

Commission on Higher Education Quality and Affordability (CHEQA)

Meeting #3

February 11, 2025

Agenda



Process update & today's focus



Features of student success programming



Features of financial aid programming



Next steps

The CHEQA task force was legislatively mandated to study and make recommendations on improving quality and affordability of higher education in MA

The task force shall review and evaluate...

- ▶ **State assistance programs and funding**, including, but not limited to, aid for tuition, fees, books, supplies and other **costs of attendance** and make recommendations to ensure the accessibility and affordability of said higher education institutions and how to achieve best outcomes
- ▶ **Student costs and debts** during and after attending said universities
- ▶ **Programs that improve student success**, including, but not limited to, academic support, career counselling, assistance with applying for state and federal benefits and improvements to facilities
- ▶ Improvements needed to **increase the recruitment and retention** of qualified adjunct and full-time faculty and staff
- ▶ **Financial assistance program design** and models to efficiently increase state assistance, improve outcomes and reduce student costs

Commission target study areas

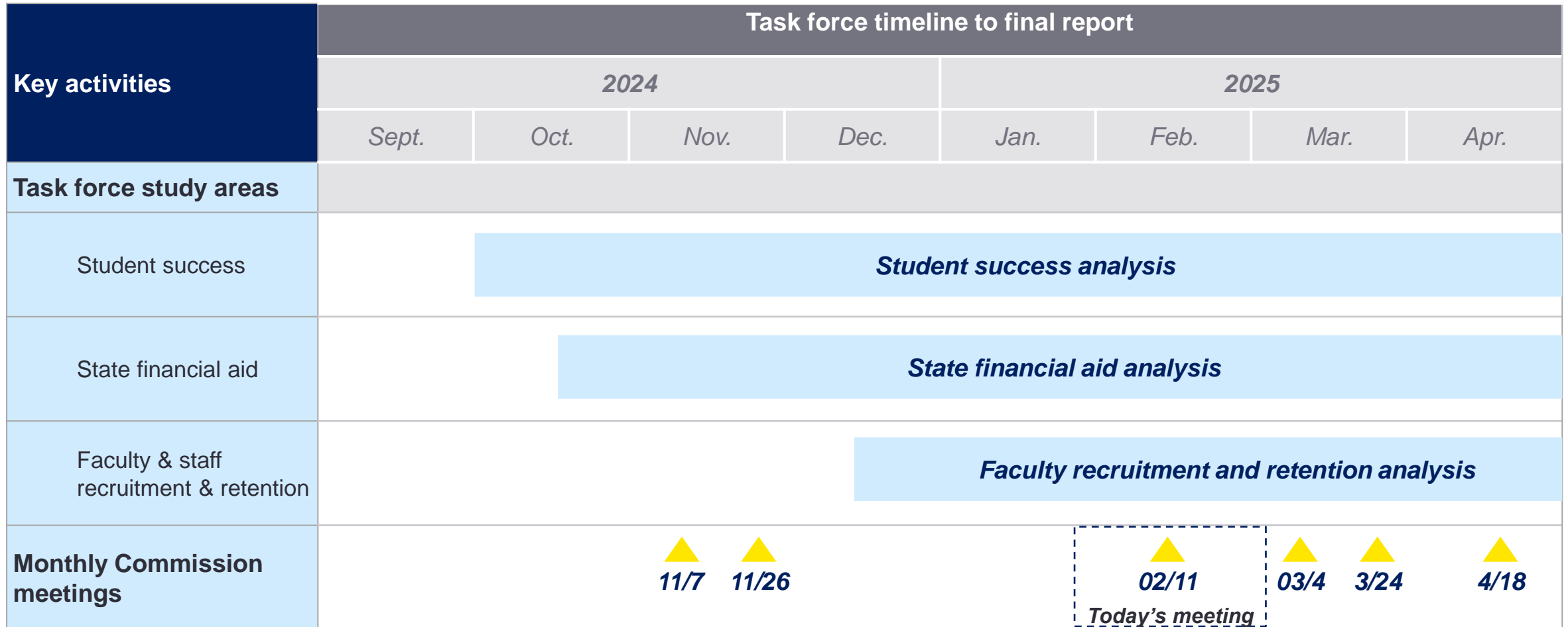
1. Student success

2. State financial aid

3. Faculty recruitment and retention

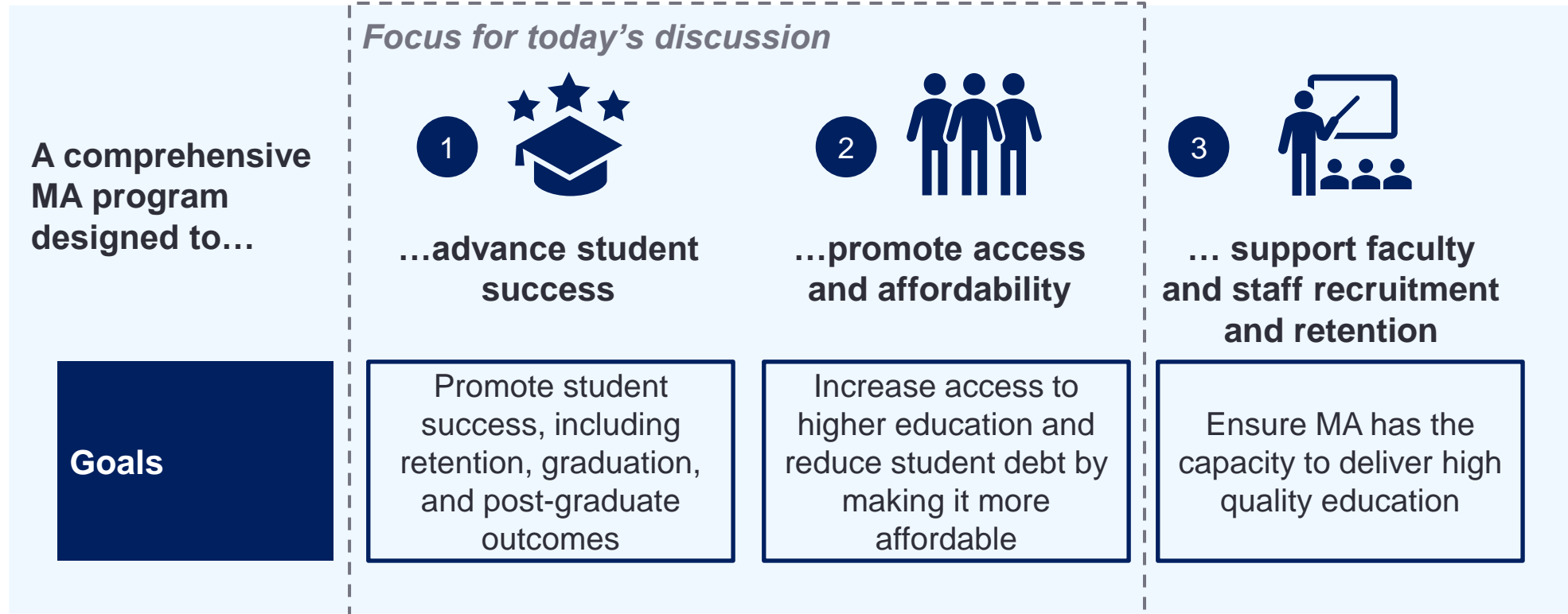


CHEQA has reviewed key content related to student success and state financial aid; today the commission will discuss key program components related to those topic areas



■ Ongoing research and analysis ▲ Key CHEQA meeting

To deliver on CHEQA task force goals, the commission will discuss underlying programmatic components related to the first two goals



Which key components or features should be prioritized for program recommendations?

The commission will focus today on seeking input and discussion on key design elements that will shape policy recommendations in the first two areas of focus

