### **Commission on Higher Education Quality and Affordability (CHEQA)**

**Meeting #2: Financial Aid** 

November 26, 2024

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History of financial aid in MA



The challenge

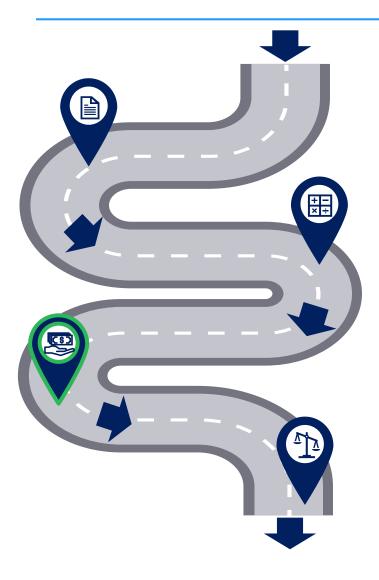


Leading practices



**Option set** 

### How does student financial aid work?



Financial aid path for students

Student fills out the FAFSA



FSA prepares a Student Aid Report (SAR)



Schools provide a financial aid package



Students compare the aid packages provided Sources of funding in MA

- Financial aid program officers at colleges and universities consider a student's federal Pell Grant award and state aid programs to provide coverage of tuition and fees for eligible students
- If unmet financial need remains, program officers may pull in additional sources of funding, like institutional grants / scholarships, and other sources of state aid, which are designed to "top off" a student's package at least toward tuition, fees, books and supplies
- Even after additional sources of funding are offered, financial need to cover the "total cost of attendance" may remain, given that **room and board, transportation, and childcare costs represent a substantial share** of a student's out of pocket cost

# The foundational, federal Pell Grant award is designated for low-income students nationally and serves as an important proxy for economic need for state-based policies

#### **Federal Pell Grant**

- Pell Grants are provided by the federal government to support low-income student access to postsecondary education; the funds are disbursed to the institution a student attends, and prioritized for tuition and fees, but can additionally cover books and supplies, room and board, transportation, technology, and childcare
- Pell Grants are awarded to undergraduate students who display financial need, based on the calculated Student Aid Index (SAI) during FAFSA filing
- SAI replaced the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and assesses need by considering income (AGI), family structure, dependency status, and state of legal residence, and full / part time status
  - AGI<sup>1</sup> (gross income deductions) is the most influential variable used to calculate SAI
- Pell grant awards are capped at 600% of a one-year award, meaning that if a student receives 100% in their first year, they will receive funding for up to 6 years
- Pell-eligibility is a common requirement for supplemental state and institutional aid, and one of the best proxies for need given the robust calculation on the part of the Federal Student Aid office

1. Adjusted gross income (AGI) is the sum of all income earned in a year before tax minus qualifying deductions, such as business expenses or certain types of loan interest

2. Range includes aid cutoffs for both single and non-single parents; Single parent AGI limit is 325% of poverty guideline for students to receive minimum award and 225% for students to receive the maximum award. Non-single parent AGI limit is 275% of poverty guideline for students to receive the maximum award award and 175% for students to receive the maximum award

Source: MA DHE internal data, US News, Federal Student Aid office

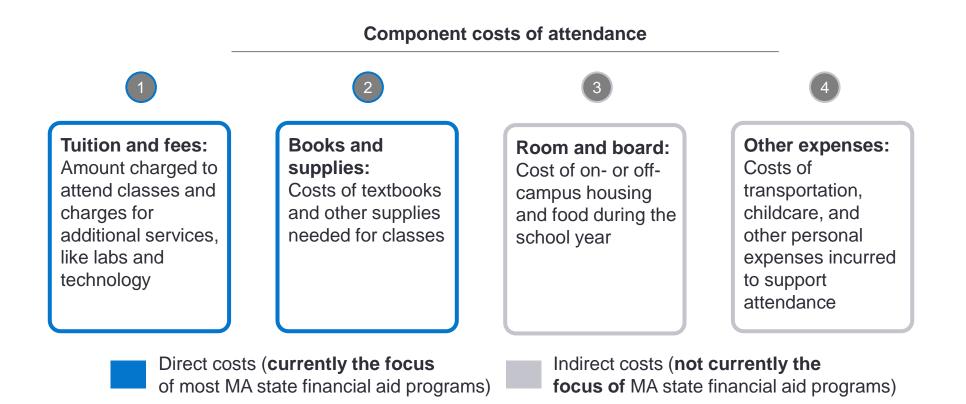
Pell Grant eligibility ranges, adjusted for family size, 2024-2025

Family size	AGI <sup>2</sup> limit to receive maximum Pell award <sup>3</sup>	AGI <sup>2</sup> limit to receive minimum Pell award <sup>4</sup>				
2	\$32k - \$41k	\$50k – \$59k				
3	\$40k – \$51k	\$63k — \$74k				
4	\$48k – \$62k	\$76k – \$90k				

In some cases, MA uses Pell eligibility as a proxy for need-based aid given the breadth of inputs FSA uses to determine Pell Award (e.g., family size, AGI)

Maximum Pell Grant award for 2024-25 academic year was \$7,395
 Minimum Pell Grant award for 2024-25 academic year was \$740

