

Three-Year Baccalaureate Programs



NECHE Annual Meeting College in Three

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Why a three-year bachelor's degree?

- **College retention and completion rates a concern**
- **Cost becoming prohibitive to many**
- **Student debt a national conversation**
- **Many high school and adult students via online learning now have earned college credits through early college programs, AP credits & transfer credits.**



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Other issues/opportunities:

- **Current model hasn't changed overall for a century**
- **Need to connect college education with professional workplace**
- **Student goals, preparation, differ widely**
- **Technology and remote learning a new reality**
- **More students completing means greater income equality, opportunity for all students seeking a college education**
- **Greater efficiency means cost control**



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Process for the 13 schools involved:

- **“Starter Kit” by Robert Zemsky & Lori Carrell**
 - Pilot program – allows for innovation, experimentation
 - Consider learning outcomes outside of Carnegie credit system
 - Data driven: enrollment and retention data, assessment data, outcomes goals
 - Different models for different schools
- **Faculty key:**
 - Leadership team
 - Starter team



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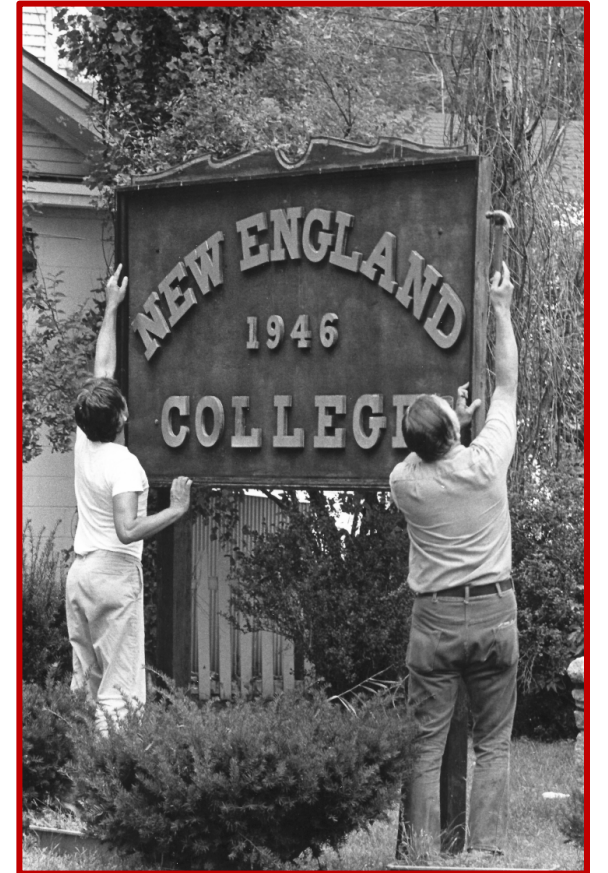
• About New England College

History of innovation

- Founding programs received national recognition for innovative 3-year, 12-month degree programs
- 3-Year Option
- Growth in enrollment due to multiple delivery modes (5,000 students)
- Merger with NH Institute of the Arts in 2019
- New 3-Year Clinical Cooperative BS Nursing

