

Commissioner's Spotlight

January 14, 2024

Spotlight Overview

- Items guiding the Board's Work
- ACARE

Informing Our Work and Priorities

Foundational BHE Documents

- Strategic Higher Education Financing (SHEF) Framework
- Equity Agenda
- Strategic Plan for Racial Equity
- The New Undergraduate Experience

Ongoing Efforts

- Advisory Council for the Advancement of Representation in Education (ACARE)
- Commission on Higher Education Quality and Affordability (CHEQA)

DHE's Goal and Strategic Priorities

Equity Goal

Reduce by at least half the racial, ethnic, and economic disparities that persist in the provision of postsecondary opportunity and success in MA

Priorities

1

Continue to roll out and sustain a compelling set of clear and consistent state financial commitments to making college affordable for students & well-supported to raise success

2

Significantly increase the socioeconomic mobility benefits of postsecondary participation in MA

3

Improve alignment between postsecondary education opportunities and MA workforce and civic needs

4

Expand the role of the Board and Department in facilitating and fostering high-impact innovation among IHEs and our system through advancing new approaches to postsecondary opportunity and success for the full range of potential learners

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DHE Team Members Presenting Today



Constantia Papanikolaou, J.D.
Chief Legal Counsel



Michael Dannenberg, J.D.
Deputy Commissioner for Policy

Advisory Council for the Advancement of Representation in Education (ACARE)

- Formed by Governor Healey in June 2023 in anticipation of SCOTUS decision on two (then) pending challenges to race-based admissions in higher education
 - Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College
 - Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina, et al.
- Aimed at increasing access into the state's higher education institutions and providing a high-quality experience to all students regardless of background
- Council included over 40 members- Input from Massachusetts colleges and universities, students, civil rights groups, advocacy organizations, and elected officials
- Co-chaired by Secretary of Education and Commissioner of DHE
- ACARE report released on October 15, 2024

The Charge

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard University, et al.*, the Administration remains committed to keeping Massachusetts welcoming and inclusive of all students and to crafting intentional strategies, within the law, to break down barriers to higher education and foster representative student bodies— so that students, colleges, and our greater society can continue to benefit from the invaluable contributions of students of color, LGBTQ students, and other students historically underrepresented in institutions of higher learning.

The Advisory Council to Advance Representation in Education is hereby established to advise the Massachusetts Secretary of Education and the Commissioner of Higher Education on the development of policies, practices, and strategies designed to eliminate barriers to access for all students and enhance student body diversity throughout Massachusetts' public and private colleges and universities.

Drawing from their diverse experiences and expertise, Council members shall give guidance and provide feedback to the Secretary and the Commissioner related to current and future policies, programs, and/or procedures needed to eliminate barriers to and enhance representation in higher education in the Commonwealth. To achieve this objective, the Council's members will share strategies, knowledge, and evidence acquired at the institutional and organizational level to ensure multi-sector collaboration in the effort to expand inclusivity and representation in higher education. The Executive Office of Education and Department of Higher Education will provide staffing to support the work of the Council, including the sharing of data, reports, and other relevant information and assistance.

The Council shall meet at least quarterly each year at the direction of the Secretary and the Commissioner. The Council will continue to meet through August 1, 2024 at which time, the Secretary and Commissioner shall submit a formal written report to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, summarizing the Council's work, findings, recommendations and feedback on how to promote **access** to higher education, particularly for students of color, LGBTQ students, low income, and other students historically underrepresented in enrollment and **completion** of programs at the postsecondary level.” (emphasis added)

Three Main Messages

Messages: We Support –



1. A Welcoming Environment for All Students

Reaffirms our commitment to access, diversity, equity, and inclusion



2. Opportunity for All Socioeconomic and Racial Groups

Supports advancing socioeconomic opportunity alongside racial equity



3. Comprehensive Support for Student Success

Goes beyond admissions and seeks to improve affordability, enrollment, and success outcomes

Recommendations

Recommendations: 5 Main Buckets

1

Enhance **Access** to
Higher Education
and Postsecondary
Opportunities

2

Implement
Innovative
Recruitment,
Admissions, and
Enrollment Policies

3

Increase College
Affordability and
Equity in State
Financial Aid

4

Increase Higher
Education
Persistence and
Completion

5

Enhance Alignment
and **Collaboration**
Among Institutions
of Higher Education

Recommendations

Enhance
Access to
Higher
Education and
Postsecondary
Opportunities

1. Increase SAT and ACT Preparation Services
2. Increase Access to AP Courses and Rigorous Curricula
3. Increase FAFSA and MAFFSA Completion
4. Expand Early College and Career Pathways
5. Enhance Capacity of High School Counselors and Teachers
6. Increase Bridge and Transition Program Support
7. Heighten Outreach to Elementary and Middle School Students

Recommendations

Implement
Innovative
Recruitment,
Admissions,
and
Enrollment
Policies

1. Encourage Promising Recruitment and Admissions Strategies
2. Advance Direct Admissions
3. Advance Dual Admissions
4. Advance Percent Plans
5. Increased Transfer Credit Applicability and Mobility
6. Study Legacy Preference and Binding Early Decision

Recommendations

Increase
College
Affordability
and Equity in
State
Financial Aid

1. Conduct a Student Aid Adequacy and Equity Analysis
2. Allocate Financial Aid to Support Full-Time Enrollment
3. Redesign State Financial Aid Programs

Recommendations

Increase
Higher
Education
Persistence
and
Completion

1. Incentivize the Provision of Comprehensive Support Services
2. Expand Work-based Learning Experiences
3. Carry out Campus Climate Surveys

Recommendations

Enhance
Alignment and
Collaboration
Among
Institutions
of Higher
Education

DHE to Convene Stakeholders on Various Topics

- Wraparound Services
- DEI Initiatives
- Recruitment and Admissions
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Data Management

Next Steps

- Build on momentum and continue to use ACARE report and recommendations to help inform ongoing work
 - Financial aid investments
 - Extension of SUCCESS
 - CHEQA work
 - Financial aid redesign
 - BHE strategic planning
- Specific Implementation Action Items referenced in report
 - Implementation plan to be prepared and submitted in 2025
 - Quarterly cross-agency (DHE, EOE, DESE, others) touchpoints to assess progress to date and development of implementation strategies
 - Annual review on progress and intended outcomes
 - Conduct statewide assessments referenced in report (RFP development in progress)

Access the ACARE report at mass.gov/acare

Thank you!