

**Remarks from Valerie R. Roberson, President, Roxbury Community College
On Behalf of Ellen Kennedy, Chair, Community College Council of Presidents
Delivered at Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Meeting March 6, 2018**

Good Morning,

I'd like to thank you for the recent conference for trustees and presidents. Your encouragement to focus on collaboration and innovation, to address the changing educational landscape, gives us a common focus in meeting the goals of the Department of Higher Education and the Commonwealth.

I would also like to thank Secretary Peyser, Chair Gabrieli, and Commissioner Santiago for speaking at our community college **mid-year Chair Academy experience** a few weeks ago here in Boston. The Chair Academy is a national professional development model focused on transformational leadership for our segment of higher education. The goal of the mid-year experience is to give our participants an opportunity to learn about statewide policy and organizational structures here in the Commonwealth. We had 25 participants from our campuses attend and all expressed genuine appreciation that you shared your time and expertise with them.

This type of professional development is often the springboard of ideas and opportunities for statewide innovation and collaborations. As some of you might recall, all of the Massachusetts community colleges successfully collaborated on a recent U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance, Community College and Career Training Grant Program (TAACCCT grant). That grant enabled us to be more innovative, in STEM education. Even though the grant moneys have all been expended, three projects that were partially funded, are just starting to flourish and produce meaningful outcomes for students.

The first is the formation of a statewide system to award credit for life experience and other alternative credit. **Advancing Adult Learner Degree Completion through Credit for Prior Learning**, was led by North Shore Community College, whose staff have had a long-standing program and are nationally noted for their leadership in this area. In this effort, faculty and staff have come together to exchange ideas about credit for prior learning, or CPL, assessment and to share best practices for local implementation. This professional development evolved into a group tasked with determining a common method for any Massachusetts resident to approach any of the 15 community colleges about CPL.

A statewide website was created for students to explore CPL that includes a self-assessment, a collection of CPL offerings by institution, and an e-portfolio repository. The website myexperiencecounts.mass.edu went live this fall and is already engaging students who are adult learners, veterans and single parents who are looking to accelerate the time to complete their educational goals.

The second initiative funded through the TAACT grant, is called **Go Open** and was led by staff of Northern Essex Community College. **Go Open** provided faculty across the state the opportunity to develop open educational resources, or OERs. OERs include course materials, textbooks, modules or other instructional resources that reside on the web and are free to instructors to share and free to students. The goal of this initiative was to provide students with substantial relief from the high cost of textbooks in a variety of academic disciplines from healthcare, to computer science, to economics and literature, and beyond. Through this work, the "Go Open" initiative addresses a major challenge to student's success and completion in Massachusetts – the high cost of textbooks supplied by national providers.

With an investment of \$200,000, this statewide collaborative, positively impacted **more than 9,000 community college students** just in the first year alone. There was a collective savings to students of **over \$1.3 million dollars** in averted textbook costs.

The initial savings to students will continue to grow for years to come as faculty use the resources they developed for teaching in future courses, as well as sharing the resources with colleagues throughout the state. In addition to the textbook cost savings, faculty also re-conceptualized their courses as part of the initiative which makes the courses even more relevant for students in today's competitive labor market.

The two colleges - North Shore and Northern Essex - that led these first two efforts were recently selected as **finalists for the national 2018 Bellwether Award**.

The third project funded through the TAACT grant, was curriculum developed or enhanced in biotechnology. This has led to recognition from industry. After reviewing the degree to which biotechnology curriculum offered at community colleges matched the core competencies needed within this complex industry, the Massachusetts Life Sciences Education Consortium recognized the work of nine of our colleges. In December, 2017,

- four of our community colleges,
 - Berkshire, Bunker Hill, Quinsigamond, and Springfield Tech, were rated at the gold level and
- five community colleges,
 - Middlesex, North Shore, Northern Essex and Roxbury, were rated at the highest designation of platinum.

This, simply stated, means our students graduate with the skills that employers require for success in the biotechnology industry. While there is still preference within the field for employees with Bachelor's degrees, community college students are still getting internships, jobs, and experience that is useful within their senior college academic work. Also, be reminded that our community colleges often serve students who have bachelor degrees in areas where they cannot find employment. These students come to the community college for retraining. In this case, a certificate in biotechnology is that key to finding employment.

All three of these projects, demonstrates the public higher education priorities:

- **to award more degrees and certificates**
- **to address current and future labor shortages, especially in high demand fields, and**
- **to make higher education accessible and affordable for all residents in Massachusetts.**

These projects also demonstrate the long-term and wide-spread effect of funding special initiatives and supporting development of our faculty and employees.

IMPACT: 3 Rounds of Go Open Grants

College	# Faculty Participants	Total Grant \$ Awarded	# Students	Savings to Students*
Berkshire	2	\$1050	168	\$48,840.00
Bristol	4	\$4,300	528	\$117,456.00
Cape Cod	3	\$4,000	600	\$65,400.00
Greenfield	6	\$5,850	279	\$56,925.50
Holyoke	7	\$3,450	975	\$151,749.00
Massachusetts Bay	18	\$19,550	1441	\$209,639.35
Massasoit	1	\$750	75	\$7480
Middlesex	18	\$15,450	1120	\$155,790.50
Mount Wachusett	2	\$2,800	150	\$24,090.00
North Shore	7	\$7,300	622	\$89,582.00
Northern Essex	31	\$27,800	2200	\$254,965.65
Quinsigamond	2	\$3,250	96	\$7,665.00
Roxbury	16	\$10,600	803	\$127,945.85
Springfield Technical CC	3	\$5,750	270	\$36,400.00
TOTALS	121	\$112,650	9422	\$1,363,528.85
*Savings to students in the first academic year				

We have exceeded our goal of \$1 million in students saving during the first year and our faculty are submitting some excellent OER course materials!