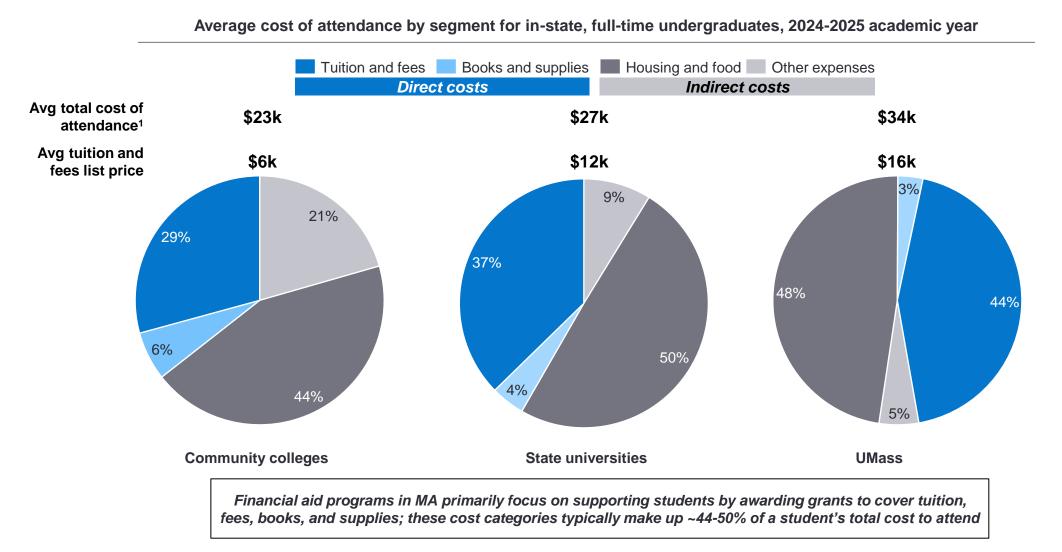
A student's cost of attendance (COA) includes both direct costs (tuition and fees, books and supplies) as well as indirect costs; State aid programs in MA mainly cover direct costs



#### Student financial aid primer

Working draft

# The average COA before financial aid for in-state, full-time undergraduates is ~\$23k at community colleges, ~\$27k at state universities, and ~\$34k at UMass campuses

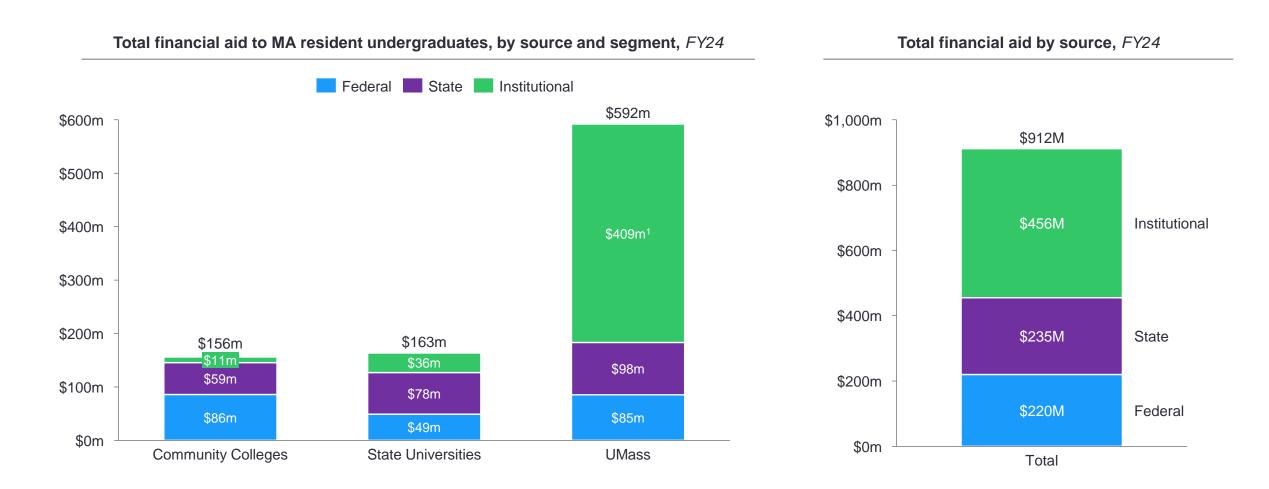


1. Assumed in-state, full-time (24 credits/year for community colleges), living on- or off-campus (averaged where applicable) Source: Institution websites

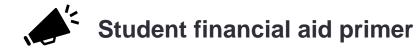
#### Student financial aid primer

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# Federal aid represents the largest source of financial support for community college students; for UMass students, institutional aid is the largest source



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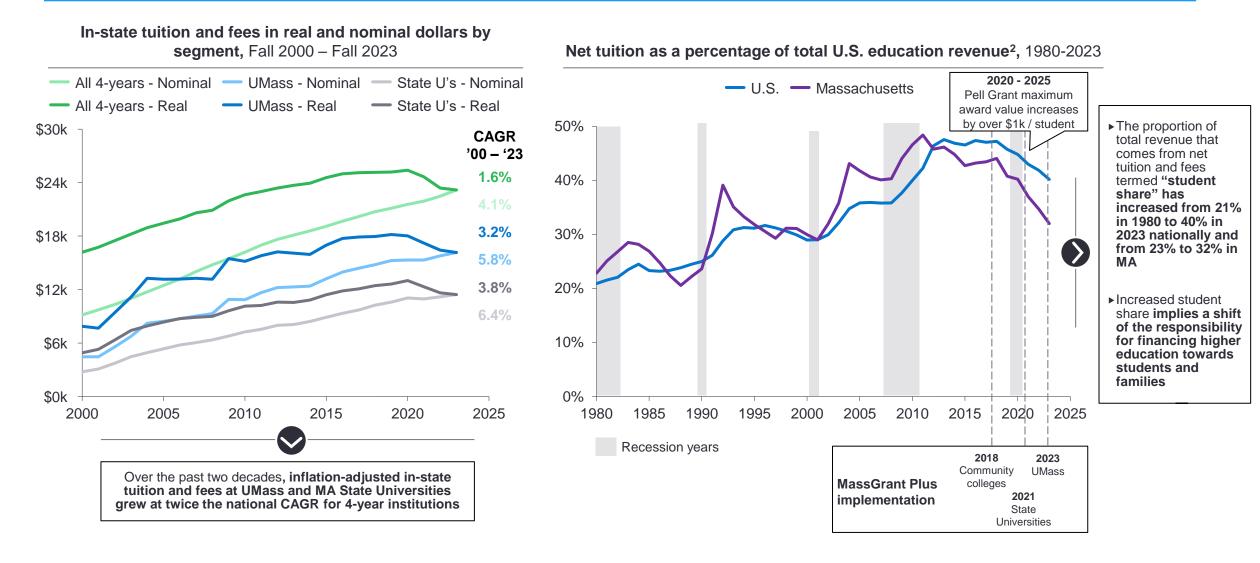


