

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

October 22, 2024
10:00 a.m.
via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (BHE or Board) was held on Tuesday, October 22, 2024, remotely via teleconference (Zoom).

The following Board Members were present:

Chris Gabrieli, Chair

Danielle Allen

Mary Burns

Harneen Chernow

Ann Christensen

Veronica Conforme

Alex Cortez

Bob LePage, Assistant Secretary for Career Education

Paul Mattera

Niki Nguyen, Voting Student Member, State University segment

Judy Pagliuca

Christina Royal

Thalles De Souza, non-voting Student Advisor, UMass segment

Noe Ortega, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

The following Board Members were absent:

Imani Barbour, non-voting Student Advisor, State University segment

Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Bill Walczak

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. Dr. Nicole Johnson took roll call attendance (see above for attendance roster).

II. COMMISSIONER'S SPOTLIGHT

List of Documents Used

[Commissioner's PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Commissioner Ortega welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the academic year. He expressed excitement about the things that are set to happen in the new academic year, and he appreciated everyone who was present at the retreat held in September. The Commissioner gave a brief highlight of what will be discussed in the Spotlight which include:

- Budget Update
- Upward mobility through higher education
- Data Report: Early Enrollment and Student Success
- Addressing Student Success

He also introduced two leadership members who would join him in the presentation; Michael Dannenberg (Deputy Commissioner for Policy), and Mario Delci, Ph.D. (Associate Commissioner of Research & Planning).

The Commissioner proceeded to remind the Board of the work that has been done over the past couple of years, which has been guided by the Strategic Higher Education Finance Framework. He stated that central to all the framework strategies is financing a higher education system that works for both students and institutions. Others include advancing student participation in high quality and affordable education, promoting equity in student outcomes, investing in innovation and collaboration, recognizing institutional context, being transparent and rooted in providing stakeholders with sufficient ability to plan.

The Commissioner highlighted that the Board made a commitment some years back to advocate for the doubling of Financial Aid of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In view of this, he shared that the legislature, along with the administration, has decided to once again fund some of the expansions program in Financial Aid as they did last year with MassReconnect investment which helped to create tuition-free opportunities for a number of students in Massachusetts as well as a modest stipend to help them with books and supplies. He continued that this year builds on the MassReconnect investments by making sure that community college is free to all students attending the community colleges in the Commonwealth, and this has more than doubled the investments in Financial Aid to almost \$400 million in the past couple of years. The Commissioner shared that he hopes the state will enter the top 10 states investing in financial aid by the time the SHEF report comes out.

The Commissioner also shared that the department was at a launch hosted by MassBay Community College and announced the MassEducate program to the public. He continued that many students came out to speak on how the program, and the other programs on Financial Aid, have changed the trajectory of their post-secondary pathway and their life.

The Commissioner highlighted that some of the feedback received about the program is that a number of students and families do not know about them. Hence, the department has been investing in building a communication strategy. He added that Nicole Giambusso, who joined the department from Salem State University, has been helping the executive office and others to begin to promulgate these programs. He also shared that the department has begun to engage stakeholders in the community to help with making sure that more students can fill out the FAFSA, which is a necessary step to be a beneficiary of these programs. Lastly, the department is being proactive in putting these opportunities out there.

The Commissioner shared that the department is not just focusing on promoting access and affordability for students but also looking into what happens in the post-secondary pathway and ensuring that students are ready to enter the workforce and give back to society. He emphasized that it is not enough to get students into colleges, but to also figure out how to get them to persist and get through college, so they can be contributing to the viability of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Early Enrollment Report and Student Success Presentation

Dr. Mario Delci shared that the nine years of steady declines in education enrollment has been reversed with enrollment up for the second year in a row - last year and this year. He presented that in the fall of 2024, the enrollment of all undergraduates' students at Massachusetts public colleges and universities totaled 162,930 which shows a 9,893 change from the previous fall. He also shared that the outcome is primarily driven by community colleges with the enrollment of all undergraduate students at community colleges increasing by 8.7% and 14% from fall 2022 to 2023 and fall 2023 to 2024 respectively.

Similarly, state Universities have also reversed the decline in enrolment with a 1.2% positive change in the enrolment of all undergraduate students in state university in fall 2024 from the prior fall. He added that for a number of years the state was experiencing decline as expected in terms of projections, the decline worsened with an unprecedented 11973 drop in enrollment in 2020 from 2019.

