

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**NO.:** BHE 23-18

**BOARD DATE:** December 13, 2022

---

**APPROVAL OF BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves **Berkshire Community College Strategic Plan 2022-2027: Equity Centered – Equity Actioned** and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

**VOTED:** Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 12/5/2022; and adopted by the BHE on 12/13/2022.

**Authority:** Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III, Section 2.  
**Contact:** Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.  
Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public Program Approval

## **Background**

A fundamental responsibility of the BHE is to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. The Board enacts this responsibility by establishing statewide goals and by regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals building upon the foundation of the Vision Project and Closing Gaps. Articulating statewide goals has no impact on creating greater equity in public higher education unless these goals and performance metrics are embraced by the individual colleges and universities and incorporated into their strategic plans. Massachusetts state statute therefore charges the BHE and the Secretary of Education with reviewing and approving campus strategic plans. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III, Section 2.

## **Berkshire Community College Planning Process**

Touch Point I took place virtually on September 27, 2021 and was attended by Commissioner Santiago and staff. Approximately 120 participants from Berkshire Community College (BCC) included faculty, staff, administrators, and student representatives. President Kennedy opened with a welcome and overview of BCC getting ready for the new strategic planning process and had already engaged in pre-planning during FY 2021. Commissioner Santiago discussed the changed process, including the dissolution of the Strategic Planning Committee. He also noted that the Touch Points would remain in place for campuses and that staff would provide feedback at Touch Point II until BHE makes another provision. Commissioner Santiago underscored the significance of BHE's Equity Agenda as an important influence on campus strategic planning and that campuses incorporating aspects of the equity agenda into strategic plans would be imperative to the success and continued growth of the MA economy and to the principles of democracy. He also noted issues of social justice: access retention and completion reflected in basic needs, financial aid, teaching and learning pedagogies that must be more responsive to student needs, and that institutions should move away from 'student-ready' for college to 'college-ready' for

students. The Commissioner offered reassurances that BHE will make any changes to strategic planning effective on a moving forward basis and not retroactively as to preserve and not disrupt the planning of Berkshire and other institution's already in-progress. Questions and comments followed including a broad conversation around fees and tuition remission.

Staff emphasized the importance of institutional ties to the region, and retention and completion, in addition to access issues. It was noted that linkages to other public higher education/PK-12/community partners will be significant to a successful plan as well as linkages to other initiatives of DHE/BHE such as Early College, PLA, OER and other innovations.

BCC constituents wanted to better understand the definition of Equity and the Commissioner underscored that BHE is looking specifically at racial equity because those are the gaps that have persisted. It was cited that if public higher education can focus and address racial equity, it will benefit all students- policies that will be put forward will influence institutional capacity to address student needs; to meet students where they are; to act as if each student can and will succeed. The example of early college was noted, as was the use of the foundational document *The New Undergraduate Experience*. President Kennedy asked the Commissioner to speak to the impetus for equity in higher education in Massachusetts and cite some of the data that had led to developing the agenda. An overview of racial inequities in MA public higher education, the impact of pandemic, and the economic downturn and importance of community colleges was provided.

*Touch Point II* began when BCC submitted a draft of the campus plan on October 7, 2022. On November 7, 2022, after a thorough review of materials by staff, a dialog took place with President Kennedy and DHE staff. A review of the draft plan found it to meet almost all of the requirements of BHE for Campus Strategic Plans. There were three recommendations for consideration in submitting the Touch Point III draft to BHE. First staff noted that the significance of community and employer engagement is evident under the workforce goal. It was recommended to strengthen this point by emphasizing

these constituencies and engagements between community and industry partners in the executive summary. Because the role of public higher education in democracy starts in communities, it was recommended that a brief and explicit narrative of Berkshire's leadership role in convening and developing these relationships would be a positive addition to the executive summary. BCC's third strategic planning goal emphasized its relationship to workforce. It was recommended that as a follow up to BCC's expected success in enrolling a more racially diverse population of students, there should also be a plan to ensure the deliberate retaining of racially diverse students through completion of programs. Adding to this objective and naming the 'multiple strategies' referenced in the Touch Point II draft of the plan would increase its validity at Touch Point III.

*Touch Point III:* On November 29, 2022, the BCC Board of Trustees approved the strategic plan. On the same day, President Kennedy submitted the revised plan to Commissioner Ortega and DHE staff and on December 2, 2022, the plan was distributed to the members of the Board of Higher Education.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by North Shore Community College at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed **Transforming the Future with our Community: North Shore Community College Strategic Plan 2022-2027**.