



State Universities
of Massachusetts

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

February 6, 2023

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 the opportunity to provide you with an update on the Massachusetts State University System.

Spring is always a time for new beginnings, and I am pleased to share some exciting news of events that are kicking off the spring semester on our state university campuses.

Just this week, Bridgewater State University will be celebrating the grand opening of its new state-of-the-art Cyber Range, designed to develop hands-on training through simulated cyberattacks, data breaches, and other cybercrimes. This cybersecurity training facility immerses up to 24 students or professionals in simulated scenarios where they will confront and mitigate sophisticated ransomware and malware attacks. The range serves as a staple of Bridgewater's first-of-its-kind bachelor's degree program in cybersecurity.

At Framingham State University recently opened its doors to the newly renovated Christa McAuliffe Center, a fully immersive STEM learning environment for students of all ages. This 21st century center features interactive learning spaces designed to provide innovative and integrated STEM pedagogies and programs that are accessible to all audiences. The renovation included an upgraded planetarium, a re-imagined Challenger Learning Center, and open, flexible exhibit areas. The grand reopening celebration was held on the days leading up to the 38th anniversary of the Challenger accident and culminated in a day of remembrance, focusing on Framingham State alumna Christa McAuliffe and the rest of the Challenger crew.

At the end of the month, Salem State University will also honor one of our esteemed alumna. On February 29, we will be dedicating our newest residence hall in honor of Charlotte Forten, Salem State's first African American graduate. A graduate of the class of 1856, Charlotte was a pioneer,

fighting against racism and sexism as an advocate for the end of slavery, equal rights for women and people of color, and educational opportunities for all. We are proud that the idea for the dedication of this building in her honor was brought to the administration and the Board of Trustees by our students. Their activism to recognize the importance of formally commemorating Charlotte's achievements as an abolitionist, educator, writer, poet, translator, and women's rights activist in a larger, more public way will be celebrated at this event.

Governor's FY25 Budget

I would now like to share some comments on the Governor's FY25 budget. While last year we all celebrated the historic investments in our public higher education system, we understand that the state is now facing a \$1 billion tax revenue shortfall. With the release of the Administration's H.2 spending plan, the Governor announced there is a need for "some belt tightening."

Recognizing that the Administration was forced to make tough and strategic choices in their budget recommendations, my colleagues and I greatly appreciate that the Governor funded campus line items with a base appropriation that annualized all FY24 campus funding. This annualized funding included salary obligations contained within our employee labor contracts, the state university funding formula and performance funding. Since the single largest cost-driver for our institutions is an unfunded or underfunded collective bargaining agreement, we want to thank this board and the DHE for your continued advocacy to ensure that our contractual increases are fully funded; just as the state does for all other state employees. Since contractual salary obligations are covered by either the state or the student through fees, full funding of these contracts goes a long way to ensuring the affordability of our campuses consistent with SHEF priorities.

The state universities will advocate the legislature to support this funding as well as the other public higher education priorities included in the H.2. These include continued investments in:

- Capital construction and deferred maintenance on our public higher education campuses, which is also a priority of the CHERISH Act;
- MassGrant Plus expansion program to provide need-based financial assistance to our public higher education students;
- Funding for comprehensive student behavioral and mental health programs; and
- Support of early college and innovation pathways programs.

We are also grateful that public higher education has a dedicated revenue source from the Fair Share surtax revenue. The FY25 Consensus Revenue Agreement includes conservative \$1.3 billion surtax-supported spending. We appreciate the Governor's recommendation as was just explained to direct \$229 million of Fair Share funding for public higher education initiatives. We

view this amount as a starting point and plan to work with the legislature to increase public higher education's share of the \$1.3 billion surtax revenue in their budget recommendations.

In addition to the priorities included in H.2 and the Fair Share surtax revenue, the Council of Presidents will also advocate for investments in the state universities internship program, the public higher education endowment incentive program, the state university funding formula line item, and enhanced cybersecurity and information technology infrastructure funding.

I would be remiss if I did not strongly reiterate my previous comments about the critical need for the release of a higher education bond bill. As you know, the last higher education bond bill was signed into law in 2008 with Governor Patrick. My colleagues and I will continue to advocate for a process that more fully funds the capital construction projects on our campuses in order to shift the financial burden of these costs off of our students.