In terms of first time and new transfer students, Dr. Mario Delci mentioned that there is also a rise in the number of new students, - community colleges experienced a 25% increase in new student enrollment over fall 2023, and 40.5% over fall 2022. State University also grew by 2.7% in fall 2023 and 2.1% in fall 2024.

Student Success Trends

Dr. Mario Delci mentioned that the metrics used for measuring students' success are those approved for tracking the outcomes within the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity. The metrics track all students. He continued that the metrics are designed to track outcomes at the system level with goals for the system and for each of the targets as well as tracking how the system is helping students achieve the outcomes that they seek when they enroll in public higher

education (community college, state University or UMass). These metrics also take racial equity into consideration because when the board endorsed the targets for these metrics in spring '23, it was for all students to achieve by 2033.

System level Completion rate: 2015 was set as the baseline year with 55.3%. The goal is to achieve 60% completion rate by 2033. However, this goal has not been met, rather, it flattened and declined slightly especially in the period that were impacted with the Covid-19 Pandemic disruptions.

Community College Metrics:

- Completion rates remained at 34% while the target for 2033 is 40%. This is the percentage of students completing their degree or certificate anywhere within 6 years of enrollment in an institution in the USA.
- Transfer to Baccalaureate dropped from 21.8% to 20%. The target set for 2033 is 25%. This is the percentage of full time or part time students who transferred to a 4 year institution within 4 years.
- Persistence to the second fall. This takes into account students who are still enrolled anywhere after the initial fall term of enrolment. This stands at 60.6% while the 2033 target is 65%.
- On time credit accumulation. This is the percentage of students completing 36 credits or 24 credits (if they are part time students), in their first year. This has steadily risen to 33.2% while the 2033 target is 40%.

State University Metrics

- Completion rate declined from 72.9% to 69%, while the target for 2033 is set at 80%.
- Completion after transfer, which is the percentage of full and part time students who graduate from a state university or UMass within 4 years of transferring from a Massachusetts Community College. This percentage rose to 59.9% from 55.8%, progressing towards the 65% set for 2033.
- Persistence to 2nd fall declined to 83.9% while the 2033 target is set for 90%.
- On time credit Accumulation declined to 67.2% while the 2033 target is set for 80%. This metric is one of the strongest indicators of whether a student will earn a degree or certificate and has been trending down for a number of years at the state universities particularly in the years leading to the pandemic and the years post pandemic. However, it has now flattened out and is making an upward turn.

UMass Metrics

- Completion rate is at 77.4% while the target for 2033 is set for 85%.
- Completion after Transfer rate has climbed steadily to 64.7%, almost reaching the goal of 65% set for 2033.
- Persistence to 2nd fall, flattened out to 88.9% while the goal set for 2033 is 95%.

Community College Metrics by Race and Ethnicity

- Completion rate is flat for Black, Hispanic and white students. However, the data shows that the white student demography has achieved the target of 40% that was set. This equity gap makes it clear that we are not there yet for all students. The rate is currently at 27.3, 25.5 and 40.4 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- Transfer to Baccalaureate. This metric is flat for white students and trending downwards for black and Hispanic students. The rate is currently at 17.7, 14.5 and 23.4 percent, for black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- Persistence to 2nd fall. This is trending upwards for all race categories. The rate is currently at 57.5, 57.4 and 63.3 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- On-time accumulation is a positive story for all three populations. The rate is currently at 24.1, 28.4 and 39.9 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.

State University Metrics by Race and Ethnicity

- Completion rate - the gaps between the 3 populations are widening for this metric. Also all populations are trending downwards in the last six years. The rate is currently at 58.6, 59.2 and 72.9 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- Completion after transfer has been steady progress for all groups, but it's slightly down for Hispanic students. The rate is currently at 57, 54.1 and 62.1 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- Persistence to 2nd fall. The trend for this metric remains downwards for black and Hispanic students, it has however flattened out for white students. The rate is currently at 80.4, 78.8 and 86.3 percent, for black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- On-time Credit Accumulation. This metric decreased substantially for black and Hispanic students prior to the pandemic, from 2012 to 2019. It has now steadied for Black students and increased for Hispanic and white students. The rate is currently at 49.6, 55.5 and 73.4 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.

