

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

December 13, 2022

10:00 a.m.

Livestreamed, via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (“BHE” or “the Board”) was held virtually on Tuesday, December 13, 2022 on the web-conference platform Zoom.

The following Board Members were present:

Chris Gabrieli, Chair

Mary Burns

Ann Christensen

Veronica Conforme

Alex Cortex

Patty Eppinger

Travis Lawrence

Paul Mattera

Judy Pagliuca

Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education

Paul Toner

Bill Walczak

Andrew Whitcomb, non-voting Student Advisor, UMass segment

Robert Huttig, non-voting Student Advisor, State University segment

Noe Ortega, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

The following Board Members were absent:

None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and announced that this meeting is being held remotely and in accordance with relevant amendments to the Open Meeting Law. Chair Gabrieli announced that the meeting is being livestreamed via Zoom and recorded, and members of the public who signed up for public comment would be allowed to join the Zoom meeting to provide comment. Department of Higher Education (DHE or Department) Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis then took roll call attendance (see above for attendance roster).

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chair Gabrieli reported that there were several requests for public participation. The following groups were allotted three minutes to speak.

- Elaine Minnehan and Brad Kramer, One Family, Inc.
- Bahar Akman Imboden, The Hildreth Institute
- Ginette Saimprevil, Bottom Line
- Amanda Seider UAspire
- Femi Stoltz, OneGoal Massachusetts
- Francesca Purcell, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Ben Forman, Mass Inc.
- Max Page, Massachusetts Teachers Association
- Maria Hegbloom, Massachusetts State College Association
- Claudine Barnes, Massachusetts Community College Council
- Tom Dretler, Shorelight
- Genesis Carela, The Education Trust

Elaine Menneham shared her experience as a MassBay Community College student. She spoke of the importance of financial aid and scholarships, something she learned firsthand as a student and mentor.

Brad Kramer is the Director of Public Policy for One Family, a Massachusetts nonprofit that works to prevent homelessness and break the cycle of family poverty. He shared information about the organization's programs and their outcomes. Mr. Kramer also urged the Board to recommend increased investments in financial aid and adoption of the MassReconnect program.

Bahar Akman Imboden is the Director of the Hildreth Institute, a research and policy center focused on systemic issues in higher education. She stated that her research has shown that tuition and fees in Massachusetts have steadily increased over the past 20 years, while funding for state scholarships have been declining. This has led to a high unmet need, with Massachusetts students facing the nation's fifth-highest student debt burden. Students must navigate an overly complex system of more than three dozen small-dollar scholarship grants and waivers to access aid. Those who can easily apply and understand the system are the ones who can pursue a degree.

Ms. Akman Imboden stated that the EY-Parthenon report has resulted in solid student-centric recommendations, such as doubling state-funded financial aid and expanding the MASSGrant Plus to reach a great number of students. However, additional measures are needed to prevent public higher education students from taking on burdensome student loans. Ms. Akman Imboden added that to address this issue, the BHE should consider a centralized financial aid system with a streamlined application process that would be clear and reliable, while providing students with access to public higher education without debt.

Ginette Samprevil, Executive Director for Bottom Line, and her colleagues Femi Stoltz from uAspire

and Amanda Seider from OneGoal, represent over 7,700 low-income, first-generation high school and college students from across the state. Through coaching and direct support, the organizations have seen firsthand how the talents and ambitions of so many of our Commonwealth's young people crash into the reality that higher education is not affordable for them. The recent alarming reports on post-secondary enrollment confirm this, with a 10% drop in college enrollment across all students in the Commonwealth and a 13% drop for economically disadvantaged students.

Ms. Samprevil added that MASSGrant does not meet the financial needs of our students and covers just 10% of tuition and fees. Research shows that students who work more than 10 to 15 hours are less likely to complete their college degrees than those who do not work. Students' stories shared with the panel shed light on the challenging decisions that so many young people face as they decide whether they can afford to pursue their dreams and attend college.

Femi Stoltz is the Massachusetts Policy Director for uAspire, a nonprofit organization committed to removing barriers to post-secondary education for students of color, low-income households, and students from first-generation families. Ms. Stoltz shared a few words from a Massachusetts College student and uAspire policy fellow, Jennifer Cabra, a first-generation student at the University of Massachusetts, Boston who is a financial aid-eligible student. Her award from MASSGrant covers a very minimal portion of her overall tuition and fees. She is not alone in this situation; many of her peers are also juggling multiple jobs while attending college to pay for classes and purchase books and other materials needed to succeed. Increasing the MASSGrant would mean a lot to the students of the Commonwealth and show that Massachusetts values and is committed to its Equity Agenda. Ms. Stoltz also stated that many disadvantaged students forgo college after high school due to the cost of college and concerns about the inability to pay. Stoltz asks that the Board keep low-income first-generation and minority students front of mind and do their part to ensure that historically disadvantaged students can enroll, persist, and graduate from college.

