

**Massachusetts Board of Higher Education  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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March 11, 2024  
2:30 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

The March 11, 2024, 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; Alex Cortez; Bill Walczak; and Commissioner Noe Ortega (non-voting, ex officio).

Committee Members Absent: Veronica Conforme.

Others BHE Members Present: Secretary of EOE designee Robert LePage; Judy Pagliuca; Cindy Mack (SAC Chair & BHE Student Member); and Andrew Whitcomb (non-voting UMass Student Segmental Advisor).

Department Staff Present: Constantia Papanikolaou; Elena Quiroz-Livanis; Richard Riccardi; Cynthia Brown; and Keith Connors.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Board Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m. Roll call attendance was taken (see above for attendance roster).

**II. MOTIONS**

List of Material's Used

*BHE Motions 24-40 through 24-41*

Chair Gabrieli began the meeting by proposing a motion to approve minutes of the January 19, 2024 Executive Committee meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the motion to approve the minutes was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote. Chair Gabrieli noted that there were only two items on the agenda.

Chair Gabrieli introduced *BHE 24-40 Revocation of the Degree Granting Authority of Park University* and commented that this motion was in follow-up to the decision of Park University to wind down its physical operations at Hanscom Air Force Base. At this time, the Board's Non-Voting UMass Student Segmental Advisor, Andrew Whitcomb, joined the Executive Committee Meeting

Committee Member Cortez asked who will be taking their place. . In response to Committee Member Cortez's question, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success Richard Riccardi informed the Committee Members that Park University notified the Department in a letter that it would be closing the physical location, and that students affiliated with the program would not experience any disruption in terms of degree completion.

Associate Commissioner for Regulatory and Veteran Affairs, Cynthia Brown, added that, as far as they know, the physical space is unoccupied and there may or may not be any unmet need in terms of the programming they were offering, as it was a small program and there was no continuing interest at that location for that particular program. Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis also mentioned that staff had no concerns about Massachusetts students not being able to access certain academic programs; the programs that are no longer being offered in the physical space is the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Management and Computer Information Systems, Bachelor of Science in Management and HR, and Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Administration. Chief Legal Counsel Papanikolaou advised that in 2018, Park University only had eight (8) students graduate; this could be a business process decision, as it is no longer necessary or profitable to have the satellite campus in Massachusetts. Ms. Papanikolaou noted that this was a good question in the context of larger institutions that may decide to cease operations in Massachusetts, and Academic Affairs is working closely to ensure that there are options for students to fill that void.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a motion to approve BHE 24-40. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the BHE Motion 24-40 was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli introduced the final motion *BHE 24-41 Approval of Criminal Justice Programs Under the Guidelines for Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Academic Programs: Fisher College*. Chair Gabrieli spoke about the Board's responsibility to authorize the eligibility of program credits for law enforcement members who enroll in the criminal justice and law enforcement programs. He added that approximately 35

programs have been approved. At this time, Board Member Pagliuca joined the Executive Committee Meeting, and was recognized by Chair Gabrieli.

Committee Member Walczak asked if there was information on the level of rigor that was extended into the programs. The Department's Program Director for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Keith Connors, replied that the rigorous evaluation process is usually conducted by out of state evaluators. He further explained that the out of state evaluators did not complete their review, and the Department found qualified evaluators in Massachusetts who thoroughly evaluated and reviewed the program.

Committee Member Walczak asked if they also evaluated the graduates. Mr. Connors responded that all three programs were evaluated individually. The Secretary of Education's designee Robert LePage, added that the Massachusetts Office of Civil Service is revising the steps to create a smoother process for individuals to move from criminal justice programs directly into civil service by changing the timelines and frequency of the civil service exam, and allowing a portion of individuals to be hired by municipalities without taking the Civil Service Exam. Committee Member Walczak commented that police officers are required to take multiple choice exams and honorably discharged service members are placed at the top of all lists; he asked what would change with the Civil Service Exam discrepancy. Assistant Secretary LePage responded that his understanding is the frequency and requirement of the Civil Service Exam will change and added that the changes are still in the dialogue stage.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a motion to approve BHE 24-41. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, BHE Motion 24-41 was approved unanimously by all members present, by roll call vote.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

- **Advisory Council Updates**

Chair Gabrieli informed the Executive Committee Members that the Advisory Council Chairs will be provided an opportunity to give their updates at the upcoming Board Meeting. Chair Gabrieli offered the BHE Chair of the Evidence-Based Policy Making (EBPM) Advisory Council (AC) Meeting, Alex Cortez, an opportunity to inform the Executive Committee Members of the EBPM AC's main focus for the upcoming meeting. Committee Member Cortez informed the Executive Committee Members that there will be three (3) guest speakers who will provide their perspective and experience in regard to calculating economic mobility and return on investment.

- **Commissioner's Evaluation**

Chair Gabrieli provided an update on the Commissioner's Evaluation, advising that the Commissioner will circulate his self-review from November 2022 to the end of 2023 and also provide a set of goals for the 2024 calendar year ahead of the next BHE meeting. Board Members will receive a draft that will be reviewed at a subsequent Board Meeting. He also spoke about the goals discussed at the January Retreat and providing a calendar for the next two fiscal years, and briefly mentioned moving forward with a mix of in-person, hybrid, or fully remote meetings.

Board Member Pagliuca commented about not seeing any follow-ups on program approvals, as there are more programs, but the number of students is not increasing. She added that they are not being apprised on what is happening institutionally. Chair Gabrieli responded that this is a goal that they will be working on this summer as a top strategic action priority. Committee Member Walczak suggested they choose random programs to evaluate their performance and set up a tickler system to ensure there is follow up. Board Member Pagliuca also suggested follow-up on the strategic plans. Commissioner Ortega advised that Department staff will look into this as there is still some follow up and due diligence that has to be done, but they will need to secure time for the next discussion as well. Chair Gabrieli suggested to the Commissioner that the next step would be to provide a high-level written analysis on the strategic action priorities they previously discussed.

Board Member Pagliuca inquired about the expected tax revenues, as she is aware that the commercial real estate tax revenues are down, which will change the funds available for different priorities. Chair Gabrieli explained that the Governor brought forward her budget based on a set of group assumptions that assume consistent funding from the normal budget within higher education. He continued by explaining the Fair Share Act, which is now projected to be 1.3 billion dollars to maintain the investments in MassReconnect and Mass Grant Plus, in addition to providing funds for the capital budgets of colleges. He concluded by adding that the House will issue its budget in April, and the Senate will subsequently issue its budget in May. EOE Secretary Designee LePage also commented that they were still in consensus on revenue estimates that were filed by the Governor and have not received anything new.

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.