**Option set** 

#### History of financial aid in MA

#### Working draft

# Student share of net tuition and fees has grown dramatically since 1980, indicating a shifting cost burden to students; only in recent years has this trend started to reverse



1. All US 4-year institutes include Public, Private & Not for Profit 4-year institutes; real tuition and fees adjusted by consumer price index (CPI) to be shown in 2023 dollars

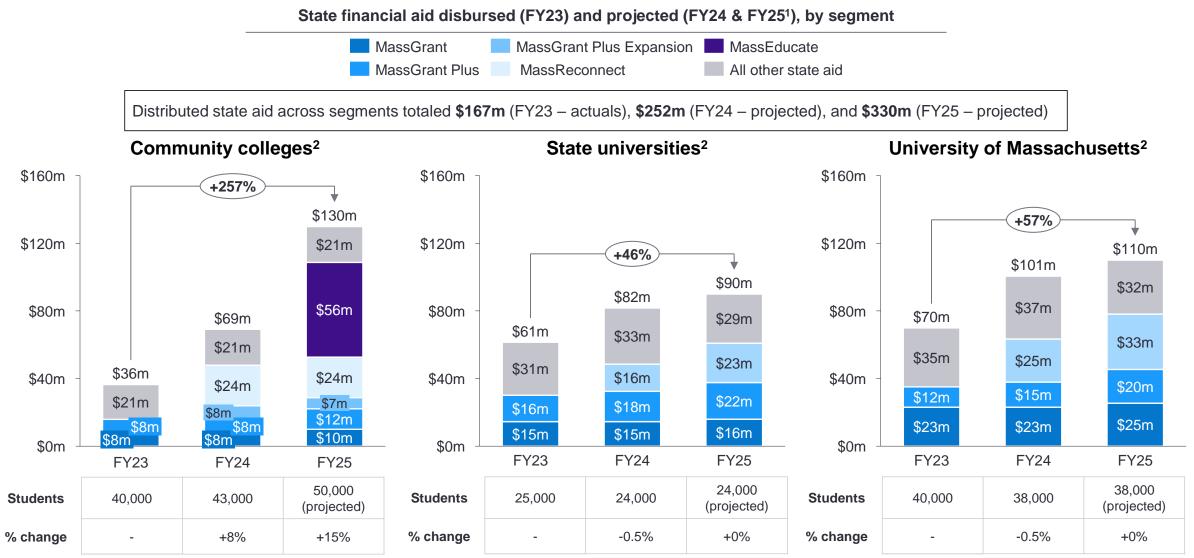
2. Includes public and private universities

Source: State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO); State Higher Education Finance (SHEF)

#### History of financial aid in MA

#### Working draft

### State financial aid distributions have dramatically increased over the last three years, in particular at Community Colleges with the introduction of MassEducate



1. FY24 and FY25 are sourced from simulated data and are preliminary

2. Growth rates represent total percent change, calculated from FY23-FY25

Source: Institutions and preliminary estimates of FY24 distributions

#### History of financial aid in MA

#### Working draft

MA disburses most aid to full-time students at public, degree-granting institutions; nondegree/credential-seeking and private institution students are largely excluded

Eligibility criteria	Degree of coverage by existing MA programs	Degree of coverage description
Students enrolled in <i>public</i> institutions		Banner MA programs, like MassGrant Expansion and MassGrant Expansion Plus apply to public institutions
Students enrolled in <i>private</i> institutions		MassGrant applies to private institutions, along with some other state aid programs and entitlements
Students enrolled <i>full-time</i>		Other than state aid specifically for part-time, all aid programs apply to full-time students
Students enrolled <b>part-</b> <i>time</i>		MA has part-time-specific aid and programs that do not stipulate full-time enrollment, though learners are excluded from ~half of programs
Students enrolled in <i>degree-granting</i> programs		Students enrolled at degree-granting institutions are eligible for state financial aid
Students enrolled in short- term <i>non-degree</i> / <i>certificate-granting</i> programs		Students enrolled in short-term (less than 10 week), non-degree programs are not eligible for DHE state financial aid

Commentary

 Students attending private institutions are eligible for fewer state aid programs than students attending public institutions

Short-term, non-degree
 courses are traditionally
 excluded from aid programs

### MassEducate has expanded access to community colleges regardless of economic circumstances, pivoting from a history of need-based financial aid



Jhollyeric De Freitas, photographed at North Shore Community College. SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE

### Free community college is now a reality in Massachusetts

Gov. Maura Healey signed a nearly \$58 billion budget bill into law this week, and one of the key policy changes it contains is providing free community college in Massachusetts.

