

Massachusetts Community Colleges

Council of Presidents

Chair: Dr. Patricia A. Gentile

President, North Shore Community College

June 18, 2019

Good Morning Chair Gabrieli, Board members, Commissioner Santiago and all of your fine staff and a special greeting to our sister colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Two weeks ago, the Community College presidents held their annual retreat and Dr. Valerie Roberson, president of Roxbury Community College, passed the baton of Chair of the Council of Presidents to me for this coming academic year. I'd like to publicly thank President Roberson for her hard work and mission driven leadership for the community college sector. I hope to continue her legacy.

As one academic year ends and another begins in two short weeks, I'd like to focus my comments on a sample of the accomplishments of your 15 public associate degree granting institutions and their goals for the upcoming year.

First and foremost, all 15 community colleges have been engaged for many years in what the Board of Higher Education has defined as its Equity Goal. Our colleges are the institutions of higher education most frequently located in Massachusetts' Gateway Cities and in neighborhoods characterized by low literacy and educational credential attainment and high socioeconomic need. We serve the highest proportions of low-income families in their quest for a college degree. Our 15 community colleges enroll the largest numbers of students of color and, as a consequence, many of our colleges are federally designated as a Minority Serving Institution and/or a Hispanic Serving Institution and even more are in the emerging institution zone. In fact, my own institution, North Shore Community College reached the 25% enrollment minimum for designation as a HSI this past fall semester. As I know you are well aware, the community college sector enrolls the highest proportion of first generation to college students.

So, our sector is well aware of the public good and public service mission we are entrusted with and doing our best with scarce resources to move the equity agenda of access, achievement and graduation forward to every student in our care. We are doing this hard work through devising innovative strategies and reallocating limited institutional resources to support that innovation, by leveraging community resources through formal and informal partnerships to support our students, and by turning to philanthropic and entrepreneurial revenue streams to enhance our ability to keep our price relatively affordable.

I'd like to provide some examples of these tactics:

A. Partnerships:

This quickly closing academic year saw many colleges embrace the hard work of affiliating with K-12 school districts and other educational institutions to provide the Commonwealth's Early College

Designation program. Just this past week, many of us attended the expansion ceremony at Bunker Hill Community College where the Governor recognized 17 of these Early College partnerships. A great example of the type of outcomes from such collaborations is Holyoke Community College's Early College Designation with partner Holyoke High School. Implemented last summer, this program provided college coursework and wrap around supports to 76 sophomores at HHS. This initial group of students was majority first generation, 64% identified as Latinx, 26% white, 3% black, 3% mixed race and 1 % Native American. This first cohort attempted 254 college credits with a 95.3% pass rate, outperforming the Holyoke Community College general population. Holyoke is expanding the partnership to 81 new sophomores this coming year in addition to 73 of the original 78 continuing to earn college credits in their junior year of high school.

Holyoke is but one sterling example of what our participation in the Early College Designation movement will mean to move the needle on the Equity Agenda. For example, Springfield Technical Community College plans expansion to scale in the coming year with the High School of Commerce in the Springfield Empowerment Zone. Massasoit Community College is planning to open a Weekend Academy at the Canton Campus this coming fall to offer high school students increased dual enrollment opportunities. Courses such as Speech, Psychology, Introduction to Nutrition, Networking Specialist, Intro to CAD, and Intro to HVAC are being offered to students from Randolph, Stoughton, Canton, Milton and Fontbonne Academy.

Speaking of the power of partnerships, Bristol Community College, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School recently signed a MOU to launch the College Access Pathway in Engineering that allows students to undertake college-level courses with Bristol during their junior and senior high school years, then seamlessly transfer post associate degree to UMass Dartmouth for their bachelor in engineering. Students completing this program will see a total cost savings of \$22,824. This not only moves the equity needle but also enhances the affordability of our public systems.

At our recent Council of Presidents' retreat, we developed a consensus that partnerships will continue to be a major sector goal.

