

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 11, 2024
10:00 a.m.
via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (BHE or Board) was held on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, remotely via teleconference (Zoom).

The following Board Members were present:

Chris Gabrieli, Chair
Danielle Allen
Mary Burns
Harneen Chernow
Ann Christensenⁱ
Veronica Conforme
Alex Cortez
Cindy Mack, Voting Student Member, State University segment
Paul Mattera
Judy Pagliuca
Christina Royal
Secretary Patrick Tutwiler
Bill Walczak

Andrew Whitcomb, non-voting Student Advisor, UMass segment

Noe Ortega, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

The following Board Members were absent:

Sarah Alzate-Pérez, non-voting Student Advisor, Community College segment

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Department of Higher Education (DHE or Department) Assistant Commissioner Elena Quiroz-Livanis took roll call attendance (see above for attendance roster).

II. COMMISSIONER'S SPOTLIGHT

List of Documents Used

[Commissioner's PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Commissioner Ortega expressed delight at completing one full year of the Commissioner's Spotlight presentations. He offered a PowerPoint presentation and noted that from the previous meeting he introduced an ecology to frame discussions primarily around system-level priorities that the Board sets. He stated that it is important to focus on the things being set up as priorities to help create what is being described as the conditions for everyone to be able to create greater and more equitable learner success, which can cumulatively be referred to as system-level Board of Higher Education priorities. Commissioner Ortega continued, noting that during the Board retreat in January the Board outlined some priorities and the Department committed developing a strategic plan to help advance the priorities as a roadmap for success, in time for the next Board retreat. Commissioner Ortega reiterated the four key items that were outlined in the January Board meeting, which included:

- Becoming the leading state for investment made in need-based financial aid.
- Aligning postsecondary education approval with the job and democratic participant skill needs of working residents.
- Emerging as a top state in the nation where postsecondary success is measured as a vehicle for upward socioeconomic mobility.
- Expanding the role of the BHE and DHE in facilitating and fostering innovation and collaboration among IHEs that advance new approaches to provision of postsecondary opportunity and success for all learners.

The Commissioner invited DHE Consultant Carey Davis and Assistant Commissioner Elena Quiroz-Livanis to address the Board on some of the work underway on Innovation and Collaboration.

Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis acknowledged the partnership that has been built with the institutions of public higher education, as well as the various stakeholders that are impacted by the policy innovations. Using three examples, she demonstrated that public higher education in Massachusetts is well positioned to drive improvements in learner access and success that benefit from system level coordination and policy change. These examples include:

- Early College: Since its inception in 2010, the program has grown to serve 8,000 learners. It is offered at 13 of the 15 community colleges, seven of the nine state universities, and all four UMass campuses, demonstrating a solid representation within the public higher education system. Additionally, there are Early College programs within the independent colleges and universities system, with approximately eight of the private colleges

participating. Associate Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis also commended the work of DHE in ensuring the success of K-12 and postsecondary innovation.

- OER (Open Education Resources): The Department has been working with the Board of and the Student Advisory Council to elevate OER as an opportunity to reduce costs for students and ensure that they have access to the materials they need at an affordable cost, if not completely free, to succeed in their courses once they are in post-secondary school.
- Corequisites: This started in 2013 when the Department looked at data which indicated that many students were being assessed as needing remediation in Math and English. The research shows that students in traditional developmental education sequences were not enrolling in college-level English and Math. As a result, a partnership was fostered with public institutions to bring this model to the local level and provide them with the incentives and resources needed to adopt the model at their schools.

Ms. Davis then reviewed with the Board the processes that should be expected in the next few months:

- June : Conduct landscape research and initial Board engagement
- July – August: Conduct additional Board and key stakeholder engagement.
- September: Share draft innovation strategic priority plan with Board for discussion
- January 2025: Present full plan (inclusive of all strategic priorities) to Board.

Commissioner Ortega reiterated that the challenges the Innovation Strategic Priority is trying to address are centered on affordability and financial aid, learner enrolment and completion, and learner workforce success.