State University Metrics by Race and Ethnicity

- Completion rate - this metric has flattened for all 3 populations and equity gaps have remained. The rate is currently at 65.5, 67.6 and 81.7 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- Completion after transfer has been positive for all student populations. However, the gap still remains. The rate is currently at 55.3, 58.9 and 68.1 percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.
- Persistence to 2nd fall has been steady for all populations and the gaps as well. The rate is currently at 84.5, 83.9 and 91% percent, for Black, Hispanic and white students respectively.

Member Conforme reiterated that the initial recommendation was to focus on students of color and students with higher needs. She suggested that areas where there are positive trends and where Black, Latino or first-generation students are excelling should be observed closely to identify what exactly is being done to produce those results.

Member Chernow pointed out that the declining number of high school graduates nationally and in Massachusetts should be factored into the metrics in terms of how it might impact the metrics.

Member Pagliuca suggested that a microanalysis may shed more light on which policies are working, and which institutions are better at implementing the policies.

In response to a question by member Cortez, Dr. Mario Delci clarified that the data is tracking both degree seeking and non-degree seeking certificates in the community colleges.

Commissioner Ortega mentioned that a lot of states are beginning to learn what is the ROI on non-credit bearing certificates for students and if it leads to some sort of mobility. He emphasized that it is important to also look into these certificates and many other things as a state and how they relate to student success. He invited Michael Dannenberg to lead the conversation on factors and initiatives that contributes to student success

Student Success

Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg mentioned that the FY25 budget established a number of committees and commissions, however, two of them within the Department of Higher Education specific purview are critical to the discussion. He presented them as follows:

- The first entity is Mission for Higher Education Quality and Affordability (CHEQA). Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg mentioned that it is a 21-member group that pulls from representatives of the business community, civil rights community, each institution segment, as well as the board. The group is chaired by Chair Gabrieli and co-chaired by Board Member Conforme. There are still five members to be named by the governor. This group of 21 members is expected to carry out its work in five general areas (which can be grouped into three) that the legislature laid out. The first is student success, the second is financial aid and a third is recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. The commission will probably begin its work on student success because there is already a lot of work that is underway nationally on that, and by department staff and external consultants. The group is expected to have its first meeting on November 7th, the meeting will be public, and hence, people can tune in.

- The second entity is the Mass Transfer Steering Committee. In the past 2 -4 years there has been a good amount of success when it comes to transfer students going from the two to four year space. However, the challenge is that nationally 80% of students who enter a community college say they want to transfer ultimately to a bachelor's degree and unfortunately not that many students actually go on to transfer. Eventually, only about 20% of community college students actually go on to transfer. The good news is that those that do are successful, and it is a testament in part to the work of the department and the board in smoothing transfer among institutions. Nonetheless, there's more work to be done. Empirically, transfer works well for students who are very intentional about it. However, it is not as good for students who aren't as intentional. To solve this problem, one of the goals of this Mass Transfer Committee is to establish common course numbering across institutions to facilitate transfer and make it more intuitive. A number of states have done this, including Florida. 15 members of this committee have been invited to serve to help achieve this goal and their response is awaited. This task would be led by Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success Richard Riccardi.

There is a third commission, which is The Governor's Advisory Council to Advance Representation in Education (ACARE). This commission has more than 60-members and was created in June of 2023 in anticipation of the Students for Fair Admissions affirmative action case and what was anticipated to be a hostile decision to race-conscious admissions. This group put out a report on October 16th with 30-odd recommendations and five key areas designed to promote representation both in and through higher education. The summary of this report is to basically expand the pool, invest in financial aid, and retain vulnerable students.

Assistant Commissioner Dannenberg highlighted that the first three buckets of the thirty-odd recommendations that relates to expanding the pool are:

- Increasing access in K-12 education to SAT and ACT preparation services to advanced placement courses and to have more students engage in academic career planning early on in K-12 education - as early as grades six. There's something called the MyCAP process that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education runs where students map out courses and steps they're going to take to prepare for higher education or careers including FAFSA completion.
- Reaching out to adult learners, including those who have never participated in higher education through increasing the availability of apprenticeship programs, paid internships etc. This also covers those who started their higher education and stopped out. There are 700,000 old adults in Massachusetts who have been to some college with no degree. These former students need to be brought back into higher education to their benefit, and this can be facilitated through embrative recommendations like the ACARE Council recommendation of providing credit for on-the-job learning and knowledge and skills gained, called the prior learning assessment.
- The third area of expanding the pool is on admissions. The Council recommended the embrace of direct admission and dual admission. Direct admission whereby students

don't even have to apply to a specific school, instead they get a letter from the school saying, you have been admitted based on your grades and maybe scores. Also, a student can be offered admission to two institutions at once (College and University), this method has been very successful in retaining students and promoting them to go through completion at both the associates' level and the bachelor's level.

