

CONNECTION

NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL

OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CONNECTION: NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT is published four times a year by the New England Board of Higher Education, 45 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111-1325 Phone: 617.357.9620

Fax: 617.338.1577

Email: connection@nebhe.org

Vol. XVI, No. 1 Summer 2001

ISSN 0895-6405

Copyright © 2001 by the New England Board of Higher Education.

Publisher: John C. Hoy

Executive Editor: John O. Harney

NEBHE/CONNECTION Intern: Gillian A. Drutchas

Director of Publications: Charlotte Stratton

Design and Production: The Publication Group

Advertising Sales and

Marketing Coordinator: Christine Quinlan

Subscription Information: \$20 per year (4 issues); regular issues \$3.95 each; annual FACTS issue \$14.95.

Advertising rates are available upon request.

CONNECTION is printed in New England. CONNECTION is indexed in PAIS International and in ERIC's *Current Index to Journals in Education*. CONNECTION is available in microform and electronically from University Microfilms, 800 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. A cumulative index of CONNECTION articles and abstracts of recent articles are accessible on the World Wide Web at www.nebhe.org.

The New England Board of Higher Education is a nonprofit, congressionally authorized, interstate agency whose mission is to foster cooperation and the efficient use of resources among New England's approximately 280 colleges and universities. NEBHE was established by the New England Higher Education Compact, a 1955 agreement among the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. NEBHE operates a variety of programs for New England students, including the tuition-saving Regional Student Program, and advances regional discussion of critical issues through a conference series and the quarterly journal, CONNECTION.

Chair: Nancy I. Chard, Chair, Senate Education Committee, Vermont Legislature

President: John C. Hoy

CONNECTION Editorial Advisory Board

Kenneth Hooker

Columnist, *Boston Globe*

Richard Barringer

Professor, University of Southern Maine

Laura Freid

Executive Vice President for Public Affairs and University Relations, Brown University

Betsy Keady

Market Director, The Forum Corp.

Arnold Koch

Arnold Koch and Associates

Thomas L. McFarland

Former Director, University Press of New England

Ian Menzies

Hingham, Mass.

Neil Rolde

Sewall's Hill, Maine

EDITOR'S MEMO

Saint Michael's College is a sort of pioneer in encouraging students to do something for the poor instead of the beer companies during spring break. For 16 years, the college has been arranging for students to travel to various sites to serve the needy during the March vacation. This past spring, more than 100 Saint Michael's students worked with homeless people in Hartford, Conn., and AIDS patients in New York City, replanted indigenous plants at the Grand Canyon and built a home in Minneapolis through Habitat for Humanity.

Such service initiatives are increasingly common. As part of an honors course called Grass-Roots Community Development, about 100 University of Massachusetts Amherst students performed emergency home repairs and other services for needy people in nearby Holyoke, Mass., and in rural Virginia.

This fall, the University of Vermont goes a step farther, providing AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers with the opportunity to provide service to Vermont communities and earn up to nine undergraduate or graduate credits for structured reflection on their experience. The so-called VISTA scholars will attend UVM workshops, create portfolios and work with faculty advisors during residency weekends on campus.

The service programs create unexpected spinoffs. Several Saint Michael's students who spent spring break working at a Florida camp serving migrant farm workers were invited by the camp operator to return as teachers in the summer. Three Fairfield University students who spent spring break conducting research in Nicaragua decided to return on their own in June to build houses for people whose homes were destroyed by Hurricane Mitch.

Service programs also teach unexpected lessons. One group of Saint Michael's students who spent spring break working with AIDS patients in Haiti reported back to the Saint Michael's board of trustees that it seemed unfair for them to do the work when jobs are so scarce for Haitian nationals.

Then there is the touchy question among academics of whether a week of grueling work in a Hartford soup kitchen is worthy of academic credit. At Saint Michael's, which does not award credit for the programs, President Marc A. vanderHeyden says it's more important that the service experience inform a student's regular coursework: "I'd like to see a history major who spends the spring working with homeless people in Hartford go back to classes and write a paper on homelessness in ancient Venice—to connect the experience with what he's into anyway," says vanderHeyden.

Now, some of the region's research-based programs are harnessing the creativity and practical good sense of service-oriented learning. The Cover Stories in this issue of CONNECTION recount, in particular, how two distinctly different New England institutions—the University of Rhode Island and Bates College—are encouraging students to apply their research in the public interest. It's a case of student activism meets experiential learning meets resume-building. As Bates College President Donald Harward says of the college's applied research in Lewiston and Auburn, Maine: "Bates is able to enhance hands-on learning while addressing community needs."

Our Cover Stories also offer a look at the changing world of knowledge applied in the *private* interest—replete with issues of patents, licenses, incubators, venture capital and, yes, conflicts of interest.

Just as we went to press, two things happened that seemed to reaffirm the timeliness of this exploration. First, Harvard launched its new Research Matters website to show how its scientific research affects people's lives. Then, the industry-sponsored Business Higher Education Forum issued a major study of university-industry collaborations that was quickly assailed for glossing over the ethical snares presented by corporatized academic research. These issues will bear watching, for in New England, *knowledge matters*, especially when it's applied—and applied generously.

John O. Harney is executive editor of CONNECTION.