

NASH Launches Talent Ready New England, a Breakthrough in Workforce Development

Public higher education systems unite to build learner-centered pathways to high-quality jobs

WASHINGTON, NY, UNITED STATES, April 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Association of Higher Education Systems ([NASH](#)) today announced the launch of Talent Ready New England (TRNE), a first-of-its-kind, multi-state, multi-system framework designed to strengthen regional employment pipelines and address critical workforce shortages.



Developed in partnership with seven NASH member systems and regional partners, TRNE focuses on building employer-aligned pathways, short-cycle earn-and-learn models, and skill-based credentialing strategies that enable learners to move more quickly and confidently into high-quality jobs. By coordinating efforts across state lines, the initiative positions New England to respond more effectively to workforce needs in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, the blue and marine economy, and other priority sectors.

“

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Nancy Zimpher, President of NASH

The seven participating systems together represent over 250,000 students spanning from Maine to Connecticut. Collectively, these systems are uniquely positioned to align education with labor market demand at a scale that individual campuses cannot achieve alone. This year, TRNE expects to expand its collaborations across the region to

include employers, additional higher education institutions, and community partners.

[NASH's Office of Workforce Development](#) will serve as the backbone for Talent Ready New England, leading convening, facilitation, and multi-year communities of practice that support systems in designing and scaling employer-aligned workforce models.

“For decades, public higher education has tried to meet workforce needs one institution and one state at a time, and the talent gaps have only widened,” said Nancy L. Zimpher, President of NASH. “Talent Ready New England represents a fundamentally different approach rooted in

systemness. By coming together on a regional scale, we give learners opportunities, employers confidence, and regions a competitive edge.”

In practice, TRNE will:

- Build faster, clearer routes into high-quality jobs through employer-aligned programs and stackable credentials
- Strengthen regional labor supply by coordinating efforts across states rather than duplicating them
- Expand work-based learning options that meet real-time industry needs
- Increase learner mobility so they can move between institutions, opportunities, and states without losing momentum
- Help employers fill persistent talent shortages in priority industries across the region

“At its core, Talent Ready New England is NASH in action, driving system-level workforce alignment across state lines,” said Colleen Thouez, Vice President for Workforce Development at NASH. “By convening public higher education systems around shared priorities, we’re building pathways that connect learning to jobs, directly addressing the needs of the local economy.”

This launch comes at a pivotal national moment, as shifting federal priorities, demographic decline, and the rapid growth of AI are reshaping the skills needed to succeed in today’s workforce. In response to these shifts, public higher education systems across New England are recognizing that workforce solutions must come from collaboration between states. At the same time, learners are seeking shorter, more flexible, and more portable credentials, while employers continue to move toward skills-based hiring, intensifying the need for cross-system alignment.

“If we act as a region, we’re powerful,” said Shannon Gilkey, Commissioner of Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner. “Aligning our higher education systems — and engaging governors and commerce leaders — gives us the leverage to attract investment and strengthen opportunity for every state.”

Talent Ready New England will run through 2030, establishing durable cross-system mechanisms that increase predictability for learners, employers, and institutions alike. By acting collectively, public higher education systems in New England are positioning the region to shape, not simply react to, future workforce demands and economic change.

For more information about NASH's workforce development efforts, visit <https://nash.edu/workforce/>

About NASH

Founded in 1979, the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) works to advance the role of multi-campus systems and the concept of systemness to create a more

vibrant and sustainable higher education sector. NASH represents the 110 public higher education systems in the U.S., which include more than 1,450 institutions and serve 16.2 million students nationwide. Learn more at www.nash.edu.

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