Prior meetings

- ▶ Discussed background, logic, and key elements of **student success** and **student financial aid**
- ▶ Heard from experts in other states who have implemented **leading practices**
- ▶ Began discussion of **policy options for MA**

Today's focus

- ▶ Seek out consensus positions on **key design elements that will shape the policy recommendations** related to the two initial focus areas of the commission (student success and student financial aid)
- ▶ No decisions will be made today, but we are **seeking input and discussion**
- ▶ Conversation is structured around straw polls to **quickly and anonymously elicit opinions and prompt discussion**
- ▶ We will **report back poll findings in aggregate** to shape the discussion

Agenda



Process update & today's focus



Features of student success programming



Features of financial aid programming



Next steps

Student success research emphasized programs with strong and replicated evidence of impact (e.g., ASAP/ACE) and recent efforts in MA inspired by those models (SUCCESS)

Key features and design considerations of quality student success programs

- ▶ Proactive, regular “high touch” **student advising**
- ▶ Visible and structured **academic pathways**
- ▶ Structures that break down barriers to **full-time enrollment and enable academic momentum** via, for example, block scheduling
- ▶ Complementary financial aid to address **transportation and emergency costs**
- ▶ Support that extends to students **enrolled in 2- and 4-year institutions**
- ▶ Support for students **enrolled full-time**
- ▶ Support for students **enrolled part-time**
- ▶ Statewide organized support to provide **technical assistance for launch and data systems to track success**

Polling Question

Question

Having invested significantly in student financial aid, it is crucial for MA to invest further in improving graduation rates through student success programs.