Amanda Seider, Executive Director of OneGoal Massachusetts, made three recommendations for making the dream of a college degree possible for all students in the Commonwealth. These include an immediate increase in state aid of at least \$2,000 to all Pell-eligible students, codifying the existing expansion of MASSGrant, and expanding the actual cost of higher education. These additional funds can open access to technology, comfort, and living expenses, allowing students to engage more fully in the college experience. Ms. Seider added that the Board should invest in increasing financial aid, communicating resources to students, and providing all state institutions with the resources they need to support best and serve low-income and first-generation students. As a final point, Ms. Seider added the Board should ensure that providing direct aid to students and the institutions that serve those students should be the highest priority.

Dr. Francesca Purcell is on the faculty at Harvard's Graduate School of Education and serves as co-chair with Bill Walczak on the Board's Strategic Planning Advisory Council. She was provost at Mass Bay Community College and Associate Commissioner for Academic and P16 policy at the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and will be sworn in as a member of the board of trustees at North Shore Community College tomorrow. She made two comments about the Financial and Administrative Policy Advisory Council and the resulting motion before the Board this morning:

first, there needs to be a more intentional, coordinated, transparent financing strategy, and second, our students deserve and need a more robust strategic financing system to help them gain access to our excellent institutions, accumulate knowledge and skills, and complete their credentials. The Equity Agenda and hard work to improve student outcomes must be bolstered by a financing strategy that meets the needs of the day. This is long overdue, and the motion should continue to guide sustained and inclusive collaborative efforts involving the Board, the Department of Higher Education, the campuses, government entities and other groups. Ms. Purcell stated the motion before board is moving things in the right direction, and while there are many more debates and discussions to be had, the Strategic Framework for Racial Equity provides a solid foundation for moving forward.

Ben Forman is the research director at Mass Inc. He stated that their most recent research shows that 200,000 college graduates could be lost from the Massachusetts workforce by the end of this decade due to migration, declining birth rates, and low-income students and students of color being only half as likely as their peers complete a college degree. Mr. Forman supports the goals of increased simplicity and transparency, predictability, efficiency, and increased momentum for students by encouraging more students to pursue their higher education studies full-time. He also suggests that as resources move into the field students choose and pursue, the dollars follow them so that faculty and professions such as nursing can provide the courses that students are enrolling in without further delay.

Max Paige is president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and a professor of architecture at UMass Amherst. He was joined at this morning's meeting by MTA leaders Maria Hegbloom and Claudine Barnes, who represent 18,000 public higher education staff and faculty and 90,000 pre-K 12 school educator members. Mr. Paige stated that the most important opportunity before us is winning passage of the Fair Share Amendment, which will go into effect on January 1 2023. The MTA proposes substantial new investments to achieve its aims, but they must go further. To achieve the high quality, debt-free public higher education system our students in Commonwealth deserve, the MTA is launching a Higher Ed For All campaign and will support a new Cherish Act and state budget requests for a generational reinvestment in public higher education. He stated that although today's proposals are a start, they are not enough to turn the corner on college attendance by those who have been shut out and deserve access the most.

Maria Hegbloom is the president of the Massachusetts State College Association, which represents faculty and librarians across the nine State Universities. She stated that expanding MASSGrant Plus and student support services is a step in the right direction. Still, more is needed to address the realities we face in seeking to build and maintain a high-quality public education system. The burden of an overworked and underfunded system is shouldered by employees and students who take out the most in student loans of all three sectors. This is due to a working-class crunch, where students often come from families who have managed to earn enough that they're not Pell-eligible yet not enough to offer substantial aid to their children who might decide that a college education is in their future. Dr. Hegbloom added that the cost of deferred maintenance has caused the universities to spend significant money, which could be hiring more full-time faculty and librarians, more mental health counselors, and curbing the rise of fees overall on state-owned buildings. The BHE is taking steps to address the funding needs at the universities, and Ms. Hegbloom hopes that it can continue

to collaborate with the Massachusetts State College Association and others to push for the high-quality, equitable, and affordable public education system that students in the Commonwealth deserve.

