

2024 0220 DeRosa, Robin (submitted via email)

I am writing to send public comment to the task force that is looking at public higher education in New Hampshire.

I am a longtime professor at Plymouth State, where I currently act as library director. I am sitting in Lamson Library on campus where we have cleared out the books from 1/3 of our library's third floor because for the last decade, the ceiling has been leaking and caving in and we can't afford to fix it.

It is exhausting to work in place that suffers from such perpetual underfunding. While the facilities suffer from all sorts of deferred maintenance that makes life difficult, the biggest tragedy is the cutting of services, supports, staff, faculty, courses, and majors. When my daughter went off to college last Fall, she went to Rhode Island because there were too many cuts here in New Hampshire to make it a viable choice for her education, despite the faculty benefit I would have had on her tuition.

"Adjusted for population, the states with the largest per capita spending for higher education in FY 2023 were Wyoming (\$682), New Mexico (\$613), Hawaii (\$612), North Dakota (\$600) and California (\$556). The states with the lowest per capita funding were New Hampshire (\$125), Arizona (\$183), Vermont (\$200), Missouri (\$207) and Rhode Island (\$230). Washington, DC provided \$181 per capita." (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2024/02/01/state-support-for-higher-education-tops-126-billion-up-102-over-last-year/>). As you know, most years, we are dead last in public funding. Most years, we are less than 10% funded by state dollars, which means that we are completely driven by tuition. When demographics shift, we cut majors like math and history and courses like "Ethics and AI" because we can't sustain our programs with fewer students. In fact, even if we filled our dorms to the max, we would not have enough of an operating budget to cover our costs. This level of public funding is literally causing our colleges and universities to wither and die.

Average student loan debt ranged from \$18,344 in Utah up to \$39,928 in New Hampshire for the graduating class of 2020, according to the latest data from The Institute for College Access and Success. (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2021/12/01/how-much-student-loan-debt-is-in-your-state/?sh=89de7ae434e4>). Our students pay the price for our state's abysmal levels of support.

I am a national leader in college affordability, digital learning, and interdisciplinary curriculum. I have an Ivy League education and have been at PSU for 25 years. Your faculty and staff are deeply competent and deeply committed to the work, and we love our students. Please do what you can to keep CCSNH and USNH institutions open and flourishing. We are on the brink of going under, and once we lose programs and people and campuses, we will likely not ever get them back.

I am sorry to sound weary and desperate. But my students work so hard to come to college, and so many of them can't afford to finish. Our faculty and staff are all doing 3 jobs at a time and are budgets are bone on bone. We need a lifeline.

Thank you for listening.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin

Dr. Robin DeRosa

Director, Learning & Libraries

Plymouth State University

Plymouth, New Hampshire

[My Website](#)

[CoLab Website](#)

[Lamson Library Website](#)