

## BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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May 19, 2014  
9 a.m.

Department of Higher Education  
One Ashburton Place  
Boston, Massachusetts

### Spring Retreat Minutes

A training and strategic planning retreat of the Board of Higher Education (BHE) was held at the Department of Higher Education in Boston, Massachusetts.

The following Board members were present:

Charles F. Desmond, Chair  
David Barron  
Glenn Gabbard, designee of Matthew Malone, Secretary of Education  
Nancy Hoffman  
Stacey Deboise Luster  
Kathy Matson, Community College Segmental Representative  
Dani Monroe  
Fernando Reimers  
Paul Toner

The following Board members were absent:

C. Bernard Fulp  
Keith Peden  
Louis Ricciardi, Vice Chair  
Henry Thomas

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Desmond called the meeting to order at 9:18 a.m. and introduced Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Senior Consultant Dr. Ellen Chaffee, the facilitator of the board's training, strategic planning, and self-review.

#### II. STRATEGIC ISSUES

Documents used:

*AGB PowerPoint Presentation, May 19, 2014*

Prior to the meeting, Board members completed a survey on key issues in higher education, and various aspects of board function. Of the ten board members who completed the survey, five or more identified each of the following as a key strategic issue facing Massachusetts public higher education:

1) affordability/accessibility, 2) funding, 3) outcomes/student success, and 4) quality.

Three other challenges were each highlighted by two board members:

1) workforce alignment, 2) public awareness, and 3) for-profit institutions. Led by

Dr. Chaffee, board members discussed these strategic issues in the context of the Vision Project and the top ten strategic issues for boards as identified by AGB.

Board Member David Barron noted his concern that the Board's current focus does not address what the system will look like in ten years given the structural changes coming to higher education. Glenn Gabbard, designee for Secretary Malone, noted there is an opportunity for learning about what other states have done on key issues.

### **III. CAMPUS LEVEL WORK**

Board members discussed their desire, reflected in the survey, to be better informed about work at the campus level. Board Member Fernando Reimers stated that it would be helpful to have more information on implementation of the Vision Project at the campus level. Because results may take a while, it was important to understand the processes that campuses were putting into place to achieve Vision Project goals.

Board Member Stacey Deboise Luster raised the issue of program approvals in the context of the Vision Project, and suggested that program approval should be linked to showing Vision Project alignment. Some board members agreed, adding that it would be important to understand the rationale for new programs, and how they fit with long term strategic goals and the Vision Project. Others cautioned against relying too heavily on the program approval process to advance strategic planning, as this may stifle program development.

Board Member Nancy Hoffman stressed the importance of seeing alignment among campus strategic plans, Vision Project data, and Vision Project Performance Incentive Fund projects. Fernando Reimers stated that in working with campuses, a stance of support was important.

### **IV. PIPELINE ISSUES**

Chair Desmond stressed the importance of working closely with K-12 in order to achieve success in higher education. Commissioner Freeland listed a number of areas of progress here, such as the joint college readiness definition, PARCC, and a Hewlett Foundation grant to support this work.

Board Member Paul Toner stressed the importance of communicating directly with local stakeholders and suggested a meeting that would include superintendents, school committee chairs and union leaders; Glenn Gabbard noted the importance of including Early Education and Care stakeholders in such discussions.

The Board then took a short break, reconvening at 11:30. David Barron left the meeting, citing a prior commitment

### **V. REVIEW OF CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLANS**

Commissioner Freeland provided a brief overview of the work to date on the campus strategic planning process and the campus pilot initiative. Board members noted that the pilot sites could be useful in teaching the Board how to move forward in the work of reviewing and approving campus strategic plans.

Stacey Luster emphasized the critical role of reviewing data in the context of

Vision Project goals, and the importance of being able to show campuses what it looked like to make positive steps in key Vision Project areas. Paul Toner suggested that the DHE could be a clearinghouse of innovative approaches, and serve a role of convener so campuses could learn from one another. Dr. Chaffee raised the question of the expected format of a strategic plan, and whether a plan could be just 2-3 pages long. Glenn Gabbard asked whether we have made clear the outcomes we hope to achieve through the strategic planning pilot.

## **VI. BOARD MEETINGS**

Board members discussed the nature of the board meetings, with Nancy Hoffman noting the rarity of robust discussion, and Paul Toner observing that the first ninety minutes often consists only of the delivery of reports. Board members might receive this information in bullet form. It was noted that the recent restructuring of the AAC meetings, with less discussion of individual programs, has proven to be helpful in making room for more strategic discussions. Continued progress in this area was suggested.

## **VII. NEXT STEPS**

- Expect campus strategic plans to align with the Vision Project dashboard. If they focus on VP metrics, any reasonable approach to moving the dashboard indicators will be acceptable.
- Focus attention on achieving the Vision through activities such as:
  1. Requiring annual campus statements on how they are moving Vision Project needles, based on dashboard data.
  2. Conducting annual BHE review of campus trend lines on Vision dashboard variables.
  3. Offering supportive opportunities for campus leaders and boards of trustees, e.g. the Vision Project Conference, PIF funds.
- Take a supportive, constructive approach to implementing the Vision Project, including activities such as:
  1. Ensuring that DHE has adequate capabilities to provide institutional support.
  2. Showcasing major effective initiatives, e.g. student learning.
  3. Revising BHE agendas, committees, and operations as appropriate to reflect BHE's commitment to achieving the Vision Project goals.
- Note that academic workforce quality is an upcoming/emerging issue that may warrant a report or presentation. Also, we may need to be more proactive in working with leaders at all levels of education.
- Shift meetings and communication from performance "theater" to strategic issues and discussion.

## **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard M. Freeland, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of the Department and  
Secretary to the Board