Ms. Davis shared with the Board, the plan to prioritize technology-enabled innovation, noting that it is rapidly-emerging and incorporates resources and approaches informed by cutting edge software and technology. It is also cost efficient and will enhance the public institutions' ability to serve learners well. It also has the potential for scale and impact to reach more learners more effectively; leverage integrated data capability. There is also a systematic approach which makes technology-enabled innovation best suited to a systems-level approach.

Ms. Davis continued, indicating that the strategic priority plan will span a 5-year period with an 18-month action plan for each priority. The action plan would comprise five components:

- Context and framing: linking the prioritization to the previous Board priorities and the broader context of the current Massachusetts higher education landscape.
- Approach: clear articulation on how Massachusetts higher education will approach innovation and collaboration, including the role of data analysis and data-informed decision making.
- Resources: Identifying necessary resources and capacity

- Measurable Targets: setting specific outcomes to evaluate success
- Action plan, timeline, and deliverables: outlining the anticipated associated initiatives and work across the plan's duration, with specific detail for the first 18 months of the execution and development of key deliverables.

In response to a question from Board Member Danielle Allen about increasing synergies with other secretariats that are working on similar interests, Commissioner Ortega stated that his office is committed to reaching out, and working closely with the various secretariats, and also engaging them in the innovation strategy as well.

Secretary Tutwiler stated that there is an artificial intelligence (AI) task force currently convening and having innovation discussions, and the chief information officer in his office is part of the conversation. He stated that his office is collaborating with the Secretariats of Economic Development and Labor and Workforce Development, on the workforce strategy, as well as on the on the childcare, and early education front as well. Member Allen suggested that Secretary Tutwiler should include someone with expertise around assessment, learning outcomes and generally education expertise in the conversations apart from the chief information officer. Member Christina Royal added that there should be an opportunity to seek input from the campuses to which innovations could be most beneficial to students and the institutions.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) President Max Page spoke about the Fair Share Amendment funding, which brings in approximately \$2 billion in annual revenue. The funds will go towards high-quality, debt-free, affordable public higher education. He urged all Board Members to think about how to advocate for additional Fair Share dollars, called the excess, which the legislature has not committed yet. The advocacy is for some of those funds to go into public higher education institutions, especially towards investing in facilities, staff and faculty, and making public higher education truly affordable.

Regarding workforce alignment, he stated that the goal is for community colleges and state universities is to graduate students who can find good work and help provide workers for Massachusetts's industries, but it is also the goal to build citizens. Hence, there should be clarity on the willingness to offer the kind of courses of study that allow young people to develop into whole, active adults and citizens.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the BHE meeting held on April 30, 2024. Hearing no further discussion, and on a motion duly made and seconded, the motion proceeded to a roll call vote and was approved unanimously by all members present as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Patrick Tutwiler - Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

V. REMARKS & REPORTS

A. Chair's Remarks

Chair Gabrieli expressed that it has been a time of both challenge and opportunity in higher education. He continued stating that the times ahead will require the Board to move well on multiple fronts simultaneously. Chair Gabrieli reassured the Board by stating that we made significant progress in the first fiscal year, where the Fair Share dollars were available to distribute. He noted that there may be significantly more revenue available this year or in the next few years to be deployed across the transportation and education spectra.

He further stated that he and the Commissioner are working closely with the Secretary regarding the current opportunities and questions on the table and the longer-term framing, including the support for innovation and wraparound support (comprehensive support services that address various aspects of a student's life) essential to a student's success.

Chair Gabrieli highlighted that the strategic planning process around the innovation priority (fostering new ideas and approaches), which will also include other key items, such as a workforce priority (enhancing skills and employability) and socioeconomic mobility priorities (improving social and economic status). This is intended to take advantage of the growing capacities of the Department staff to be able to advance multiple things at the same time.