Assistant Commissioner Dannenberg continued that a general area of recommendation would be to incentivize highly selective public and private institutions to engage in holistic assessment of admissions of applicants. Holistic assessment involves not only assessing the grades but also life experiences, challenges overcome, cultural awareness, neighborhoods that folks come from. Looking at these factors are legal and can help expand the applicant pool and increase diversity on campus.

The recommendation also includes investment in financial aid, incentivizing greater embrace of need-based aid versus financial aid that's not linked to economic need. Investment in financial aid that incentivizes students to attend full-time, which increases the likelihood of completion was recommended. Studies have shown that students who attend full-time are substantially more likely to complete their degree program than those who attend part-time.

The last aspect is retaining vulnerable students. Sometimes it is not finances but life that gets in the way of students. This may vary from housing insecurity, transportation problems or child care problems that lead to students unfortunately dropping out. Statistically, one in four students today has a child, hence today's student is not the traditional student. The investment in increasing the availability of comprehensive wraparound services can go a long way to boosting representation in higher education of historically underserved or underrepresented groups.

Commissioner Ortega added that the goal behind all the work being done is not to be a state that is best for some, but rather a state that is best for all and where racial gaps are closed. He continued that discussions around access to post-secondary opportunities are often related to equitable opportunities that are affordable for all students, and also the provision of high quality learning. He added that high quality learning should be addressed in terms of what it means for our institutions and also point to some things that need to be invested in.

To address high quality learning, apart from capital investment, a committee has been established to look at the needs of institutions and ensure that students have the best facilities that make sure that they have the right kind of learning. There is also the human capital aspect to high quality learning, as the workload has increased due to all the changes that are being implemented.

Member Allen shared that the approach to admissions on college campuses is changing, hence it is important to dwell more on innovations in terms of admissions that will help understand the kind of approach that should be advanced.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the BHE meeting held on June 11, 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
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Niki Nguyen - Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Assistant Secretary for Career Education, Bob LePage - Yes

IV. REMARKS & REPORTS

A. Chair's Remarks

Chair Gabrieli expressed that even though the system in Massachusetts provides more autonomy at the campus level as it is in many states, and most of the issues being discussed boil down to actions taken at the individual campus; yet, the board does have significant authorities as well. Hence, it is important that the Board identifies and acts on these authorities to make a difference through policy change, changes in support to campuses to adopt new approaches, and other similar ways.

Chair Gabrieli added that there are 3 important areas that should be focused on in raising up outcomes for students that have been poorly served historically.

- The first is an initiative that the Board and department started years ago and it's the efforts to reduce the whole traditional approach of remediation and to substitute a better and healthier approach of co-requisite, which has been very effective. Even though it took a ton of work and adoption by campuses to pull off, it helped change placement policies, and surely need to be looked at continuously in a broader admissions sense to avoid students being put on somewhat hopeless cul-de-sacs of remediation, which was a historical approach.
- The second point highlighted by Chair Gabrieli is Early College. Fresh evidence of significant increases compared to well-matched controls for students who are in early college in terms of both matriculation, and more importantly progress into a second

year, was observed at the Early College Joint Committee. He added that the data presented shows evidence on how alarming and challenging students progressing into second year can be and the Board needs to really look into this.

- The third point highlighted by Chair Gabrielli is the efforts to provide enhanced success programs to students. He emphasized that the Board should advocate for effective literacy that is effective towards students' success. He added that the same boldness with which the Board changed the playing field by tripling financial aid over the last 5 years and doubling it over the last two, should be used to also address early college, student success, and eliminating remediation.

Chair Gabrielli concluded by saying there should be greater inquiry into whether students go on to succeed in life after earning their degrees and certificates. This might be measured by metrics such as employment and earnings after graduation, their wellbeing and other metrics that measure their uplifting and success in life.

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

Secretary Patrick Tutwiler was represented by Assistant Secretary Bob LePage. He highlighted that it is STEM week and acknowledged the incredible work done by the higher education system to ensure that the commonwealth has the most productive and innovative workforce. He stated that STEM week is designed for all ages and it is important that STEM starts early in students. He admonished the Board to ensure that there is support for programs to launch new initiatives and that degrees and certificates are aligned to emerging sectors and emerging jobs.

