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November 6, 2025

Her Excellency, Governor Kelly A. Ayotte
and the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Your Excellency and Members of the Council:

Pursuant RSA 187-A:28-e, enclosed is the annual report identifying ongoing work and collaboration between the University System of New Hampshire and the Community College System of New Hampshire.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions on the report.

Respectfully,


Mark Rubinstein, Chancellor
Community College System of NH


Catherine A. Provencher, Chancellor
University System of NH

Enclosures

Pursuant to RSA 187-A:28-e and to make the public more fully aware of the collaborative efforts being undertaken by the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) and the University System of New Hampshire (USNH) to better serve students and the State of New Hampshire, “Beginning November 1, 2024, and each November 1 thereafter, the chancellors shall submit an annual report regarding implementation of comprehensive higher education alignment strategies and findings to the governor and council, the senate finance and education committees, the house finance and education committees, the board of trustees of the university system of New Hampshire and the community college system of New Hampshire, and the commissioner of the department of education.” We are pleased to submit this second annual report.

As outlined in the final report of the Governor’s Public Higher Education Task Force (hereafter, “the task force”), the key benefits of achieving greater strategic alignment between the two systems of public higher education include enhanced student educational attainment through improved accessibility and seamlessness, bolstering administrative synergies and efficiencies, and driving more focused impact on meeting the state’s workforce needs. These efforts to improve alignment are complementary to the differentiated missions that guide appropriate scope of programs for each system as well as to the regional engagement between individual institutions and the key stakeholders in those communities, contributing to the well-coordinated systems of public higher education outlined in statute for the state college and university system and the community college system (RSA 187-A and RSA-188-F), respectively.

Given that the final task force report described nearly forty (40) distinct short-term and long-term opportunities, many of which were already ongoing and increasingly incorporated into normal operations (e.g., procurement, student outreach, enrollment and retention efforts), we recognized that prioritizing the deliverables of all initiatives simultaneously would cause them to become fragmented and diluted. Immediately following the release of the final report, CCSNH and USNH formed a working group to identify the opportunities that were most practicable in the short term and those that would require action from outside parties (legislative changes, accreditation, etc.) as well as incremental resources, therefore extending the time required for their attainment/completion. Included among those prioritized opportunities were ones that are clearly collaborative as well as some that are unique to one system or the other, but that were identified by the task force as important steps to be considered for the long-term benefits of public higher education in New Hampshire.

The following summarizes a subset of opportunities that we have identified as priorities for immediate action. The first five are focused on direct engagement with students, the sixth

relates to healthcare workforce and the last four address administrative opportunities that will support greater operating efficiencies between and within systems. While some of these initiatives can be furthered with current levels of support, others—notably expansion of early college, transfer technology and implementation of a common enterprise resource planning platform—will likely require targeted incremental investments by the state.

- 1) Improve ability to transfer from CCSNH to USNH - Upon completion of HB1530 requirements, commit to a continued review of credit transfer pathways each year, with priorities informed by State workforce needs, industry input, and revenue opportunities, with a goal of seamless credit transfer between systems.

Working together since the passage of HB 1530, CCSNH and USNH have delivered more than 100 universal pathways to bachelor's degrees, with another 44 in development, that are possible within specific programs or majors. Pathway development was prioritized based on workforce needs and student demand. The pathways contain blocks of courses from all of the community colleges that transfer fully into a USNH degree on a pathway that is possible to complete within four years in a 2+2 model (assuming full-time enrollment, early enrollment in the pathway and successful performance). For students who may not be ready to choose a pathway immediately (which describes many college students), pathways have been created that provide the most efficient ways to earn a bachelor's degree under most circumstances. This work is having meaningful impact. **USNH saw a 36% increase in transfers of those with associate's degrees from CCSNH between FY 24 and FY 25.**

This work will continue to iterate through effective collaboration between the two systems. The USNH Provosts and CCSNH Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs now have a cadence of periodic joint meetings to continuously identify opportunities.

- 2) Admissions Process – streamline acceptance processes to proactively accept CCSNH students with a predetermined GPA at USNH schools. Also, explore automatic acceptance of New Hampshire high school students at CCSNH as well as early and often notification.

CCSNH and USNH have worked collaboratively to establish a Direct Admission Program (DAP). This initiative streamlines the transition for graduates of CCSNH institutions into USNH institutions, thereby enhancing educational opportunities and supporting student success. CCSNH graduates who meet the established academic criteria, including GPA thresholds, received proactive communications earlier this year that they are automatically admitted to designated USNH programs (conditioned upon transcript and other validations). Note: Some programs, such as Nursing, may have additional requirements or program capacity limitations.