Claudine Barnes is the president of the Massachusetts Community College Council, President of the Higher Education Leadership Council of the MTA, and a Professor of US History and Government at Cape Cod Community College. She spoke out about the chronic underfunding of Massachusetts community colleges and the need to bring their wages and workloads into the 21st century. Ms. Barnes stated that the average instructor's salary is \$57,000, and the average professor's salary is about \$75,000. These averages fail to keep up with the cost of living. Faculty and professional staff can no longer afford to live in Massachusetts with these wages because their workloads are not commensurate with their salaries. This shortfall is compounded by a lack of support, increasing student needs, the impacts of COVID, and the colleges' collective inability to fill vacant positions due to fiscal concerns. Ms. Barnes suggested that the solution is to create more full-time positions and not rest college budgets on students. Ms. Barnes added that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has an opportunity to change the way it funds and supports higher education, from covering deferred maintenance costs and fringe benefits to improving facilities, creating fair workloads, recommitting to the CHERISH Act, and providing salaries that will ensure our colleges are serving Massachusetts to the best of their ability. Community Colleges receive 25% of the state's higher education budget, yet their students are more diverse, financially challenged, and less prepared for college than they could be. Ms. Barnes asked for more assistance to better support the institutions.

Tom Dretler is CEO of Shorelight, a Massachusetts-based education company that serves tens of thousands of students in 38 states and 75 higher education institutions. He shared that as we prepare to support lower and middle-income students, we need to understand that a demographic change is coming in the form of a decrease of 24% of post-secondary students in Massachusetts by 2029, a massive reduction in tuition dollars that our state institutions have relied on receiving. This means that many institutions that have relied on tuition from certain students will only be able to enjoy that tuition at a different level in the future. Mr. Dretler stated that there is a need to provide more funding for those students who cannot pay as much privately, as well as a need for taking measure that would allow these student to graduate debt free.

Genesis Carla is the State Policy Associate for The Education Trust in Massachusetts, a nonprofit organization dedicated to closing long-standing gaps in opportunity and achievement. She is a recent college graduate who knows firsthand what it's like to juggle being a full-time student while working more than 40 hours a week to afford college. She stated that over the last two decades, public colleges in Massachusetts had increased tuition and fees by 59%, leaving many students priced out of an education. It has left many families with no choice but to take on higher amounts of student debt. For many students from families earning less than \$30,000 annually in Massachusetts, public college attendance costs can amount to more than half of their family's income. Ms. Carla stated that the Board had taken an important step forward by acknowledging that the way we currently finance public higher education is not meeting students' needs. With increased funding from the Fair Share Amendment, the Board can make significant investments in public higher education so that Massachusetts can ensure that college is a critical pathway to economic security and mobility for

students and families for generations.

III. WELCOME

Chair Gabrieli welcomed everyone to the last, regularly scheduled Board meeting for the calendar year. He summarized the agenda before turning to the next item.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Chair Gabrieli then asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the last Board meeting held on October 18, 2022. With no further discussion, the motion proceeded to a roll call vote and passed unanimously by all members present, as follows:

- Mary Burns – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Travis Lawrence – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

V. REMARKS & REPORTS

A. Chair's Remarks

Chair Gabrieli opened his remarks by acknowledging our new Commissioner, Dr. Noe Ortega, and departing Secretary of Education James Peyser. He stated that the main topic for today's board meeting is to discuss the proposed framework for the future of public higher education financing. While the Governor and legislature will primarily decide what to advance, Chair Gabrieli noted that the BHE has a vital role in setting an agenda, building consensus, providing holistic guidance, and ambitious but realistic plans that serve the students of our Commonwealth and the communities. He then invited Commissioner Ortega to share his remarks.

B. Commissioner's Remarks

Commissioner Ortega opened his remarks by acknowledging his first six weeks at the DHE and his experience after meeting with presidents, institutional leaders, Board members, faculty, members from the community, alums, employees, and students as part of a listening tour. He stated that they appreciated their institutions, their contributions to communities, regions, and

the Commonwealth, and the challenges posed by the pandemic. The students also spoke about the necessity of attending to their needs, such as food security, homelessness, and mental health issues, and their expectations of the Board.

