



Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Community College President's Report

Delivered by David Podell, President, MassBay Community College
Chair, Community College Council of Presidents

March 22, 2022

Good morning Chair Gabrieli, Secretary Peyser, Commissioner Santiago, and members of the Board.

First, I'd like to formally welcome Jackie Jenkins-Scott, Interim President of Roxbury Community College, who took on that role early last month. She brings many years of experience to the institution and we are happy to have her join us.

I would like to thank Chair Gabrieli for the inclusion of the community college voice in the search for the next Commissioner of Higher Education in Massachusetts. Our 15 colleges are unique institutions whose students are in many ways unlike what many might consider a traditional college student. That doesn't mean our students are any less capable or driven than those who learn at our four-year counterparts – rather, they have unique needs that must be considered in important decisions like these. We are grateful to be part of the process.

As we mark the two-year anniversary of the start of the pandemic, I want to take a moment to recognize the resiliency of our college communities. The last two years have been marked by uncertainty and worry—yet our students, faculty, and staff have not only been flexible, they have been innovative and creative to best meet the needs of our campuses.

While we are encouraged by the current health trends, we know that the pandemic is not yet behind us – nor do we, as a system, overlook the enormous impact that COVID-19 has had on our students and employees, our colleges, and on higher education in general. We must move forward strategically and thoughtfully into the future.

To that end, all of our community colleges are looking forward to transitioning to mask-optional environments by the end of the Spring 2022 semester. This transition will be handled by each institution in consideration of its local circumstances. As we have since March 2020, we will continue to closely monitor conditions and reserve the right to change course if necessary, but are optimistic that trends will continue to move in a positive direction.

Finally, you are set to take up the allocation and distribution of the ARPA mitigation and maintenance funding later today. We believe the funding formula is equitable, and offer our full support for the allocations before you.

Thank you for the chance to speak with you this morning. On behalf of our 15 colleges and their students, thank you for your continued support.

David Podell, Ph.D.
President, MassBay Community College
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