-CBS, 2024



Higher education enrollment in Massachusetts is up for the first time in years thanks in part to free community college programs, according to state education officials.

#### In Massachusetts, a Push for Free Community College for All

The first year of a program offering free college for those over 25 was a rousing success at boosting enrollment. Now, some legislators want to expand the program to all ages.



A free community college proposal included in the Massachusetts Senate's budget aims to increase the number of students attending community college in the state by 4,000 annually.

Photo illustration by Justin Morrison/Inside Higher Ed | londoneye/iStock/Getty Images

### MassEducate applies to all Massachusetts residents, regardless of income or other gating criteria for need

66 MassEducate covers tuition and fees, which cost an average of about \$7,000; as well as books for students under a certain income threshold. Anyone without a bachelor's degree and who has lived in Massachusetts for at least a year is eligible."

Boston Globe, 2024

### Community college enrollment increased 14 percentage points following implementation of MassEducate

66 Student enrollment in the Massachusetts higher education system increased by 6.5% between the fall of 2023 and 2024. Enrollment at Massachusetts 15 community colleges grew by 14% over the last year."
WRUE NER Restan, 2024

WBUR-NPR Boston, 2024

#### The expansiveness of the MassEducate policy reaches underrepresented and first-generation students who face higher barrier to college enrollment

66 [Free community college for all] contrasts sharply with programs in other states that may offer free community college to certain populations, but often lose students due to complex paperwork or a failure to clearly communicate whether or not they qualify." CBS News, 2024

UMass campuses are marketing "free tuition and fees" for low-income students via existing aid programs, a signal that a student guarantee is necessary





UMass Lowell Announces Free Tuition in Partnership with MassGrant Plus

Program Covers Tuition and Fees of Massachusetts Residents with Family Incomes up to \$75K

#### 2024 News

E Q

### UMass Dartmouth launches free tuition program for high-need, in-state students

The UMass Dartmouth Deal to provide expanded opportunities for personal and professional success to Massachusetts undergraduate students



#### Commentary

- At the end of October, UMass campuses introduced language around a "free tuition guarantee for income-eligible students" by marketing existing federal, state, and institutional financial aid as a singular pledge for students with AGI <\$75,000</li>
- The campuses made clear that the repackaging was aimed at highlighting UMass affordability and communicating simplicity to families and students who might not otherwise consider a UMass education due to cost
- The reframe of existing policies highlights the benefit of and need for a statewide guarantee, so students and families who might not otherwise consider postsecondary education due to cost have reliable information they need to make a different decision

Oct. 30, 2024 | by Office of Communications

EDUCATION, PRESS RELEASE

UMass Boston

> Free tuition for eligible students. Now at UMass Boston.

**Beacon Pledge** 

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**Student financial aid primer** 



History of financial aid in MA



The challenge



Leading practices



**Option set** 

#### The challenge

#### Working draft

# Students in MA face three key challenges: remaining unmet financial need, a lack of guaranteed aid, and an uncoordinated, uncomprehensive system

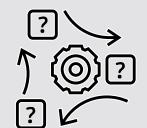
#### Unmet need persists among low- and middle-income students

- ▶ Unmet need for costs beyond tuition, fees, books, and supplies persists for low-income students
- Middle income students who do not qualify for need-based financial aid still struggle to afford higher education tuition & fees



#### Lack of codified aid policies

- Currently, there is no codified financial aid guarantee in MA. Policies are funded through annual budget appropriations rather than via legislation, meaning funding levels and program specifics can vary each fiscal year.
- MassEducate is the first policy to codify a "promise," though the funding source is not guaranteed; UMass recently made a public pledge (without legislation), leaving state universities the only truly guarantee-free segment



#### System is neither coordinated nor comprehensive

- MA has 50+ aid programs that are largely last-dollar programs, many of which serve a small number of students and distribute a small award amount
- Programming currently excludes key populations from eligibility (e.g., early college students, high-value certificate students); students find it challenging to navigate

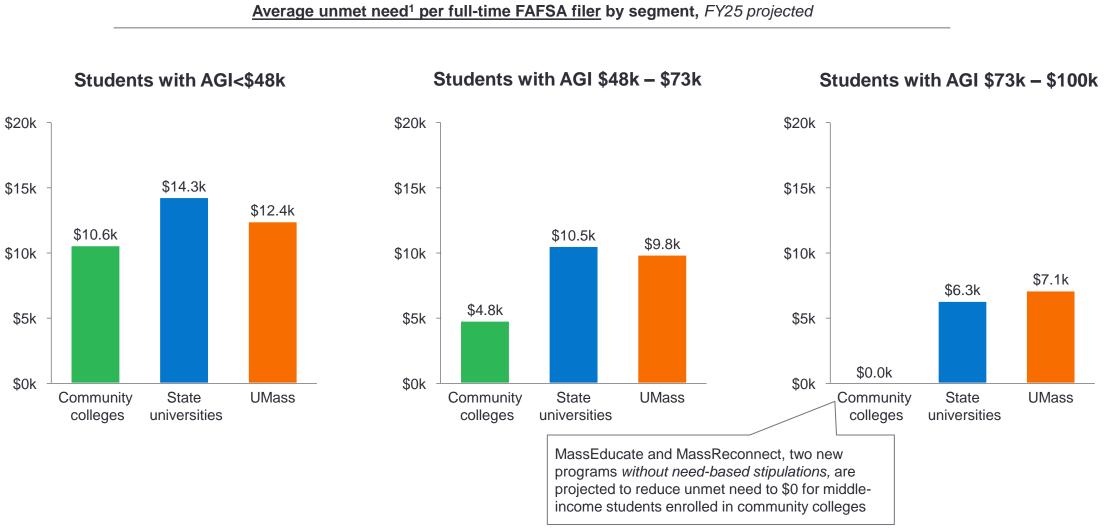
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2.