In his remarks, Commissioner Ortega emphasized that the most important point is that students have expressed their expectations of the Board, the institutions, and the higher education system, and that the Board is willing to address them. He continued that the Board has invited the voices of the community constituencies to present, speak to them, and share their expectations of the Board, the institutions, and the higher education system. In response to these expectations, the Board introduced a proposal that addresses critical issues and engages in difficult discussions. The process of gathering feedback from constituencies, institutional leaders, students, and others who want to weigh in on this conversation is reflected in the process.

Commissioner Ortega closed by stating the Board would take these issues seriously and provide input where needed, highlighting the importance of public higher education to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the students and communities it serves. Chair Gabrieli thanked Commissioner Ortega before turning the meeting over to Secretary Peyser

C. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education's (EOE) Remarks

Secretary Peyser opened his remarks by thanking Chair Gabrieli and welcoming Commissioner Ortega. He reviewed his eight years in office, highlighting his work with the Board, the Department, the Governor, and the legislature. Secretary Peyser addressed creating low-cost degree pathways, streamlining credit transfer, and reducing or eliminating unmet financial need for low-income students to increase college access, affordability, and completion. He also emphasized the Commonwealth Commitment and A2 degree programs, which cut the cost of a Bachelor's degree by 40% for students who transferred to a four-year public college after completing an Associate's degree at one of the Commonwealth's community colleges.

Secretary Peyser continued to highlight accomplishments, including funding for higher education construction projects based on a new strategic capital allocation strategy, joining SARA to offer online courses and degrees, and implementing financial controls of our private colleges to warn of closures and aid student transition. Secretary Peyser concluded by mentioning the Early College Joint Committee (ECJC) and funding for new STEM tech academies based on the P-TECH model to improve higher education results for historically underrepresented and impoverished students. Secretary Peyser closed by expressing his gratitude for eight years of collaboration with the Board.

D. Report from Presidents

State University Segmental Report

For a copy of President Keenan's full remarks, please see:

[https://www.mass.edu/bhe/documents/BHE%20Segmental%20Report%20-%20December%202022%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.mass.edu/bhe/documents/BHE%20Segmental%20Report%20-%20December%202022%20(2).pdf)

Salem State University President John Keenan opened his remarks by stating that the higher education landscape is changing, and the State Universities are adapting to meet the needs of their students. He also addressed the EY Parthenon Strategic Review of Public Higher Education Financing and the passage of the Fair Share Amendment, encouraging state budget writers to follow the will of the voters and significantly increase investment in public higher education. He also highlighted the importance of fully funding employee collective bargaining agreements and ensuring that unfunded obligations do not incur additional student charges.

President Keenan stated that the State University Council of Presidents endorsed the guiding principles of fully funding the collective bargaining agreement and employee fringe benefit costs, significantly increasing financial aid for low-income students, and providing financial support for all Pell-eligible students. The State University Council of Presidents also supports working with the Department to develop a funding formula that weighs enrollment and low-income student enrollment but also considers operational costs.

President Keenan concluded his report by stating the State University Council of President's support for the Board's recommendation to create a transparent tuition fee system that makes sense to the consumer while preserving and respecting the fiduciary duty of local boards. They also endorse the historical structure of local control over campus by overseeing gubernatorial trustee appointments.

He then returned the meeting to Chair Gabrieli. Chair Gabrieli invited MassBay Community College President David Podell to share his report.

Community College Segmental Report

For a copy of President Podell's remarks please see:

https://www.mass.edu/bhe/documents/BHE_Community%20College%20Report_12.13.22.pdf

Mass Bay Community College President Podell opened his remarks on behalf of the Community College Council of Presidents with respect to the strategic finance recommendations. He expressed his support for doubling needs-based financial aid, recognizing community colleges' important role in educating adults without a college degree, and proposing MassReconnect. He also noted that major new investments into annual state appropriations are needed to keep student costs low despite allocations that have yet to keep pace with rising operational costs.

President Podell stated that it's important to recognize public higher education's value to the Commonwealth and its citizens, and in turn, the importance of funding it appropriately. The Commonwealth needs to reconsider its funding methodology and he spoke of places where there was strong philosophical alignment with the strategic review of public higher education finance. The Community College Council of Presidents believes that state investment has not kept up with the needs of higher education over the decades, leading to increased costs for students and deferred maintenance needs on campuses. Additionally, students have paid for raises for non-unionized professionals. The community colleges are concerned that their students may suffer the consequences if they relinquish the authority to set most of their costs to anyone other than their local gubernatorial-appointed boards of trustees.