Chair Gabrieli informed the Board that there will be a joint meeting of the Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education on June 20th from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. The meeting will be held remotely on Zoom. The anticipated agenda items for the meeting include:

- An update on research that Professor John Papay from Brown University has been doing on our student longitudinal data system.
- An update on the work between the two education agencies to raise awareness of financial aid among high school students.
- Discussions around proper delivery of the major changes to the affordability of public higher education in this state to students as a result of the commitments of significant new financial aid funding.
- An update on Early College.

Chair Gabrieli also informed the Board that there are two outgoing presidents: Dr. Richard Lapidus of Fitchburg State, who is retiring, and Dr. Jenkins-Scott, who served as interim president at Roxbury Community College. As is customary, Chair Gabrieli read a detailed resolution for Dr. Richard Lapidus, signifying the Board's recognition of his contributions.

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

Secretary Patrick Tutwiler expressed his appreciation for the legislature and their ongoing support for education in general, and higher education in particular, notably supporting affordability and wraparound supports. He also acknowledged that the Fair Share funding is above the consensus benchmark, which is good. He emphasized the strong collaboration between the current administration and the legislature, as they work closely to confirm the resources and establish mechanisms for the use of funds. He also expressed anticipation for the opportunities that those additional dollars will provide to further advance the Board's priorities. He concluded by expressing appreciation for and congratulating the ecosystem of higher education in the Commonwealth, stating that the challenges of the current year were met with humility, willingness to create spaces for dialogue, and most importantly an opportunity to learn.

C. Reports from Presidents

State University Segmental Report

[For a copy of President John Keenan's full remarks, please see here:](#)

President John Keenan of Salem State University stated that it was his last day serving as the State University Council of Presidents (COP) Chair. He reported that, generally, the state universities have been encouraged by early enrollment numbers. More specifically, Salem State University recorded a rise in new student deposits for the first time in over a decade. He strongly encouraged the financial aid advertising blitz in the fall because not all students were aware of the historic level of support available to make public higher education in Massachusetts affordable again due to the Fair Share funding. As the Chair of the State University Council of Presidents, he provided the following update on the state budget and the future of the public higher education system.

- The Senate wrapped up deliberations on the FY25 budget at the end of May and is now in conference committee to resolve the differences between the House and the Senate.

- Consistent with the Consensus revenue agreement reached with the administration and the legislature, the FY25 budget will include \$1.3 billion in Fair Share revenues to invest in our public education system and improve the state's infrastructure. This is the second year this source of revenue has been available. To this end, he expressed gratitude on behalf of the Council of Presidents for the continued historic investments in public higher education.

He stressed that the continued investments in students and campus infrastructure are not only crucial for the personal growth of the students but also for the sustained economic growth of the Commonwealth and the regions being served. He also acknowledged the pivotal role of the House and Senate in this process, appreciating their support in providing campus line items with a base appropriation that encompasses all FY24 campus funding and incremental salary increase obligations in the employee labor context for FY25.

He continued that the two budgets had a few differences, and the Council of Presidents is advocating for the following items to be included in the conference report.

- Extending the SUCCESS program to the state universities so they too can provide the critical wraparound support services that keep students on track to graduate.
- Increasing the MASSGrant Plus program for students attending public higher education institutions to continue to break down financial barriers that make it difficult for the neediest students to attain a baccalaureate degree.
- The COP also advocating for funding for internship programs, our performance-based funding formula, student mental health grants, the Endowment Incentive Program, and the Hunger-Free Campus Initiative.
- Capital funding for the campuses. The State University Council of Presidents look forward to working with the legislature on a proposal for the upcoming supplemental budget that utilizes surplus fair share dollars to support significant capital investments in the public higher education system.

President John Keenan announced that the Council of Presidents will have its annual business meeting at Mass Maritime Academy by the end of the week and will celebrate outgoing President Richard Lapidus during the gathering. Dr. Lapidus will be succeeded by Dr. Donna Hodge, who will be the 12th president of Fitchburg State University, and the first woman serving in that role. President Keenan also announced that the State University Council of Presidents has selected President Linda Thompson of Westfield State University to chair the Council of Presidents next year.

