



CoP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education May 20, 2025

Introduction:

Good Morning, Chairman Gabrieli, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega and members of the Board of Higher Education. On behalf of the State Universities Council of Presidents, thank you for this opportunity to provide you with an update on the Massachusetts State University System.

Graduations and Alumni Educator Award Ceremony

Since it is graduation season, we have so much to celebrate on our campuses.

Our recent commencement ceremony at Westfield State University held a special meaning for me. As the class of 2025 was beginning their first year on campus in 2021, I was starting my first year as president. In that sense, I feel like I was part of this class.

Over the past four years, we have gotten to know each other. We have travelled together, celebrated together, created programs, attended events, concerts, plays and formal balls. We have chatted around the campus green and in the dining commons. We have both laughed and had heavy conversations. We have outlined challenges and strategized on devising solutions.

It was an honor and pleasure to watch the class of 2025 grow and learn. I will always recall our time together with fondness.

Last Thursday, the state universities held our annual State University Educator Alumni Awards ceremony at the State House, where we celebrated graduates from our nine campuses who have made a difference in Massachusetts' public schools.

As you know, the Commonwealth was the first state in the union to recognize the importance of teacher preparation programs. Although our institutions have greatly expanded our program offerings, we continue to be proud of our original mission to prepare teachers. In fact, the Massachusetts State Universities continue to educate over one-third of all public educators in Massachusetts.

We were thrilled to recognize nine impressive educators for their teaching excellence and their dedication to their students and communities. And we want to thank Commissioner Ortega for providing inspirational remarks at this event. We are fortunate to have a Commissioner who

understands the importance of a diverse educator workforce and that our students deserve access to educators trained in culturally-responsive and culturally-relevant teaching.

Spending Bills

I would like to share a couple of comments on the spending bills that are currently pending before the Legislature.

Fair Share Surplus Spending Bill

The State Universities Council of Presidents continue to appreciate the historic investments in public higher education that have been made possible due to the dedicated revenue from the Fair Share surtax. With \$1.32 billion in surplus Fair Share revenues, we advocated for the Legislature to prioritize public higher education in the surplus surtax supplemental spending bill.

We appreciate that the House included funding for our endowment match program which has been a great success on our campuses. We are also grateful to the Senate for including in their version of the bill \$175 million for a deferred maintenance capital program for public institutions of higher education.

FY 26 State Budget

Regarding the FY26 state budget, even though there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding funding cuts on the federal level, we are grateful that both the House and Senate budgets include several critical investments in our state universities. This funding will help our campuses keep the cost of attendance down so that even our neediest students are able to attain a baccalaureate degree.

We are grateful that the House included funding for the state university internship program and SUCCESS program as well as increased our performance funding line item. And we appreciate that the Senate included a \$20 million increase to the MassGrant Plus Expansion program and level funded our state university SUCCESS program and mental health grants. After the Senate debates its budget next week, our advocacy efforts will turn to the members of the conference committee and we will urge that these investments be included in the final FY26 budget.

My colleagues and I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Legislature for their continued support of our state university system. We would also like to thank this board and the department for your advocacy efforts on our behalf to ensure that public higher education in Massachusetts has the resources we need to best serve our students while remaining affordable and accessible to the populations we serve.

Conclusion

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share this update from our state universities. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.