Comprehensive advising and support services is provided, including academic advising, financial aid counseling, and career guidance, to assist students with transition from the community college system to the university system. Mechanisms have been established for data sharing and tracking of student progress to monitor the effectiveness of the Direct Admission Program and identify areas for improvement. The USNH Outreach and Enrollment Center facilitated communication in support of all CCSNH and USNH institutions until the student has identified their destination institution, at which point communication is taken over by the receiving institution. Mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement of the Direct Admission Program will be established, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and making necessary adjustments to optimize outcomes.

Related, the accessibility of most CCSNH programs points to an opportunity to more fully leverage direct admission as an entry point for more high school graduates, thereby encouraging increased participation in postsecondary education and greater retention of college-bound students in New Hampshire. CCSNH currently has access to approximately 40% of New Hampshire's high school seniors through its early college programs; however, to optimize these efforts, CCSNH would need to develop another mechanism with more comprehensive reach. One option would be to work with individual school districts; however, it makes sense for CCSNH to explore whether there are more efficient strategies that could be pursued at the statewide level in conjunction with the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDoE). Based upon discussions with the NHDoE, this might require legislative action to enable this type of outreach to students and families.

USNH has launched direct-admit programs for eligible high school students through Niche.com.

- 3) Implement a common platform for supporting transfer equivalencies, including experiential and workplace-based learning and industry-recognized credentials, to support efficient navigation for students.

CCSNH and USNH are pursuing the implementation of software platforms to create a common language around courses and credits to assist students in navigating current and new degree and certificate pathways, with the long-term goal of guiding them through learning opportunities that begin in high school and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Centers and advance to certificate and degree programs at CCSNH and USNH. USNH has begun implementation of the Transfer Evaluation System (TES) that was previously used successfully at the former Granite State College, to facilitate easy access to transfer equivalencies for students interested in transferring to the 4-year institutions. USNH started the TES implementation with CCSNH transfer equivalencies. CCSNH piloted TES

through Nashua Community College during AY25 and is now in the midst of a systemwide implementation for CCSNH. To date, 4,368 course equivalencies drawn from nearly 400 institutions have been incorporated into the platform to facilitate efficient degree planning and to minimize the risk of students incurring unnecessary expense associated with repeating courses for which they can already demonstrate mastery. Although still early in the implementation process, CCSNH is also in the process of incorporating credit for prior learning for demonstrated college-level learning competencies that can be accomplished outside of classroom settings. To further this work, a memorandum of understanding has been developed between UNH's College of Professional Studies Online and CCSNH to share validation reviews, conduct joint reviews, and accept transfer credit for approved validation reports in support of increasing students' access to preapproved credit for non-collegiate instruction. Coupled with work to strengthen pathways, this bridge will help New Hampshire students navigate opportunities from high school (through dual enrollment) to CCSNH and then to USNH.

The incorporation of these validations as well as industry recognized credentials into TES is compatible with the recommendation of the final report to "engage the business communities in the state with a systematic and continuous set of dialogues between industry and the two public higher education systems" and will facilitate a more timely and affordable credential attainment process to enable entry or advancement into the NH workforce.

- 4) Enhance and expand CCSNH's early college (dual enrollment) initiatives to give students a compelling pathway to post-secondary education by reducing costs and debt burdens.

During the 2024-25 academic year, CCSNH served more than 11,000 students in dual enrollment courses, reflecting 9.38% growth over the prior year. Those students enrolled in 60,784 credits, representing savings of more than \$14,000,000 in tuition and fees for high-quality postsecondary education that will insulate those students and their families from some of the costs and the debt that often accompanies college enrollment. It is important to note that this was made possible by the State's investment in dual and concurrent enrollment and effective collaborative relationships with stellar educators and administrators in high schools and CTE centers across New Hampshire.

In partnership with VLACS, UNH offered online dual credit college courses for VLACS high school students for the first time this fall with 76 NH students enrolling. This pilot program is an effort intended to keep more early college dual credits in-state by building an affinity with UNH.

- 5) Develop 3-year bachelor's degree programs, including online delivery, to raise the level of educational attainment and to make bachelor level degrees more affordable. This initiative will ultimately require accreditor approval but will also require significant pre-work to prepare for approval, hence its inclusion as both a short-term initiative and long-term recommendation.

