



State Universities  
of Massachusetts

## **COP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education**

Roxbury Community College  
December 11, 2018

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### **Introduction:**

Chairman Gabrieli, Secretary Peyser, Commissioner Santiago and members of the Board of Higher Education, on behalf of the Council of Presidents, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Massachusetts State University System.

### **FY20 DHE Budget Recommendations:**

Later this morning the board will be presented with the FY 2020 DHE budget recommendations developed by the Commissioner and his team. The state university council of presidents would like to go on recorded in support of the departments forward looking recommendations. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the commissioner for recognizing the importance of several items that are of value to the state universities. In particular, the increases to our state university line items by recognizing the unfunded salary costs of negotiated contracts between our three state university bargaining units – the MSCA, APA and AFSCME. The full funding of these contracts go long way to ensure the affordability of our campuses as these costs associated with these increases are either borne by the Commonwealth or by the students through increased fees.

We also are very supportive of the significant increase recommended by the commissioner in the Commonwealth's financial aid line item. As you know, the average MassGrant award once covered about 85% of a public college student's cost of attendance and now only covers less than 10%. This major investment in state financial aid, coupled with the increases to community college students included in the FY19 budget, are long overdue and we fully support the Commissioner's recommendation to add \$14.3 million to this account. The expansion of the MassGrant program to pell-eligible state university students will go a long way begin to close the affordability gap that exists for many of our students.

In addition to investments in financial aid and campus line items, I would also like to highlight two other priority areas of the department that are of interest and supported by the state universities. The Performance Incentive Fund (PIF) has been a highlight successful program for state universities, community colleges, and UMass campuses to fund important and innovative programs that support inter-campus collaboration. We continue to support the DHE's and DESE's programs that support Early College Initiatives creating a more streamlined preK-16 system of public education in Massachusetts.

Finally, we appreciate the continued support the DHE has shown towards the state university internship incentive program. We support the commissioner's request to level fund this matching grant program at \$1 million. This program is a wonderful example of how public/private partnerships can work; and work well. Since its creation in FY 2013, thousands of state universities have benefited from this program which connects students with employment opportunities while providing much needed dollars for students working towards a degree.

#### **Partnership with MassBIO:**

While on the topic of our state university internship incentive program, I would like to make you aware of a partnership we are developing with MassBio, MassBioEd, Mass LifeSciences and Bottom Line through this successful program. The business community recognizes the value internships bring, not only students by giving them real work experience, but also the business community by having students workplace ready at graduation. The State Universities are going to leverage our state appropriation for paid internships to support this effort. We have found that a major barrier to experiential learning for students is the cost of transportation and time away from other paid part-time work. The State University Internship Incentive earmark helps our students bridge those financial barriers by providing them with a stipend for an internship.

If your schedule allows, we would like to invite you to join MassBio, the state universities and biotech company leaders from across Massachusetts at a press conference and announcement of *Project OnRamp -- Connecting Promising Students from Underserved Communities with Internships in the LifeSciences*. In the coming weeks we will provide greater details, but the launch of this program is tentatively scheduled for the morning of January 23, 2019 at Framingham State. We are so pleased that the DHE is supportive of the internship incentive program and have included it in the FY20 budget recommendations. This sends an important signal to policy makers that supporting internships for students burdened by financial barriers by including this program in your recommendations will be warmly embraced by our state universities and our partners in the business community. I am happy to provide you with more information as the date approaches.

#### **Community College Partnerships:**

Proposed increases in funding to campuses allows greater opportunities for collaboration between the universities and our partners at the community colleges. The Commonwealth Commitment, which grew out of an initial partnership between individual state universities and some community colleges, has been embraced by both our segments as an important way to provide affordable and seamless transfer pathways between community colleges and state universities. This program through the support it has been given by the DHE and the Baker Administration, has been a great success for the students participating in the program. While the benefits to students are clear, the partnership it creates between both segments has spurred greater collaboration that has developed organically between regional community colleges and state universities.

I would like to highlight a couple additional partnerships that have gained attention in recent weeks.

Framingham State University and MassBay Community College, two campuses who have long had a strong relationship working collaboratively together in MetroWest, this year began collaborating on residential student housing. Due to excess housing capacity at Framingham State, the university began

offering MassBay students the opportunity to live and participate as resident student life at Framingham State University. With soaring housing prices in the MetroWest region, this partnership has the potential to offer students attending MassBay a more affordable and safe opportunity to be part of Framingham State community as a resident.

On the North Shore, Commissioner Santiago recently joined President Keenan from Salem State and President Gentile from North Shore Community College for a signing ceremony for expanded partnership between the two institutions. The agreement, which was signed on November 30<sup>th</sup>, creates a seamless transfer pathway between North Shore and Salem State. Like Framingham and MassBay's partnership, this agreement provides housing and student extracurricular options at Salem State for community college students attending North Shore. The partnership opens opportunities for North Shore students to be part of an honors program and student clubs. Additionally, the agreement builds upon the successful MasTransfer work to make transfer seamless between the two institutions. Building upon the successful financial collaboration between the state universities and community colleges through PACE, the Salem/North Shore agreement also focuses on shared services to maximize resources between the campuses.

These partnerships between community colleges and state universities are an important part of our mission to efficiently serve the students of the Commonwealth.

**Closing:**

As we begin the New Year, my colleagues and I will continue to work closely with Commissioner Santiago building upon the successes over the past year. We are proud that our state universities continue to offer the best value proposition for a bachelorette degree in the northeast and with nearly 95% of our students coming from Massachusetts, we have established ourselves "first choice" universities for residents of the Commonwealth... The Governor is preparing his FY20 budget recommendations to the legislature. Public colleges are the best, and most often, the only chance for economic mobility for residents living in our gateway cities.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to present the state university segmental report to you this morning. I am happy to answer any questions.