

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

**NO.:** BHE 25-23

**BOARD DATE:** January 14, 2025

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**BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the December 13, 2025 unanimous recommendation of the Bristol Community College Board of Trustees to appoint Dr. Sedgwick Harris as President of Bristol Community College. Such appointment is effective on or before March 1, 2025, is subject to the successful and satisfactory completion of a State Police background check, and is subject to and in accordance with the attached Terms of Appointment.

**VOTED:** Motion adopted by the BHE on 1/14/2025.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(q) and 21

Contact: Constantia T. Papanikolaou, Chief Legal Counsel

## Background

The Board of Higher Education (BHE) is a coordinating board, with some governing authority, over the public higher education system. Among the BHE's governing functions are its statutory responsibilities to approve the appointment and removal of, and set the compensation for, the president of each state university and community college within the public higher education system. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§ 9(q) and 21.

In furtherance of these legislative requirements, and consistent with the BHE's responsibility to establish overall goals in order to achieve a well-coordinated, quality system of public higher education in the Commonwealth, to establish coordination between and among institutions, and to resolve conflicts of policies or operations, the BHE issued guidelines and procedures for the search, selection, appointment and removal of the chief executive officers at state universities and community colleges. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§ 9(c) and (u). [BHE Presidential Search, Selection, Appointment and Removal Guidelines \(2013\)](#). The BHE Presidential Guidelines establish minimum procedural expectations for Board of Trustees conducting presidential searches, delegate to the Commissioner the authority to act on behalf of the BHE as specified therein, and include several touchpoints between local Board of Trustee Chairs and the Commissioner to ensure that the Presidential search process is being conducted consistent with the BHE and the Commissioner's expectations.

The Bristol Community College (BCC) Board of Trustees initiated the search process for the next President of BCC in January 2024, during a board meeting where President Laura Douglas announced that she intended retire in January 2025. The BCC Board of Trustees conducted the search with the assistance of search consultants at Isaacson, Miller. As required under state law and the BHE's implementing guidelines, the Commissioner appointed a voting member to the search committee, Deputy Commissioner Richard Riccardi, who participated in the development of the position profile, the selection and interviews of semi-finalist candidates, and the search committee decisions to recommend final candidates for public interviews.

The following five finalists participated in BCC Board of Trustee interviews and virtual campus visits during the weeks of November 18<sup>th</sup>, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, and December 9<sup>th</sup> :

- Dr. Alison Buckley
- Dr. Sedgwick Harris

- Dr. Patricia Marshall
- Dr. L. Michael McCloud
- Dr. Evon Walters

During that time, the BHE was extended an opportunity to interview all five candidates, as provided by the BHE Presidential Guidelines. The Commissioner and the Secretary of Education engaged in this procedural touchpoint on behalf of the BHE and interviewed all five candidates on behalf of the BHE; consistent with our current practice these interviews were recorded.

On December 13, 2024 the RCC Board of Trustees voted unanimously to recommend Dr. Sedgwick Harris to the BHE for approval and appointment, subject to and in accordance with the attached Terms of Appointment. M.G.L. c. 15A, § 21.

The Commissioner has received and reviewed the BCC Board of Trustee's recommendation, along with all supporting materials, and has determined that the submittal is complete, and the search was conducted in alignment with the BHE Presidential Guidelines. Accordingly, the Commissioner is forwarding the recommendation to the BHE for consideration and formal action.