On Wednesday, September 30, 2009, the Massachusetts Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education will jointly host a high-level meeting to discuss the need for stronger mathematical preparation of the Commonwealth’s aspiring elementary and special education teachers. This joint convening will be held from 9 a.m.—3 p.m. at Lesley University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We are writing to seek your institution’s participation in this important discussion.

We invite you to send up to three institutional representatives to this statewide convening. Ideally, your institutional team will include your Provost or Chief Academic Officer, as well as senior-level leaders who oversee mathematics and educator preparation. The goal is to ensure and foster strong collaboration among arts and science and education departments in meeting this critical challenge. Attendees will hear from senior policymakers from both the higher education and K-12 sectors on the rationale and impact of the new standards. They will also learn how undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs across Massachusetts are developing new courses and program requirements to help meet the challenge.

As you know, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education established new mathematics knowledge and skill requirements for elementary and special educators in 2007. While challenging, the Board’s standards and guidelines on mathematics course recommendations are consistent with guidance from national advisory groups and professional organizations.

Initially low pass rates on the mathematics subtest of the General Curriculum MTEL should serve as a wake-up call for concerted statewide efforts to increase the mathematics knowledge and skills of our aspiring elementary and special educators. The achievement of this goal may require changes in recruitment and preparation practices, as well as institutional policies for resourcing them. In addition to providing practical examples of how institutions can do this, the meeting will help identify additional strategies and policies that could help increase the pool of new teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills to teach elementary mathematics well.

To confirm your institution’s participation, please send the names, titles, and email addresses for your campus team, before September 18, 2009, to Stacy Bougie at the Department of Higher Education at, sbougie@bhe.mass.edu. Stacy will follow-up with meeting agenda, directions, and other logistics.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Freeland
Commissioner
Department of Higher Education

Mitchell D. Chester
Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education