



State Universities
of Massachusetts

COP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education

Mass Bay Community College
December 12, 2017

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

FY19 DHE Budget Recommendations:

Later this morning the board will be presented FY17 DHE budget recommendations developed by the Commissioner and his team. The state university council of presidents would like to be recorded in support of the commissioner's recommendations. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the commissioner for recognizing the importance and value of the state university internship incentive program. We support the commissioner's request to level fund this matching grant program at \$1m. This program is a wonderful example of how public/private partnerships can work; and work well.

We also support the modest increase recommended by the commissioner in the financial aid line item. As you will hear, Financial Aid which once covered about 85% of a public college student's cost of attendance now covers only about 8%. Major investment in financial aid is long overdue and we fully support the commissioner's recommendation to add \$7.5m to this fund. Additionally, we support the Commissioner's recommendations for the increases in the DHE PIF accounts, the Foster Care accounts and funds to administer the SARA program.

The presidents do want to express concern in three specific areas of the commissioner's recommendations. The commissioner is requesting a reduction in the DHE operating budget. We believe that the board should consider adding additional resources to an already underfunded department. Further reduction in the DHE operating budget will put even more stress on staff that is being asked to do even more with less... The state university presidents would support this board if you amended the commissioner's reconstructions to add additional funds for the operation of his office. We would also go on record as disagreeing with the DHE request to eliminate funding for the SU/CC funding formula line item and ask the board to add funding for those two line item. We request that you amend the DHE budget to include a modest appropriation of one or two percent to the state university and community college

funding formula line items. Lastly, I bring to your attention the elimination of the nursing and allied health line item. For very little funding, the campus nursing programs and our students benefit greatly.

My colleagues and I recognize the challenges facing the Governor and lawmakers in developing a balanced budget funding certain initiatives is critical to helping our public colleges and universities deliver a high quality education to residents of the Commonwealth.

Capital Spending:

As the first segment of public higher education established in Massachusetts, with over 175 years educating residents of the Commonwealth, the state universities house some of the oldest state-owned buildings.

In 2008, the legislature passed one of the first major capital investments in our public colleges and universities in decades. Projects authorized under that bond represent some of the first new construction of academic facilities for public higher education. The goal of that bond bill was to ensure our public college campuses receive funding in order to modernize support the growth of our student population. Though many of our public campuses have seen funding from this bond bill, our campuses continue to struggle with deferred maintenance costs and the need to modernize outdated equipment. Incredibly, even with this major investment made by the state in the 2008 bond, Massachusetts lags behind our competitor states, ranking 30th capital spending on higher education per student.

The state universities have gone on the record in support of H: 3968, *An Act Providing for Immediate Capital Improvement Needs of the Commonwealth*, filed by Governor Baker. That legislation has passed the House of Representatives and is currently in Senate Ways and Means. While the bill provides much needed support to begin to address deferred maintenance issues within our public higher education system, ensuring that each campus has adequate funding to address these needs should be a priority. Just as an FYI, the three segments of PHE contracted with an outside firm, Sightlines Consulting, to do an independent, third party analysis of deferred maintenance needs across the 29 public college campuses. According to this report, the full deferred maintenance needs for only the state universities is believed to be in the billions. Recognizing the Commonwealth does not have the capacity to address the full deferred maintenance needs of the campuses, we would request additional funding beyond what is contained in the current version of the bill.

Campus Hate Crimes:

As reported last month, several of our state universities have been the target hate speech, directed at minority students, in our dorms and on our campus grounds. This is unacceptable, reprehensible, shameful, disturbing, and frankly, criminal. Racism has no place in our society and will not be tolerated on our campuses. The impacted campuses have worked with local, state, and federal law enforcement authorities and have launched investigations into these

hate crimes. The Presidents, our students, campus and community leaders, have opened a dialog around campus climate, intolerance and bigotry. Each campus has held forums to hear from campus community members, not simply to listen, but to take actionable steps to ensure that our campuses provide a safe and welcoming environment to all our students and our employees; and since the board's last meeting, the State University COP joined with the members of our faculty to discuss how we can all work together in address these issues.

Based on feedback from these forums and meetings, we are looking into curriculum to enhance the inclusion of race, ethnicity, and cultural understanding in the courses we provide to students; provide greater support to our faculty and staff in addressing race issues in the classroom; a commitment to explore having all campuses employee a Chief Diversity Officer; exploring changes to our Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action and Diversity Plan; campus climate surveys; and engaging with national experts to discuss race, diversity and inclusion with presidents, faculty, staff and students.

I, along with my colleges behind me, appreciate the commissioner's leadership on this issue and we are looking forward to the discussion after this meeting.

Closing:

As we begin the New Year, my colleagues and I will continue to work closely with Commissioner Santiago building upon the successes over the past year. We are proud that our state universities continue to offer the best value proposition for a bachelorette degree in the northeast and with nearly 95% of our students coming from Massachusetts, we have established ourselves "first choice" universities for residents of the Commonwealth... The Governor is preparing his FY19 budget recommendations to the legislature. On behalf of my colleges, I implore you, members of this board, to contact the Governor and advocate for our campuses. Public colleges are the best, and most often, the only chance for economic mobility for residents living in our gateway cities.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to present the state university segmental report to you this morning. I am happy to answer any questions.