

SEARCH PROSPECTUS:

President



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THE SEARCH

The New England Commission of Higher Education seeks a forward-thinking, collaborative, and innovative President who will be a respected voice and thought leader in the regional, national,

and international conversation for independent accreditation in the rapidly changing higher education landscape.

ABOUT NECHE

A distinguishing hallmark of American higher education is its system of regional institutional accreditation bodies. This system supports the variety and richness of higher education institutions, including private and public, along with non-profit and proprietary frameworks. The New England Commission of Higher Education ([NECHE](#)) is one of seven regional higher education accrediting bodies in the United States. NECHE is the regional accreditation agency for colleges and universities in the six New England states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Three institutions in Greece, three in Switzerland, two in Lebanon, and one in Bulgaria, Bermuda, and Morocco, respectively, are also members of NECHE.

NECHE is a voluntary, non-profit, self-governing organization having as its primary purpose the accreditation of educational institutions. Through its evaluation activities, the Commission provides public assurance about the educational quality of degree-granting institutions that seek or wish to maintain accreditation. Regional accreditation bodies, like NECHE, operate independently of and in collaboration with state and federal agencies, using peer review to define and evaluate whether institutions meet high standards. The self-regulation provided through regional accrediting bodies helps to preserve the diversity and autonomy of the institutions that comprise the American higher education system.

The Commission is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a reliable authority on the quality of education for the institutions it accredits. The Commission is also recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), affirming that its Standards and processes

are consistent with the quality, improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established.

Based just north of Boston, in Burlington, Massachusetts, the Commission accredits approximately [230 colleges and universities](#). Its institutions range in size from 17 students to more than 135,000.

VISION

Accreditation by NECHE is widely recognized as an effective and efficient system of peer review, assuring the quality of education, supporting innovation, and providing value to institutions and to the public.

MISSION

The Commission exercises the dual roles of quality assurance and encouraging continuous improvement for degree-granting institutions of higher education. The Commission assures the education community and the public that accredited institutions have clearly defined objectives consistent with *Standards for Accreditation* established by the Commission; that they have the organization, staffing and resources to accomplish and sustain these objectives. In addition, through its process of accreditation, the Commission promotes the improvement and effectiveness of its member institutions.

ABOUT NECHE (cont.)

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan, adopted in July 2018, establishes five goals:

1. Increase transparency to advance public trust in accreditation.
2. Affirm the Commission's focus on academic quality and student success.
3. Encourage responsible innovation to improve educational effectiveness.
4. Establish the Commission as a leader in effective data-informed accreditation.
5. Continue to build value from accreditation for member institutions.

HISTORY

NECHE has its roots in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges ([NEASC](#)) where it operated as the NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) until 2018. It served in concert with the three K-12 Commissions of NEASC – the Commission on Public Schools, the Commission on Independent Schools, and the Commission on International Education – to ensure quality education for students in New England and around the world.

Founded in 1885 by Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard University, NEASC is the nation's oldest accrediting association and has worked to establish and maintain high standards for all levels of education longer than any other accreditation agency in the United States.

In 2018, NEASC completed a restructuring that involved making the higher education commission (CIHE) a separate and independent entity – the New England Commission for Higher Education (NECHE) – to align with U.S. Department of Education requirements. NECHE is now the federally recognized regional higher education accreditor for the six New England states.

THE COMMISSION

The [Commission](#) comprises at least twenty-seven persons elected by the member colleges and universities for no more than two consecutive three-year terms. The individual Commissioners reflect diversity in institutional characteristics such as mission, size, geography, funding, and sponsorship, as well as in personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and experience. At least one in seven Commissioners is a representative of the public, with the remainder being faculty, senior administrators, and trustees from member institutions.

STAFF

The president manages a [professional and administrative staff](#) of 11, five of which are vice presidents who serve as institutional liaisons and perform other commission work. The six administrative staff members coordinate the accreditation processes and institutional reviews, provide support to the Commission, its committees, and the vice presidents, and offer programs and support to help institutions enhance their effectiveness.

ACCREDITATION

Regional accreditation of postsecondary institutions is a voluntary, non-governmental, and self-regulatory process of quality assurance and institutional improvement. Regional accreditation recognizes higher education institutions for performance, integrity, and quality to merit the confidence of the educational community and the public. Accreditation by a postsecondary regional accrediting agency qualifies institutions and enrolled students for access to federal funds to support teaching, research, and student financial aid. In the United States, this recognition is extended largely through nongovernmental, voluntary membership associations that establish accreditation criteria, evaluate institutions against those criteria, and approve institutions that meet the criteria.

Institutions of higher learning achieve accreditation from NECHE by demonstrating they meet the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation* and comply with its policies. The Commission expects member institutions to work toward improving their quality, increasing their effectiveness, and continually striving toward excellence. Its evaluative processes are designed to encourage such improvement.

The Commission accredits a wide variety of institutions with different missions. Each institution is evaluated according to the Standards in light of its unique mission. Each of the Standards articulates a dimension of institutional quality. In applying the Standards, the Commission assesses and makes a determination about the effectiveness of the institution as a whole. The institution that meets the Standards:

- has clearly defined purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning;
- has assembled and organized those resources necessary to achieve its purposes;
- is achieving its purposes;
- has the ability to continue to achieve its purposes.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

Adopted in 2016 and covering nine areas of institutional academic and administrative operations, the [Standards for Accreditation](#) are largely qualitative, in keeping with their need to apply to a variety of institutions with different missions. The Commission approaches institutional differences in ways designed to protect both educational quality and individual philosophy and practice. The Standards are aspirational expectations that must be met at least minimally. They allow the Commission to appraise a wide variety of collegiate institutions, differing in purpose, size, organization, scope of program, clientele served, support, and control. The Standards are designed to encourage perceptive and imaginative innovation aimed at increasing the effectiveness of higher education.