Community College Segmental Report

[*For a copy of President Vander Hooven's full remarks, please see:*](#)

President James Vander Hooven of Mount Wachusett Community College, who currently serves as the Chair of the Community College Council of Presidents, announced that this would be his last address to the Board in this role. He introduced Dr. Luis Pedraja of Quinsigamond Community College, who will be taking over as the new Chair. President Vander Hooven also

welcomed Dr. Jonathan Jefferson, the incoming president of Roxbury Community College, who will be succeeding Dr. Jackie Jenkins-Scott.

President Vander Hooven emphasized the significance of the ongoing initiatives. He stated that while waiting for the House and Senate Conference Committees to prepare a final budget, the Community College Council of Presidents is diligently tracking funding for SUCCESS, STEM Starter, Early Childhood Pathway grants, expansion to financial aid, and free community college, among other things. He continued that the decision-making process is ongoing for whatever will be implemented this fall, whether free community college, under Mass Educate, or year two of Mass Reconnect.

D. Report from Student Advisory Council (SAC)

BHE Student Member Cindy Mack announced that his tenure as Chair of SAC has come to an end. Board Member Mack thanked everyone on the Board for their unique contributions to their success during his five-year tenure.

UMass Segmental Advisor Andrew Whitcomb stated that over the past month, about 20,000 students were awarded degrees by the University of Massachusetts across the five campuses. He emphasized that these alumni, with their diverse skills and knowledge, would go on to have significant social and economic impacts on the Commonwealth. This directly translates to the fact that an investment in UMass is an investment in the future of Massachusetts, a future that holds great promise and potential. He also announced that his tenure had ended, and he gave a heartfelt farewell speech.

E. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Ortega acknowledged that Massachusetts moved closer to affordability for students and families in the last year and appreciated the effort of every Board member in accomplishing that level of affordability. He also expressed his gratitude to the outgoing representatives of the Student Advisory Council for their valuable contributions. Commissioner Ortega recognized and thanked the outgoing Council of Presidents Chairs John Keenan, and James Vander Hooven. He also acknowledged Fitchburg State University President Richard Lapidus and Roxbury Community College Interim President Jackie Jenkins Scott's services to the Commonwealth. He welcomed Roxbury Community College President Jefferson and Fitchburg State President Hodge to the system, wishing them success in their new roles.

F. Advisory Council Reports

Board Member Alex Cortez informed the Board that there would be an Evidence-Based Policy Making Advisory Council meeting on Thursday, June 13 at 10:30 am. He stated that we are privileged to have a guest speaker, Matt Gandal, President of the Education Strategy Group, who will discuss a report that was recently published and examining how different states measure economic mobility.

VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT & MOTIONS

A. Executive Committee Report

No report.

B. Motions

List of Documents Used

- [BHE 27-47](#); [BHE 24-48](#); [BHE 24-49](#); [BHE 24-54](#); [BHE 24-55](#); [BHE 24-56](#); [BHE 24-57](#); [BHE 24-58](#); and
- [BHE 24-53](#) Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions [BHE 24-50](#); [BHE 24-51](#); [BHE 24-52](#) on a Consent Agenda.

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to approve **BHE 27-47**, *Approval of Letter of Intent of Massachusetts Amherst to award a Bachelor of Arts and Films Studies and Authorization for Fast Track Review*. He stated that the motion is to approve the letter of intent for University of Massachusetts Amherst as well as authorize fast track review for a new Bachelor of Arts program. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-47 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes

- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-47 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST TO AWARD A BACHELOR OF ARTS AND FILMS STUDIES AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of University of Massachusetts Amherst to award a Bachelor of Arts and Films Studies and has determined that the proposal aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the program and to make a final determination on degree granting authority pursuant to the Fast-Track review protocol.

