

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

**NO.:** BHE 20-10

**BOARD DATE:** May 5, 2020

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**AUTHORIZATION TO MOVE FORWARD WITH A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE LUMINA FOUNDATION AND DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO COMMISSIONER**

**MOVED:** In December 2018, the Board of Higher Education (BHE) adopted a vision statement to guide the work of developing a statewide equity agenda. Pursuant to recommendations in the Board's FY19 Evaluation of the Commissioner to seek additional resources and develop partnerships with outside stakeholders, including philanthropic organizations, to advance the equity agenda the Department of Higher Education seeks to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Lumina Foundation.

Lumina Foundation has identified the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as qualifying for designation as a Talent, Innovation, and Equity (TIE) State Partner. Should both Lumina Foundation and the Department move forward with the Commonwealth's designation, the BHE hereby delegates to the Commissioner the authority to finalize and execute the TIE MOU with the Lumina Foundation, consistent with the framework and goals outlined in the attached background statement.

**VOTED:** Motion adopted by BHE 5/5/2020.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A § 9(n)

Contact: Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner

## Background

Though Massachusetts leads the nation in high school graduation, college enrollment, and overall degree attainment, the attainment levels of Latinx and African American students remain substantially lower than those of the general population. A recent analysis by DHE found that, while 65% of White female adults (age 25+) in Massachusetts hold at least an associate degree, the rate for Latino males is only 22%. Similar disparities are also evident in every success metric tracked in public higher education.

During the September 2018 Board of Higher Education (BHE) retreat, Commissioner Santiago and Chair Gabrieli proposed to members a new direction for public higher education that would reaffirm the state's commitment to maintaining high levels of educational attainment among the adult population while emphasizing equitable postsecondary outcomes for students from traditionally underserved backgrounds.

In December 2018, the Board adopted the following vision statement to inform the developing of a statewide Equity Agenda:

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education aims to sustain and expand on Massachusetts' unique leadership position in higher education as defined by the strength and reputation of our private and public postsecondary institutions and our nation-leading level of attainment among our adult citizens. To further realize those goals and to ensure that public higher education opens doors of opportunity and fulfillment for traditionally underserved populations, we elect to make our top statewide policy and performance priority – Significantly raise the enrollment, attainment and long-term success outcomes among under-represented student populations. We intend this equity lens priority to guide campus and system performance measurement and promote initiatives and policies that collectively expand success for residents and for our economy and society.

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) was subsequently charged with collaborating with institutions to develop a new strategic framework for higher education focused on equity. The Department began this project by first engaging in a professional development series for agency staff. The DHE partnered with the University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center and with funds awarded by Lumina Foundation Equity Leadership Acceleration Grant, staff engaged in a four-day Equity Institute. The four-day Institute prepared staff to begin planning for the development of a statewide strategic plan centered on ensuring equitable outcomes for students enrolled in public postsecondary institutions.

## **Talent, Innovation, and Equity (TIE)**

Lumina Foundation has identified Massachusetts as a national leader in advancing equity and higher education. Lumina Foundation has established the Talent, Innovation and Equity Partnership program ("TIE Partnership") to provide a specific suite of grant, planning, research and other supports to further increase the statewide attainment outcomes in a select group of states well-positioned to provide exemplary leadership and success in this regard, particularly with respect to closing gaps between the overall state attainment rate and the attainment rates of African American, Hispanic, Native American, and other equity populations. Lumina Foundation has identified our state as qualifying for the designation as a TIE State Partner.

As a condition of Lumina designating the Commonwealth as a TIE state, and the Commonwealth's access to the attendant funding, the BHE, acting by and through the Commissioner, is required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which outlines expectations and goals. The anticipated term of the MOU would be for two years (June 2020 through June 2022) and the primary purpose would be to support the Commonwealth's overall attainment and equity goals. To that end, as a TIE State Partner, Massachusetts would adopt the following framework and goals which will be memorialized in the MOU with Lumina:

- Sixty percent of working-age Massachusetts residents ages 25–64 will hold an associate degree or higher and an additional 10% of the population will hold a high-quality credential by 2030.
- Forty-three percent of African American and 32% of Latinx Massachusetts residents ages 25–64 will hold an associate degree or higher by 2024.
- Gaps in completion rates for African American and Latinx students who initially enroll in the Massachusetts public higher education system, relative to White students, will be reduced by 9-10% with respect to the completion outcomes of the fall 2018 entering cohort.

The goals will be subject to further refinement and adjustment as the Department and the BHE engage in future modeling, and assess currently indeterminable factors, such as the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on enrollments in public and private higher education institutions. The DHE would receive funding and technical assistance from the Lumina Foundation to help advance the Commonwealth's equity agenda.