

**Massachusetts Board of Higher Education  
Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Minutes**

The October 24, 2017 meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was held in the 21st Floor Conference Room, One Ashburton Place, Boston, Massachusetts.

- SPC Members Present<sup>1</sup>:** Paul Toner, Acting Committee Chair; J.D. LaRock; Danielle Dupuis; BHE Chair Chris Gabrieli
- Commissioner Carlos Santiago, non-voting, ex-officio member
- Other BHE Members Present:** Secretary of Education Designee, Tom Moreau
- Department Staff Present:** David Cedrone; Kate Flanagan; Winifred Hagan; Jonathan Keller; Pat Marshall; Meghan McInnis; Dena Papanikolaou; Elena Quiroz-Livanis; Ashley Wisneski.
- Campus Representatives:** Bridgewater State University President Fred Clark; Massachusetts Maritime Academy President Francis McDonald; Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts President Jamie Birge.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chairperson Paul Toner called the meeting to order at 12:12 p.m.

**II. MINUTES**

Acting Chair Toner brought forth a motion to accept the minutes of the June 13, 2017 SPC meeting. The motion was seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously by all SPC members present.

**III. REMARKS AND REPORTS**

In the interest of time, there were no formal remarks offered by either Commissioner Santiago or Acting Chair Toner.

**IV. MOTIONS**

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<sup>1</sup> Committee Chair Fernando Reimers was absent but his prepared commentary on the Strategic Plans being brought forward for a vote, were distributed at the meeting for review by other members of the committee.

List of documents used and submitted for approval:

*Bridgewater State University Draft Institutional Strategic Plan*

*Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Strategic Plan 2017-2022*

*Massachusetts Maritime Academy Special Mission Renewal Plan 2017-2021*

**A. SPC 18-01 Approval of Bridgewater State University's Strategic Plan**

After a motion was made and seconded, Acting Chair Toner turned to Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Winifred Hagan to describe Bridgewater State University's (BSU) Strategic Plan. Dr. Hagan provided an overview of the BSU process, stating that the plan is an inclusive, outcomes-based document which uses a nested design that pivots off the institutional plan to guide strategic plans at the divisional, departmental and program levels. She remarked that Touch Point II took place on May 30, 2017 and both the SPC and the Commissioner supported BSU's progress and direction, and that staff recommends approval of the BSU Strategic Plan today. She then introduced BSU President Fred Clark.

President Fred Clark began his remarks by acknowledging the newly appointed BHE student member and current BSU student, Danielle Dupuis, as well as the work of his Chief of Staff, Dr. Deniz Zeynep Leuenberger. He provided an overview of the plan, describing the nested model that includes nine divisional plans. He continued by stressing the value of metrics, and acknowledged the forthcoming DHE performance metrics task force; he believes the process of strategic planning will be continuous. President Clark continued by stating he believes BSU has exceeded what is required per BHE's agreement with the State University Council of Presidents, and remarked that each institution should have a unique plan that meets its own unique institution. He further stated his belief in the necessity of an implementation plan where capital, budget and personnel are aggregated. President Clark then welcomed questions from the Committee, and thanked the BHE for their collaboration over the last two years of this process.

At the conclusion of President Clark's remarks, the SPC engaged in a lively discussion.

Board member La Rock asked some clarifying questions on the Strategic Dashboard 2.0, which was part of BSU's proposal, including how it will be utilized, and to what goals it will be tied. He additionally asked about the process for defining BSU's institutional peer group. President Clark responded that BSU will implement a three year review cycle, as well as a ten year horizon; BSU additionally has annual goals tied to their ten year goal. He stated that BHE defined their peer groups for them, and explained they also have aspirational peer groups tied to different metrics.

