

**Massachusetts Board of Higher Education  
Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Minutes**

The June 12, 2018 meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was held in the 14th Floor Conference Room, One Ashburton Place, Boston, Massachusetts.

**SPC Members Present:** Fernando Reimers; Paul Toner  
Commissioner Carlos E. Santiago, ex-officio, non-voting member

**Other BHE Members Present:** Secretary of Education's designee, Tom Moreau

**Department Staff Present:** Winifred Hagan Patricia Marshall, Kate Flanagan Copans

**Campus Guests:** Christina Royal, Robert Gilbert, Veena Dhanker, and Jody Turcotte, Holyoke Community College; Luis Pedraja. Ingrid Skadberg and Kathy Rentsch, Quinsigamond Community College

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Fernando Reimers called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. and invited SPC members in attendance to make brief introductions.

**II. MINUTES**

Chair Reimers brought forth a motion to accept the minutes of the January 16, 2018 SPC meeting. The motion was seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously by all SPC members present.

**III. REMARKS AND REPORTS**

**A. Committee Chair's Remarks**

Committee Chair Reimers provided brief opening remarks, stating that he wished to make a productive use of this hour. He remarked that there would be no vote today, just an informative discussion.

## **B. Commissioner's Remarks**

In the interest of time, Commissioner Santiago made no remarks.

## **IV. Touch Point II Campus Presentations**

### **A. Holyoke Community College**

Chair Reimers invited Holyoke Community College (HCC) President Christina Royal to offer remarks. President Royal thanked the SPC and provided some background information on the process, which started 18 months ago when she first became President. During her first summer on campus, her team put together a structure to support maximum engagement and participation, being mindful that many people at the college had not been through a planning process before. She noted that part of their process was to explain what strategic planning is and why it is necessary. The college formed a 45 member steering community who have met every week and have been a highly engaged group. She remarked that her plan was also to bring some focus to the institution, and that prior to her arrival, there were annual plans with very detailed, large documents. She considered those to be more of an operations plan that tracked performance and action plans. HCC's priority was to create focus and to zero-in on what matters most to the state, community and campus.

President Royal continued that the process brought them to a series of actions for this summer, which will include an economic impact study, significant engagement with business and community leaders, an environmental scan, SWOT analyses, and further education of the community so that they can be better participants in the process. She noted that HCC is refreshing their mission statement (for context, it was a single spaced entire page); the new mission statement has been redesigned to be only three words. They also created a vision statement, a value statement and a student experience statement. President Royal additionally noted significant engagement with the external community, including business leaders, community members and non-profit organizations. The steering committee obtained feedback from stakeholders, and most noteworthy from the community was how impressed they were by HCC's vision statement and willingness to tackle challenging issues. HCC then started working on strategies and objectives: the first version of the plan was previously submitted to the DHE, and the revised second draft, more refined and presented today, will be followed by a third version incorporating SPC feedback. The President continued that their strategies and objectives include the DHE's "Big Three" priorities embedded within the goals and objectives. The objectives include creating a clearly sustainable future for the campus, as their current model is not sustainable. HCC is considering different ways to keep costs low with declining state support, which is particularly challenging in a gateway city like Holyoke that has significant poverty compared with other areas of the state. Additionally, keeping costs affordable is essential to student persistence. President Royal remarked that the campus plan will cover FY19-FY22, which is very intentionally aligned with other institutional processes particularly NEASC accreditation in October 2020. She continued, that the steering committee will persist to prioritize engaging and educating staff and the external community, as well as benchmarking other institutions.

President Royal concluded the presentation by stating that HCC launched the draft plan at their most recent event, the *Future Walk: Strengthening HCC as a Hispanic Serving Institution*. The next stage will be to create action plans and tactics to support these objectives, noting that they want to keep objectives and strategies limited for greater focus and to avoid initiative fatigue.

Chair Reimers invited the SPC to provide feedback and engage in a discussion. He remarked that he is impressed by the inclusivity of their process, and the lengths gone to consider external context. He noted that the bulk of the documents included the process and an analysis of their strengths and weakness, without much emphasis on their strategies. He asked President Royal how they will be able to determine whether they have succeeded or not. He additionally suggested that HCC build more intentional connections with local school districts, because given the context provided, the campus is at risk in the absence of some real innovation.

Secretary of Education designee, Tom Moreau, thanked President Royal for the presentation and remarked that he appreciated the environmental scans conducted as part of the process. He remarked that he recently visited Holyoke and was struck by the lack of philanthropic infrastructure. He echoed Chair Reimer's comments about how campuses will know if they have succeeded, and asked *'what will success look like?'* Moreau referenced the recent work on revising the academic approval process, noting that the new process will likely leave BHE heavily reliant on strategic plans as an important contextual element for program review and approval. He remarked that plans should contain more details and should include enough operational information for BHE members to be able to approve new programs as they relate directly to the strategic plan. He additionally asked how the plan fits in with long-term financial plan, and how does it respond to unique economic or demographic needs.

