



State Universities
of Massachusetts

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

University of Massachusetts Boston
June 18, 2019

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.

This will be my final segmental report, as I am completing my tour-of-duty as chair of the COP. I am happy to share with you that the state university presidents have selected Richard Lapidus, President of Fitchburg State University, to chair of the State University Council of Presidents next year. President Lapidus, who is here today, is looking forward to building upon our successes over the past year and work with you, our community college partners, UMass and other public higher education stakeholders to strengthen partnerships and help move this board's equity agenda forward.

A year ago, when selected to represent the State Universities as chair of the CoP, I made forging new and innovative partnerships my number one priority. I want to thank Commissioner Santiago and your talented team of dedicated professionals at the DHE. Through your leadership and willingness to work with our state universities, we have moved a meaningful and forward-thinking agenda for our 29 public higher education institutions. The many accomplishments over the past year, as highlighted in the Commissioner's end of year report, could not have been realized without all of us embracing a spirit of trust and collaboration.

I particularly want to thank my friend and colleague, Valerie Roberson, for her work with me to align our two systems and develop new partnerships between the state universities and community colleges. We have focused on breaking down institutional barriers and working on ways to better support our student. With this commitment of collaboration, the state universities and community college COPs developed a public higher education advocacy campaign; began meeting jointly to share ideas and create new pathways between segments for our students; expanded shared campus services our joint purchasing initiatives; developed MOUs between our campuses intended to open up state university dorm rooms to community college students; and have embraced the pilot program seeking to address the needs of our students struggling with homelessness and hunger issues.

But that's just the beginning. The Community Colleges, State Universities and UMass are continue working on developing a common application for public higher education institutions; continuing our commitment to the Public Higher Education Honors Undergraduate Research Conference; and we have expanded the number of 2+2 programs with the community colleges and many of our campuses have established 3+1 agreements with the UMass Law School.

Thank you, President Roberson, and thank you Commissioner Santiago, for working with me and my state university colleagues throughout this year of unprecedented collaboration between the department of higher education, the community colleges and the state universities.

I would like to take a couple minutes to offer a brief update on some state university COP related matters. As many of you know, the State Universities met last Friday for a two day, all-university campus leadership retreat where we discussed expanding on our collaboration efforts with the community colleges, development of shared services around international recruitment, moving forward our proposal to provide a public option to Massachusetts students seeking professional practice doctorate programs not offered or not readily available at the University of Massachusetts, initiating a comprehensive review of our student health services and student health insurance, and continuing to work with our community college colleagues to maximize the value and effectiveness of our PACE office.

During our two day conference, my colleagues and I were joined by Commissioner Santiago. Carlos was able to brief the state universities' campus leadership teams on the board's Equity Agenda and other BHE priorities for the upcoming year. I am happy to report that our campus team enthusiastically support and fully embrace this bold and forward-thinking initiative. The Equity Agenda directly speaks to the mission of our system and our efforts to provide high-quality, affordable, and accessible pathways to a meaningful degree. We all know that the best, and most often the only, opportunity for social and economic mobility is through a public higher education institution. We join the commissioner and this board in embracing and supporting this Equity Agenda and look forward to working with Commissioner Santiago in the coming years to advance this work.

The presidents were also joined by Secretary Peyser at our meeting. We wish to express our gratitude to the Secretary for taking time to share the Administration's plan for our public higher education system, his thoughts and views on our state universities, the work we do and our shared interest in creating the best public higher education system in the nation. The presidents are committed to continuing our work with the Secretary on the distribution of critical campus repair funds, advancing the early college program and the Commonwealth Commitment, as well as developing ways to work with the Administration and Legislature on prioritizing adequate funding for public higher education campuses in order to fully realize the opportunities outline in this board's equity agenda.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of representing my colleagues, our nine campuses and the 50,000 students we serve every year at our great state universities.