Despite appropriations not having kept up with costs, Massachusetts community colleges are significantly more affordable than other options students have, and their student charges are consistent with those in states that share the same level of state support. President Podell concluded his remarks by stating that community colleges support making tuition the more substantial of the two charges, provided that the establishment of all student charges is left to local boards. They support the motion and hope that as the process moves forward, the more specific recommendations reflect the viewpoints they support.

E. Report from Student Advisory Council

SAC Chair Travis Lawrence reported that for the last year, he has been researching the effects of COVID on Massasoit Community College students and working with the Healthy Neighborhoods Study to analyze the economic and social well-being of citizens throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. According to the research, financial hardships are a widespread problem, and our students all cite a lack of a work-life balance as their top concern. And for that reason, he would support the upcoming votes in favor of students.

Student Member Robert Huttig continued the SAC report by asking for the Board's support on the Basic Needs and Security legislation currently before the legislature, also referred to as the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative. He urged the Board to put its full force behind trying to get this legislation passed and to plan a community-building week, April 3-7, 2023, to highlight the issue of Basic Needs Security. Students also favor additional funding for financial aid, but one issue of concern is textbook costs and the use of Open Educational Resources (OER). They asked that the BHE continue its long-standing support for using more OER because it's a powerful investment in students' lives and will defray the cost of textbooks. Finally, SAC also endorses having Ballot Question No. 1 funds appropriated toward higher education and an allocated educational trust for that money, so funding goes where it's intended to go.

Student representative Andrew Whitcomb concluded the SAC report by focusing on Massachusetts Ballot Question No. 1. He stated that higher education is at a crossroads, particularly in Massachusetts, where we can make a decision that will benefit students for decades. He continued by stating that it is crucial to keep students informed. Member Whitcomb invited Board members to present to a Student Advisory Council to help students better comprehend their options. As participants in various Advisory Council and BHE meetings, they want to keep the conversation active. Member Whitcomb noted that the benefits of these proposals are for the students, who should be permitted to advocate for their advancement.

Chair Gabrieli thanked SAC and invited Co-Chair Patty Eppinger to present the Academic Affairs and Students Success Advisory Council report.

VI. ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS

A. Academic Affairs & Student Success

Academic Affairs and Student Success Advisory Council Co-Chair Patty Eppinger provided a report on the last AA&SS meeting. She stated the group was briefed on two departmental initiatives that align with the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity: Basic Needs Security and Civic Education and Participation. Co-Chair Eppinger stated that FY '23 funding provided \$4 million to Community Colleges and \$2 million to State Universities for behavioral and mental health. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has helped with food security, and 14 institutions have participated in the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative.

Co-Chair Eppinger noted the second topic was on Civic Learning and Engagement. The AA&SS Advisory Council heard about a segment level that emphasized the cultivation of community leadership. Up to five students will receive paid internships to work with community organizations or government agencies on civic engagement through a program currently being developed, which will require participating Community Colleges to develop programs that offer substantial student credentials. Seven Community Colleges were accepted after applying; others will participate as well.

Co-Chair Eppinger reported that staff are currently working on a national symposium on anti-racist community engagement with the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement National Coalition in March 2023.

Co-Chair Eppinger stated that the AA&SS Advisory Council also heard from Salem State Center for Civic Engagement, Executive Director Cynthia Lynch, and how they took the New Undergraduate Experience and our Strategic Plan for Racial Equity and developed Salem State's Strategic Plan. Co-Chair Eppinger also addressed input from programs that will lead to faculty development across the state in the summer of 2023.

VII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MOTIONS

List of Documents Used

[BHE 23-17](#)

[BHE 23-18](#)

[BHE 23-21](#) {Consent Agenda Includes} [BHE 23-19](#) - [BHE 23-20](#)

[BHE 23-22](#)

Chair Gabrieli reviewed the motions voted on and advanced by the Executive Committee during their last meeting. He reassured Board members that the Executive Committee spent meaningful time discussing the motions, and further reminded Board members of their right to ask questions pertaining to any motion presented.

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion for approval of BHE 23-17, Approval of Berkshire Community College Mission Statement. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 23-17 was approved unanimously by all members present through roll call vote, as follows:

- Mary Burns¹
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Travis Lawrence – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 23-17 APPROVAL OF BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE REVISED MISSION STATEMENT

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the request of Berkshire Community College to revise the College’s mission statement to read as follows: Mission Statement Berkshire Community College is committed to providing an exceptional education and a wide range of opportunities that meet the diverse needs of our community through college transfer, workforce and career pathways, partnerships, and lifelong learning. The Board further authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 7.