Authority Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b); AAC 18-40

Contact Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-48**, *Approval of Degree Granting Authority For Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary For The Degree Program Doctor Of Philosophy In Theological Studies*. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-48 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-48 APPROVAL OF DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY FOR GORDON CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAM DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

VOTED The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Theological Studies. Provided that the Seminary will prepare and submit a report on its progress in establishing the program at the conclusion of academic year 2024-2025, in a form and manner to be prescribed by Department of Higher Education staff.

Authority Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact Cynthia Farr Brown, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner of Regulatory and Veterans Affairs

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-49**, *Approval of Criminal Justice Programs Under the Guidelines for Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Academic Programs*. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-49 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-49 APPROVAL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS UNDER THE GUIDELINES FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

VOTED That the Board of Higher Education approve the application by American International College for the Degree of Master of Science in Criminal Justice under the Guidelines for Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Academic Programs. The program has been found to meet or exceed all quality standards established by the Guidelines making it eligible for police career incentive pay increases under the Police Career Incentive Pay Program (PCIPP), formally known as the Quinn Bill.

Provided further that AIC will provide a report at the conclusion of academic year 2024 – 2025, in a form and manner to be determined by Department staff, which adequately documents the progress made in establishing a plan to ensure the formal credentials and experience of the faculty assigned to teach in the approved program remain in compliance with the requirements of the PCIPP Guidelines.

Authority Chapter 41, Section 108L (as amended).

Contact Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-53**, *Approval of Motions 24-50 through 24-52, which are Commonwealth Honors programs renewals at Middlesex Community College, Northern Essex Community College and UMass Lowell*. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions. Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-53 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-53 COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM – CONSENT AGENDA

VOTED The Board of Higher Education approves the following motions on a consent agenda:

- BHE 24-50 Renewal of Middlesex Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program
- BHE 24-51 Renewal of Northern Essex Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program
- BHE 24-52 Renewal of University of Massachusetts Lowell in the Commonwealth Honors Program

Authority Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in March 2022; G.L. c. 15A, § 9.

Contact Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success
Keith M. Connors, Program Director for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-54**, *Approval of Bridgewater State University's Strategic Plan*. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-54 was approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-54 APPROVAL OF BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

VOTED:	The Board of Higher Education hereby approves Bridgewater State University Strategic Plan 2.0 (2024-2029) 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 and Article III
Contact	Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-55, Approval of Massasoit Community College's Strategic Plan**. Chair Gabrieli explained that the Executive Committee had a discussion with interim President William Mitchell, who has been instrumental in bringing the process to completion following the untimely passing of the school's late President Ray DiPasquale. President DiPasquale, who led the vast bulk of the work, made significant contributions to the school. Chair Gabrieli then turned to the Board for questions.

Member Chernow acknowledged the importance and breadth of these strategic plans and inquired about the measures in place to ensure that the strategic plans of the state universities and colleges align with the broader goals of the BHE. In response, Chair Gabrieli stated that certain elements of the strategic plans are tied to priorities set by the BHE. Additionally, he noted that historically, the Board had a committee to review the strategic plans, but due to limited interest from Board Members, the responsibility was primarily delegated to the Department. Nevertheless, he noted the importance of trying to ensure that these strategic plans, as well as other important items originating from the campuses such as presidential evaluations, reflect the priorities of the Board in a way that is respectful of the institutions' roles in these processes and the Board's statutory responsibilities. He also noted that there are specific checkpoints, which Member Bill Walczak has reviewed as Co-Chair of the Strategic Planning Advisory Council (SPAC).

Member Bill Walczak commented that the institutions do a lot of work on these plans to make sure that the plans align with the goals and needs of the institution, and the goals and priorities of the Board. He stated that he has seen a lot of these strategic plans in his role on the SPAC, and Department staff do a good job of making sure that the plans align with the overarching goals of the Board. Member Walczak said that we are moving in the right direction and that he was hopeful that we will have a much more improved way of approaching this over the next year or so.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-55 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes

- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-55 APPROVAL OF MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves Massasoit Community College Strategic Plan 2024-2029 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 and Article III.

