

OUTLINE COMMENTS FOR SU SEGMENTAL REPORT

- I. **Good morning** Chairman Gabrieli, Secretary Peyser, Commissioner Santiago and members of the Board of Higher Education. On behalf of the State Universities Council of Presidents, I thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Massachusetts State University System.

- II. FY21 Budget:
 - I begin the morning by thanking this board, Commissioner Santiago and his department, Secretary Peyser, the Governor and legislature for prioritizing in the FY21 state budget, our Massachusetts public higher education system. We recognize the unique challenges facing state leaders in this year's budget process. The investments made during these unprecedented and trying times will help our campuses manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

 - Although there are some minor differences between the branches in the spending plans, it is clear that Beacon Hill leaders are committed to ensuring the viability of our Massachusetts public higher education system.

 - Specific to the state universities, we appreciate that the FY21 budget recognizes the amortized costs of past collective bargaining agreements; and the budget
 - Incorporates in campus line items grants awarded through the FY20 performance-based funding line item; it
 - Includes a \$10 million increase in the state's scholarship line item. These new funds will certainly help more financially needy students cover the cost of their education; the FY21 spending plan also includes the
 - State university internship incentive program was again passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. This initiative has been a

great success and has helped thousands of state university students obtain job and career experience through a public-private matching grant internship program. Data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers shows that in 2019, 66.4 percent of students with paid internships received a job offer after completing their internship. It is undeniable that those participating in a paid college internship have greater career opportunities in their field of study.

- The legislature also recapitalized the State Universities Performance Based Funding Formula account by adding \$5.5m to the line item. These funds will be distributed through a performance-based formula that was mandated by the legislature and developed by the Department of Higher Education in 2015. Funding for this line item has been included in each of the last five state general appropriations acts.
- My colleagues and I are grateful for investments made in our campus appropriations, our funding formula account, the state universities internship incentive program, and the state's scholarship and financial aid line item. We thank you for your leadership and advocacy throughout the process.

III. DHE FY 2022 Budget Recommendations:

- But, just as we clear one hurdle, another is right in front of us. Later this morning the board will be presented the Department's FY22 budget recommendations. We would like to thank the Commissioner and his staff for developing a proposed budget that further invests in our campuses and students. The council of presidents supports these recommendations and urge adoption by this board.
- This plan builds upon investments in campus appropriations made in FY21, supports the state universities internship incentive, and further expands financial aid through the MassGrant plus program.

- The DHE budget also recommends investment in the state university performance-based funding formula account. The DHE recommends recapitalizing the account at a 2% funding level.
- Our Council of Presidents enthusiastically endorses and supports the Department's budget recommendations.

IV. Vaccine Distribution:

- Just yesterday, the first Massachusetts resident received the COVID-19 vaccine. Each of our state universities are willing to be part of the vaccine distribution plan. Our campuses are located in every region of the Commonwealth and can be used to distribute these vaccines, especially in our Gateway cities.
- As we manage this public health crisis and vaccines begin to be distributed across our commonwealth, your universities stand ready to assist the Commonwealth in any way possible.

V. Looking back on the semester....

- I would like to conclude my remarks today by sharing with you an update on the fall semester. As I think back on our discussions over the summer about the challenges facing our campuses to safely bring students back to campus for an on-campus experience, many of us didn't think we would be able to pull it off. Well, I'm happy to report, with the help and support of our campus community, we successfully offered a mix of in-person and online classes, as well as an opportunity for residential on-campus student housing.
- In collaboration with on and off public health experts, community leaders, emergency management professionals, and with the help and support of our faculty, staff and students, each state university campus developed and operationalized a COVID return plan that

focused on the health and safety for our students, staff, and faculty.

- In compliance with DPH and CDC guidance, we worked to de-densify our campuses and our classrooms by expanding remote, online, and distance instruction and offering students a blended learning environment.
- We installed plexiglass in campus classrooms, offices, restrooms, dining facilities and other public areas; we provided campus community members face masks and other PPE as necessary; we invested in enhanced cleaning and sanitizing practices; and most importantly, we provided trainings for students, staff and faculty on ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Through the Broad Institute, our campuses implemented a robust COVID surveillance testing and contact tracing plan. We tested nearly 200,000 students, staff, and faculty over the semester. With complete buy-in from the campus community for the policies and protocols in our campus COVID plans, we were able to keep our average positivity rate below 1% for the system.
- Our campuses created quarantine space, on and off-campus, for students who did test positive for COVID or were identified as a close contact of a COVID positive person. As part of the quarantine plan, each campus built a support plan around the student to ensure their medical, safety, physical, emotional and educational needs are supported during their quarantine.
- All in all, the fall semester was a success.
- As we look towards the spring semester, we are again are working with our campus communities to update our COVID safety plans, incorporate new testing and tracing guidance, and plan for a full educational experience for our students.

- We all plan to safely welcome students, faculty and staff back to campus for in-person classes, residential housing, athletics, dining and other traditional educational activities.
- Like our discussions with this board over the summer, there are challenges that we are working to overcome, but we are all fully committed to bringing students back to campus in January for the spring 2021 semester.

VI. Conclusion... Thank you for allowing me this time to share an update from our state universities. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.