



Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Community College President's Report

Bill Heineman, President, North Shore Community College Chair, Community College Council of Presidents

October 28, 2025

Good morning Chair Gabrieli, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and members of the Board:

It's been less than a month since we were last together, so I will keep these remarks brief.

That being said, it has been an immensely busy few weeks for the community colleges and I'm pleased to cover a few of those items today.

First, as you just heard, the early enrollment report shows that our campuses are lively with new students – nearly 24,000 since the start of Free Community College. It's no exaggeration to say our campuses feel like different places than they did just three years ago. And while that's been incredible to be part of, what's more exciting to me is what this truly represents – a jump start, a new beginning, a leg up – for tens of thousands of students across the Commonwealth. The investments made here haven't just boosted enrollments – they've offered opportunity to each and every student coming through our doors.

Just last week, in recognition of the success of Free Community College, College Promise – a national, non-partisan, non-profit initiative that builds support for funding the first two or more years of postsecondary education – awarded Massachusetts the National Impact Award. This award recognizes programs that are transforming lives through access to higher education, career opportunities, and community partnerships. On a national stage, Massachusetts is being recognized for the impact Free Community College is making – and our colleges are so happy to be part of that.

Also last week, community college presidents and chief academic officers met with UMass President Marty Meehan and the leaders of the UMass campuses. We focused on assuring transfer between our institutions and UMass is as clear and seamless as possible, and we believe the number of students graduating from the Community Colleges and transferring to the State Universities and UMass will inevitably grow with our enrollment.

Looking ahead to next week, we will be joining Ed Trust in MA and the Hildreth Institute – as well as the Commissioner and the Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education – for a legislative briefing on the SUCCESS program. My colleagues and I have detailed the importance of SUCCESS in the landscape of ensuring student success, and we are looking forward to sharing more about the program with legislators and stakeholders.

Finally, we offer our thanks to the Senate President and her colleagues for including funding for financial aid in the Senate version of the FY25 closeout supplemental budget. Although the bill must still go through conference committee, we are pleased to see the Senate acknowledge how critical these dollars are for students and we hope that the conference committee will follow their lead. We believe significant growth in the Commonwealth's talent pipeline will be the result of the substantial increases in financial aid for public higher education students, including Free Community College, over the last several years. We thank the Board, the legislature, and the Governor for that investment.

Thank you – I am happy to take any questions you might have.