Please rate your answer on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Proactive, regular “high touch” student advising**

What does this refer to?

- ▶ Fostering proactive, sustained, and personalized advising relationships to holistically support student needs, enabling early intervention and accountability, is a key feature of ASAP / ACE and other replicated success programs

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Visible and structured academic pathways**

What does this refer to?

- ▶ Sequenced curriculum that emphasizes gateway courses early to reduce confusion, minimize excess credits, and facilitate timely completion, is a key feature of ASAP / ACE and other replicated success programs

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Structures that break down barriers to full-time enrollment and enable academic momentum via, for example, block scheduling**

What does this refer to?

- ▶ “Block schedules” are intentionally functional class schedules that allow students to manage outside responsibilities like work or childcare while still maintaining full time enrollment status, and are a key feature of ASAP / ACE and other replicated success programs

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Complementary financial aid to address transportation and emergency costs**

What does this refer to?

- ▶ Financial support that occurs on an as-needed basis to provide students with transportation and emergency stipends, filling gaps as they arise and promoting full time enrollment, is a key feature of ASAP / ACE and other replicated success programs

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Support that extends to students enrolled in 2- and 4-year institutions**

Additional context:

- ▶ ASAP and other replicated success programs have historically focused on 2-year institutions, although ACE and replications have demonstrated success at 4-year institutions as well
- ▶ MA SUCCESS programming has historically focused on 2-year institutions with only recent expansion to state universities

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- Support for students enrolled full-time
- Support for students enrolled part-time

Additional context:

- ▶ ASAP / ACE and other replicated success programs have historically focused on full-time students, with recent pilots for part-time students
- ▶ The MA SUCCESS program currently extends to both full- and part-time students
- ▶ Two-thirds of community college students are part-time

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of student success programming, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Statewide organized support to provide technical assistance for launch and data systems to track success**

What does this refer to?

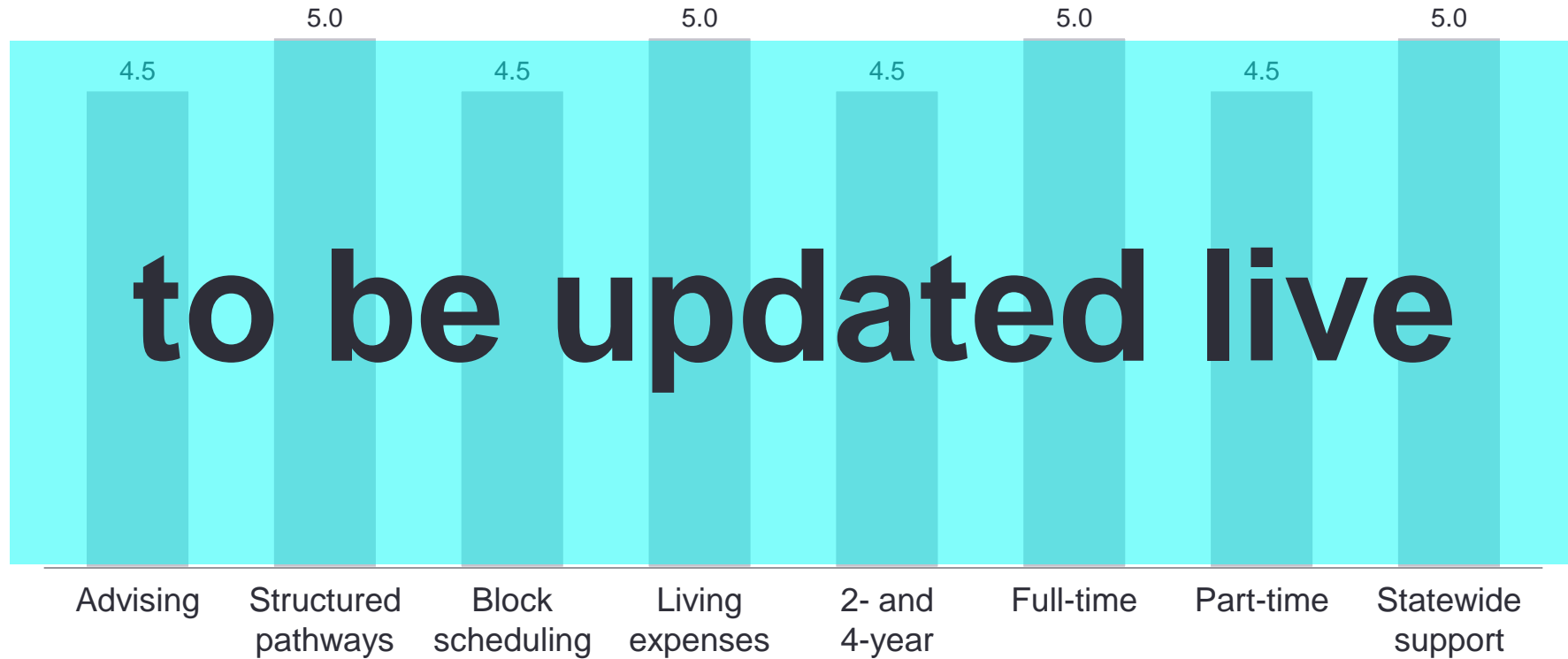
- ▶ A centralized program office can support adoption of best practices, avoid duplicated efforts, mitigate common pitfalls, provide assistance for program launch, and facilitate data collection across institutions
- ▶ Centralized support is a pillar of ASAP / ACE and other replicated success programs

