

**Massachusetts Board of Higher Education
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

February 6, 2023
2:30 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

The February 6, 2023 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Higher Education (“BHE” or “the Board”) was held virtually on the web-conference platform Zoom.

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present:	BHE Chair Chris Gabrieli; Bill Walczak; Patty Eppinger; and Commissioner Noe Ortega (non-voting, ex officio).
Committee Members Absent:	Vice-Chair (vacant seat); and Veronica Conforme.
Others BHE Members Present:	Judy Pagliuca; Alex Cortez; Robert Huttig (non-voting State University Segmental Advisor); and Andrew Whitcomb (non-voting UMass Student Segmental Advisor).
Department Staff Present:	Constantia Papanikolaou; Elena Quiroz-Livanis.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. Roll call attendance was taken (see above for attendance roster).

II. DISCUSSION

List of Material's Used

BHE Motions 23-24 through 23-29

Chair Gabrieli began by proposing a motion to approve minutes. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion to approve the Executive Committee minutes for the meeting held on December 5, 2022 was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote. Chair Gabrieli informed the committee members that the following items were on the agenda: two Letters of Intent, Pine Manor’s degree revocation, the

approval of guidelines for the Tomorrow's Teacher Scholarship program, and the annual funding formula allocation.

Chair Gabrieli introduced BHE Motion 23-24 Approval of Letter of Intent of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) to Award the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Authorization of Fast Track Review. Commissioner Ortega stated that the Department worked with the institution to assist with arranging the information needed to advance this to the Board. The Commissioner spoke further on the Department's role in helping to identify the goals and commitments made over the years. The Commissioner noted that public comment was received from Berkshire Community College (BCC), and that was included in the board packet as required. The Commissioner advised that they have been working with BCC to make sure they institutions can work on their partnership and collaboration. Chair Gabrieli emphasized on the importance and need of BSN programs and commented that he is comfortable with of the BSN program.

Committee member Walczak shared his experience in the healthcare system and voiced his concern about BCC's dissatisfaction with the proposal. He commented that public institutions are in a system and need to work together and not be in competition with each other. He stated that if they can confirm that BCC is happy with the arrangement, he will vote in favor; if not, he is voting against it. Chair Gabrieli provided further clarification of the fast track process and advised that the program can be adjudicated by the Board. Committee member Walczak asked if fast track meant it would not return to the Board. Chair Gabrieli advised that it would not return to the Board for technical approval but suggested that this could return to the Executive Committee informally, with updates.

Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning, Winifred Hagan, provided further clarification and reviewed the recent changes that were made to the public program review process. Pursuant to those changes there is now a Letter of Intent (LOI) followed by a Phase Two full application, which separated the question of whether and how the proposed programs align with board priorities, the mission of the institution, and if it filled a need in the market. The Phase Two application captures more detail of the curriculum, admissions, MassTransfer, relationships in the community, and more; both phases previously were integrated into one program review process but was separated approximately two years ago. Dr. Hagan also added that during the process, there was an extensive amount of serve and return between staff and all the institution's stakeholders. Staff has recommended this program for fast track approval, as they are fully satisfied with MCLA's commitment to work with BCC, the industry, and other stakeholders in Massachusetts.

Committee member Walczak commented that he received BCC's letter, advising that the institution has not been included in the MCLA's plan and was not invited to participate in the strategic plan. He added that he would vote for this, but not the fast track version. Committee member Eppinger commented that it appeared they were discussing the concept of the collaboration and partnership to move this forward. She continued by advising that the proposal checked all the boxes in terms of what is needed for an approval. She added that she also reviewed the document and believes the program is needed in the community and the institution followed the processes. She believes that the Commissioner will help move it forward, as this could be a model for the Community Colleges and State Universities working together. She concluded by stating that from a future aspect, she believes these are important jobs that are needed in the economy, and there are many opportunities for everyone.

Chair Gabrieli suggested that they advance the motion to the Board meeting without a vote, to provide the Department time to decide whether they recommend that board members vote on it as it was originally proposed or propose a different vote. He added that he is in favor of moving more quickly with approvals and believes the BSN crisis is real. Commissioner Ortega added that MCLA representatives are present and can respond to Committee member Walczak's concerns. Commissioner Ortega pointed out that there are items addressed in the letter that do not exclusively fall within the agency and within the way the Department works with institutions, and he wanted to acknowledge that this is shining a light on the need to work institutions to ensure that some of the constraints that are present in different regions are being addressed.

Chief Legal Counsel Papanikolaou provided comment on the Board's legal authority and standard of review to help focus the discussion. She stated that she was not hearing objections to the underlining substantive proposal. Rather, it appears as though the only question is whether to "fast track" the proposal under the LOI process summarized by Senior Associate Commissioner Hagan and delegate final approval to the Commissioner; or to require the proposal to advance on the "standard track," which would require the proposal to come back to the BHE for final approval after more work is done fleshing out the specifics of the proposal. She suggested that the Board focus on whether the proposal meets the three fast track criteria identified by Senior Associate Commissioner Hagan. If the Board believes the proposal meets those criteria the Board then fast track review can be authorized; if not, then standard review can be used. Ms. Papanikolaou added that it was her understanding that either way, the program review and academic review would progress, and staff would work with the institution and visiting committee. She concluded by reiterating that the only difference is that with the standard review process the matter would come back to the Board for a final vote on approval.