Contact Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-56**, *Approval of Amended Guidelines for the Department of Children and Families Foster Child Tuition Waiver and Fee Assistance Program*. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Chair Gabrieli provided a brief overview of the motion, noting that it is a technical amendment which seeks to ensure that we are in alignment with the Department of Children and Families’ procedures. Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-56 was unanimously approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes

- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-56 APPROVAL OF AMENDED GUIDELINES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FOSTER CHILD TUITION WAIVER AND FEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the following amended guidelines for the Department of Children and Families Foster Child Tuition Waiver and Fee Assistance program.

Authority M.G.L. c. 15A, Section 19

Contact Clantha McCurdy, Senior Deputy Commissioner for Access and Student Financial Assistance

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-57, *Financing Approval of Massachusetts State College Building Authority Refunding Revenue Bonds State University Program***. Chair Gabrieli explained that the State College Building Authority wants to do some revenue bond refunding for the State University Program. The Authority will also seek to ensure that the lowest net interest rate possible is paid. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-57 was unanimously approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-57 FINANCING APPROVAL FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGE BUILDING AUTHORITY REFUNDING REVENUE BONDS STATE UNIVERSITY PROGRAM

VOTED:

The Massachusetts State College Building Authority (the "Authority") is hereby authorized to issue one or more series of refunding bonds for the purpose of refunding all or a portion of the Authority's outstanding Build America Bonds ("BABs") issued to finance projects at the state universities in order to achieve debt service savings and provide for the costs of issuance of the refunding bonds, provided the aggregate net present value savings achieved from the refunding is at least one percent (1%) of the par amount of refunded bonds; provided further that the Commissioner is hereby authorized and directed, in the name and on behalf of the Board of Higher Education, to:

- approve in writing the issuance by said Authority of bonds for such refunding purpose; and
- to execute and deliver any and all documents, certificates, and other instruments necessary or desirable in connection with the issuance of such refunding bonds, including, without limitation, an amended and restated contract with the Authority and a continuing disclosure agreement with the Authority; and
- to do all other acts and things the Commissioner deems necessary or desirable to effectuate the purpose and intent of this motion.

Authority

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 4, 6, and 9; Chapter 703 of the Acts of 1963, sections 1-3, et seq., as amended.

Contact

Matthew Cole, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, Finance & Operations

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-58**, *Approval of the Community College and State University Funding Formula Allocations for FY2025 and FY2026*. Chair Gabrieli briefly introduced the motion and noted work moving in the direction to comprehensively review the funding formula in subsequent years. Meanwhile, this motion is for next year's fiscal year and voting on it now will enable the Department to promptly move that money to the campuses based on the existing formula. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Hearing no discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-58 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes

- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-58 APPROVAL OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND STATE UNIVERSITY FUNDING FORMULA ALLOCATIONS FOR FY2025 AND AUTHORIZATION OF TIMELINE TO REVIEW AND UPDATE THE FUNDING FORMULAS

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) hereby affirms the Community College and State University funding formula methodology for FY25, and delegates to the Commissioner the authority to allocate the FY25 funds during the summer months, subject to the enactment of FY25 GAA appropriations (line items 7066-1400 and 7100-4000).
The BHE further:

- directs the Commissioner to use the Community College and State University funding formula methodology to award grants and/or determine allocations funded by other appropriations in FY25, where deemed necessary or appropriate by the Commissioner, upon a determination by the Commissioner that the purpose of the grant is aligned with the intended outcomes of the funding formulas; and
- directs the Commissioner to evaluate the efficacy of existing funding allocation formulas for public higher education institutions and their alignment with the Strategic Higher Education Finance (SHEF) Framework. To that end, the Commissioner shall, after consultation with stakeholders, develop recommendations on the funding formulas with the goal of ensuring alignment with the Key Design Elements, Goals, and Principles of SHEF

The BHE further directs the Commissioner to provide regular updates to the BHE and to work with the Finance and Administrative Policy Advisory Council to propose funding formula recommendations to the BHE no later than Fall 2025.