Question

Which features, if any, would you add to the list to guide quality student success programming in MA?

- ▶ Proactive, regular “high touch” **student advising**
- ▶ Visible and structured **academic pathways**
- ▶ Structures that break down barriers to **full-time enrollment and enable academic momentum** via, for example, block scheduling
- ▶ Complementary financial aid to address **transportation and emergency costs**
- ▶ Support that extends to students **enrolled in 2- and 4-year institutions**
- ▶ Support for students **enrolled full-time**
- ▶ Support for students **enrolled part-time**
- ▶ Statewide organized support to provide **technical assistance for launch and data systems to track success**

Summary view: student success program elements



Agenda



Process update & today's focus



Features of student success programming



Features of financial aid programming



Next steps

Student financial aid research emphasized programs based on a clear, simple, and compelling principle and delivered in a sustained manner

Key features and design considerations of quality student financial aid programs

- ▶ Support that goes beyond direct costs to target the total **cost of attendance**
- ▶ **Simple messaging** that is universally understood and easy to navigate
- ▶ Support that prioritizes **targeting the neediest students**
- ▶ Support that prioritizes reducing the debt burden for **middle income students**
- ▶ Support that ensures students receive **consistent financial aid** across 2- and 4-year public segments
- ▶ **Program codification in law** like promise programs in other states
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled **full-time**
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled **part-time**
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled in **high-value credential** programs
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled in **early college and dual enrollment** programs

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- Support that goes further beyond direct costs to target the total cost of attendance, particularly basic needs (e.g., food, housing)

What does this refer to?

- ▶ *Direct costs*: tuition, fees, books, and supplies
- ▶ *Indirect costs*: room, board, and other living expenses
- ▶ *Cost of attendance*: the full set of costs associated with earning a degree, combining both direct and indirect costs

Additional context:

- ▶ The majority of current financial aid programming in MA targets direct costs

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Simple messaging that is universally understood and easy to navigate**

What does this refer to?

- ▶ Simple messaging like “free community college” that is easily understood by students
- ▶ Clear program guidelines that enable financial aid officers and institutions to market guarantees to students

Additional detail:

- ▶ MA currently has 50+ financial aid programs; most have restricted eligibility or application

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- Support that prioritizes targeting the neediest students
- Support that prioritizes reducing the debt burden for middle income students

Additional detail:

- ▶ MA has historically prioritized targeting the neediest students for financial aid, with the majority of dollars flowing to the lowest income students
- ▶ In recent years, MA has expanded programming to middle income students, working to reduce the loan burden through programs like MassGrant Plus Expansion

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Support that ensures student eligibility for financial aid is consistent across 2- and 4-year public segments**

What does this refer to?

