

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

**NO.:** BHE 15-10

**BOARD DATE:** April 28, 2015

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**CREATION OF CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the attached “Board of Higher Education Guidelines for Review of Campus Strategic Plans”, and creates a Committee on Campus Strategic Planning.

The committee shall have the following powers and duties:  
To consider, report and make recommendations to the Board of Higher Education on matters relative to campus strategic planning, in accordance with the attached Guidelines.

The Chairperson of the Board of Higher Education shall appoint the members and the chair of this committee, in keeping with BHE By-laws.

**Authority:** M.G.L. c. 15A, §§9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d) and Article III.

**Contact:** Constantia T. Papanikolaou, General Counsel  
Anne Perkins, Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs

## **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 regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals, as it is currently doing through the Vision Project. But articulating statewide goals has no impact 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.

### **Ad Hoc Committee on Institution Strategic Plan Review**

#### **Committee Charge**

In October 2014, the Board of Higher Education, in furtherance of its responsibility for reviewing campus strategic plans, established an Ad Hoc Committee on Institution Strategic Plan Review, and charged the committee with accomplishing the following by June 2015:

- 1. Discuss and review at least five campus strategic plans**
- 2. Create, in consultation with campus leaders, a plan for formal BHE review of campus strategic plans beginning in 2015-16.** This plan should include:
  - a. The criteria by which the BHE will assess campus strategic plans
  - b. The process the BHE will use to undertake this review
  - c. The means by which the BHE will monitor the progress of individual campuses in achieving their strategic planning goals
  - d. A timetable showing which campus plans will be reviewed in which years over the five-year cycle of strategic planning set forth by the legislature

Further, the BHE stated as part of this motion that "It is the further intention of the Board to fully implement its responsibility to review and approve campus-level plans during 2015-16".

#### **Committee Members**

BHE Board Chair Charles Desmond appointed BHE member Fernando Reimers as Chair of the Committee and BHE members Stacey Luster and Paul Toner as the other two members of the committee. DHE Associate Commissioner Anne Perkins served as committee staff.

## **Completion of Committee Charge**

The BHE viewed FY15 as an important period of learning, and the committee is grateful for the candid and thoughtful ideas from campus presidents, trustees, and strategic planning committee chairs on how to accomplish campus strategic plan review in a way that supports and enhances campus work.

## **Development of these guidelines benefited from the following campus input:**

1. Communication with and review of strategic plans of the 2014-15 pilot campuses: Berkshire Community College, Roxbury Community College, Springfield Technical Community College, and Worcester State University<sup>1</sup>.
2. December 2014 lunch with Presidents Carberry, Kennedy, Maloney, & Meservey.
3. February 2015 Vision Project Conference session with campus presidents and trustees
4. April 2015 vetting of draft document with campus presidents

## **In addition to the above campus meetings, the Committee:**

1. Provided the BHE with updates at the December 2014 and March 2015 BHE meetings
2. Met regularly over the course of the year, with meetings on: November 17, December 9, December 16, January 13, February 27, and March 10.

The attached guidelines are the result of this work.

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<sup>1</sup> Middlesex Community College has shifted to the 2015-16 cohort in order to accomplish a fuller approach to strategic planning with the new campus president; Massasoit Community College has shifted to the 2017-18 cohort in order to accomplish a fuller approach to strategic planning with the new campus chief academic officer; MassArt's strategic planning is being addressed as part of the renewal of its special mission partnership agreement.

# Board of Higher Education Guidelines for Review of Campus Strategic Plans

## I. Introduction

A fundamental responsibility of the Board of Higher Education (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 regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals, as it is currently doing through the Vision Project. Review and approval of campus strategic plans is another important aspect of this role. The BHE also seeks to use its review of campus strategic plans to inform its own system-wide work and to support campuses as they engage in the important work of setting their own strategic directions. The BHE will be guided in this work by the BHE Committee on Campus Strategic Planning.

## II. Criteria for Campus Strategic Plan Review

### A. Guiding Principles

The following principles guide the BHE's criteria for reviewing campus strategic plans:

1. **Avoid a "one size fits all" approach:** BHE strategic plan review should recognize that strategic plans reflect each campus' unique mission, culture, community, and region.
2. **Focus on ends rather than means:** BHE strategic plan review should respect the autonomy of campuses to determine how best to align with the goals of the Vision Project and to organize their work and resources to achieve these objectives.

### B. Criteria

The BHE will review campus strategic plans based on the following four criteria:

1. **Process**

Development of the plan should be transparent and inclusive, involving "the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes" (NEASC Standard 2.1).