At Salem State University, we have seen substantial increases in costs for our major capital project, SSU BOLD, which includes an addition for much needed, and overdue, modern science labs and the renovation of a vacant building on our campus to relocate programs from a soon to be shuttered South Campus. We have been creative throughout the design process to keep costs down, but there is only so much that can be trimmed before you end up with a project that does not fully meet the needs. This challenge is not unique to our campus, as Mass Maritime's science, technology and engineering lab modernization project and Bridgewater's renovation of Burnell Hall for its College of Education and Health Sciences are facing higher costs without a significant increase in state support.

At Salem State, we were grateful to the Administration for an additional \$15 million in support of SSU BOLD, but even with this additional funding, the university's portion of the project is around 60 percent, which is about \$65 million. If not funded by the state, this expense falls on the backs of our students. As we strive to make higher education more accessible and affordable to all, we need to consider the impact these projects have on our students.

Campus Police Recruitment and Retention

As you may know, all state university campuses, and probably all Massachusetts public higher education institutions, are finding it extremely difficult to recruit and retain campus police officers. With the passage of the new police reform law, a significant inequity in our public safety workforce has been highlighted: Our campus police officers remain in Group 1 of the Massachusetts State Retirement System while all other Massachusetts Police Officers are in Group 4.

With the passage of the Massachusetts Justice, Equity and Accountability in Law Enforcement statute in 2020, and regulations promulgated through the Police Officer Standards and Training

Commission (POST Commission), our campus law enforcement officers are statutorily required to receive the same training and adhere to the same accountability standards as any municipal, county or state police officer.

Despite these requirements, our police forces are not entitled to the same retirement benefits. The difference in a law enforcement retirement benefit and other state employees is significant, and for good reason. Law enforcement officers put their lives on the line every day they go to work. Our campus police are no different; as evidenced by recent events across our Massachusetts public higher ed campuses and for the fact that they serve as auxiliary forces within the communities where we are located.

There is legislation to move public higher education police officers from Group 1 to Group 4 in both the Senate and House. The State University Council of Presidents supports this effort and asks the board to join us in advocating for this change.

Professional Practice Doctorate Programs

I will end my remarks with an issue that is not new to this board, but the urgency for addressing it and for change has never been greater. The state universities continue our quest to amend the General Laws to permit our institutions to offer Professional Practice Doctorate Degrees. Last week, the Joint Committee on Higher Education voted favorably to advance legislation that would grant us this authority.

The barrier to the state universities offering doctorates dates back to the late 1980's when the Saxon Commission issued a report that led to the restructuring of our public higher education system in Massachusetts. As part of that restructuring, the state universities were prohibited from offering doctorate level programs without a vote of the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees. The reason for this restriction was to ensure that the missions of the three public higher education segments were protected from "mission creep" between the three separate systems. During the time that the Saxon Commission was issuing its report, there was little attention given to Professional Practice Doctorate Degrees and the term "Doctorate Programs" was a standard industry term which included both PhDs and PPDs. However, over the past five decades, higher education has been forced to change in order to meet regional, state and national workforce demands as well as regional accreditation and licensure agencies.

As a result, clinical and professional doctorate programs have emerged as separate degrees which are distinct from PhD programs and separate from research institutions. Those in higher education and industry have shifted from the catchall term of *Doctorate Degree*, and now differentiate between a Doctor of Philosophy (a PhD) and a Professional Practice Doctorate (PPD). The traditional PhD is a research-based degree through which scholars create "*new knowledge*" through original research, and by contrast, the PPD is a degree through which master

practitioners apply “*existing knowledge*” to address practical problems or develop more effective professional practices in a discipline. This degree represents the highest level of education and a mastery of subject matter and techniques in a professional field of practice or study, and is something that our universities are more than equipped to offer without interfering with programs offered within the UMass system.

With our state’s workforce facing a critical shortage of qualified and credentialed applicants for jobs, and a lack public higher education pathways to the PPDs required to fill them, changing the statute allows our campuses to fill this gap. Having the state universities offer professional practice doctorates is not only good public policy, but it is essential to Massachusetts’ economy. Without this change to the General Laws, we are failing our Massachusetts residents and not fulfilling our mission as public colleges and universities.

We ask this board to support our efforts to amend this law, and to assist us in working with UMass to make this a possibility for the students in our region.

Conclusion

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share this update from our state universities.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.