#### 1. Unmet need persists

Working draft

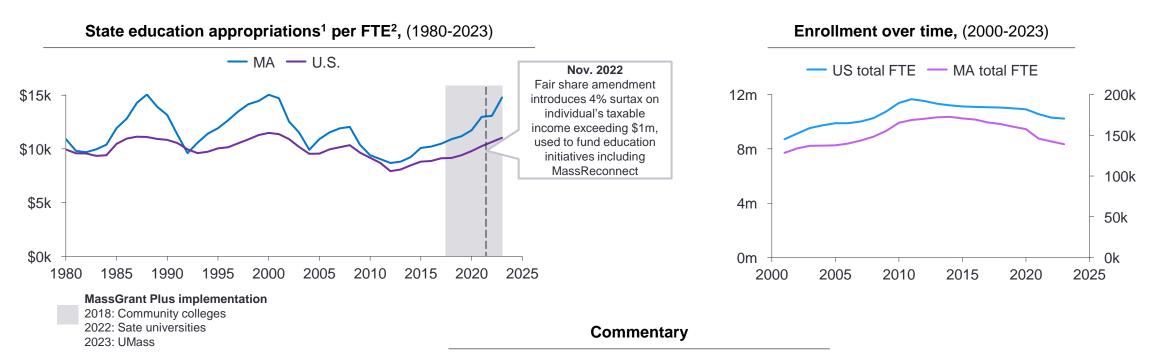
# For lowest, low- and middle-income students, unmet need persists across segments when considering the total cost of attendance



#### 2. Lack of codified aid policies

Working draft

### MA financial aid allocations are subject to annual legislative approval, which limits institutions' ability to market financial aid guarantees on a longer time horizon



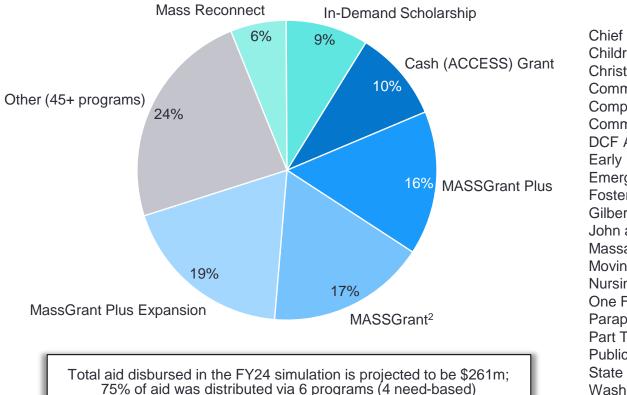
- Some aspects of financial aid, such as eligibility criteria and program structures, may be outlined in state regulations; the actual funding is subject to annual legislative approval and budget appropriations
- Per-FTE aid has increased ~16% annually since 2018 in MA, which has helped close the gap between MA aid and national averages, however that funding is not guaranteed year-over-year
- A clear guarantee that existing aid programs will persist could allow students and families to make decisions without worrying that financial support will erode over time
- 1. Constant 2023 dollars adjusted by the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA)

2. Education appropriations are a measure of state and local support available for public higher education operating expenses and student financial aid, excluding appropriations for research, hospitals, and medical education. Education appropriations include federal stimulus funding

A lack of coordination among aid programs resulted in ~50 state programs in FY24, including ~25 tuition waiver programs; ~75% of aid was distributed only six programs

Percentage of aid disbursed by program, FY24

List and description of "other" programs<sup>1</sup>



Non-Waiver Program Name (N=21)

Chief Justice Ralph Gants Judicial Scholarship Children of Fallen Service Member Christian Herter Scholarship Commonwealth Commitment **Completion Incentive Grant Fund** Community College Civic Engagement Internship DCF Adopted Children Fee Assistance Early Educators Scholarship **Emergency Grant** Foster Child Grant **Gilbert Matching Grant** John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Massachusetts High Demand Scholarship Moving to College Scholarship Nursing Scholarship for Community Colleges **One Family Scholarship** Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Part Time Grant Public Service Grant State University Internship Incentive Program Washington Center Scholarship

#### Program Type

Workforce development Entitlement Need Entitlement Need Merit Entitlement Workforce development Need Need Need Merit Workforce development Entitlement Workforce development Need Workforce development Need Entitlement Workforce development Entitlement

1. In-Demand Scholarship supports students pursuing careers needed in Massachusetts; Cash (ACCESS) Grant covers fees and non-state supported tuition

2. MassGrant data only includes funds disbursed to public institutions

Source: Program level internal data

#### 3. System is neither coordinated nor comprehensive

Working draft

Current financial aid is not comprehensive, leaving out key learners and programs such as students enrolled in early college and skills-based programs



- Early College (EC) provides access and scaffolded support to low-income high school students taking sequences of college courses; EC is a leading approach to increasing college success, especially for traditionally underserved populations
- During high school, EC students earn college credits accelerating their degree/certificate-earning timeline, and allowing them to reduce college costs and enter the workforce faster
- ► EC reduces need for remediation, since the program integrates high-touch advising, tutoring, and specific preparation for college-level courses.
- EC programming is currently funded through a separate line item that requires annual estimates and risks insufficient funding levels



#### Skills-based / high value certificate aid expansion

- DHE state financial aid is not available to students enrolled in less than 10 week-long, short-term credential programs.
- Commonwealth Corporation funding is available to public colleges offering high-value certificates programs in rapidly growing fields.
- Other states, like VA, are expanding financial aid programs to support students enrolled in less than 10 week-long, short-term credential programs
- Certificates are viewed by many as integral to accessing in field first jobs and upskilling for working adults.