2. **Goals**

The plan should explicitly address the six educational outcomes of the Vision Project—college participation, college completion, student learning, workforce alignment, preparing citizens, and closing achievement gaps—demonstrating analysis of the institution's performance and establishing

targets for each of the six outcomes, and explaining how the plan's proposed strategies are expected to achieve those outcomes.

- a. **Campus-specific goals:** While BHE strategic plan review will focus solely on system-wide goals, the BHE recognizes that campus strategic plans will include other areas of focus (e.g. financial goals) and goals that are specific to a campus' unique identity.
- b. **Changes in system-wide goals:** From time to time the BHE may decide to amend or extend the system-wide goals to be included in campus strategic plans, but such changes will not require campuses to modify plans previously approved by the BHE. Rather, the BHE will discuss with campus leaders how the modified statewide goals can most reasonably be advanced within the framework of the current plan or in the next strategic planning cycle.

### 3. Strategies

The plan should provide "feasible priorities and a realistic course of action" (NEASC Standard 2.3). While the BHE has no specific requirements with regard to the strategies and programs that each campus uses to achieve its goals, the Board does seek to understand that a campus has a plausible theory of action and operational plan underlying its proposed strategy.

### 4. Metrics

To the maximum extent possible, the plan should include clear measures for evaluating progress on strategic planning goals over the course of the plan's duration, including both qualitative and quantitative methods (NEASC Standard 2.5).

## III. Process for Campus Strategic Plan Review

### A. Guiding Principles

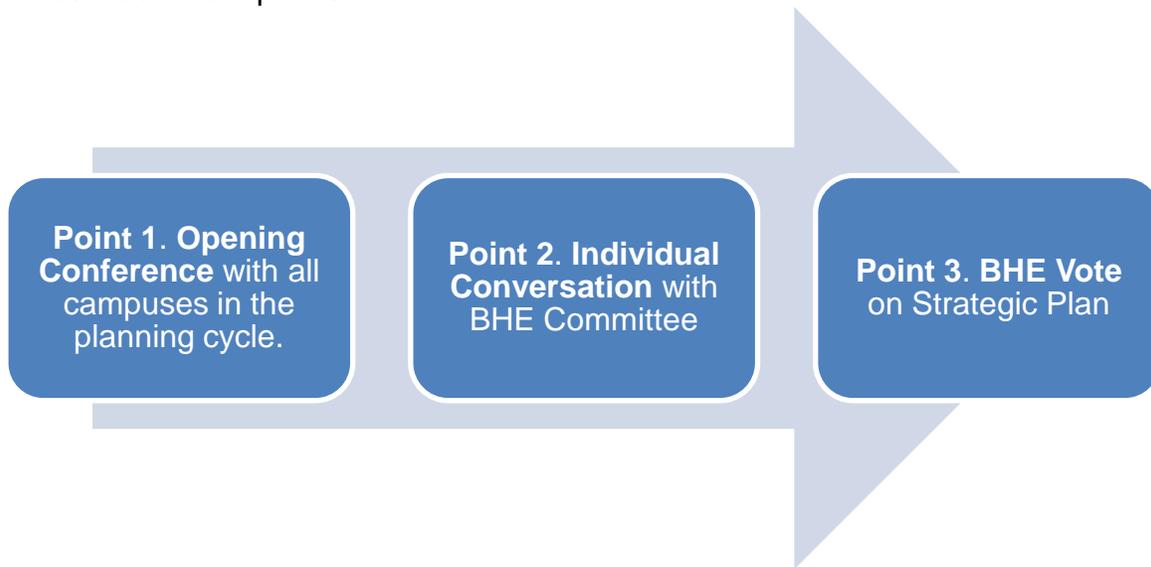
The following principles guide the BHE's process for reviewing campus strategic plans:

1. **Avoid surprises:** Communicate with the campuses at the front end of the planning process, beginning a year in advance, and throughout the process in order to:
  - a. Facilitate plan approval by the BHE once it comes time for the formal vote; and
  - b. Recognize and support the consensus-building nature of strategic planning, and avoid needing to make substantive changes late in the planning process.

2. **Establish a partnership:** Develop a collegial, partnership approach to BHE and campus interaction regarding campus strategic planning and facilitate the development of supportive relationships among planning groups in various institutions in the system.
3. **Foster mutual learning** among campuses and between campuses and the Board of Higher Education through identifying and disseminating effective practices.

## **B. Process**

The BHE will use a **three-touchpoint process** for reviewing campus strategic plans, with DHE staff support of campuses as needed prior to and between touchpoints:



### **1. Touch Point 1: Opening Conference**

- In early June of each year, the BHE Strategic Plan Review Committee will convene the campuses that will be undertaking strategic planning in the upcoming year so as to ensure that campuses have a clear understanding of the BHE's criteria for strategic plan review, share questions and ideas, and introduce the committee and the campuses to one another.

