

## Opening Remarks, The *Purpose First* initiative

Dr. Ross Gittell, CCSNH Chancellor

Nov. 1, 2018

Good Afternoon.

It is exciting to be part of this afternoon's discussion. I am here as CCSNH representative and partner with Plymouth State University on a state-wide initiative -- Purpose First. CCSNH's Purpose First engagement with PSU and others is meant to address a key barrier to college attendance and attainment – prospective students giving limited attention to purpose, to life aspirations and goals, and having limited understanding of the opportunities that college can provide toward the achievement of goals and purpose. This barrier is particularly acute among first generation and rural students. And for NH, without increasing the college matriculation rate across the state in areas which currently have the lowest levels of higher educational achievement, the state will not achieve its 65 by 25 goal – that 65% of working age population will have college credential or degree – in support of strong NH economy and future.

Working with our national partner, Complete College America, Purpose First aligns career/purpose exploration and knowledge-building with college and academic preparation and planning. We are partnering to put into place opportunities for prospective and current college students all across the state to explore and be exposed to the opportunities that can come with college attainment, and what those opportunities are in NH. And to try to have this exploration/search start in high school, or even earlier.

As our speaker Professor Ardoin highlights in her research, rural and first-generation students often lack the **cultural capital** to be sufficiently informed about the value of college education and the opportunities that can come - the doors opened - with college education.

Ardoin describes very well in her work how the aspirations of first generation students and students in rural areas are strongly influenced by their immediate environment – basically what they are exposed to on a regular basis. For rural students and students whose parents did not attend college -- their exposure to college, the college preparation and application process, what it takes to be

successful in college, and the careers and other opportunities that college attainment provides -- is often a limited view.

For rural and first-generation students, we want to help raise aspirations and then support achievement of those aspirations right here in NH with affordable and strong pathways to higher education and support of student success in academics, and life and labor market success.

We are trying to do this in a variety of ways. To be successful will require a multi-tier approach and a variety of efforts. We are working in partnership with the NH department of Education and with high schools across the state. We are deploying on-line web-based and mobile tools for student and prospective student self-assessment and exploration of labor market opportunities. And we are having our students engage in aspiration-based academic pathway planning which we are supporting with advising and work-based learning opportunities.

By supporting student aspirations and achievement, we are also supporting community well-being and the economy of NH, given that the skills, capabilities and education of local residents is the most important aspect of community and state economic development.

We look forward to hearing from and being informed by Dr. Adroin. We will use today to advance our thinking, planning and actions, with the goal to support a broader cross-section of students in NH achieving college success.