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#### Leading practices

#### Working draft

States are increasingly implementing state-wide programs that offer tuition-free or debt-free guarantees for in-state students

#### **Reduction of unmet financial need**

- Programs in other states offer financial assistance towards the total cost of attendance
- The Washington State College Grant program is a needbased promise that covers the gap for low-income students who demonstrate unmet need beyond tuition, fees, books, and supplies, covering living expenses, transportation, and other necessities



**Clearly codified aid policies** 

- There are "promise" programs in other states that codify guarantees for students in state law, even identifying the source of funding in legislation
  - The Tennessee Promise and the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship established an endowment via state lottery revenue to guarantee funding in perpetuity

Enhanced navigability via program simplification

- Promise programs in other states reflect a reorganization of pre-existing program structures to streamline and simplify the system for students and financial aid officers
- Michigan Achievement Scholarship reorganized existing state aid into one banner program with eligibility requirements and awards differing by institution level





#### Leading practices: Case study

Working draft

# Tennessee provides <u>tuition and fees with no income requirement</u> after reorganizing existing scholarships into a "Tennessee Promise" of free community college

Challenge addressed	Tennessee Promise Program	Codification (May 2024)	Implementation	Initial outcomes
State aid from HOPE scholarship (lottery-funded), Tennessee Student Assistance Award, Wilder- Naifeh Technical Skills grant, and federal aid (Pell Grant) left unmet need, was not streamlined, and was confusing for students	<ul> <li>Program design: Last-dollar scholarship that funds tuition and fees for students pursuing an associate's degree. Funds cannot be used for books / supplies or other costs of attendance</li> <li>Income requirement: None (all students eligible)</li> <li>Other requirements:         <ul> <li>Attend team meetings and mandatory college orientation</li> <li>Remain enrolled for consecutive semesters</li> <li>12 hours / semester</li> <li>2.0 GPA / semester</li> <li>8 hours community service / semester</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Statute: Tennessee legislature passed SB2471 (HB2491) to establish Tennessee Promise Scholarship Act of 2014 and fund the promise</li> <li>Funding sources:         <ul> <li>Law established an endowment for funding Promise through state lottery</li> <li>Endowment to be funded by state lottery</li> <li>Funds appropriated to Promise but not spent will not return to General Fund and will remain allocated to Promise</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Partner organizations work with high school guidance counselors to enroll students who might not otherwise apply to college</li> <li>Though enrollment rose due to TN Promise, it became clear that student success supports (e.g., mentorship and emergency funding) are integral to graduation</li> <li>Promise Plus model introduced COMPLETE grants which cover other costs of college for Pell- eligible students (groceries, gas, computers)</li> <li>Promise Plus is currently still a bill in TN legislature, but has not yet been passed</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Community college graduation rates rose from 16% (2011, no program), to 22% (2014, widespread county programs), to 28% (2020, statewide Promise program)</li> <li>Promise students have higher retention and graduation rates than non-recipient peers</li> </ul>

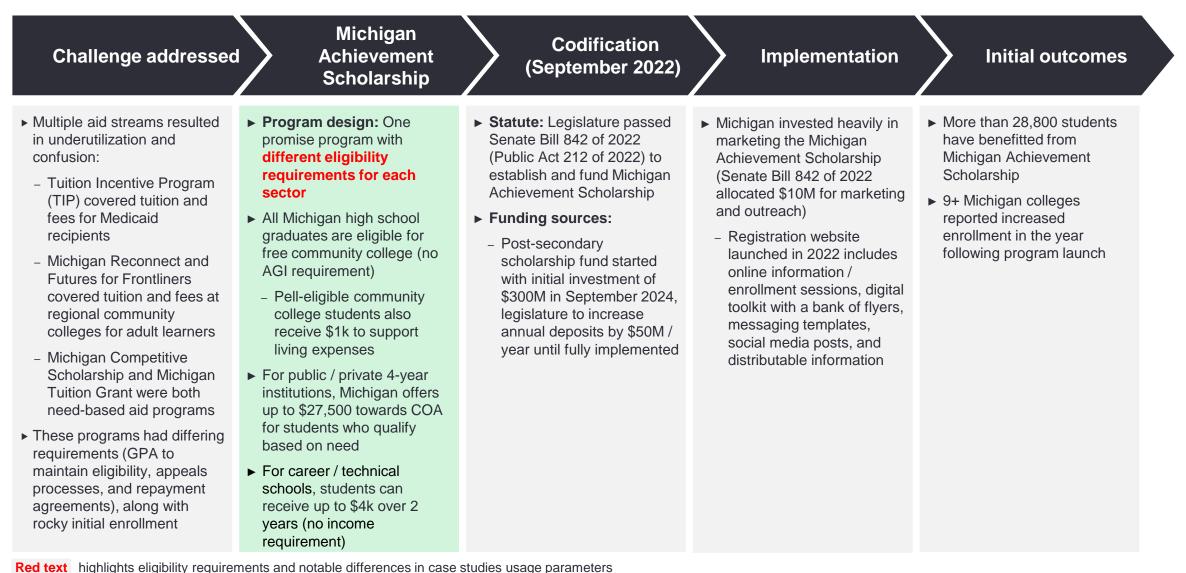
Red text highlights eligibility requirements and notable differences in case studies usage parameters

