

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
August 15, 2006

The August 15, 2006, special meeting of the Board of Higher Education (BHE) was held at the Department of Education in Malden, Massachusetts. The following members were present:

Stephen P. Tocco, Chair
Aaron D. Spencer, Vice Chair
Peter Alcock
Jeanne-Marie Boylan
David P. Driscoll

Kathleen Kelley
Colleen McKiernan
Ann Reale
Richard Taylor
Karl E. White

Absent: John C. Brockelman

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Tocco called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Chair Tocco thanked Commissioner David Driscoll for welcoming the Board to the Department of Education (DOE).

He said that it was honor to place before the Board the motion for the appointment of Dr. Patricia F. Plummer, Deputy Chancellor, to serve as Chancellor of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, praising her as "the backbone of higher education for many years." All compensation issues have been reviewed and approved, and she will assume the Chancellorship on September 1, 2006, for a one-year term. Chair Tocco introduced the following motion, which was seconded and passed unanimously:

BHE 07-01 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHANCELLOR OF THE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education appoints Dr. Patricia F. Plummer to serve as Chancellor of the System of Public Higher Education, effective September 1, 2006, and approves and fixes the compensation of the Chancellor in accordance with the provisions of the attached employment agreement, dated August 15, 2006.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, Section 6

Contact: Peter Tsaffaras, Director of Employee Relations and Benefit Administration

Chair Tocco remarked on the following topics:

1. **Legislative Issues:** The outcome of funding for the BHE is better than expected, with both the House and the Senate viewing higher education funding as a priority. It has been a good year from a budget standpoint. There is agreement that the Legislature will return for a one-day session at which time the Bond Bill, which is important for higher education and the campuses, will be on the agenda. Chair Tocco said he sensed that the Bond Bill would be passed within the next few weeks.

On the National Guard Fee Waiver issue, he commented that the Commonwealth is ultimately responsible for funding, and the number of students eligible for the waiver varies from campus to campus. There is commitment from the Legislature that the campuses will be reimbursed.

There is a commitment from the Legislature to move early childhood through high school education forward, which is good for the entire system of public education.

The Higher Education Bill got caught up in discussion between the House and the Senate, and time is running out for passage of this bill. The matter to be decided is whether the bill should be presented before the Legislature in the one-day session or next year. He said that there is much common ground between the House and the Senate; the issue involves pushing the bill forward.

2. **Collective Bargaining:** All agreements have been signed before the commencement of fall classes. He also described the collective bargaining teams as being fair and open-minded, with both sides in agreement on what is best for the system of public higher education.
3. **Advisory Committee:** Chair Tocco thanked Chair James Peyser and Commissioner David Driscoll for responding to the need to reconvene the Committee to examine admission standards. Many students are still entering college in need of educational remediation. He said that the focus of the Committee will be on admission standards, especially in math and science, with standards being different for each segment of education. Describing the challenge as an exciting time, he said that cooperation from the entire P-16 system is needed for success to be achieved.

Commissioner Driscoll added that despite the success in the increase of SAT scores in Massachusetts, more students are requiring remediation once they enter college, perhaps because of the MCAS 220 score standard. Though progress has been made, more is needed. Joint policies between DOE and BHE are necessary, and a determination of courses and their content must be made.

Ann Reale emphasized the connectivity of the educational continuum, from pre-school through college and the need for children to become excited about education at a young age. Ms. Reale said she was pleased to be a member of the Advisory Committee. In support of Early Education and Care, Dr. Plummer added that “college begins in pre-school.”

4. Chair Tocco welcomed Colleen McKiernan, Student Board Member, a junior and a Psychology major with a Pre-Medical Studies concentration at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Jake Oliveira, the state colleges’ student representative from Framingham State College, was also introduced. Chair Tocco encouraged both to participate fully in Board discussion.
5. Chair Tocco has also spoken with Dr. Jack Wilson, President of the University of Massachusetts, about the possibility of a joint meeting between the University Board and Board of Higher Education, to be followed by a social gathering.

FINANCIAL AID TASK FORCE UPDATE

Chair Tocco summarized recent Board activity regarding affordability. Because of budget cuts, it has become more difficult for people to attend college, and many who do attend college are

burdened with excessive debt upon graduation. The Financial Aid Task Force has reviewed our financial aid programs and has credible facts to support their forthcoming recommendations. Before recommendations are made, however, the Task Force will hold public hearings in late August to complete the information necessary to make recommendations.

Dr. Clantha McCurdy, Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Financial Assistance gave a PowerPoint presentation on Policy Options Update, which focused on three areas:

1. responsibility of the Commonwealth to promote an accessible and affordable higher education
2. parameters for state financial aid programs
3. student loan debt and the role of the Commonwealth

Dr. McCurdy announced that two public hearings will be held on August 22 at Worcester State College and on August 23 at Massachusetts Bay Community College.

The Task Force will determine what the Commonwealth's role is in promoting access to higher education and how the Commonwealth's funding of financial aid can be used best to promote access. On affordability, the Task Force will determine the Commonwealth's responsibility in meeting a student's need, how much of a student's unmet need should be addressed by the Commonwealth, and how the Commonwealth should compensate for the decline in federal need-based aid. The Task Force will also explore the issue of the role that the Commonwealth should play in addressing increasing student loan debt. It will also consider bold ideas that the Commonwealth might use to improve access to higher education.

Dr. McCurdy reviewed charts that revealed:

- The Commonwealth's distribution of state financial aid in FY2005 totaled \$97.2 million (\$64.9 million to students attending public and \$32.3 million to students attending private institutions), which was distributed to a total of 133,990 students (77,906 attending public and 56,084 attending private institutions).
- The average cost of education at the community colleges was assessed at \$11,169, state colleges at \$13,400, and \$16,234 at the University of Massachusetts. Cost of education includes all direct and indirect student charges based on the individual student—tuition, fees, books, supplies, room, board, and insurance.
- 38 percent of full-time public college students experience unmet need.
- In New England in FY2004, the cumulative amount borrowed by full-time undergraduates, as of their fourth year, amounted to \$15,399 for public college students and \$23,491 for private college students.

Next steps for the Financial Aid Task Force include conducting public hearings, integrating relevant public commentary into policy options, and issuing its final report in October 2006.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.