Student Population & Enrollment

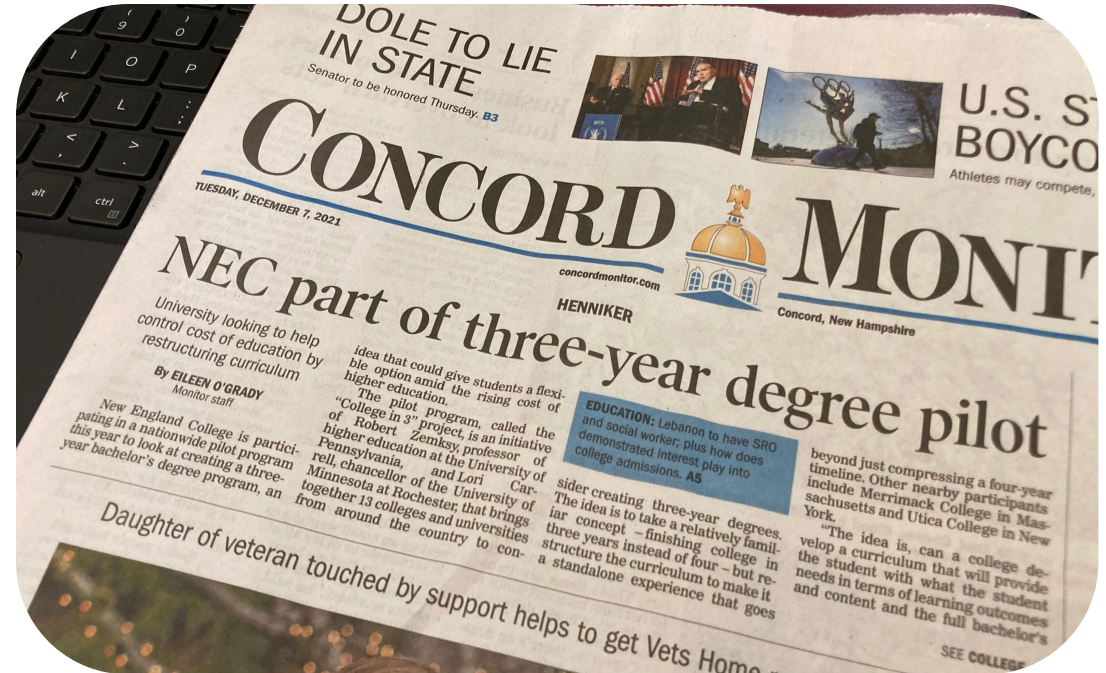
- 40% traditional students are Pell recipients
- Most diverse college in NH



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New England College

- Popular majors lend themselves to a 3-year degree
 - Business
 - Criminal Justice
 - Nursing
- Heterogeneous student population in terms of preparation, goals
 - Three-year program desirable for some but not all



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New England College Priorities:

- Commitment to solid liberal arts foundation
- Opportunity for all traditional students to enjoy on-campus experience, extra-curricular opportunities
- Full time faculty instruction
- Reduce cost, debt



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Leadership Team

- President
- Senior Team

Starter Team

- President
- Assoc VP, Enrollment & Program Development
- Provost
- Deans
- Professors

Faculty Team

- Assoc Dean, Liberal Arts Education
- Assoc Dean, Student Success & Advising
- Criminal Justice Professors
- Registrar



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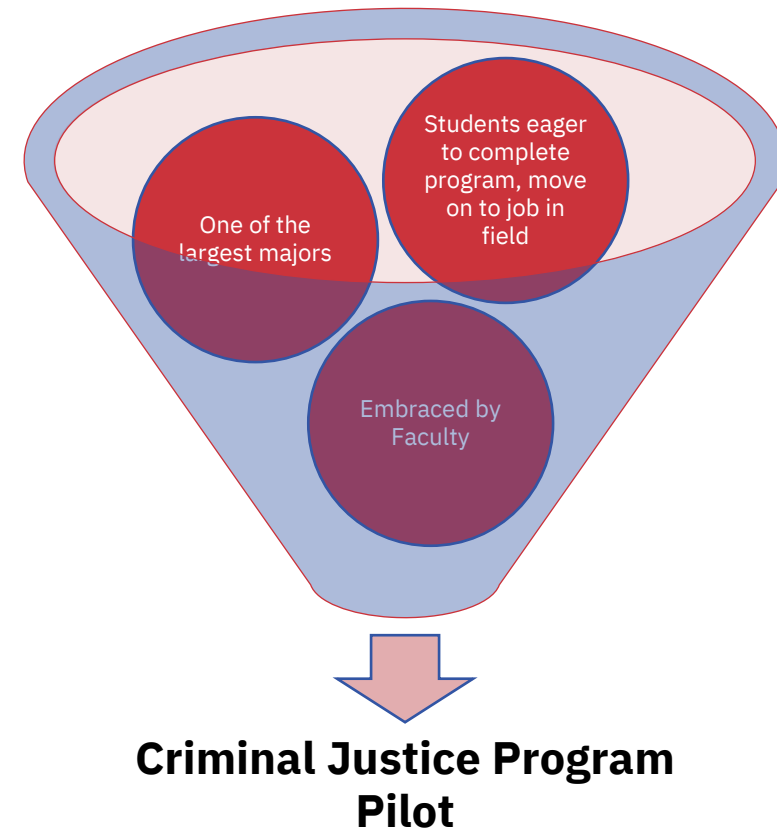
New England College Pilot Timeline:



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New England College Pilot Major:

- Utilize alignments between general education and major course content
- Refocus from time on task to what students need to know
- Integrate workplace experiences



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About Merrimack College:

- Founded in 1947 by Cardinal Cushing & the Augustinian Order of Villanova University to serve GI's returning from WWII who lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts and the Greater Merrimack Valley.
- Merrimack has experienced considerable growth and positive momentum for the last decade and named a top 3 most innovative college in the master comprehensive Northeast ranking in 2020.
- 5600+ undergraduate & graduate students (4,000 UG & 1,600 graduate); DI athletics, dozens of majors across professional, science & liberal arts disciplines, growing online presence; Apple distinguished university and recognized as a Carnegie community engaged school

Merrimack College Early College Program:

- Merrimack has played an early and major role amongst private colleges in the early college movement in Massachusetts and currently enrolls more than 140+ high school students each semester from the Abbott Lawrence Academy (ALA).
- Abbott Lawrence Academy (ALA) is a small, accelerated 9-12th grade honors high school within the larger Lawrence High School campus. ALA was created to retain the best and brightest students of the city of Lawrence. ALA is the district's first exam high school, admitting students each year through a rigorous application and entrance exam process, enrolling only up to 100 students per year.
- The Early College/Merrimack partnership allows students to take courses on the Merrimack campus beginning their junior year.
- We currently fully fund 40 ALA students upon graduation from ALA to attend Merrimack (10 new students per year with full tuition, fees, room & board) scholarships), the program is called Pioneer Scholars has it own counselors and staff to support the students, these students are the best and brightest at Merrimack with very high GPA's.
- Three year model allows us to utilize early college with affordable models to have more ALA Pioneer Scholars attend Merrimack



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Merrimack College Approach to the Project

Following the 'Starter Kit', Merrimack established a reasonably small and at the same time broadly representative team, comprised of faculty members & academic leaders who have demonstrated their capacity to collaborate across disciplines and other campus silos. The group collectively discussed the core key questions of the project:

- *What is the purpose of a Baccalaureate degree?*
- *What is the history of current degree requirements on the campus?*
- *What should the holder of a Bachelor's degree be able to do.*
- *How best can the identified competencies be taught and learned in three years?*
- *How do we address the issues of access, affordability and employment outcomes?*