Chair Reimers remarked that the larger context in which Holyoke is located could be an opportunity, given that there is a real sense of a lack of opportunity for many families; the college could play a transformational role in the community.

Committee member Paul Toner remarked that the BHE needs to be clearer as to exactly what is expected for these plans because members often tell institutions that more detail or less detail is required, and it is confusing- a moving target. He remarked that he appreciates the detail provided today, really hopes that in Holyoke the college can serve as a beacon of hope. He continued that he believes within the Holyoke community, students have concerns that there may not be a job for them waiting after graduation, and while he is not suggesting they give up on the liberal arts, there is a need to steer students in the direction of higher paying jobs. He additionally suggested engaging the business community.

Chair Reimers referenced an early childhood educator program that targets Hispanic mothers at QCC. He suggested building those bridges and considering new populations that could be served, additionally recognizing culture and the large Puerto Rican community in Holyoke and high levels of poverty.

Commissioner Santiago remarked that he has recently visited HCC and all along the halls are different stations where people have commented on the plan. From his perspective, this has been a very inclusive process. He remarked that both QCC and HCC have new presidents and are inheriting different systems and cultures; President Royal inherited a community with no experience with strategic planning. He remarked that the goal is to straddle high-level strategic

big vision with the daily operational elements, and commended President Royal for creating a culture that is embracing this change.

President Royal thanked Commissioner Santiago and the SPC for their comments, noting that this has been helpful. She remarked that they have been focused on the operational level, but also have focused on early education and developmental education with Holyoke Public Schools, which are currently in state receivership. She remarked that she sees an opportunity to develop a new ecosystem; the next iteration of the plan will focus on this. She concluded by stating that the presentation today did not include the time and metrics of these priorities, but they will be addressed this summer.

## **B. Quinsigamond Community College**

Chair Reimers invited Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) President Luis Pedraja to make remarks. President Pedraja provided an overview of the strategic plan and the QCC process. He remarked that when he first came to QCC a year ago, he shared his vision to focus on student success. Enrollment was shifting; there was no problem enrolling students but there was a problem retaining them, so QCC determined to focus on retention. The President noted that in the past, strategic planning was done by a consulting firm and the community had not been included. He wanted to create a transparent process that engaged the community. QCC formed a steering committee of thirteen people from different areas on campus that was charged to be open and data driven. They asked for volunteers for subcommittees and 80 people volunteered. They additionally conducted detailed SWOT analyses within multiple focus groups that included the external community. They held a campus wide forum in December and have connected to the larger community at multiple touchpoints, as well as developing an action plan with metrics and measures. President Pedraja noted QCC has linked new hires to the new strategic plan and budgeted resources to implement the plan. The QCC campus strategic plan is data driven, connected to the budget and integrates the DHE's "Big Three" priorities. QCC has developed measures to indicate progress in meeting goals and objectives. President Pedraja noted that the City of Worcester developed a strategic plan that he was involved in developing, as did Worcester Public Schools.

Chair Reimers remarked that he was impressed by inclusive and participatory process that engaged a cross section of faculty. He observed that some of the objectives lacked specificity. He cited as an example the objective to increase Pell eligible students and asked "from what to what? What does that mean?" Chair Reimers underscored the urgency to "end the system of educational apartheid, which is why we cannot only focus on the students that we have enrolled in our campuses, but we also have to look at the students who do not make it." Dr. Reimers suggested including more specificity in the plan, so the campus will know when they have attained their goals. He remarked that it sounds like too much to ask to take on these mandates without funds, but we have to set our sights on these challenges.

Secretary of Education designee, Tom Moreau, referenced the focus on student success and asked what that would mean to the operational expenses. He remarked that the campus strategic plans will end up on Secretary Peyser's desk and when he reads them, he will want to

see evidence that campus leadership understands their communities in a way that clearly informs the plan.

Commissioner Santiago remarked that each of these plans are different, and the Guidelines state that plans should be unique to the campuses with different focal points. He emphasized that it is up to the campus to ensure operation and strategic plans come together in a reasonable and thoughtful way. He remarked that in conversations with the Secretary, he is interested in characteristics of campuses including the programmatic elements that distinguish an institution from the rest of the system. The Commissioner continued that there is a degree of specificity the Secretary will expect to see. Massachusetts has a system of public higher education comprised of unique institutions with similar strategic initiatives. HCC and QCC will work to achieve goals within the communities they serve. It will be different from campus to campus, but the campuses can learn from each other. The Commissioner referenced ongoing work to revise the academic program approval process. If the strategic plan provides evidence that a certain array of programs will be beneficial to a campus and community, the BHE will fast track program approval in those areas. The Commissioner noted that both Framingham State University and Westfield State University have upcoming Touchpoint sessions under summer delegation of authority.

President Pedraja thanked the SPC and remarked that this discussion was very helpful and the plan is a work in progress. He noted that the QCC Board had similar comments on specificity.

### **C. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Reimers thanked everyone, and noted that work we do is actually making democracy. There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.