



**Remarks of  
Gregory W. Powell  
Chairman, Harold Alfond Foundation**

**New England Board of Higher Education  
2024 Excellence Awards Dinner  
Kennebunkport, Maine**

**October 10, 2024**

---

On behalf of the Harold Alfond Foundation, it is a pleasure and honor to be here this evening along with fellow trustee, Mike Dubyak, and Foundation staff members Travis Cummings, Ryan Fitzsimmons, Allison Holton, and Jarod Deanis.

We are grateful beyond words for this recognition, and we extend our thanks to the entire NEBHE team for this award and for all of the terrific work you do to advance higher education in New England and beyond. Thank you.

Let me add that it is a special and unique pleasure to be here tonight for at least three reasons.

First, it is special as we are delighted to see our good friend and outstanding former University of Maine System Chancellor, Jim Page, recognized. Better late than never, and so well deserved. Congratulations, Jim!

Second, we join Senator Daughtry in thanking Karen Pardue and Joan Nass for their fine contributions to the Board even as we thank the entire NEBHE team lead by Mike and Gregg for their fine leadership.

Finally, in my 28 years with the Harold Alfond Foundation, I cannot remember a more pleasurable, extraordinarily unique evening.

Here we are at this grand old hotel, surrounded by brilliant, wonderful, esteemed leaders in higher education of the highest caliber: chancellors, presidents, etc.

And here's the unique pleasure part. Not once have I been asked for money! Not yet any way!

Well, thank you for that as well.

We are at the point in tonight's program when everything has been said. Just not everyone has said it.

As the near-last speaker of the evening, I know brevity is a virtue of the highest order.

So let me leave you with a little history and how the life of NEBHE and the Foundation have crossed paths.

Harold Alfond graduated from Swampscott High School in 1932. He never attended college. That said, he came to deeply believe in the value of higher education from the challenges he faced as a shoe factory worker and then building a shoe business himself.

So, in 1950, he launched the Harold Alfond Foundation. Some five years later, the New England Board of Higher Education was created. Since 1950, Harold's Foundation has awarded over \$1.3 billion in grants, some 80% or more of which have been to advance higher education.

And since 1955, your organization has recognized and advanced higher education in all its forms in countless meaningful ways.

Fourteen years ago, in 2010, you hosted the Foundation and the Maine Compact of Higher Education at the Fairmount Hotel in Boston.

At *that* grand hotel, you honored the Foundation and its launch of our signature program which provides a \$500 grant to every Maine child at birth for higher education. Your recognition of us and our new program those 14 years ago was a wonderful confidence booster and greatly appreciated.

And tonight, we are proud to report that over one half a billion dollars in higher education savings has been invested through our program for some 160,000 Maine kids.

As we thought about you and the honor you are bestowing on us tonight, we were struck by your vision statement:

“Our vision is that everyone in New England will have lifelong, affordable, high-value, post-secondary education.”

In every way, the Harold Alfond Foundation shares your vision and has tried, over the course of its history, to do our part in fulfilling that mission here in Maine.

As we close out this evening, what do we make of this alignment, this vision we share?

In this time of national divisiveness, discord, and strife, we can be tempted to overlook the many, many ways in which we share the same core beliefs, aspirations, and goals.

But here in this room tonight, we are together. We are partners and teammates who share an aspiring vision for higher education and the huge value it provides and the good it will produce in the years to come.

Together, we are committed to offering diverse, affordable, higher education models to all learners of all ages, from Kittery to Caribou, including those who have not chosen, do not thrive in, or cannot afford the more traditional college or university experience.

We are committed to the essential value of multi-disciplinary, experiential learning in a digital world – learning which is relevant and effective as it connects learners to the world.

We are committed to life-long learning for all – more necessary than ever as technological innovation and change accelerates at an unprecedented pace – all in a highly competitive global economy.

And as artificial intelligence looms and blooms, we are committed to the proposition that higher education is uniquely positioned to guide, lead, and harness the power of AI.

And we are committed to fulfilling that role – essential as it is to moving forward with our humanity preserved, nurtured, uplifted, and flourishing.

At the Foundation, we just write the checks. Sometimes with a few conditions.

You do all the work.

And so let me close by thanking you. Not only for recognizing the small part we play in the work you do, but thanking you for all that you have done and all that you will do in the days and years ahead.