



Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Community College President's Report

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

I am glad to be with you all today. As we dive headlong into spring – and all of the events and celebrations that come along with May at our colleges – I want to take a moment to congratulate our students, faculty, and staff. In just two weeks, I will have the distinct pleasure of welcoming the Mount Wachusett Community College Class of 2024 to their commencement ceremony. Any college president who tells you that commencement isn't their favorite part of their job is lying – I am sure of it.

Each graduate represents not only the individual successes and sacrifice, but that of their families and their colleagues, their children and their friends. They represent the commitment that their faculty members bring to their jobs every day, and the dedication that my college staff carry through every single thing that they undertake. Their successes are why we do the work that we do – I am deeply grateful to all those involved in ensuring our students walk across that stage, prepared for what's next and ready to make us proud.

Equally integral to this spring season, though slightly less festive, is the legislature's annual budget process.

Although I've spoken about the upcoming fiscal year several times before, it's imperative to our colleges that I publicly note, as we prepare for the Senate to release their budget, some items that are of critical importance to us.

The first is the community college SUCCESS program. You've heard today about some of the innovations occurring across the country with respect to student success. In fact, CUNY ASAP served as a model for us when we were building our SUCCESS program. We would welcome the opportunity to, jointly with our partners at the DHE, come present at a future meeting about the Massachusetts SUCCESS program at our community colleges. It is working, and working well, in terms of increasing persistence for our most vulnerable students: our students who engaged with the SUCCESS program persisted better than their like peers who did not participate in the program by double digit percentage points. That is a *huge* impact, and we are hopeful that the Senate will inject additional funding to this important – and proven – program.

Additionally, we are seeking funding to continue our colleges' Workforce Education and Training Fund. Established with one-time funds in FY22, ETF supports high-demand workforce training programs at our community colleges that align with regional labor market blueprints. ETF has trained nearly 3,200 students in healthcare, education, information technology, and more at no cost to the student. The most important piece to note as we discuss ETF: these programs are not eligible for Federal financial aid due to the duration of the programs. So, for a fully Pell-eligible student – those with the greatest financial need – that Federal aid would fully cover the cost of whatever degree they wish to pursue. But a student seeking to study to be a CNA or EMT – two of the greatly in-demand fields that the ETF program has trained students in – must pay *entirely* out of pocket due to the lack of financial aid. This program has been tremendously successful in training students into fields where they go right to work, which is particularly important to building the Commonwealth's workforce.

Finally, per the Senate President's public remarks last week, we are excited at the possibility of seeing free community college in the Senate budget proposal. The final report of free community college recommendations was submitted yesterday to legislative leadership – that report is the culmination of many months of work of an advisory group convened by the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges and consisting of representatives from across the higher education landscape. Should the Legislature pass Free Community College, the lives of students across the Commonwealth – including those who thought college was out of reach and those who never considered college at all – will be immediately impacted for the better.

We look forward to continued dialogue about the community college's priorities in support of our students and employees.

Thank you again for the chance to talk about what's happening at our colleges, and I am happy to take any questions you might have.