Authority Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(e), and 22(n)

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Chair Gabrieli next asked for a motion for approval of BHE 23-18, Approval of Berkshire Community College Strategic Plan. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all Board members present through roll call vote, as follows:

- Mary Burns²
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes

¹ Not present for the vote.

² Not present for the vote.

- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Travis Lawrence – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 23-18 APPROVAL OF BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves Berkshire Community College Strategic Plan 2022-2027: Equity Centered – Equity Actioned and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

Authority Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III, Section 2.

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success

Chair Gabrieli next asked for a motion for approval of BHE 23-21, Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 22-19 and 22-20 on a Consent Agenda. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 22-62 was approved, through roll call vote, as follows:

- Mary Burns³
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Travis Lawrence – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

³ Not present for the vote

**BHE 23-21 BHE 23-21 APPROVAL OF BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MOTIONS 22-19
AND 22-20 ON A CONSENT AGENDA**

VOTED

BHE 23-19 Approval of Letter of Intent of Berkshire Community College to Award the Associate of Science in Natural and Physical Sciences and Authorization for Fast Track Review

BHE 23-20 Approval of Letter of Intent Bridgewater State University to Award the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity and Digital Forensics and Authorization for Fast Track Review

Authority Article III, Section 6, By-Laws

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D., Sr. Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning & Public Program Approval

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion for approval of BHE 23-22, Approval of North Shore Community College Strategic Plan. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all Board members present, through roll call vote, as follows:

- Mary Burns⁴
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Travis Lawrence – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

⁴ Not present for the vote due

BHE 23-22 APPROVAL OF NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

VOTED The Board of Higher Education hereby approves TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE WITH OUR COMMUNITY: North Shore Community College Strategic Plan 2022-2027 and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

Authority Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III, Section 2.

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D. Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public Program Approval

VIII. BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

List of Documents Used

[BHE 23-23](#)

Chair Gabrieli turned to the final item on the agenda, BHE 23-23, *Strategic Review of Public Higher Education Financing: Endorsement of a Policy Framework and Charge to the Commissioner*. He provided an overview of the presentation, but first outlined the process leading up to where we stand today on this matter. Chair Gabrieli stated that the Board received a number of ideas during the feedback period, but several Board members noted that something more than funding strategies is required to ensure that we meet our goals and responsibilities. Goal achievement is a core responsibility of the BHE and DHE, as defined by statute, Chapter 15A, which states that the Board shall work with boards of trustees to hold the system accountable for achieving its goals, while establishing a comprehensive approach to measure quality by defining educational achievement and success using standards and measurements.

Chair Gabrieli continued, stating that for several years, the DHE has been working to advance what is now known as the Performance Measurement Reporting System. Former Commissioner Santiago and the DHE's Research and Planning team launched the system in May 2019. On the Board level, the DHE also established the Evidence-Based Policymaking Advisory Council to focus on this as part of its charge. Based on Board feedback and a shared belief that the Board's performance measurement function is vital and a critical complement to investments, Chair Gabrieli said that he and Commissioner Ortega are committed to bringing the DHE's performance measurement work to the BHE through the EBPM Advisory Council in the first half of 2023 to ensure better alignment.

He stated that the finance system needs to work well for both students and institutions and asked the Board to conclude the following during today's presentation:

- the system should be driven to organize and drive advances in student participation in high-

- quality and affordable education;
- student outcomes need to improve, particularly along our equity priority, both in retention and graduation and in the longer-term outcomes, specifically employment and workforce outcomes;
- that system needs to be transparent, data-driven, and reliable;
- that system needs to recognize institutional context continuously; and
- because the current system for financing public higher education needs to support the above sufficiently but does not, we need to move beyond it.

Co-Chair Conforme stated that the Board's primary role is to advocate for students, meet their needs, and put them at the center of everything we do. The proposal is to increase annual financial aid and double the current budget of financial assistance levels, thus making college more affordable for low-income students. She also mentioned rising debt burdens and the perception that college is out of reach for many students, which will affect all of us for years to come if we don't act now. She concluded her remarks by stating that the Board should have a better understanding of the recommendation to increase financial aid. However, at the heart of the issue is not only creation of opportunities for our lowest-income students, but accessibility for our moderate and middle-income students and families.