C. Reports from Presidents

State University Segmental Report

[*For a copy of President Linda Thompson's full remarks, please see here:*](#)

President Linda Thompson of Westfield State Community who is the new Chair of the State University Council of Presidents stated that she looks forward to collaborating with the Board, the Executive Office of Education and the Department of Higher Education during her two-year term. She shared that the state universities are maintaining steady enrollment numbers and shared the data for some Universities, including:

- Framingham State University experienced an 18% increase in new first-year students with 26% of their incoming class identifying as Hispanic and 51% identifying as BIPOC.
- In MassArt University 26% of their incoming undergraduates are first-generation college students, and this cohort represents students from 27 states and 17 countries.
- Worcester State University's enrollment increased over the last year, and 47% of their incoming class identified as African American, Latino, or Native American or BIPOC, which is the highest in their university's history.
- Mass Maritime also welcomed its largest incoming class ever with a 25% increase over last year. They also have the largest incoming class of women and the largest incoming

class of students of color. A new training ship also arrived at the academy last year with a capacity to train 600 cadets at sea.

- Salem State University's total enrollment went up for the first time since 2012 and the largest undergraduate class in several years with 30% of new students identified as Hispanic.
- Westfield State University experienced about 20% increase in new student enrollment with over 44% of new students self-identifying as first generation students. The University also increased the number of international students and enrolled 24 international students this fall. Nine Westfield State students will be studying abroad this fall. Similarly, 16 students are confirmed for 2025 winter and spring study abroad programs.

President Thompson shared that enrollment is more than recruiting students in the first year, rather they must also be retained to graduation. Hence, there is more work to be done to increase degree attainment within six years. She expressed gratitude for the \$14 million approved by the legislature to extend the success programs to the state universities. She emphasized that the Universities are ready to invest these funds in proven retention strategies that create a welcoming campus culture with improved student engagement with faculty and the campus community. She appreciated the Board and the Department of Higher Education for their advocacy during the budget process, and for the legislature for prioritizing public higher education and fiscal year 25 state budget. She also expressed gratitude for the increases in the Mass Grant Plus Program and the extension of the Success Program to the state universities.

She continued that the Mass Grant Plus and the Mass Grant Plus expansion programs allow the universities to cover tuition and fees and provide a \$1,200 allowance for books and supplies for students enrolled in public four-year colleges or universities whose families earn up to \$85,000 per year. Also, the cost for tuition and fees will be reduced by up to half of the students out of pocket costs for families making between \$85,000 and \$100,000 per year.

President Thompson added that in fiscal year 2024, Westfield state has 938 and 699 students supported by Mass Grant Plus and Mass Grant Expansion, respectively. While in fiscal year 2025, there are 1037 and 465 students supported by Mass Grant Plus and Mass Grant Expansion, respectively.

She concluded by saying the launch of free community college for all this year, has brought the state universities and community college presidents together to discuss some new and innovative partnerships. Some of the issues discussed include establishing system-wide joint admissions agreements, early college admission agreements between the two systems, pathways for community college students to live in state universities campuses, and maximizing the positive impact of the free community college initiative.

Community College Segmental Report

[For a copy of President Luis Pedraja's full remarks, please see:](#)

President Luis Pedraja of Quinsigamond Community College who is currently serving as the chair of the Community College Council of President for this academic year. He welcomed and announced Dr. Jonathan Jefferson, who recently became the President of Roxbury Community College. He stated that following the passage of the fiscal year 2025 budget. College faculty, staff and administrators have worked hard and have been able to establish successful allocations targeting historically underrepresented students in an effort to increase completion and persistence.

President Pedraja added that the community colleges have begun to establish the ground work to better collaborate and build efficiency across all colleges. Also, continuous effort is being made to focus on supporting early college students and enroll them. In specific terms, QCC has been working in partnership with Worcester State and Worcester Public Schools to continue to increase its early college population. So far, about 9,500 new students have been added across the 15 community colleges. He added that through the partnerships, support and hard work, the colleges have been able to increase the number of transfer of students and their success when they do transfer.

President Pedraja also highlighted that the free college for all initiative has led to an increase of about 14% in headcount in all community colleges and 25% increase of new students (there was 40% increase of new students in 2022). The first year of MassReconnect, which provides free community college for those 25 and older who have never earned a degree, boosted enrollments for the first time in a decade with an 8% increase last fall. This fall is not exempted as thousands of new students have been welcomed. He expressed gratitude to the legislature and executive for the investment made in education.

