond science and math—will yield graduates with skills necessary for success in the work force. Finally, the prospect of a partnership between UNH's Manchester campus and Dean Kamen's work in the Millyard is very encouraging. It would be a positive step in establishing rich partnerships between USNH and New Hampshire's business community.
- 4) The Office of the Legislative Budget Assistant filed its performance audit of the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) in August of this year. The report illuminated a number of policy and procedure weaknesses, inefficiencies, and a lack of adequate controls within the organization that need to be addressed. These issues are cause for concern, even if not altogether unexpected considering the organization has only been independent from State control since 2011. The committee's overarching concern is how the Board overlooked the many problems detailed in the audit in the first place. The committee did not receive a satisfactory response from the Board explaining why it permitted the audit conditions to exist or why it took the audit process to bring many of the issues to light.
- 5) The committee is generally pleased with the CCSNH Board of Trustees' response to the audit. The Board has drafted a plan to implement the audit recommendations and has been meeting the deadlines it established for reforms so far. The committee will continue to receive updates from the CCSNH Board of Trustees on its progress toward meeting the deadlines set for addressing the audit recommendations. The committee urges the Board to make policy review and revision part of its ongoing work in the years to come to ensure obsolete policies are purged and remaining policies are followed and enforced.
- 6) Further discussion is needed regarding the size and composition of the CCSNH Board of Trustees. Some members felt a large board is not agile enough to get the organization's work done efficiently. Others had concerns about the membership of the Board as many of the government officials are likely spread too thin to attend all Board meetings.

- 7) The committee recognizes CCSNH's unique ability to quickly respond to the evolving education and training demands of the State's students and businesses. For example, White Mountain Community College has a successful high school outreach program to provide welding certification opportunities to juniors and seniors. Manchester Community College has developed strong relationships with area employers and River Valley Community College makes programming available at its campus in Claremont along with academic centers in Keene and Lebanon. NHTI has developed an impressive early childhood education lab school. Finally, the system wide programs in healthcare and engineering are creating opportunities for graduates and helping meet some of the State's workforce needs.

Suggested Proposed Legislation:

Legislation has been suggested to authorize the community colleges to remove the word "community" from their names. The committee discussed research showing improved acceptance of transfer credits and a generally higher regard for institutions considered "colleges" rather than "community colleges." Some members agreed that the term "community college" may be falling out of fashion, similar to the terms "junior college," "teacher's college," or "normal school." Others had concerns that such a rebranding may make the CCSNH institutions seem less accessible to some students.

Respectfully Submitted,

Senator John Reagan, Chairman