



Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, MA 02108-1696

TEL (617) 994-6950
FAX (617) 727-0955
WEB www.mass.edu

Richard M. Freeland, *Commissioner*
Charles F. Desmond, *Chairman*
Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Katy Abel
MA Department of Higher Education
(617) 994-6932 office (617) 429-2026 cell
Email: kabel@bhe.mass.edu

MASSACHUSETTS HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSIONER RICHARD FREELAND TO STEP DOWN AT CLOSE OF 2014-15 ACADEMIC YEAR

Resignation Caps Four+ Decades in Higher Education Leadership Roles

BOSTON -- Tuesday, October 21, 2014 -- Higher Education Commissioner Richard M. Freeland has informed the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) that he intends to leave his post at the end of the 2014-15 academic year, the Department of Higher Education announced today.

"I have arrived at this decision after considerable reflection and with acute awareness of how much work remains to accomplish the goals for public higher education toward which we are all striving," Freeland told the Board at its first meeting of the year at Bristol Community College in Fall River. "But from a purely personal perspective, this is the right time for me to step aside. I hope I have contributed to the advancement of our public colleges and universities, which have never been more central to the economic future of the state and the well-being of our citizens, including the thousands of students we serve."

"Commissioner Freeland has been a true champion of our public colleges and universities," said Governor Deval Patrick. "He has brought a renewed spirit of unity and purpose to our public higher education system, forcefully reminding all of us that the state's economic future depends on a well-educated citizenry and workforce and effectively stewarding our system to help meet that need. I appreciate and thank him for his service."

“Richard Freeland represents the very best of what public service is all about,” said Secretary of Education Matthew Malone. “I have been impressed by his approach to this work and by his unwavering commitment to ensuring Massachusetts has the very best public higher education system in the nation. Richard has served the Commonwealth beyond any reasonable expectation and I intend to call on him many times in the future to seek his advice and insight.”

“The Commonwealth has benefitted greatly from Richard Freeland’s leadership,” said Charles F. Desmond, Ed.D., Chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. “More than anyone in recent history he has made enormous strides in knitting together our community colleges, our state universities and the University of Massachusetts as one system of public higher education, with one common purpose.”

At this morning’s meeting, Chairman Desmond announced plans to form a search committee to lead the search for a new Commissioner. Freeland intends to continue in his current role until June.

Considered one of the most influential voices in higher education today given his four and a half decades of leadership experience, Freeland was named Commissioner of Higher Education in 2009. He is best known for winning BHE and legislative support for a new strategic agenda to achieve national leadership among state systems of higher education. That effort, known as the [Vision Project](#), has focused on improving the system’s performance in college readiness in partnership with K12 educators, and with regard to college graduation rates, the alignment of degree and certificate programs with the needs of employers, and closing achievement gaps.

The Vision Project has also drawn national attention for several breakthroughs, including a first-in-the-nation statewide policy approved by the BHE last spring to establish civic learning as an expected outcome of an undergraduate education, an effort Freeland called “essential if students are to meet their future responsibilities as citizens.” Freeland also led the development of a plan to measure, without use of standardized tests, what college students actually learn and will be prepared to do upon graduation. The assessment pilot developed in Massachusetts is now being tested by a consortium of nine states led by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association.

“Richard Freeland has been a force for good both in Massachusetts higher education and also nationally,” said Carol G. Schneider, President of the American Association of Colleges and Universities. “His work with AAC&U to assess student learning through the VALUE/Multi-State Assessment initiative has been transformative.”

Freeland was also instrumental in advocating for the 2013 launch of performance funding for the state’s fifteen community colleges, which now receive up to half their appropriations based on Vision Project performance outcomes, including graduation

rates. A similar formula is now being considered for Massachusetts' nine state universities.

"We have had the pleasure of being a major partner with Commissioner Freeland during his tenure, especially related to the work we've done to highlight the importance of community colleges," said Paul Grogan, President and CEO of the Boston Foundation. "His achievements are enormous; he has really convinced the state's leaders and the business community that the future of Massachusetts public colleges and universities is pivotal to the economic future of the Commonwealth."

In addition to his five and a half-year tenure as Commissioner, Richard Freeland served as President of Northeastern University (1996-2006) where he enhanced the University's flagship co-operative education program and strengthened links between co-op experience and classroom learning. A major achievement of Freeland's presidency was the transformation of Northeastern into a nationally selective, residential university with a high-achieving student body, increased enrollments from beyond Massachusetts and New England, improved graduation rates and enhanced academic stature. Over the ten years of Freeland's presidency, Northeastern rose from 162 to 98 in the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of "Best National Universities," a repositioning the *Boston Business Journal* called "one of the most dramatic since *U.S. News* began ranking in 1983."

Freeland has spent his entire academic career in urban higher education. As Assistant to the President of the University of Massachusetts in 1970, he focused on the development of a new campus in Boston. For the next 22 years, he was associated with UMass Boston, serving as Assistant to the Chancellor, Director of Educational Planning, founding Dean of the College of Professional Studies, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Between 1992 and 1996 Freeland was Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the City University of New York, the country's largest urban system of public higher education.

An American historian, Freeland is the author of two books, *Academia's Golden Age*, a post-World War II history of universities in Massachusetts, published by Oxford in 1992, and *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism*, published by Knopf in 1972. He plans to teach American history at Northeastern, complete a long-planned book and spend more time with his wife, Eastern Connecticut State University President Elsa Nunez, their two children and three grandchildren.

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