



Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Community College President's Report

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

February 1, 2021

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

Before I begin, I want to welcome Jackie Jenkins-Scott who has been named Interim President at Roxbury Community College. Jenkins-Scott brings more than three decades of experience in senior and executive leadership positions in higher education and public health, and we look forward to working with her when she comes on board next week. We are grateful for President Roberson's many years of commitment to Roxbury and wish her well.

Our colleges are excited to have the Spring semester underway. The work that went into getting our vaccine requirement implemented for employees and in-person students was significant – but we are so excited to be scaling up our in-person activities. We are committed to giving our students the flexibility to learn virtually or in person, but know that students across higher education are facing a mental health crisis exacerbated by the isolation and solitude of pandemic quarantine. As we've talked about frequently, our campuses play a unique role in supporting students with wrap-around services – something they've continued to do throughout the last two years – but the sense of community and belonging is something that has, understandably, faltered in the absence of in-person activity. I am grateful to our campus staff and faculty for leading throughout the pandemic.

Unfortunately, our colleges continue to struggle to recruit and retain staff. Our campuses are not immune from "the great resignation" being seen across the country, and our institutions are often not equipped to retain talent in such a competitive job market. This has slowed a number of important initiatives across the system, and we continue to look for ways to mitigate these challenges.

As we look to the future, we are grateful for the investments in our community colleges in Governor Baker's FY23 budget, including the addition of SUCCESS funding for the first time, and significant increases in need-based financial aid and early college funding.

Yet, we are concerned about critical omissions from Governor Baker's proposal, including funding for workforce development grants and higher education opportunities for EEC providers.

Additionally, there are two important changes that we are monitoring closely. First, we are concerned that changes to calculating the community college base funding could negatively impact our colleges' funding. We are examining this change closely and look forward to continued discussion around this topic. Secondly, while we applaud the expansion of the

MassGrant Plus program to support additional students, it is important that students who are getting these funds now are not negatively impacted.

Over the course of the next few months, as the budget makes its way through the House, Senate, and joint conference committee, our colleges will continue to advocate for funding for these and other important initiatives. We're grateful for the support we've seen for our community colleges and offer our appreciation to the administration.

Finally, our colleges are currently advocating for a change to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 15A, Section 26 to allow evening courses and summer courses taught at community colleges in the Commonwealth to be covered by state appropriations. Currently, Section 26 allows public institutions of higher education to offer courses to students in the evening and during the summer, but they must be "operated at no expense to the commonwealth" which creates logistical challenges for our colleges. Additionally, the current language is not reflective of a 21st century community college and instead relies on a dated model where the majority of students attended full-time and during the day – in fact, more than 44,000 students served at community colleges attend part-time, which accounts for about 2/3 of our overall population. As more students want to take courses in the evening, the community colleges must identify additional faculty to teach these courses, as full-time faculty can only teach during the day. This can be particularly problematic for high-demand evening health programs, whose accreditation requirements require full-time faculty staffing and leadership. This change would not result in an increased expenditure, as the state determines what level of support to provide to colleges through the annual appropriations process and increasing the scope of the academic day has no bearing on the amount of appropriation awarded overall. This change would simply allow state supported instruction to occur during the day or evening or the summer.

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

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