Authority M.G.L. c. 15A, § 9(dd); M.G.L. c. 15A, §15B; Line item 7066-1400 of section 2 of Chapter 165 of the Acts of 2014; Line items 7066-1400 and 7100-4000. Section 2 of Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023.

Contact Matthew Cole, Deputy Commissioner of Administration, Finance and Operations

VII. BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MOTIONS

List of Documents Used

PowerPoint Slide entitled "Sub-120 Baccalaureate."

[BHE 24-62](#): Delegation of Summer Authority to The Commissioner

Before turning to the final agenda item requiring a vote (delegating summer authority to the Commissioner), Chair Gabrieli noted one more item for discussion. It is not up for a vote, but for background information that will help inform the work the Commissioner and Department staff are anticipated to engage in this summer involving a pilot proposal by an institution to offer a 3-year degree. Chair Gabrieli noted that the matter is complicated and asked the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner Richard Riccardi to provide some background information.

Commissioner Ortega stated that the issue of a 3-year baccalaureate (BA) degree is not unique to Massachusetts, but a national concern. To provide context, Deputy Commissioner Riccardi highlighted that baccalaureate degrees have historically had a minimum requirement of 120 credits, as codified in the Board's degree-granting regulations. However, ongoing discussions with institutions and accreditors across the country are exploring how to accredit a 3-year BA with less than 120 credits.

Recent incidences include:

- The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities approved a 3-year bachelor's degree program developed by Brigham Young University last fall; however, other accreditors on their commissions have been cautious in this area.
- The New England Commission of Higher Education, NECHE, provided guidance for a sub-120 baccalaureate and notified the Department that Merrimack College had proposed a 96-credit baccalaureate degree. These proposals go through NECHE's policy on the innovation process, which means limited approvals since they fall outside of their existing standards. However, under their innovation process, NECHE approved Merrimack's proposal under several conditions, including the requirement for BHE approval.

Merrimack College is the first to propose a 3-year sub-120 baccalaureate degree in Massachusetts, and the institution does not have broad degree granting authority that would allow it to offer such a degree without Board approval. Under the Board's regulations (610 CMR 2.08) an external review of a petition for a new degree authority is required once an institution seeks authority to grant a degree at a new level or to grant a degree significantly different degree from those for which it is chartered.

The Department staff have determined that a 96-credit baccalaureate degree is significantly different from those that Merrimack College is authorized to offer. As a result, an external review (visiting committee) is necessary. Upon receipt of an application (anticipated this summer), the Department will thoroughly review the proposal using the current degree approval process as a guide for evaluating Merrimack's application. The review will include the establishment of a visiting committee for a site visit, as well as a public comment process. The process will take into account NECHE's review of Merrimack's proposal and NECHE's sub-120 baccalaureate guidance. Deputy Commissioner Rick Riccardi indicated that the DHE anticipates providing the Board with a report in the fall.

Member Walczak pointed out that in other states, three-year bachelor's and applied science degrees are often offered by community colleges. Therefore, if the Department and Board proceed with the process, it might be more appropriate to limit the offering of such programs through the community colleges.

A. Delegation of Summer Authority to the Commissioner

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to approve **BHE 24-62**, *Delegation of Summer Authority to The Commissioner*. He stated that the motion is to delegate summer authority that allows the Commissioner to act on matters until the next regularly scheduled meeting in consultation with the Chair, and anyone else as needed for anything substantive. The Board does not hold meetings during the summer; however, items may still need approval. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions. Hearing no discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-62 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 24-62 DELEGATION OF SUMMER AUTHORITY TO THE COMMISSIONER

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education delegates to the Commissioner, ex officio, until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board its authority to take such action, in consultation with and upon the advice of the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board, as is deemed necessary or desirable.

Authority Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 6 III.

Contact Constantia T. Papanikolaou, Chief Legal Counsel

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Gabrieli adjourned the meeting at 12:44 p.m.

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

ⁱ Arrived at 10:40am