- ▶ Historically, financial aid programs have applied to students enrolled in all public institutions in MA
- ▶ Two of the most recent expansions have focused on the community college segment only (Mass Reconnect & Mass Educate)

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Codification in law, like some promise programs and/or dedicated funding as in other states**

Additional detail:

- ▶ Codification can be either of the outcome (e.g., free college) or of the funding source (e.g., a share of lottery revenue)
- ▶ Currently, there is no codified financial aid guarantee in MA. Policies are funded through annual budget appropriations, meaning funding levels and program specifics can vary each fiscal year
- ▶ A longer-term commitment allows students and families to plan and budget for college years in advance of attendance

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled full-time
- Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled part-time

Additional detail:

- ▶ Many of the current MA programs cover both part- and full-time students (e.g., MassGrant Plus, MassEducate)

Polling Question

Question

Please rate each of these features from 1 to 5 in terms of importance to the design of financial aid programming in MA, with 5 meaning the feature is critically important and 1 meaning the feature is minimally important

- **Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled in high-value credential programs**
- **Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled in early college and dual enrollment programs**

What does this refer to?

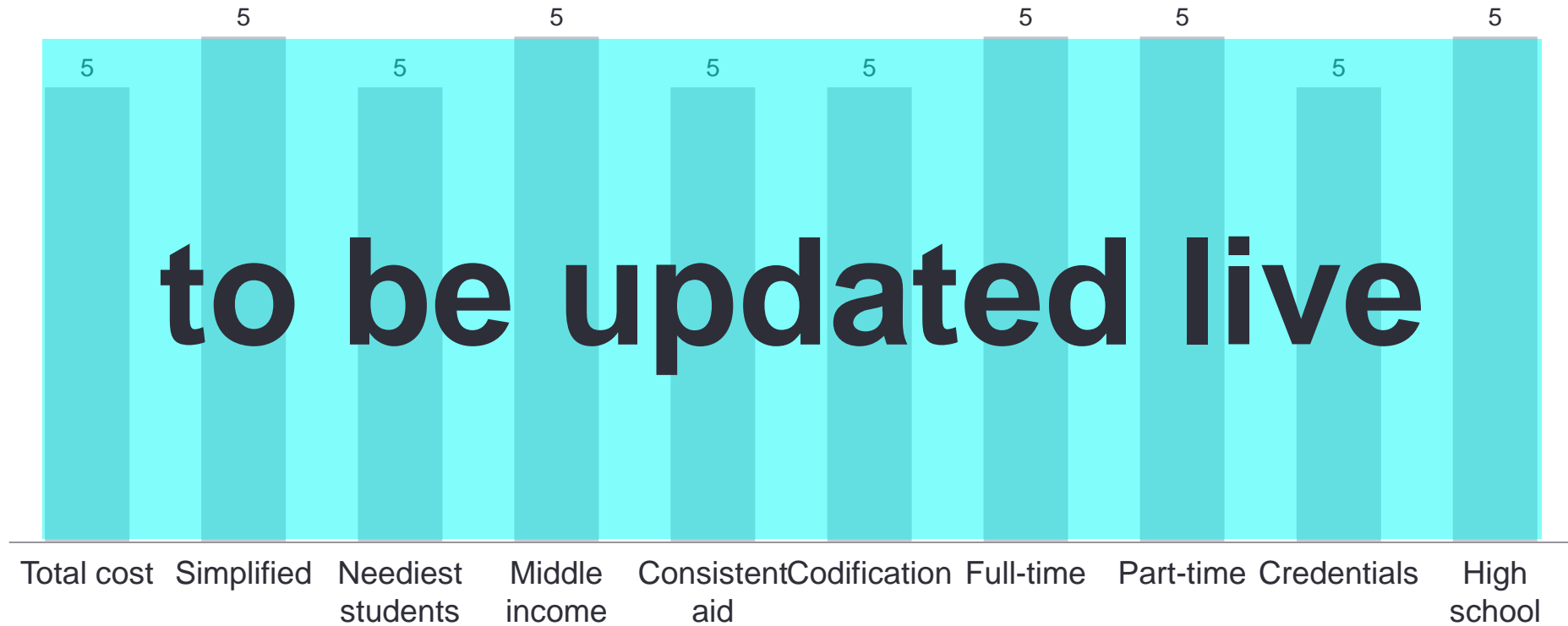
- ▶ High value credential programs are short-term and geared toward upskilling for working adults
- ▶ Early college and dual enrollment provides access and support to high school students taking college courses

Question

Which features, if any, would you add to the list to guide quality student financial aid programming in MA?

