

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 21-38

BOARD DATE: December 15, 2020

APPROVAL OF FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the **Fitchburg State University** Strategic Plan and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

VOTED: Motion adopted by BHE 12/15/2020.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l);
BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III.

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.
Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public
Program Approval

Background

A fundamental responsibility of the BHE is to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. The Board enacts this responsibility by establishing statewide goals and by regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals building upon the foundation of the Vision Project and Closing Gaps. Articulating statewide goals has no impact on creating greater equity in public higher education unless these goals and performance metrics are embraced by the individual colleges and universities and incorporated into their strategic plans. Massachusetts state statute therefore charges the BHE and the Secretary of Education with reviewing and approving campus strategic plans. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III.

Fitchburg State University Planning Process

Touch Point I took place at a site visit on September 3, 2019 with Commissioner Santiago and staff, President Lapidus, all faculty, and the Fitchburg State University (FSU) strategic planning leadership committee. Commissioner Santiago presented an overview of the BHE expectations for campus strategic plans and the Equity Agenda as a feature of the all-faculty meeting. As well, the Commissioner followed up by meeting with the President and committee for dialog and to underscore the importance of the BHE goals and priorities for campuses across the public system in Massachusetts.

Touch Point II began when Fitchburg submitted the plan on June 26, 2020. It was first reviewed by the Commissioner and staff before being circulated to BHE members for their feedback and commentary on August 4, 2020. Individual members provided the Commissioner with comments on the plan between August 4 -25, providing positive

remarks and suggestions for what they will look for at Touch Point III when the plan is brought forward to the Strategic Planning Committee for a vote.

The Commissioner shared BHE Member feedback with FSU. Generally, the FSU plan was found to be solid and to include all the required components in the Campus Strategic Planning Guidelines. Members also found that further explanation should be included within the TP III submission, regarding BHE strategic initiatives such as Early College, Prior Learning Assessment, and Open Education Resources. Members found that inclusion of these strategic initiatives should be explicitly reflected, noting that FSU's *Goal One: Forge innovative paths to knowledge acquisition, career readiness, social mobility, and lifelong learning*, goes directly to some of these state-wide strategic efforts, but they are not specifically cited in the plan. Members also commented that the introductory explanation and articulation of the plan is outstanding, and that laying out the process and assumptions was very helpful to understanding it. Members also found the values and vision to be quite clear. Members commented that it would strengthen the plan to include more details regarding how outcomes will be measured, noting that using measurement as a management tool and to define success is critical. Members strongly suggested developing and setting more specific targets.

Touch Point III: On November 18, 2020, the FSU Board of Trustees approved the strategic plan. On November 19, 2020, President Lapidus submitted the plan to Commissioner Santiago and on December 8, 2020 the plan was distributed to the members of the Board of Higher Education.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Fitchburg State University at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed **Fitchburg State University Strategic Plan 2020-2025**.