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June 3, 2014

55 New England Colleges and Universities Support Stronger Student Preparation

All of the Public Institutions of Higher Education in Five New England States Endorse Innovative Strategies for Teaching Today's Young Adults

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PORTLAND, ME: All the public institutions of higher education in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont have joined the New England Secondary School Consortium (newenglandssc.org) and three private institutions to endorse educational approaches that can strengthen student preparation for college, modern careers, and adult life.

Over the past decade, the movement to adopt proficiency-based approaches to teaching, learning, and graduating has gained momentum in New England, and throughout the country, as more educators, parents, business leaders, and elected officials recognize that high educational standards and strong academic preparation are essential to success in today's world.

"This strong testament of support from higher education is nothing short of inspiring," **said J. Duke Albanese, senior policy advisor for the Great Schools Partnership**, the lead coordinating organization for the New England Secondary School Consortium. "Proficiency-based graduation decisions represent an important shift for many public schools, and our parents, families, and communities want assurance that their schools are embracing educational approaches accepted by colleges. New England's collegiate leaders recognize that producing more educated and skilled high school graduates will only benefit their institutions, and that preparing young adults to succeed in higher education and earn a degree is a goal shared by K–12 educators, college professors, and prospective employers alike."

The Consortium's **Collegiate Endorsement of Proficiency-Based Education and Graduation** has now been signed by 55 colleges and universities across New England, including the public-university and community-college systems in five states and three private institutions in Maine. The full text of the endorsement is available on the New England Secondary School Consortium website: newenglandssc.org/resources/endorsement.

With some parents wondering about the effects that proficiency-based education will have on their children or the college-admissions process, the Consortium reached out to higher education institutions throughout the region and asked them directly about their support of proficiency-based learning. The response has been both affirming and encouraging.

"Parents naturally want to know how changes in public education are going to affect their children," **said David Ruff, executive director of the Great Schools Partnership**. "One common concern is whether nontraditional academic programs and transcripts may disadvantage students applying to college. Of course, colleges do and always have accepted students with a wide variety of academic backgrounds and records, including home-schooled and international students. While there's no cause for concern, this endorsement provides further evidence that our nation's colleges and universities know what matters most—that every student deserves to graduate from high school prepared to succeed no matter what path they choose in life."

"The Vermont State Colleges signed the endorsement for a simple reason: it's the right thing to do for our students and for our colleges," **said Tim Donovan, Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges**. "Today's complex world demands more from the education of our young people—in K–12 schools and in colleges and universities. We have to work together to equip our students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in every area of life. At the Vermont State Colleges, we want the educators in our state—and throughout New England and the country—to know that we fully support their innovative efforts to better prepare our young people for the future. No hoops, no hurdles."

"As a longtime engineer, business advocate, and state lawmaker, I believe it is absolutely critical that our collegiate institutions and public schools work together in common purpose," **said Lou DiPalma, state senator from Rhode Island**. "This endorsement shows that New England's collegiate institutions and leaders are willing to step up, take action, and publicly support schools that are not only raising academic standards, but doing whatever it takes to make sure that every student actually achieves those high expectations."

More Information on Proficiency-Based Learning

The term “proficiency-based learning” refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that require students to demonstrate they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. The general goal of proficiency-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential to success in school, higher education, and modern careers. If students fail to meet expected learning standards, they typically receive additional instruction, practice time, and academic support to help them achieve proficiency. In K–12 education, the terms *competency-based*, *mastery-based*, *outcome-based*, *performance-based*, or *standards-based* education, instruction, or learning are typically synonyms for proficiency-based learning. That said, proficiency-based learning can also be designed and implemented in different ways, and consequently some educators may interpret and define the terms differently from place to place.

Visit the Glossary of Education Reform (edglossary.org) for a more detailed description of proficiency-based learning: edglossary.org/proficiency-based-learning.

About the Great Schools Partnership

The Great Schools Partnership is a nonprofit school-support organization working to redesign public education and improve learning for all students. Working at all levels of the education system, the Great Schools Partnership provides school coaching, professional development, and technical assistance to educators, schools, districts, organizations, and government agencies. The Great Schools Partnership the lead coordinator of the New England Secondary School Consortium and League of Innovative Schools. greatschoolspartnership.org

About the New England Secondary School Consortium

The New England Secondary School Consortium is a regional partnership that promotes forward-thinking innovations in the design and delivery of secondary education across New England. The five partner states—Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont—work together to close persistent achievement gaps and promote greater educational equity and opportunity for all students. newenglandssc.org

The Higher Education Signatories

CONNECTICUT

Asnuntuck Community College
Capital Community College
Central Connecticut State University
Charter Oak State College
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Eastern Connecticut State University
Gateway Community College
Housatonic Community College
Manchester Community College
Middlesex Community College
Naugatuck Valley Community College
Northwestern Connecticut Community College
Norwalk Community College
Quinebag Valley Community College
Southern Connecticut State University
Three Rivers Community College
Tunxis Community College
University of Connecticut
Western Connecticut State University

MAINE

Central Maine Community College
Eastern Maine Community College
Husson University
Kennebec Valley Community College
Maine Community College System
Northern Maine Community College
Southern Maine Community College
Thomas College
Unity College
University of Maine
University of Maine at Augusta
University of Maine at Farmington
University of Maine at Fort Kent
University of Maine at Machias

University of Maine at Presque Isle
University of Maine System
University of Southern Maine
Washington County Community College
York County Community College

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Community College System of New Hampshire
Granite State College
Great Bay Community College
Keene State College
Lakes Region Community College
Manchester Community College
Nashua Community College
NHTI-Concord's Community College
Plymouth State University
River Valley Community College
University of New Hampshire
University System of New Hampshire
White Mountains Community College

RHODE ISLAND

Community College of Rhode Island
Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education
Rhode Island College
University of Rhode Island

VERMONT

Castleton State College
Community College of Vermont
Johnson State College
Lyndon State College
University of Vermont
Vermont State Colleges
Vermont Technical College