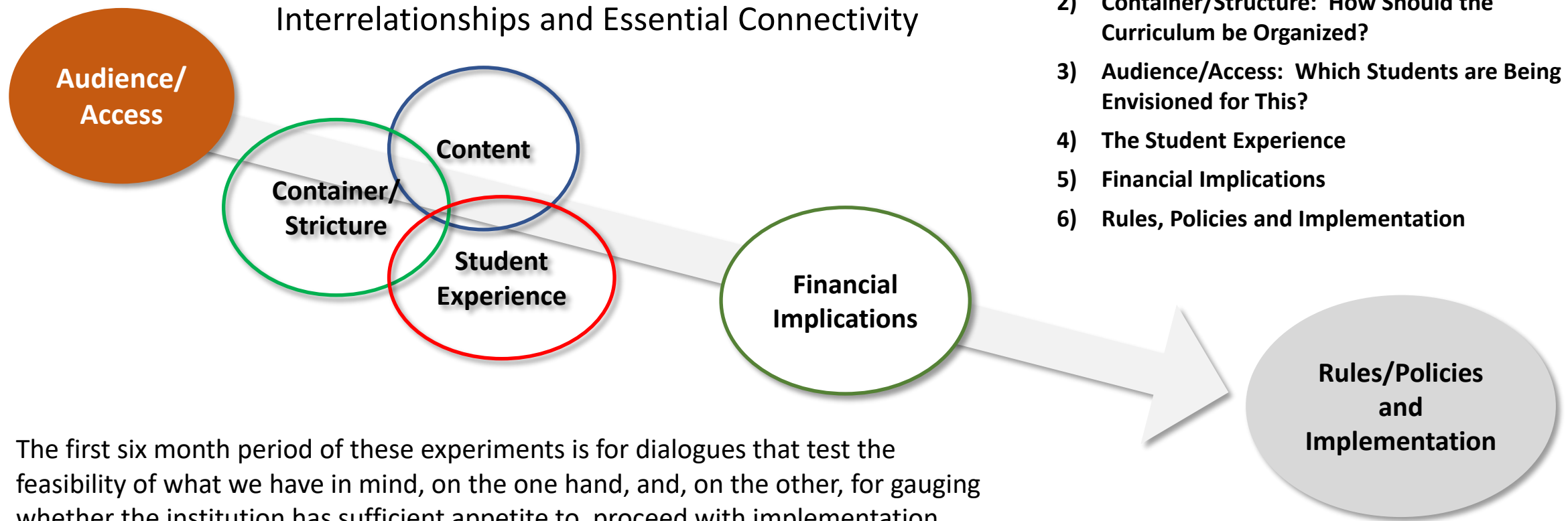
Team members were instructed to not obsess on existing accreditor's bachelors degree requirements, including credits, credit hours, general education requirements or other factors that might inhibit exploration and discussion.

Project related literature was also provided on a team google drive and on google space



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Phase I: The First 6 Months @ MC



The first six month period of these experiments is for dialogues that test the feasibility of what we have in mind, on the one hand, and, on the other, for gauging whether the institution has sufficient appetite to proceed with implementation.



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Phase II - Audience/Access

- Targeted audience for pilot: Early college/dual enrollment program, Honors, post traditional students/working adults (age 25+)
- Focused on non-licensure majors, like business, health science, physics, liberal arts
- Build in counseling: mental health and career counseling to address added stress due to shorter length of degree
- Invest in faculty training, tailored to enhance accelerated program and student success
- Size of each **cohort** for pilot: at least 20-25 students, more scaffolded curriculum less course choices

	← LOWER COST MORE OPPORTUNITIES →		
PROGRAM	<i>"ACCELERATED"</i>	<i>"360-DEGREE SUPPORT"</i>	<i>"HONORS"</i>
SIGNATURE COMPONENTS	Mostly online Competency-based Work-aligned	Cohort-based Program-focused Living-learning	3+1 (3+2) programs Internship/coop Faculty mentorship
AUDIENCES	Bachelor-Completion Working adults Commuter	Compass Promise	Honors Early College



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Merrimack Pilot

- Utilize our Early College/Pioneer Scholars program and Honors programs
- Focus on 3-5 non-licensure majors
- Target lower-income higher ability students who would be interested in a graduate degree
- Create a program for 20-25 student cohorts
- Pilot new competency based courses
- Pilot 7 week course offerings, project based model.

Next Steps

- Assess feasibility of piloting a few groups in Fall 2022
- Discuss how to market the program to prospective audiences
- Coordinate with other groups, especially content and student experience
- Identify and build incentives for faculty interested and ready to teach in such a program
- Build an assessment model for courses, program and student outcomes
- Seek NECHE & Dept of ED Approval for a 90 credit BA/BS degree



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What We Have Collectively Learned So Far:

- A lot of excitement among faculty and leadership.
- Students are excited and interested.
- Collective effort w/13 other colleges, not on our own.
- Seen as a positive opportunity to make significant change in curriculum, costs and degree completion.

