

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

NO.: BHE 27-17

BOARD DATE: October 20, 2026

APPROVAL OF HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education (Board) hereby approves the **Holyoke Community College Strategic Plan FY2027-FY2031**, subject to the institution ensuring that all strategies within the plan will be implemented consistent with relevant state and federal laws, as well as guidance issued by the Massachusetts Attorney General; and provided further that the institution is authorized to make revisions to the document as needed from time to time to maintain compliance. The Board further authorizes the Commissioner to forward the strategic plan 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 10/20/2026.

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 Board of Higher Education (BHE) is to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. The BHE enacts this responsibility by establishing statewide goals and by regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals. Articulating statewide goals has no impact in the public higher education system 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).

Holyoke Community College Planning Process

Touch Point I: On May 27, 2025, Department of Higher Education (DHE) Staff met with President Timmons, members of his Cabinet, the co-chairs of the Planning and Innovation Committee, and a member from the CampusWorks Team to review the strategic planning process, the roles of the Board of Higher Education and the Department of Higher Education and how the campus strategic planning process integrates with the Board's fundamental responsibility to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. DHE Staff answered questions concerning the timing of the planning process, how campus goals integrated with statewide goals set by the Board, and the use of campus metrics and how they connected to existing DHE metrics and the Board's strategic priorities. During the Fall 2025 semester, Holyoke examined national trends in higher education as well as stakeholder input from the community as part of a comprehensive SWOT analysis gathering data concerning institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. DHE Staff attended a campuswide day of learning and visioning on December 9, 2025, where three nationally recognized thought leaders presented strategies for improving transfer outcomes, strengthening workforce programs, overhauling academic advising, modernizing high-impact practices, developing Artificial-Intelligence-aware pedagogy, and building authentic assessment through continuous improvement.

Touch Point II: An initial draft was submitted to DHE staff by President Timmons on April 7, 2026. After review by DHE Staff, a Touchpoint II meeting occurred on April 27, 2026 to provide feedback to President Timmons and members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. DHE Staff noted how inclusive the strategic planning process was throughout the timeline and how inclusion is listed as one of the five core

values of Holyoke Community College and was truly embraced by the campus and the community it serves. DHE Staff found the Student Experience Statement compelling, framing the entire plan around strong commitments to the students and placing those students at the center of the plan. DHE Staff also appreciated that the mission of Holyoke ("educate, inspire, and connect") was front and center throughout the strategic planning process; this emphasis is evident in the formatting of the final plan. Finally, DHE Staff appreciated the significant work involved in developing the Strategic Frameworks and Objectives, noting the specificity of the goals and suggested that the connection between the campus goals and Board of Higher Education strategic priorities could be made stronger and more apparent. This was accomplished with the metrics crosswalk found in the final plan.

Based on the feedback from Touchpoint II, a draft plan was submitted by President Timmons on August 23, 2026; upon review of the submission, minor editorial modifications were suggested by DHE Staff. Those suggestions were incorporated into the final plan.

Touch Point III: A draft plan was approved by Holyoke's Board of Trustees on May 26, 2026. Holyoke submitted the final plan to DHE Staff on September 1, 2026. The plan was distributed to the members of the Board of Higher Education prior to the October meeting.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Holyoke Community College at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for BHE approval of the proposed **Holyoke Community College Strategic Plan FY2027-FY2031**.