

Remarks to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

May 4, 2021

Dr. James Mabry, President

Middlesex Community College

- Good morning Chair Gabrieli, Board Members, Commissioner Santiago, Secretary Peyser, DHE staff, and my colleagues in public higher education. I want to thank you all for this opportunity to share updates from the Massachusetts Community Colleges.
- First, I want to welcome the newest Member of the Board of Higher Education – Bill Walczak of Bunker Hill Community College. We are delighted that you will bring your breadth of experience in advocacy and engagement as the Community College Trustee Representative to the BHE.
- But we know you will have large shoes to fill in that role. And we are grateful for the 5 years of service of the outgoing Trustee Representative, J.D. LaRock. Thank you, J.D. – for your expertise and representation on behalf of community colleges.
- And congratulations to Jorgo Gushi, an outstanding student leader, who was re-elected as both the Student Advisory Council Chair and the community college segmental advisor. We look forward to working with you again.
- Additionally, we are excited for the most recent additions to the public higher education system. We welcome Dr. Mary Grant back to the presidential ranks at MassArt. We are, of course, proud to welcome Dr. Bill Heineman to our group of community college presidents as the next leader of North Shore Community College.
- Also, we look forward to the BHE’s consideration of the newest presidential selections in the near future, with:
 - Mr. Ray DiPasquale, Massasoit Community College’s pick, who returns to Massachusetts with extensive executive experience.
 - And this morning, the Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees selected Middlesex Community College’s provost Phillip Sisson to be the next president. I look forward to the Board’s consideration of this very experienced and knowledgeable leader.
- And last but certainly not least, I would like to formally welcome the new Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC), Nate Mackinnon. Many of you know Nate well, and the presidents are pleased to welcome him back home after a stint leading the community colleges in Nevada.
- I look forward to today’s agenda and would like to extend an appreciation of the Board’s interest in the student transcripts process and general practices at the colleges.
- Our individual colleges have been looking at our current practices and policies and we look forward to continuing to share information with the Board of Higher Education and coordinating with our state university colleagues on this important matter.

- We have already collected some initial information from the 15 community colleges and found that only a tiny percentage of student are impacted by this process but even so, each college is taking a deep look at their practices to make sure they are in the best interests of our students and help keep them from more dire consequences. As always, student-centered policies are central to what we do at community colleges.
- We have arrived at the time of year where we typically spend all our energy getting students across the goal line and getting excited about graduation ceremonies.
- But this year, on top of all of that, we are stepping up our efforts in the fight against COVID-19. Despite positive trends and developments, we continue to closely watch the impacts of this public health and economic crisis play out in the lives of Massachusetts residents and people across the country.
- And just as it was discussed at the last meeting, it is important to reiterate that community colleges are not solely a “more affordable” version of other sectors.
 - On average, we serve older adult students.
 - Our students do not reside in dorms.
 - 90% work while attending school.
 - Our students come from communities that have been disproportionately impacted by both the pandemic and its economic impact.
 - And in the context of “spring decisions” for many graduating high school students, it’s important to know that it’s quite different for community colleges.
 - We will not know the exact numbers of students we will serve until much later in the summer, often only once the semester begins.
- Which is also why it is too early to make many decisions for our fall students, even despite very encouraging public health trends. And no matter what, it is our top priority, and incumbent on *all* of us to strongly encourage vaccinations for *all* members of the campus community – students, faculty, staff – *everyone*, and to help make this possible for everyone.
- The community colleges are already playing and will continue to play an important role in facilitating and encouraging vaccinations in our local communities:
 - In Chicopee, every single student in the **Holyoke Community College** nursing program has been administering shots at a local vaccination site.
 - **Roxbury Community College** partnered with Transformative Healthcare to offer students job openings at the vaccination sites, using these paid internships to align with their future healthcare roles while helping the vaccination effort.
 - **Northern Essex Community College** has been staffing vaccine clinics in Lawrence with nursing and medical assistant students, and a new clinic just opened on campus in Lawrence.
 - Both at **Greenfield** and **North Shore Community Colleges** – nursing students are volunteering and receiving valid clinical experience as they are working on the front lines.
 - At **Bristol Community College**, nursing students are also gaining valuable clinical experience at vaccination sites on campus, Gillette stadium, or in COVID-19-specific ISU/SICU hospital units.

- At **Middlesex Community College**, nursing students, faculty members and staff members have been volunteering at a local site run by Lowell general Hospital. It was there, I am proud to say, that I was vaccinated by an MCC nursing student.
- This is just a sample of what we have already being doing, but I do want to let President Ellen Kennedy briefly describe what **Berkshire Community College** has done to partner in Pittsfield:

[Brief Remarks from Dr. Ellen Kennedy, from Berkshire Community College]

- Thank you, Ellen. That was a fantastic example of how central our community colleges can be in these localized and regional collaboratives.
- And with the Baker Administration announcing the next phase of the administration of vaccines, with more doses going out regionally and expanding mobile clinics, the community colleges are ready to facilitate vaccinations for all in our communities – especially with a targeted approach on communities of color.
- The logistics are important and very localized, but welcome the opportunity to work with you, the Department, and the Executive Office of Education to help us more consistently provide local vaccine access to our communities.
- The community colleges are also proud of the support by our state and federal elected officials, including President Biden – who has very clearly made community colleges a priority in the coming years.
- Stating the role that community colleges play in economic recovery, recent proposals by the Biden Administration look to invest in community college programs and students:
 - The **American Jobs Plan** invests in community college infrastructure and ramps up capacity for the leading role we place in workforce development and training.
 - The **American Families Plan** focuses on a reimagining of college access through a major investment from the federal government.
 - We are excited about what these proposals highlight – how community colleges are central to the effort to Build, Back, Better.
- We also appreciate how these proposals can work hand-in-hand with the additional investments by the Commonwealth.
- We're pleased so far in the FY22 State Budget process, and we appreciate that many of the shared priorities of the BHE and MACC were reflected in early budget proposals.
 - This includes increased funding for:
 - The SUCCESS Fund
 - Early College programs
 - STEM Starter Academy
 - Mass Grant Plus, and many more

- We look forward to the work ahead and will again be counting on our leaders in the Legislature to help maintain affordable higher ed access and propel economic development in all corners of the Commonwealth. Without strong community colleges, the core of the future Massachusetts workforce could be left behind.
- With 15 colleges with campuses operating in all corners of Massachusetts, the community colleges are the engine of equity and workforce development for the Commonwealth.
- As Chairman Gabrielli has noted, it is great to work together, and we hope that the BHE will work closely with the community college sector as it works through ideas on how to structure BHE operations. Like the state universities, we are partners in these efforts.
- We look forward to working together with the Board, the Department, and our higher education colleagues to advocate for further support and investments into public higher education. Thank you.