### **2. Touch Point 2: Individual Conversation**

- Prior to the campus board vote, at a point in the process by which the overall shape of the plan has been given preliminary definition but early enough that changes can still be made without major disruption to campus-level work, the committee and the campus will discuss the emerging plan and the plan's goals, metrics, and strategies tied to each of the six Vision Project outcomes. This step is intended to be collegial and formative in nature.

- The purpose of this conversation is to provide the campus with a clear signal as to whether the developing plan is consistent with the BHE criteria outlined in Section II. B. above. If the answer to this question is “yes”, the campus can move forward in anticipation of a positive BHE vote at Touch Point 3.

### 3. **Touch Point 3: Formal BHE Vote**

- The BHE vote occurs after the campus board has voted to approve the plan.

## **C. Opportunities for learning**

The BHE will also seek to support campuses by:

1. **Creating an online platform** of strategic planning resources, practices, and documents that Massachusetts public campuses have found successful.
2. **Establishing links between campuses** that are at similar stages in their strategic planning cycle.

## **IV. Monitoring Campus Progress**

The BHE will use existing structures for monitoring campus achievement of the system-wide goals reflected in their strategic plans, including presidential evaluations and Vision Project outcomes as measured in the annual Vision Project data dashboards. ***Statement on annual report to the BHE moved to new section VI.***

## **V. Timetable**

### **A. Guiding Principles**

The following principles guide the BHE’s timetable for reviewing campus strategic plans:

1. **Minimize new work for the campuses:** BHE review of campus strategic plans should leverage campus planning processes and work already underway.
2. **Recognize the need for flexibility:**
  - a. **Adjustments to strategic planning timeline:** If campus plans shift, the department will work with campuses to change their review year within the five-year cycle.
  - b. **Shorter planning cycles:** While the BHE plans to formally review most institution’s strategic plan only once every five years, campuses that wish

to adopt a shorter cycle for their strategic planning can be accommodated with greater frequency.

- c. **Modifications to approved plans:** Campuses seeking to modify approved plans should inform the BHE Committee on Campus Strategic Planning of such contemplated changes. The committee will make a determination as to whether the change is significant enough to require some form of action by the BHE.

## **B. Timetable**

Following is an initial five-year schedule for BHE strategic plan review. Campuses should feel free to request a shift in review years--i.e. from Year 2 to Year 3--to accommodate shifts in their own planning goals as a result of leadership or other changes. The DHE will accommodate such shifts as long as a formal review is completed prior to June 2019.

The planning years below run from June to June.

### **Year 1, 2014-15:**

1. Berkshire Community College
2. Massachusetts College of Art and Design *Partnership Plan*
  
3. Roxbury Community College
4. Springfield Technical Community College
5. Worcester State University

**Year 2, 2015-16:** *Planning year launches with convening at the Department of Higher Education, Wednesday June 3 12:30 to 3:30, for strategic planning leadership from each campus and the BHE Committee on Campus Strategic Planning.*

1. Bristol Community College
2. Greenfield Community College
3. Holyoke Community College
4. Middlesex Community College
5. North Shore Community College
6. Northern Essex Community College

### **Year 3, 2016-17:**

1. Bunker Hill Community College
2. MassBay Community College
3. Mt. Wachusett Community College
4. Quinsigamond Community College
5. Bridgewater State University
6. Framingham State University
7. Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts-

8. Salem State University
9. Westfield State University

**Year 4, 2017-18:**

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|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Cape Cod Community College  | <i>Formal mid-plan check-in</i> |
| 2. Massasoit Community College |                                 |
| 3. Fitchburg State University  | <i>Formal mid-plan check-in</i> |
| 4. Mass Maritime Academy       | <i>Partnership Plan</i>         |

**Year 5, 2018-19:** *BHE Strategic Plan Review Guidelines--Assessment Year*

## **VI. Improving the effectiveness of system-wide and campus strategic planning**

In the spring of each year, the BHE Committee on Campus Strategic Planning will seek feedback from campus presidents and trustees on the following:

### **A. The BHE Guidelines for Review of Campus Strategic Plans**

1. Are there ways that the BHE's approach to review of campus strategic plans can better meet the goals and principles outlined above?
2. Are any revisions needed to the guidelines?

### **B. Campus Implementation of Strategic Plans**

1. Are campuses successfully implementing their strategic planning goals, and if not how can the BHE better support them in this work?

### **C. The BHE's own Strategic Plan, the Vision Project**

1. What has the BHE Committee on Campus Strategic Planning learned from its interaction with campus-level strategic planning that should inform the BHE's own strategic plan?
2. Are there elements of the Vision Project that the BHE should consider adding, editing, or eliminating?

The committee will report this feedback along with its own assessment to the full board no later than the end of May of each year.