The Standards were developed through a participatory process involving the membership and with input from the public. The Commission periodically evaluates the effectiveness of the Standards and the processes for applying them and makes changes as needed.

ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Self-regulation obliges institutions to adhere to the Standards as a condition of their accredited status; accredited colleges and universities demonstrate their integrity through their continued voluntary compliance to these criteria. Adherence to the Standards is periodically reviewed through peer evaluations that are preceded by self-studies directed toward demonstrating that the institution meets the Standards and that it has effective means to ensure institutional improvement.

QUALIFICATIONS

The next president of the New England Commission of Higher Education will have an earned terminal degree from a regionally accredited institution, significant teaching and/or administrative experience in higher education, and demonstrated leadership experience in a collegial environment. The successful candidate will have knowledge and understanding of the issues confronting

colleges and universities; a commitment to and understanding of regional accreditation; exceptional analytical, interpersonal, and organizational skills; a sense of humor; good cheer and uncommon civility; flexibility and a high tolerance for ambiguity; and a willingness to travel within New England, nationally, and internationally.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The president is responsible for the effective operations of the Commission, which includes providing the executive leadership necessary to carry out successfully the Commission's evaluation program, promulgating the standards of membership, and advancing the cause of quality education. The president supports member institutions in meeting the Standards, supervises the Commission's staff, reports to and works with the Commission Board, and works collaboratively with other regional and national accrediting bodies.

The major duties of the president are to:

- Develop and implement a vision and set priorities for NECHE jointly with the Commission, including strategic planning.
- Maintain continuous communication between the Commission and the leadership of the broad variety of member institutions.
- Provide direction and support for the Commissioners in the development of Standards and policies and their application to member institutions.
- Oversee the accreditation process and provide guidance to the institutions engaged in it.
- Work with other regional accrediting agencies and New England state licensing authorities.
- Work with a range of other outside entities and interests pertinent to accreditation, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Supervise, motivate, and lead the NECHE staff.
- Manage NECHE's internal administrative processes.
- Represent the interests and needs of NECHE in its work with other accrediting bodies on regional and national policy issues.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA FOR THE NEXT NECHE PRESIDENT

The coming decade will bring many opportunities and challenges for the next president of NECHE. The Search Committee and Commissioners anticipate the agenda will include opportunities and expectations for the new president to:

Lead: The changing landscape of higher education requires the new president to further develop and extend the vision of NECHE and provide leadership within the Commission and at the national and international levels in support of voluntary accreditation, peer review, quality assurance, and continuous institutional improvement. The Commission expects that the new president will become a highly respected thought leader. At the same time, given the diversity of the NECHE member institutions and their multiple realities and circumstances, the new president will need to inspire trust and lead the Commission with diplomacy and dexterity.

Advocate: In an era of public skepticism and doubt about the value of higher education, it will be critical that the new president is able to make the case for and champion the benefits of voluntary peer review and accreditation within the membership, in governmental circles, and in broader public discussions about higher education. The new president will need the disposition and political acumen to serve as a strong national voice for accreditation's role in quality assurance.

Strategize: The new president will engage the Commissioners and members in the development

of innovative strategies to meet the ever-evolving challenges of the future and contribute equally to the national dialogue through the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions in the larger national conversations about peer assistance and quality assurance.

Steward: In late 2018, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) completed a restructuring to align with the U.S. Department of Education's requirement that the higher education commission (CIHE) operate as a "separate and independent" entity. While NECHE has made a smooth transition to becoming an independent organization, the new president will need to steward the continued development of the Commission as a legal entity of its own. The new president also will be expected to continue to steward and nurture the strong distinctive culture of NECHE.

Manage: The NECHE staff is known for its expertise, work ethic, "can do" spirit, and commitment to supporting member institutions, the general public, and governmental entities. Given the small size of the staff and relatively small geographic region of NECHE, the new president must be task-oriented and capable of balancing details with the big picture. The new president will be an excellent manager, providing leadership for the internal operations of the organization while engaging in external Commission issues and activities.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Nominations, applications, and inquiries may be made in confidence. Full consideration will be given to all applications received by **February 28, 2020**. Application materials that include a letter of interest, curriculum vitae and contact information for five references (who will not be contacted without permission) must be submitted to:

NECHEPresident@academicsearch.org

Academic Search is assisting NECHE in this presidential search. Confidential discussions about the opportunity may be arranged by contacting consultants Jay Lemons (jay.lemons@academicsearch.org), Ann Hasselmo (ann.hasselmo@academicsearch.org), or Jennifer Kooken (jennifer.kooken@academicsearch.org).

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search, Inc. is assisting New England Commission of Higher Education in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services exclusively to institutions of higher education. Academic Search was founded on the principle of strengthening higher education leadership through professional search services. We are the only search firm in the nation with a formal relationship to a premier leadership development program. As the subsidiary of the American Academic Leadership Institute (AALI), Academic Search provides substantial financial support to a number of leadership identification, development, and support programs across all sectors of public and private higher education. For more information, visit <http://www.academicsearch.org/>.



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