

NEED/NERA Comments to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine Blue Ribbon Committee on *Enhancing Coordination Between Land-grant Universities and Colleges*

Submitted by Ali Mitchell Dunnigan, NEED Executive Director, and Rick Rhodes, NERA Executive Director, on May 6, 2022

As the Executive Directors for NEED and NERA, we are grateful for the opportunity to review the Blue Ribbon Panel's 17 preliminary observations on enhancing coordination between Land-grant Universities and Colleges. While we found no surprises in the observations, we will highlight the following points.

- We agree that there is a substantial portfolio of completed and ongoing collaborative projects among the Land-grant institutions and, as the preliminary observations suggest, the portfolio of collaborative projects represent exemplars for future inter-institutional collaboration.
- We appreciate and agree that that interinstitutional collaboration is far more common between the 1862's than between the 1862's and the 1890's and 1994's.
- As the preliminary observations clearly point out, there are a number of barriers – individual, institutional, traditional, and historical that need to be addressed.
- Addressing the resource and staffing inequities between our 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions is paramount. At the same time, we believe that it is important for the authors to recognize that the capacity of small 1862 institutions in the northeast, west, and pacific islands to collaborate is also constrained by limited Hatch and Smith-Lever allocations.
- We agree that investing resources in programs to promote collaboration is important. The recommendations in Preliminary Observation 14 describe many of the long-term Hatch Multistate projects. Having additional sources of funding that would be sustainable beyond 5 years, as recommended in Preliminary Observation 15 would be very helpful to promote more multistate projects.

Importantly, both NEED and NERA look forward to the roadmap that the Blue Ribbon Panel develops as the “system” systematically addresses the opportunities that widespread collaboration provides. We understand that at the heart of collaboration is interpersonal trust. That trust is dependent on the building of relationships among team members and the teamwork that evolves from the trusted relationships must have clear intentionality, support, and associated rewards. We look forward to the recommendations that the Blue Ribbon Panel will share as it develops a roadmap for the Land-grant system to consider. Clearly, we have far higher collective intelligence and capacity when we address problems and challenges together.