



January 8, 2009

Dear Member of the New England delegation:

The New England Board of Higher Education and the New England Council, representing 270 colleges and universities and more than 300 businesses, academic and health institutions and other organizations throughout New England, seek your support relative to the proposed economic stimulus package.

In brief, we are respectfully requesting the members of the New England congressional delegation to urge your colleagues in the House and Senate to include funding for new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation and/or restoration, betterments and other infrastructure improvements at New England's higher education institutions in any such stimulus legislation.

Consider:

- There are hundreds of “shovel-ready” construction, renovation, improvement and other projects at New England higher education institutions that could begin within 60 to 90 days of Congress' enactment of a proposal. This would provide immediate stimulus to the moribund economy. As you know, one of the states leading the country into recession was Rhode Island.
- Investment in the region's higher education institutions has both immediate and long-term benefits for the prosperity of the region. In the short term, such investments will provide high-wage jobs, reduce energy and operating costs and quickly generate economic activity. In the long term, these investments will strengthen higher education's capacity to educate high-skill graduates who will contribute to the region's economy. Moreover, such investments will renew the infrastructure and research capacity of the region's universities, expanding their ability to provide basic and advanced research, technological innovation and intellectual property that fuel growth and increase our economic and scientific competitiveness.

Additional information concerning these investments is enclosed for your review.

Construction projects for new facilities, additions to existing buildings, renovation projects and other capital investments are jeopardized by unyielding fiscal constraints, further slowing the region's economy. Numerous projects in both the planning and execution stage have been halted due to financial exigencies, financing troubles or economic uncertainty.

Further, New England's higher education institutions are grappling with a host of other issues: job loss and home foreclosures that further diminish the ability of students and families to pay tuition and fees; loss of some student borrowing alternatives due to the collapse of private loan markets and stricter borrower qualification requirements; state budget cuts; staggering endowment

losses; and difficulties with short- and long-term borrowing, including the inability to issue bonds, to name several.

We thank you for your ongoing leadership on the key issues affecting higher education, including your support for: the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the first comprehensive bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act since 1998; the expansion of veterans education benefits for those who served after September 11, 2001; and the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008.

Higher education is a proven catalyst of economic growth and absolutely necessary element of state, regional, national and international competitiveness in a global economy.

Thank you for considering our request and we look forward to hearing from you in the near future. We are eager to assist in any way and to provide additional information that might make action in this regard possible.

As always, your work on behalf of working families and students at all levels of education is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Thomas  
President and CEO  
New England Board of Higher Education

James T. Brett  
President and CEO  
The New England Council

Enclosure

## **Facts About Investment in New England Higher Education as a Stimulus for Economic Growth**

- According to the 2008 Annual College Construction Report, college construction *projected to start* in the New England region include \$417 million on new buildings, \$45 million for additions to existing buildings and \$305 million on renovation/retrofitting existing buildings for a total of \$768.9 million.
- Based on the 2008 report, college construction projects *to be completed* in the New England region include \$525 million in new construction, \$127.8 million for additions to existing buildings and \$155 million in renovation/retrofitting existing buildings for a total of \$808.3 million.
- The New England region completed more than \$1 billion worth of construction in 2007, which was an increase in activity over previous years. In 2007, colleges in Region 1 (New England) spent \$556 million in new construction, \$235 million on additions to existing buildings and \$228 million on renovation/retrofitting existing buildings for a total of \$1.03 billion.
- Nationally, all regions of the country spent more than \$10 billion in new construction, \$1.7 billion in addition to existing buildings and \$2.5 billion in renovation/retrofitting existing buildings for a total of \$14 billion.

Higher Education is a critical component of the New England economy. Specifically, our 260 colleges and universities:

- Educate 887,000 students annually;
- Contribute nearly \$100 billion annually in overall economic impact;
- Create \$28.7 billion in direct expenditures annually;
- Have over \$9.5 billion in collective revenues, topping many of the region's largest companies;
- Employ over 187,000 people (137,000 are full-time, greater than the number of doctors, police officers, construction laborers, dentists, pharmacists and computer programmers in New England combined).