MA BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORTS NEW NURSING COMPACT
Endorses Effort to Streamline Student Transfer to Four-Year Programs

Boston, MA--February 21, 2014 --The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) is taking steps to make it easier for nurses to pursue advanced degrees, with the goal of improving patient outcomes across the Commonwealth.

On January 28 the BHE endorsed a new Nursing Education Transfer Compact developed by the Massachusetts Action Coalition (MAAC), a partnership between the Organization of Nurse Leaders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. The goals of the Compact are to provide a “seamless, cost effective, timely and transparent pathway” from community college nursing programs, where students earn Associate degrees in nursing (ADN), to state universities and UMass campuses, where they can earn Bachelor of Science degrees in Nursing (BSN). Eligible students are those who have completed an ADN at a Massachusetts community college, passed the NCLEX-RN exam, and completed the requirements of the MassTransfer program (http://www.mass.edu/masstransfer), which allows students to transfer general education credits.

Board members called on Commissioner Richard M. Freeland and campus presidents to work together to implement the voluntary compact beginning as early as fall 2014.

“I’m very pleased with the Board’s action in support of this Compact,” said Freeland. “We know from research that nurses who advance their skills are better equipped to deal with the challenging medical cases presented by an aging population, within a health care system that is becoming more technologically complex. It’s good to see our public colleges and universities collaborating to design the clearer academic pathways nurses need in order to pursue higher education.”

“As a co-lead of the MA Action Coalition along with the Department of Higher Education, this represents a major accomplishment of our partnership that provides a clear pathway for nurses to achieve higher levels of education as recommended by the landmark 2010 Institute of Medicine report on the future of Nursing,” said Sharon A. Gale, MSN, RN, FAAN, and CEO of the Organization of Nurse Leaders of MA & RI.

The Compact was developed by a project team comprised of nursing deans and faculty working with MAAC and Department of Higher Education staff. It supports the statewide goal of having 66% of all nurses educated at the BSN level or above by 2020. Currently, just over 55% of licensed nurses in the Commonwealth are at that level. A workforce plan developed by the Department of Higher Education has allowed each public college and university campus to develop its own target for program growth to support the statewide goal.

“This strategic compact is a significant step forward in meeting the growing demand for health care professionals,” said Patricia Meservey, PhD, President of Salem State University. “Massachusetts has been a leader in educating qualified, well-prepared, and diversified nurses. This initiative will allow us to expand our efforts in meeting the future needs of the Commonwealth.”

The strength of the Massachusetts’ plan for the nursing sector was key to the state’s selection by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as one of nine recipients of an Academic Progression in Nursing program grant totaling $300,000. The Commonwealth has recently applied for continuation funding to expand its work.

For more information on the Massachusetts Action Coalition and Massachusetts’ current initiatives in Nursing & Allied Health, please visit: www.championnursing.org/state/massachusetts and http://www.mass.edu/currentinit/NiHome.asp