President Pedraja mentioned that there is a need to focus on faculty and staff compensation as well as it is becoming extremely hard to recruit, attract and retain quality faculty and staff. He added that compensation for MCCC and ASPE members is a primary concern to the College Presidents. He also emphasized that student support in terms of basic needs such as food pantry, housing insecurity, challenges with childcare, academic and counseling supports; can help to ensure that the students persists and complete their education. He continued that there is need for investment in capital improvements as well, as most of the colleges were built 50 - 60 years ago and require uplifts and improvements.

Lastly, President Pedraja acknowledged the crucial role of the audience in the success of short-term workforce training, which is a key element in the Massachusetts workforce landscape. He highlighted that colleges received \$15 million in ARPA funding for the education training fund, a testament to the collective efforts of the audience and other stakeholders. This funding supported high-demand workforce training programs aligned with regional labor market blueprints. The initial goal of this training was to graduate 1500 students, but the outcome surpassed expectations. More than 3,200 students completed job training at no cost to them in high-demand fields like healthcare, IT, and human services, and 53% of those students were placed in industry jobs.

D. Report from Student Advisory Council (SAC)

BHE Student Member Niki Nguyen, who is a student at UMass Boston and is the new representative of the Student Advisory Council, stated that since resuming office, she has been opportune to meet Board members at the retreat, learn more about the DHE and meet with advisors to share perspectives on how to enhance the strategic initiatives for the upcoming year. She added that she was one of the keynote speakers at the 2024 Open Ed conference, a national conference that consists of advocates of OER that convene annually to share and learn about Open Educational Resources, open pedagogy, and open education initiatives. She shared that she had the opportunity to exchange wisdom on methodologies for increasing OER student awareness amid pending events such as elections, international politics, etc., with several current and former members of SAC. SAC's initiatives include improving infrastructure and expanding outreach so that student members know about SAC's work and their participation in educational equity.

E. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Ortega appreciated all the people in the campuses who are putting in the work. He stated that over the summer, the department's legal team under Dina worked with the institutions to ensure that the Title IX plans were updated and ensured that they were representative of all the updates that needed to be made by the regulations. Commissioner Ortega appreciated Dina and her team for leading this. He also appreciated all the institutional leaders whose staff stepped up to help with the update as well as Nate and Vincent for helping to coordinate among the two segments. The commissioner also appreciated UMass for working with the department on this.

The Commissioner went on to appreciate Dr. McCurdy and her team for their efforts in the recent FAFSA updates as the new investments in programs required going back and revisiting all of the financial aid guidelines. The individuals working on the various campuses (food service, academic advising, faculty, and staff) were also appreciated by the Commissioner for stepping up to the increased workload.

Lastly, the Commissioner mentioned that the department is excited to be able to re-engage and invite the Board into the conversations that lead to the changes and tap into the expertise of the Board. He appreciated the Board for always lending their expertise.

V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT & MOTIONS

A. Executive Committee Report

No report.

B. Motions

List of Documents Used

- [BHE 25-15](#) Approval of Bunker Hill Community College Strategic Plan
- [BHE 25-16](#) Approval of Framingham State University Strategic Plan
- [BHE 25-17](#) Approval of Massachusetts College of Art and Design Strategic Partnership Plan
- BHE 25-20 Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 25-18 and 25-19 on Consent Agenda
 - A. [BHE 25-18](#) Approval of UMass Amherst LOI Master of Science in Management
 - B. [BHE 25-19](#) Approval of UMass Lowell LOI Bachelor of Science in Data Science

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to approve **BHE 25-15**, *Approval of Bunker Hill Community College Strategic Plan*. He stated that the motion is to approve the Strategic Plan for Bunker Hill Community College. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

President Pam Eddinger of Bunker Hill Community College mentioned that the plan is for the next five years. She handed over to Associate Provost Arlene Vallie to continue the presentation.