Chair Gabrieli continued by stating that the Commonwealth spends approximately \$200 million in financial aid annually, with significant increases in recent years. The DHE proposed a matching option of \$2,000 for Pell-eligible students and \$1,000 for moderate-income students. This would benefit approximately 100,000 Massachusetts students and extend the unmet need goal to all part-time students at state universities and in the University of Massachusetts (UMass) system. When asked to consider what would happen if the DHE reduced the expected family contribution to zero across the system, the option costs nearly the same amount. It benefits some students more and others less than the initially proposed option. Chair Gabrieli then invited FAAP Advisory Council Co-Chair J.D. LaRock to offer comment.

Mr. LaRock described the second key element of the proposal, which is to bolster institutional aid and adopt a weighted enrollment approach that would provide additional funding for low-income students to raise outcomes and promote equity for all students across the system. This proposal does not only advance the idea of bolstering institutional support, but also recognizes that a growing number of our public students require additional support. Mr. LaRock talked about the public system's meaningful progress in increasing key outcomes like graduation rates, time to degree and persistence in courses, and progress in developmental courses, but the resources just aren't there currently to provide the significant basis of support to make game-changing progress. The proposed design element is additive funding, including funding weighted for students with higher needs with the goal of helping to raise outcomes.

Chair Gabrieli commented that although the Board does not specify a formula, the option of allocating \$2,000 toward each student would yield a 10% increase in the total funding that goes to our institutions. Each institution would benefit based on the number of students. According to Chair Gabrieli, when the DHE examined the evidence, it discovered that funding these types of success

programs can result in higher student retention and graduation rates, which is consistent with the DHE Equity Agenda.

Chair Gabrieli next highlighted the third element of the proposal, which is to ensure system level capacity to foster innovation and capacity. Chair Gabrieli stated that the notion of a department deserving better support to drive change in terms of innovation and collaboration is less evident than aid to students or aid to campuses. However, other states are investing significantly more in a time of rapid change to be able to drive innovation and collaboration. He stated that Higher Education Fund yielded cross-campus initiatives such as Mass Transfer and Open Education Resources (OER).

Chair Gabrieli then invited Commissioner Noe Ortega to share remarks. Commissioner Ortega stated that the role of a Commissioner working with the Board is to determine what the Commonwealth and the Board have in common. It is critical to ask "What can we do to innovate and foster collaboration to improve our efforts at the local level among institutions?" Numerous ideas could emerge from these connections and address some of the concerns raised in the proposal.

After Commissioner Ortega's comments, Chair Gabrieli provided an overview of the fourth key element of the proposal, aligning incentives between the Commonwealth and campuses. He stated that this design element raises two issues: codifying funding for salary increases and creating federal incentives for fringe benefits. The Commonwealth's budget for higher education does not include it, but the institutions pay all non-state-funded employees' benefits. This expense has grown from a small percentage of their overall costs in FY '02 to one that now makes up a sizeable portion. The question is whether this proposal is a fair plan. This proposal addresses that question and the others presented under this design element.

Chair Gabrieli addressed tuition and fees, and the need for increased simplicity, transparency, and predictability during the final design element of today's proposal. He stated that the proposal is consistent with legislative language that has never been implemented, which prescribes that tuition constitute the majority of cost at campuses, that it all be retained by campuses, and that the BHE has balanced guardrail rights to approve tuition and fees. Chair Gabrieli acknowledged that it is a source of contention among our colleagues. He appreciates, however, that they embraced the overall proposal today, noting that they wish to continue discussing it.

Chair Gabrieli summarized the proposal, stating that it is for all students and that its implementation would benefit all institutions. He then referred Board members to the motion language. The motion asks the Board to endorse the Framework, which includes criteria, goals and design elements. The BHE affirms the Framework as guidance intended to inform the development of a fair, equitable, and rational approach to financing and supporting the Commonwealth's system of public higher education institutions. In addition, the motion charges the Commissioner to work with stakeholders, including institutional leaders, policy makers, the legislature, and others to advance the implementation of the framework.

Chair Gabrieli concluded his presentation by highlighting the availability of materials in the Board packet containing information from the FAAP Advisory Council to supplement what was shared

during today's presentation. The packet also references other areas of exploration, such as simplifying the existing financial aid system of scholarships and tuition waivers, financial aid for students at private institutions, additive performance funding related to institutional support, and capital funding for maintenance and capital improvement projects. Chair Gabrieli opened the floor for comments from the Board.

