



CoP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education

December 9, 2025

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Gabrieli, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and members of the Board of Higher Education. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the important work the Massachusetts State Universities are doing to fulfill our mission of offering high-quality, affordable, and life-changing postsecondary education.

Innovation Program Approval Regulations – Public Comment Period

The Council of Presidents would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, Commissioner Ortega, and especially Attorney Papanikolaou for your collaboration over the summer in developing the draft innovation regulations that this board voted to release for public comment. Although we continue to question both the need for and the quality of sub-120-credit bachelor's degree programs, we appreciate the Department of Higher Education's efforts to ensure strong consumer protections and safeguards for academic rigor within these proposed regulations.

The Council of Presidents intends to submit formal written comments during the public comment period, and we look forward to continued partnership with the Board and the Department as we explore new, innovative ways for students to access our high-quality educational programs.

State Financial Aid Supplemental Funding

My colleagues and I want to publicly commend and thank the Massachusetts Legislature for allocating additional student financial aid funding through the FY25 supplemental budget signed by the Governor a few weeks ago. As you know, our public higher education system was facing significant shortfalls in student aid accounts—shortfalls that threatened our ability to keep our promise of providing affordable pathways for students facing financial barriers to earning a degree.

Through our joint advocacy, the Legislature appropriated \$18.2 million in supplemental funding, enabling thousands of students to continue their education. We are proud of the strong commitment our state policymakers and the Administration have made to the students of the Commonwealth.

Investments in Public Higher Education

As the fall semester comes to a close, my colleagues and I have a great deal to be thankful for.

Last month, the House of Representatives advanced the BRIGHT Act, bringing us one step closer to addressing our immense deferred maintenance backlog and critical infrastructure needs. In Western Massachusetts, where the regional shortage of healthcare workers is acute, BRIGHT Act investments would allow Westfield State University to develop a Human Health Hub to help meet workforce demand. This project would replace Bates Hall—which is no longer adequate for modern science education—with state-of-the-art laboratories and classrooms. These are the types of transformative investments we hope the BRIGHT Act will make possible for our campuses, our regions, and the students we serve.

Finally, the Healey-Driscoll Administration recently released a first-of-its-kind statewide report on post-college earnings for students who attended Massachusetts public colleges and universities. At a time when some are questioning the value of a college degree, this report confirms what we have long known: students who graduate from our campuses earn significantly more than peers who do not pursue higher education. Our public institutions drive economic growth, advance equity and inclusion, create proven pathways for social and economic mobility, and transform lives.

We are grateful to the Administration and the Legislature for their historic and ongoing support in making higher education more affordable and accessible for all.

Conclusion

On behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank this Board, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and your dedicated staff for your continued support and for your tireless efforts on behalf of our students throughout this past year. I wish all of you a happy holiday season, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the new year.