Committee member Walczak advised that as the Co-Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, one of the items he must review is whether institutions are acting as a system; he believes the letters provided in the Board packet from BCC are indicating that they are not acting as a system but acting out of market-place requirements. He added that if the public institutions will be authorized to compete against each other, then Community Colleges should be allowed to issue baccalaureate degrees.

MCLA President, James Birge, commented that in 2017, the Board approved the MCLA's strategic plan, which called for the development of a nursing program. He stated that BCC was invited to participate in their community conversations about the program and plan. He added that they always discussed how they would partner with BCC, and they have a long history of collaborating that they would like to continue.

Chair Gabrieli summarized the discussion and comments received on the proposal and noted that more work had to be done. He suggested that the Commissioner work with both institutions to facilitate an agreeable outcome between now and next week's full BHE meeting. He further suggested that the Executive Committee advance the proposal to the full BHE next week without a recommendation, at which time the Board will receive a recommendation from the Commissioner. Hearing no further discussion or objections, Chair Gabrieli confirmed that this would be the approach and moved on to the next agenda item.

Chair Gabrieli moved on to introduce the BHE 23-25 Approval of Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to Award the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and Authorization for Fast Track Review. Chair Gabrieli commented that the proposal was straightforward, within the boundaries and without objection. He believes this has strong market opportunities. Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a motion to approve BHE 23-25. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote. Thereafter, Chair Gabrieli withdrew motion BHE 23-26 Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 23-24 and 23-25 on a Consent Agenda, as it was no longer needed.

Chair Gabrieli soon after introduced BHE Motion 23-27 Revocation of the Degree Granting Authority of Pine Manor College and referred members to the background summary in the Board packet. Hearing no questions or discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a motion to approve BHE 23-27. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli introduced BHE Motion 23-28 Approval of Guidelines for the Tomorrow's Teacher Scholarship Program. Committee member Eppinger commented that this is a great program that is intended to move the Equity Agenda forward. The recipient could receive up to \$25,000 per year and other reimbursement for a maximum of four years. Clantha McCurdy added that with approval of the guidelines, it will allow staff to continue to support the program and make scholarship awards available for Academic Year 2023-2024. Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a motion to approve BHE 23-28. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli introduced the final motion, BHE Motion 23-29 Approval of the Community College and State University Funding Formula Allocations for FY23. Chair Gabrieli spoke about this representing the same formula from the past, and commented on learning about the level of impact the investments bring to the institutions whether large or small. Interim Deputy Commissioner for Administration and Finance, Joe Wallerstein, encouraged the Board to revisit some of the recommendations from the Funding Formula working group, as it has been ten years since the formulas have been implemented and they can review where the metrics have shifted. He also commented that he hopes they can begin completing the allocation process earlier. Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a motion to approve BHE 23-29. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli moved on to Advisory Council updates and asked the Chair of Academic Affairs and Student Success (AA&SS) Advisory Council, Chair Eppinger, for an update on the January 31st meeting. Chair Eppinger stated that they heard presentations on two topics, the STEM Starter Academy and Resources for Teacher Education Programs. The STEM Starter Academy's purpose is to recruit and graduate students who will go on to earn a STEM degree, certificate, or to go into the workforce in that field. They reviewed the year eight evaluation of the program, which provided the following information: 31,000 students have been served, 9,500 students have earned degrees or certificates, 2,700 students have transferred to four-year institutions, and 1,000 students have taken advantage of the case management approach. In regard to Resources for Teacher Education Programs, she spoke about the many different programs and initiatives that provide scholarships, grants, forgivable loans, and tuition waivers, to increase the teacher population, as only forty percent of students are people of color, and only eight percent are teachers. She also spoke about the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant, Tomorrow's Teacher Scholarship, and a teacher loan forgiveness program. She added that they also discussed communication and outreach strategies to make sure the participants are aware of all the resources that are available.

III. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Gabrieli moved on to discuss the FY24 budget and the broader framework. Chair Gabrieli advised the committee members that he and Commissioner Ortega intend to have the two following items discussed by the summer: board functioning and strategic prioritization. He noted that the board functioning discussion is for board members to discuss whether the current approach needs to be adjusted and to give the board members an opportunity to voice their opinions and comments. The strategic prioritization is to discuss initiatives priorities for the next few years. Thereafter, Chair Gabrieli discussed the FY24 budget. He spoke about the new funding from the Fair Share Amendment possibly triggering additional changes and support to higher education financing. He added that he anticipated the Governor's FY24 Budget would be released on March 1.

He continued by reporting that he anticipated asking the Board to vote on FY24 budget priorities during the next board meeting; to that end, a memorandum with budget recommendations will be made available by the end of the week. Commissioner Ortega spoke about integrating the framework into decision-making with the budget and the Fair Share Amendment. He added that Board members and the Department will need to leverage available tools to make a strong claim that builds on a framework, invests more money in students, and provides more resources for institutions while also holding them accountable. Committee member Walczak asked if Secretary Tutwiler would be present at the Board meeting. Chair Gabrieli and Commissioner Ortega replied that they believed he would. Chief Legal Counsel added that if the Secretary of Education is not able to attend he can send a designee, noting that under law, he is the only member who can send a designee with the authority to vote. Commissioner Ortega added that Secretary Tutwiler has been briefed by Department staff on their work, including strategic higher education financing and strategic planning. The Secretary will also be briefed on the agenda items for the next Board meeting.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli concluded the meeting.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.