In October of 2024, Plymouth State University (PSU) received formal approval for 96-credit, 3-year bachelor's degrees from the New England accrediting body, New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE). These professionally oriented accelerated degrees provide students with a more affordable pathway to graduation and into critical areas of New Hampshire's workforce. The five 3-year undergraduate degree programs PSU proposed are: Police Studies, Business Administration, Applied Robotics, Cybersecurity, and Outdoor Adventure Leadership.

The programs were designed during FY 25 with the first 22 students enrolling this fall with very little marketing. Small business administration is by far the most popular with 12 of the 22 students. It is anticipated that enrollment in these programs will grow as marketing efforts are ramped up.

UNH is exploring 3-year 90/96 credit Bachelor of Applied Science degree programs that align with student and workforce needs with proposals likely being submitted to NECHE in calendar year 2026.

- 6) Give special attention to the workforce needs of the state's health care system, which is experiencing immediate worker shortages in a wide range of occupations. Establish a focused working group to develop a plan to meet these needs.

USNH and CCSNH are currently working with the State Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS) in developing the application for the federally funded Rural Health Transformation Program. Following gubernatorial and DHHS review, USNH was notified on October 29 that its proposed Rural Health Transformation simulation learning "Common Campus" remains in the pipeline under consideration. CCSNH was similarly notified of continuing interest in supporting the comprehensive proposal for creating Healthcare Career Guidance Hubs, a "Para Academy," and expanded capacity for preparing Nurses as well support for Allied Dental Health. Upon request, letters of support were provided by USNH and CCSNH as the next step in the application process of this process that has the potential to have sweeping impact on health care delivery across the State.

- 7) Co-locate the CCSNH and USNH system offices in shared working space to foster the streamlining and coordination of common administrative functions to reduce duplication and improve efficiency. This could include both student-facing services

as well as more backroom operational areas such as budget and finance, human resources, and facilities management.

The USNH system office moved into Farnum Hall on the NHTI campus in July 2025. The project was completed on time and under budget. It will save USNH students \$250,000 in annual operating expense, provide a revenue stream to NHTI and foster increased collaboration between the two systems.

- 8) Evaluate the concept of CCSNH pursuing regional accreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) as a single, statewide college with locations throughout the state (unified accreditation) and evaluate whether changes to USNH accreditation would be beneficial.

Following a motion adopted by the CCSNH Board of Trustees in March 2024, CCSNH engaged the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to assist with analysis and planning related to the potential for CCSNH to pursue accreditation as a single, statewide institution, maintaining its current footprint and presence in each region of the state, but facilitating more seamless academic opportunities for students and more nimble administrative structures that can enhance innovation while sustaining community engagement. Predicated on that analysis, recommendations offered by NCHEMS, and informed by input from a myriad of stakeholders, the CCSNH Board of Trustees directed the system to take steps to improve the experience of students through more seamless academic programs and more consistent business practices, while still sustaining separate accreditation of CCSNH's seven colleges; however, the Board indicated the need to evaluate progress to determine whether this remains the right path for CCSNH to best fulfill its mission on behalf of students and the State of New Hampshire.

The USNH Board of Trustees considered various options in the past year for the path forward. Over the next 18 to 24 months, USNH is committed to doing everything possible to remain three separately accredited financially sustainable institutions. With KSC president Melinda Treadwell's unexpected resignation this month, the Board approved naming PSU President Don Birx as interim president of KSC through June 30, 2026 to identify more areas for collaboration between institutions and to reduce administrative cost. USNH has applied to NECHE for an innovation waiver for approval of this pilot of sharing leaders at two separately accredited schools.

- 9) Implement a common Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform.

USNH has undertaken a multi-year implementation of the Workday ERP. This will replace two different Ellucian ERP platforms currently in use across USNH's three institutions. USNH went live with the human resources and finance components of the Workday ERP in December 2024 and is now designing and testing the student Workday system with go live currently planned in phases starting in calendar year 2026.

CCSNH remains on Ellucian's Banner ERP platform (one of the two being retired by USNH). Although replacement of this ERP is not currently part of CCSNH's planning cycle, with incremental investment to support this initiative, CCSNH would be prepared to evaluate this opportunity.

- 10) Leverage emerging artificial intelligence (AI) to achieve cost savings and improved services.

USNH has and continues to leverage AI to achieve cost savings in administrative work, transaction processing and more. Current areas of focus include travel and expense processing, accounts payable, human resources processing, and custom chatbot user assistance to reduce the need for ticket processing and help desk support and more.