Source: Forbes, Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, TNAchieves, Tennessee General Assembly, The Hechinger Report

#### Leading practices: Case study

Working draft

### Michigan provides targeted aid towards <u>cost of attendance for low-income students</u>, rolling multiple financial aid programs into a single Michigan Achievement Scholarship



Source: The Century Foundation, Michigan Legislature, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, Potential

#### Leading practices: Case study

Working draft

# New Mexico provides aid towards <u>cost of attendance with no income requirement</u>, leveraging a trust fund to ensure that scholarships are funded in perpetuity

Challenge addressed	Opportunity & Lottery Scholarships	Codification (February 2022)	Implementation	Initial outcomes
<ul> <li>Lottery Scholarship (launched 1996) fully covered tuition for students pursuing Associates' and Bachelors' degrees (~10,000 students / year)</li> <li>Economic downturn in 2016 forced the state to roll the program back to covering only 60% of student tuition</li> <li>Governor restored program to cover 100% tuition in 2021, using federal funds</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Program design: Opportunity scholarship covers adults, returning, and part-time learners while Lottery scholarship covers immediate high school graduates entering college</li> <li>Scholarships promise of free 2-year and 4-year college, technical school, or tribal school to all students</li> <li>Both programs allow students to use funds for childcare, transportation, and other living expenses</li> <li>Income requirement: None</li> <li>Other requirements:         <ul> <li>Citizenship not required</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Statute: Opportunity Scholarship Fund Act passed in 2022 by NM legislature, expanded in 2024</li> <li>Funding sources:         <ul> <li>Opportunity Scholarship funded by higher education trust fund established with \$959M, supplemented with funds from tax stabilization reserve</li> <li>Lottery Scholarship primarily funded by state lottery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	NM public colleges and universities automatically apply Lottery Scholarship / Opportunity Scholarship to aid package, as long as student meets eligibility criteria	<ul> <li>Since signing Opportunity Scholarship in 2022,NM enrollment rose 7% and short-term certificate completion rose 39%</li> <li>From 2021-2022, retention rates were 8% higher for Opportunity Scholarship students compared to peers</li> <li>~42k students are receiving the scholarship (as of March 2024)</li> <li>86% of students who receive the Lottery Scholarship for six or more semesters earn a certificate or degree</li> </ul>

Red text highlights eligibility requirements and notable differences in case studies usage parameters

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**Student financial aid primer** 



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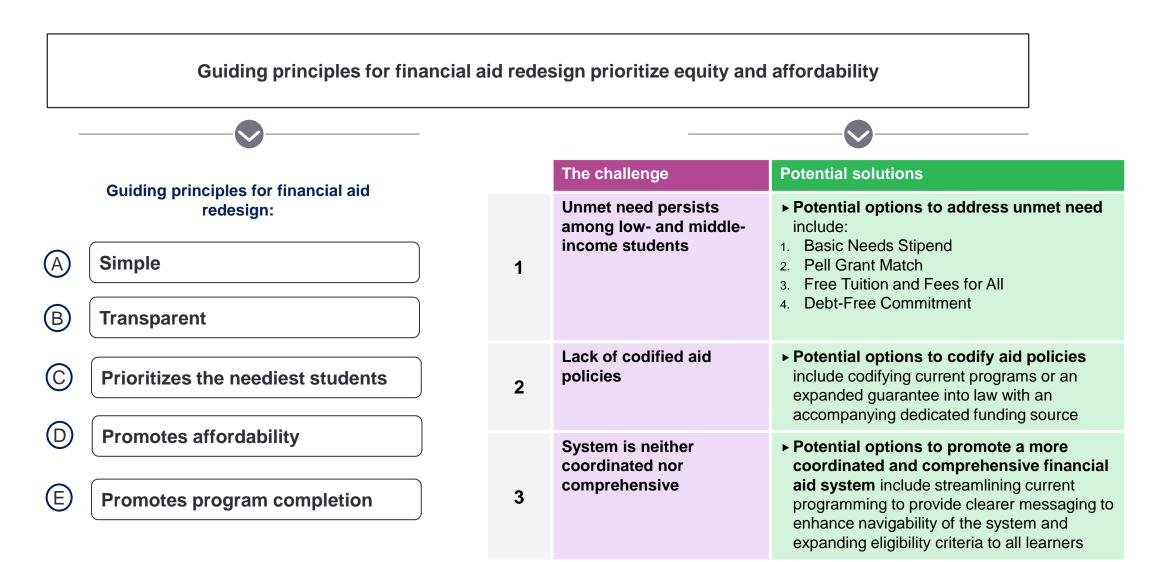