Member Bill Walczak commented that public higher education is essential to the Massachusetts economy. However, the state still needs to provide the kind of resources that other states do to support students and institutions. He also noted that despite inadequate financial support at Bunker Hill Community College, the trustees know how much to charge and how to balance books without being overbearing on students. Member Walczak supports the proposal but stated the details must be worked out. He concluded his comments by adding that if the objective is how Ballot Question No. 1 impacts our state budget, our goal should be that the Board and institutions stick together to make this happen and that they go for the highest amount of dollars available.

Member Paul Mattera commented that he aligns with the comments made by Member Walczak on behalf of Community Colleges and President Keenan on behalf of the State University segment. He added that when discussing cost sharing, we must remember that local boards are critical in reviewing and approving budgets.

Member Paul Toner expressed his support for the recommendations to address affordability and accessibility for low-income and first-generation students, as well as middle-income families who are struggling to meet the needs of their students. He also noted that, in a way similar to the education reform debate of 1993, we are moving toward uniformity with continued autonomy for campuses, and that the Board better understand our higher education system's financial systems. He stated this is significant for many reasons, including instilling faith and trust in the consumer, students, parents, the legislature, and general taxpayers.

Member Ann Christensen commented that today's presentation raised important points regarding access and affordability issues and seeks to provide significant funding, particularly in the short term. However, as we look to the future and want to continue addressing accessibility, affordability, and equity, we must focus some of these dollars as we think about innovation on what is the business model of the education we're providing is because we cannot keep pouring money out. She added that we need to use some of this money to think about how we can help students get jobs that will help them pay for their lives and thrive. We need to think about innovations that will bend the cost curve that we are investing in, look at marketing to ensure that the students who need these funds the most know how to get them, and seek to ensure that the process becomes easier, not harder. Member Christensen concluded her remarks by stating we must move forward, but that we should keep sight of the major cost issue being dealt with in higher education.

Member Judy Pagliuca emphasized the importance of addressing the system's enrollment challenges due to globalization and the advent of better internet-related online educational services. While adding more money to the system is always good, other principles are needed to address difficult discussion-level items.

Member Alex Cortez commented on the importance of providing an accurate breakdown of expenses and assistance and identifying the most effective pathways for different populations. He stated that we are going through many changes with enrollment and the environment. Member Cortez added that public institutions are experimenting and innovating with new non-degree pathways, credentials, and badges, which present opportunities and challenges. As a board, we are working to develop a system that gives people the same freedom of choice and access to a wide range of options. To ensure this system is implemented, we must be able to finance innovation and research while keeping track of what is effective and for whom.

Hearing no further discussion Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion for approval of BHE 23-23. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all members present, through roll call vote, as follows:

- Mary Burns⁵
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Travis Lawrence – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 23-23 STRATEGIC REVIEW OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING:
ENDORSEMENT OF A POLICY FRAMEWORK AND CHARGE TO THE
COMMISSIONER**

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) receives the research, analyses, and policy options prepared by the Finance and Administrative (FAAP) Advisory Council with the assistance of EY-Parthenon in furtherance of the Board of Higher Education’s Strategic Review of Public Higher Education Financing. The documents that comprise the FAAP Advisory Council’s research, analyses, and policy options are referenced and linked in the Background Statement and attached to this motion as “Attachment A.” The BHE expresses its appreciation to the FAAP Advisory Council and EY-Parthenon for their work.

⁵ Not present for the vote

Based on and building upon the FAAP Advisory Council's work the BHE accepts and endorses the strategic public higher education financing Framework, including the criteria, the goals, and the design elements, as set forth in Section III of the attached Background Statement.

The BHE affirms the Framework as guidance intended to inform the development of a fair, equitable, and rational approach to financing and supporting the Commonwealth's system of public higher education institutions. The BHE commits to incorporating the Framework in all aspects of budget and policy development.

The BHE charges the Commissioner to work with stakeholders, including institutional leaders, policy makers, the legislature, and others to advance the implementation of the framework through necessary legislative, executive and budgetary actions. The BHE further directs the Commissioner to continue to work with the FAAP Advisory Council and to provide regular updates to Board on the Department's progress in this regard.

Authority M.G.L. c. 15A, §1, 9, 15B, 16 and 19

Contact: Joe Wallerstein, Interim Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Gabrieli adjourned the meeting at 1:49 p.m.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Noe Ortega, Ph.D.
Commissioner and Secretary to the Board*