- ▶ Support that goes further beyond direct costs to target the total **cost of attendance**
- ▶ **Simple messaging** that is universally understood and easy to navigate
- ▶ Support that prioritizes **targeting the neediest students**
- ▶ Support that prioritizes reducing the debt burden for **middle income students**
- ▶ Support that ensures students receive **consistent financial aid** across 2- and 4-year public segments
- ▶ **Program codification in law** like a dedicated share of funding stream
- ▶ Designation as a **promise program** to expand financial aid
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled **full-time**
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled **part-time**
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled in **high-value credential** programs
- ▶ Eligibility criteria that covers students enrolled in **early college and dual enrollment** programs

Summary view: student financial aid program elements



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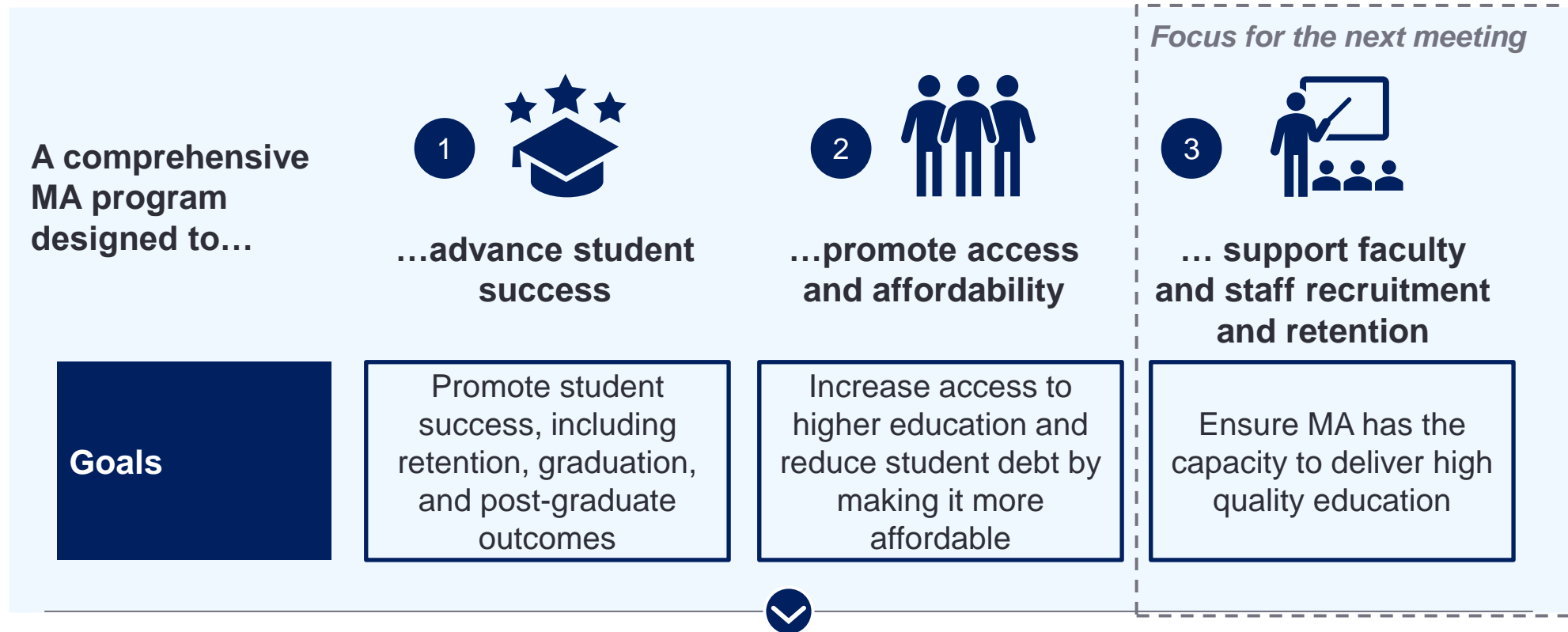


Features of financial aid programming



Next steps

In the next meeting, the commission will focus on the third goal: recruitment and retention of faculty and staff



Surveys to be sent to institutions this week; data will be reported in the February meeting

Thank you!