B. Innovative Strategies

Some of the innovative strategies being utilized by our community college sector encompass institutional change. For example, this year MassBay Community College initiated a Young Women of Color program to complement their existing and successful Young Men of Color program. Northern Essex Community College won the Boston Foundation's Deval Patrick Prize for Community Colleges this year in recognition of their PIES Latinos de NECC program. This program provides local services to immigrants, including validation of foreign college transcripts, industry-based ESOL classes, and employer networking. In its first two years, the program has assisted over 600 immigrants in the Lawrence area, moving many from low-skilled, low-wage jobs into high-skilled, high-wage jobs in education, healthcare and STEM fields.

Many of the Commonwealth's institutions of higher education joined with Bridgewater State University for the Leading for Change program where our faculty and staff entered a year-long program on cultural inclusiveness. Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment at our colleges is a complement to the strategies just noted but essential for long term institutional success in the equity agenda.

Speaking of welcoming students, this year Massasoit Community College created *Student Central*, a one-stop enrollment center to integrate all enrollment-related services. In addition to a welcoming and modern single point of in-person services, Massasoit also created a series of self-service kiosk stations to enhance efficiency and customer service.

My own college, North Shore, has been working on a MOU and program innovation with the national non-profit Year Up to bring this public private employer-based partnership to our Lynn Campus and community. Starting in the coming academic year we intend to start a first cohort of 40 in the Computer Information System pathway and expand that quickly to a minimum of 160 students per year.

We're not alone in addressing employer demand, this coming year Bristol Community College will be expanding its workforce development offerings for the offshore wind industry. Bristol and its training partners will be providing state-of-the-art training experiences, such as: Global Wind Organization Certified Training Programs in Basic & Advanced Safety Training and Basic Technical Training as well as customized training to meet industry need. Bristol is the only US training provider offering the certificates and associate degree programs specifically in offshore wind power technology, augmented with the GWO certificates.

Often our sector is modest about the scrappy and strategic way we address innovation and the high quality of our rigorous academic program menu. At our COP retreat, we recognized that we need to tell our unique story better and so a second goal adopted was to message our compelling story better to potential students, employers, state and community leaders, and the general public.

C. Philanthropic and Entrepreneurial Resources

Due to our more recent arrival on the higher education field, community colleges have been a bit late to the philanthropic and entrepreneurial tables. But the Commonwealth's community colleges are working hard to make up that time.

As you are well aware, Cape Cod Community College recently announced their \$5 million capital gift from a local donor. Northern Essex has embarked on their *Leading Into the Future Together* multi-year major gifts campaign designed to raise up to \$7 million for student scholarships, facilities improvements, academic support services and other student success needs. During NECC's quiet phase, \$2.5 million has already been raised. The North Shore Community College Foundation also recently announced a \$1.765 million gift to enhance and expand its health care programs' simulation labs and integrate simulation curriculum across ten health care programs. Roxbury Community College is planning this year to raise more philanthropic gifts with the help of its newly restructured Foundation board.

We have a student success and persuasive case study story to tell about the outcomes of the state's community colleges. Not only are we worthy of taxpayer investment, we are very worthy of philanthropic investment. These examples show that when donors are aware of the tremendous work done at the community colleges to address income inequality and that our outcomes are moving the needle to educational equity, the major donations do come to us.

Finally, community colleges are the workhorse of workforce development. Through our CTE academic programs and our professional and corporate development programs and credentials, we ensure that the employers in this state have access to highly skilled and credentialed workers. Although each of our community colleges supports a continuous education approach to workforce development, we do so only within our own geographic service areas or in small clusters. We understand that this is an area that needs a statewide approach so that we can better serve the Massachusetts employers and workers looking to stay on top of leading edge technologies, new market skills, and enhance the business sectors' productivity. This coming year, we will be leading a statewide Big Idea to enhance and improve our delivery of workforce development in the Commonwealth.

Growing public, private and employer-based resources is our third major goal for the coming year as a sector.

In sum, I look forward to coming before you to update you on our progress in implementing the Equity Agenda and in reaching our three sector-wide goals: Enhancing and expanding partnerships, Growing public and private resources, and telling our compelling message to the public.

Thank you for your time and interest.