Associate Provost Arlene Vallie presented the Bunker Hill Community College Strategic plan to the Board. She highlighted 4 key points of the plan, including;

- Focus on assessment: This speaks to the commitment of the college to measure and track achievement across all key areas including academic, co-curricular, administration, finance etc.
- No wrong door: The focus of this is to ensure that students are able to access the full range of services and programming at Bunker Hill Community College regardless of where they enter and how they progress through the institution.
- BHCC Online: The focus of this is to explore and expand offerings into remote services.
- Chelsea Campus: Being part of the Chelsea community with over 50% of its residents as Spanish speaking, has forced the college as an HSI to think more comprehensively about the services, programming and partnerships that are being built and developed at the Chelsea Campus as well as ensuring the right technology and services is available to support all students, all locations, and all modalities in all the ways.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Dr. Nicole Johnson for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 25-15 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes

- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Niki Nguyen - Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage - Abstained

BHE 25-15 APPROVAL OF BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the 5 year strategic plan of Bunker Hill Community College and has determined that the Strategic plan aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the plan and to make a final determination.

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 25-16, *Approval of Framingham State University Strategic Plan***. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

President Nancy Niemi of Framingham State University appreciated the Board and the Department of Higher Education for their support and gave a summary of the strategic plan. She highlighted that the strategic planning was going on concurrently with the 10-year re-accreditation exercise by NECHE. Hence, some recommendations of the accreditors were included in the plan. She stated that the 10 year accreditation was granted by NECHE and a two year update will be provided to NECHE in 2026 on strategic enrollment management plan, the strategic plan monitoring goals and achievements from these plans.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Dr. Nicole Johnson for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 25-16 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes

- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Niki Nguyen - Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Assistant Secretary of Career Education, Bob LePage - Abstained

BHE 25-16 APPROVAL OF FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the strategic plan of Framingham State University and has determined that the Strategic plan aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the plan and to make a final determination.

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 25-17, Approval of Massachusetts College of Art and Design Strategic Partnership Plan**. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

President Grant of Massachusetts College of Art and Design gave a brief presentation of the strategic partnership plan. She mentioned that all of the plan is centered on students with strategies to advance students' success, actualize students and ensure that it is all connected to the Commonwealth's priorities. She highlighted that a dean from MassArt is privileged to serve on the Advisory Council Committee. Similarly, MassArt is at the table of the New Council on Cultural Economy established by the Governor, as it is a \$27 billion economy in Massachusetts.

President Grant added that in the coming years there would be 700,000 jobs in Massachusetts and 18% of them (approximately 24,000 jobs) will require skills from the creative economy, which is the forte of MassArt. She continued that MassArt is focused on the application of hands-on learning.

In response to a question about work-based learning internships, president Grant stated that there is a MassArt Museum where students work through a program called Catalyst Fellows Program, which is geared towards employing the next generation of diverse museum leaders, curators and directors; and it is a scholarship program. Similarly, there is a fab lab on campus supported through Mass Skill Grant where students are doing significant levels of coding, and it is available for all students on campus. Also, there is an architectural program, called Community Build Initiative where students are working with community - based organizations. Some projects ascribe to the initiative are a playground built in Chelsea, a bike shelter in Longwood - which is being used as a prototype, as hospitals in the area will be very excited to have it. She also shared that there is a sustainability minor program where

students look at how they can develop their ideas and bring them to market. There is also a Center for Art and Entrepreneurship on campus, where students are developing business plans, financial literacy, understanding the taxes involved which helps when they become small business entrepreneurs after graduation. President Grant added that an Innovation Advisory Council will also be launched soon.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Dr. Nicole Johnson for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 25-17 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Niki Nguyen - Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage - Abstained

**BHE 25-17 APPROVAL OF MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the strategic partnership plan of Massachusetts College of Art and Design and has determined that the Strategic plan aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the plan and to make a final determination.

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 25-18**, *Approval of UMass Amherst LOI Master of Science in Management*. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Dr. Nicole Johnson for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 25-18 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Niki Nguyen - Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage - Yes

**BHE 25-18 APPROVAL OF UMASS AMHERST LOI MASTER OF SCIENCE IN
MANAGEMENT**

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Master of Science in Management program proposed by UMass Amherst and has determined that the program aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the proposal and to make a final determination.

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 25-19, Approval of UMass Lowell LOI Bachelor of Science in Data Science**. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Dr. Nicole Johnson for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 25-19 was approved by members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Niki Nguyen - Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – N/A
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage - Yes

BHE 25-19 APPROVAL OF UMASS LOWELL LOI BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN DATA SCIENCE

VOTED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Bachelor of Science in Data Science program proposed by UMass Lowell and has determined that the program aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the proposal and to make a final determination.

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

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Gabrieli adjourned the meeting at 12:41 p.m.

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