



Special Commission on In-State Tuition Retention

A Report to the Legislature—May 2011

The Tuition Retention Commission, created pursuant to section 162 of Chapter 131 of the Acts of 2010, met on a number of occasions during the fall of 2010, with active and strong participation by all members. The Commission has studied the many issues related to in-state tuition retention with a view towards assessing the feasibility of implementing such a policy.

The Commission noted the positive experiences that Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and the Commonwealth have had with full tuition retention. Positive aspects of tuition retention include:

- it provides a more stable and predictable revenue stream for financial planning and budgeting purposes;
- it gives local autonomy to institutions to manage their cash flow issues; and
- it allows institutions to clarify and codify student charges in a more understandable and user-friendly manner.

Each of these conditions would benefit an institution that adopted tuition retention or was given such authority through legislation.

The Commission believes that any implementation of tuition retention, through any process, must be cost neutral to the colleges and universities and cost neutral to the Commonwealth.

The Commission identified a number of critical issues that would need to be resolved in order to successfully implement in-state tuition retention. These include:

- paying for employee fringe benefits;
- assuring that tuition waivers do not harm institutional revenue;
- resolving collective bargaining requirements; and
- avoiding a loss of state appropriated funds.

Although many alternatives were reviewed to ensure that statutes would protect institutions financially, the institutional representatives on the Commission ultimately concluded that financial safeguards and local trustee control of student charges were problematic and that proposed solutions were not sufficient. These representatives recommended against in-state tuition retention at this time.

Therefore, the Commission will not be proposing any legislative language at this time.

The Commission is, however, cognizant of the potential benefits from in-state tuition retention and will plan to stay in place so that over time the Commission may be in a position to change their conclusion and recommend some form of tuition retention that is a positive for all parties. It

is hoped that such an approval will come in the form of a broader reform of higher education policy.

The Commission will also work to clarify and simplify the student bill to avoid confusion about the meaning of “tuition and fees.”

The Commission members are most appreciative of the opportunity provided through this Commission and the Legislature’s work to explore and assess this vital issue. Members are also appreciative of the recent decision to allow out-of-state tuition retention beginning in FY2012. This program will provide a “laboratory” to see how well tuition retention works in a less comprehensive fashion.

Board of Higher Education Chairman Desmond, Greenfield Community College Trustee Sillin, Secretary Reville and Commissioner Freeland dissent from the conclusion of the Commission and feel that in-state tuition retention, with appropriate legislation, is a workable and positive activity for all public higher education institutions. Ongoing institutional autonomy with a five-year, BHE-approved student charge plan and a more logical and comprehensible student bill are reasonable public policy objectives that could be achieved.

Members of the Tuition Retention Commission

Chair: Richard M. Freeland, Commissioner of Higher Education

Wayne Burton, President, North Shore Community College

David Bunker, Chief Fiscal Officer, Executive Office of Education
(Designee of Paul Reville, Secretary of Education)

Carole A. Cowan, President, Middlesex Community College

Charles F. Desmond, Chair, Board of Higher Education

David F. Gray, Senior Vice President for Administration, Finance, & Technology, University of Massachusetts (Designee of Jack M. Wilson, President, University of Massachusetts)

Richard Gurnon, President, Massachusetts Maritime Academy

James R. Julian, Jr., Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, University of Massachusetts (Designee of Robert Manning, Chair, University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees)

Patricia Meservey, President, Salem State University

Elizabeth H. Sillin, Member, Greenfield Community College Board of Trustees

Katherine Sloan, President, Massachusetts College of Art and Design