Leading practices

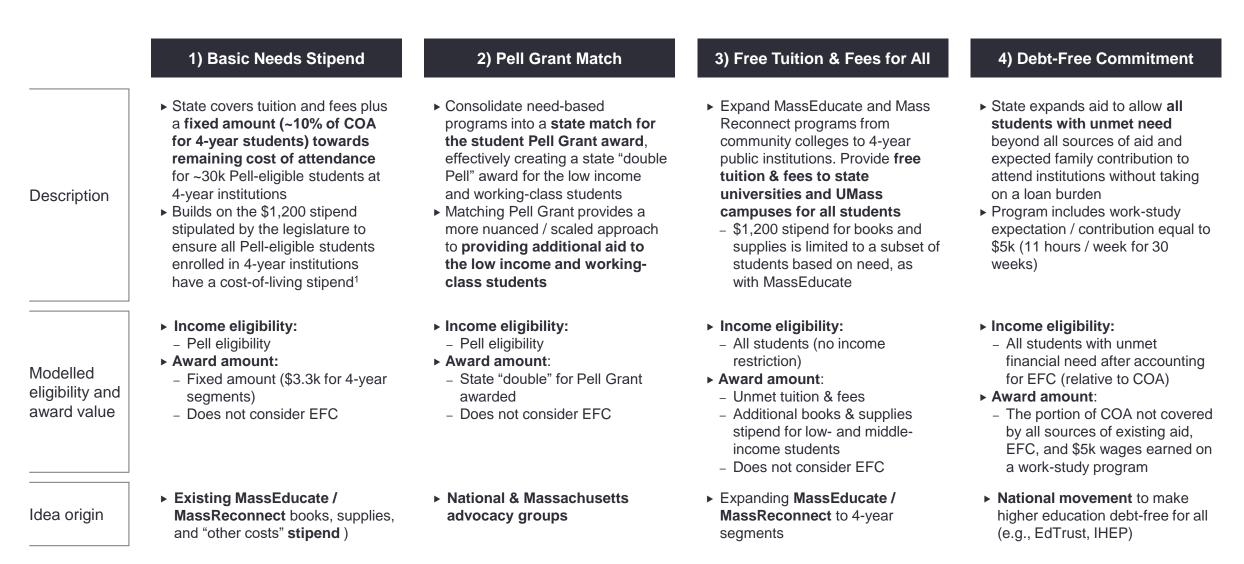


**Option set** 

Option set – Pre-decisional, for discussion purposes Potential options proposed to the challenges identified that align with ideas advanced in MA and nationally, and incorporate guiding principles for financial aid redesign



# In order to initiate discussion, four specific options – typical of ideas that have been advanced in MA and nationally – are charted in the next few slides



1. MassEducate and MassReconnect provide a stipend of \$1,200 to community college students for the same purpose, incremental to the \$1,200 stipend provided through MassGrant Plus Expansion

#### 1. Potential options to address unmet need

#### Working draft

# Incremental costs from \$100m to \$450m across the four options for financial aid program redesign, above and beyond the current investment of \$330m across segments

#### Access and affordability redesign options for consideration

	1) Basic Needs Stipend		2) Pell Grant Match		3) Free Tuition & Fees for All		4) Debt-Free Commitment					
	CC	SU	UMass	CC	SU	UMass	CC	SU	UMass	CC	SU	UMass
Base case (Projected FY25)	\$130m	\$90m	\$110m	\$130m	\$90m	\$110m	\$130m	\$90m	\$110m	\$130m	\$90m	\$110m
Incremental cost	None; stipend provided by ME / MR	\$40m	\$65m	\$50m	\$35m	\$50m	None; T&F provided by ME / MR	\$95m	\$205m	\$195m	\$110m	\$145m
Total incremental cost		\$105m			\$135m			\$300m			\$450m	
Total students served <sup>1</sup>	35,000	20,000	30,000	40,000	15,000	25,000	35,000	20,000	35,000	35,000	15,000	25,000
Average incremental award	N/A	\$3.3k	\$3.3k	\$1.2k	\$1.6k	\$1.6k	N/A	\$4.5k	\$5.5k	\$5.6k	\$6.5k	\$6.0k

1. Total students served largely includes those who already received some form of state aid

# Each of the four options addresses the guiding principles for financial aid redesign in different ways and at different price points

	1) Basic Needs Stipend	2) Pell Grant Match	3) Free Tuition & Fees for All	4) Debt-Free Commitment
Simple	Students allocated a fixed amount	Equal to Pell Award, but allocation via state funds adds complexity	Covers tuition and fees for all students, regardless of need	Concept is straightforward (no debt burden) but award amount is inclusive of multiple inputs
Transparent	Fixed stipend is easily understood by students	Students may not have visibility into anticipated Pell dollars when applying	Coverage of T&F is easy to understand by students, even early in the process	Coverage of no-loan burden is easy to understand by students, though exact amount may vary
Prioritizing the neediest students	Targeted to low-income students	Targeted to low-income students on a sliding scale basis	Universal	Universal (but phases out based on family contribution)
Universality / parity across segments	CCs not allocated additional aid, but SUs and UMass are approx. equal	All segments receive similar incremental aid, based on need identified by Pell Grant award	UMass allocation is 2x that of SUs	CCs allocation is ~2x that of SUs
Cost	\$105m	\$135m	\$300m	\$450m

Note: All options promote affordability and outcomes; these dimensions are therefore not assessed for comparison here

Codification of selected redesign option is central to communicating aid availability and ensuring continuity of programming / funding to support student decision-making



D

Existing Massachusetts financial aid programming could be leveraged to **create a guarantee for students** 

K-12 education in MA receives guaranteed funding via Ch.70 law that provides a predictable goal and source of funding (sales tax); this legislation would implement an analogous framework for higher education in MA #1a) Codify current programs in law

 Current funding for students in MA could be codified into law to ensure programmatic perpetuity (e.g., MassGrant Plus)

#### #1b) Codify expanded <u>commitment</u> in law

 Legislature could create a program to permanently fund some kind of guarantee for students (e.g., free college for all students)

#### #2) Codify <u>funding</u> guarantee in law

Legislature could establish a guaranteed percentage of Fair Share funds to support financial aid for students, which cannot be less than the prior year's allocation

#### **Codification benefits:**

- Allows students to plan and budget for college years in advance of attendance by assuring persistent funding availability
- Boosts overall enrollment for students who are less likely to pursue postsecondary education due to financial constraints
- Provides a high degree of visibility so students are aware of their postsecondary options and can easily access resources to take advantage of the program

### **Thank You!**