

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 25-16

BOARD DATE: October 22, 2024

APPROVAL OF FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the **Framingham State University Strategic Plan 2024-2029** and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

VOTED: Motion adopted by the BHE on 10/22/2024.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3 and Article III.
Contact: Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Background

A fundamental responsibility of the BHE is to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. The Board enacts this responsibility by establishing statewide goals and by regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals. Articulating statewide goals has no impact on creating greater equity in public higher education unless these goals and performance metrics are embraced by the individual colleges and universities and incorporated into their strategic plans. Massachusetts state law therefore charges the BHE and the Secretary of Education with reviewing and approving campus strategic plans. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§9(f), 9(l) and 22(l).

Framingham State University Planning Process

Touch Point I: On November 11, 2023, DHE staff met with President Niemi and the entire Executive Leadership team for the University including General Counsel and Chief of Staff McDonald, who co-chaired the planning committee with co-chair Dexter, who serves as the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources & Equal Opportunity. President Niemi opened the meeting noting that this was a new context for her and that it would be important for the process to be true to the character of FSU. She provided a graphic depicting FSU overarching approach to the planning process and another depiction of FSU's anatomy of a strategic plan. President Niemi also emphasized that FSU expects to align campus strategic planning with their NECHE self-study, which was currently underway at the time of the meeting with an anticipated completion in April 2024. FSU indicated the desire to use data from the self-study in the campus plan. DHE staff responded that this was common feedback from Presidents during the 2022 Strategic Planning Advisory Council study on aspects of campus strategic planning, and something that BHE supported and included in the revised version of the Campus Strategic Planning Guidelines.

DHE staff provided an overview of the adjustments to the Touch Points process and the revised guidelines. A robust conversation ensued during which FSU requested updates to the Frameworks for Student Success. Staff provided that the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity, The New Undergraduate Experience, and the Student Success frameworks serve as the foundational documents and strategic priorities of BHE, which are expected to be reflected in each plan in a way that is consistent with the character and mission of the institution.

FSU underscored that much was learned during the pandemic, and the former strategic plan had to be adaptive and flexible to meet the moment, and that they expect to build adaptability into the 2024-2029 plan. President Niemi emphasized the relationship between resource allocation and the realization of aspirational goals.

Touch Point II: Framingham State University submitted the Touchpoint II draft plan on May 15, 2024. After a comprehensive DHE staff review, a Touchpoint meeting (virtual) was held on June 5, 2024 with President Niemi and co-chairs McDonald and Dexter as well as DHE staff to provide feedback. DHE staff noted the excellent work the campus had already completed in terms of this draft. A particular note of excellence was the goals, objectives and strategies defined by purpose, program, people, place, and performance, creating a thread that is woven throughout the plan. DHE staff noted that there were multiple references of the region FSU serves and suggested a clearer definition of that term. FSU responded with further clarification in the draft plan to emphasize that these references are specific to the MetroWest region, with Framingham as the heart of that region. As the only public baccalaureate and graduate degree granting university in MetroWest, FSU's continued focus will be on its role, relationships, and contributions in this region and they will use that synergy in the region to inform a number of their strategic initiatives. DHE staff requested a list of key performance indicators (KPI) associated with the proposed strategic goals so that the plan was data-informed throughout. Those KPIs were provided to DHE staff on July 24, 2024 and incorporated into the final draft of the plan.

Touch Point III: Chief of Staff McDonald submitted the plan to DHE staff on September 6, 2024. The plan was distributed to the members of the Board of Higher Education on October 10, 2024. The plan was approved by Framingham State's Board of Trustees in September 2024.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Framingham State University at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for BHE approval of the proposed **Framingham State University Strategic Plan 2024-2029**.