Board member La Rock remarked that he believes it is helpful to elucidate that these are ten year goals, and commented that he wonders about the ambition of the goals, citing an example of their graduation rate and the significant year to year spikes they have enjoyed. He asked why not set five year goals instead? President Clark responded that they sought goals that were realistic and attainable, keeping in mind the challenges of working with our current population and noting that their current students need more support than they did ten years ago. He continued that they have an aspiration to be the best in their class in ten years, and that BSU

worked with their Institutional Research Division. President Clark underscored that the plan reflects the goals BSU finds attainable based on the current level of support they receive from the state. He remarked that he believes goal setting ten years out is best left to the campus level and not necessarily the purview of the BHE.

Board member La Rock agreed that the BHE should not be in the business of approving goals, but remarked that he thinks it would be interesting to have a deeper conversation with the campuses on goals and what the campuses need to attain them. He further remarked that he has long held the belief that the public higher education business model is broken. President Clark responded that conversation is always welcome, and stated that he believes their plan goes beyond what was required by the BHE Guidelines<sup>2</sup>. He additionally referenced the Vision Project and the aspirational goals that were set years ago segmentally.

Commissioner Santiago remarked that the Performance Measurement system will help us set goals segmentally, and noted the special consideration given to data trends. He continued that it is important to consider the trajectory of each institution, and further noted that our process can allow for goals to be modified, if appropriate.

Board member Toner asked if campus boards are subject to risk if their goals are set too aspirationally, and if this is potentially a deterrent.

President Clark responded that he believes it is important to have both aspirational and attainable goals, and cited an example of the progress his institution has made in closing achievement gaps, and how the interventions they have applied towards this metric have been effective, resulting in pivoting on a prior goal. He elaborated that they do have aspirational goals for each goal set, they are just not publicly visible.

Chair Gabrieli acknowledged the enthusiasm of the campus, and thanked them for sharing their process. He remarked on the challenges of approving strategic plans while the BHE is trying to evolve their own strategic plan for public higher education. He noted the absence of contextual information included in the plan for decisions and challenges faced by limited resources, and asked a clarifying question about aspirational outcomes the institution feels are unattainable due to a lack of resources. He additionally remarked that he believes there is a gap between the goals outlined in this plan and the overall goals of the system.

President Clark responded by noting the challenges faced by the BHE in trying to produce a culture change throughout the entire system, as well as the time constraints doing this campus by campus statewide. He additionally noted that all of their goals and data points have a narrative and a context, and cited examples of their efforts to improve enrollment and retention rates, given several geographic and demographic challenges. He continued that more contextual information can be included if required, because all of their goals have a story.

Chair Gabrieli responded that he appreciates the tone and acknowledged that both the campuses and the BHE are trying to figure this out together, and wants to be clear that his concerns are more general and not specific to BSU. He clarified that he doesn't mean that the goals included in this plan are not appropriate for this institution, but not necessarily the best

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<sup>2</sup> 2017-2018 Revised Campus Strategic Planning Guidelines and Procedures



**AUTHORITY:** Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7,9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d), and Article III.

**CONTACT:** Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D  
Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Board member LaRock excused himself from the meeting at 1:08 pm due to a prior commitment.

### **B. SPC 18-02 Approval of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts' Strategic Plan**

Acting Chair Toner invited Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) President Jamie Birge to introduce MCLA's plan and offer brief remarks. President Birge began his remarks by providing an overview of the process and timeline for developing the plan, which started over a year ago. The campus developed a 5 year plan that requires annual reviews of performance measures. He then provided a brief overview of the eight goals included in their plan, with special focus on Goals 1 and 2: (1) Respond to student and community needs in ways that enhance MCLA's distinctiveness, its role as a pioneering educational leader, and its value as an engine of regional growth; and (2) Enhance student persistence, completion, and preparation for post-college success. He noted that Goal 2 resulted from direct conversation with regional partners; MCLA knows they can have local and regional partnerships that inform strategy, and can measure their responsiveness to the needs of the community. President Birge continued by citing further examples on enrollment, retention and success goals, noting MCLA's commitment to serving low income, Pell-eligible students. He remarked that the U.S. Department of Education recognized MCLA as an institution that provides low income students with high wage earning fields, ending the cycle of poverty for families; their mission is palpable in that they can change the lives of their students. He concluded his presentation by stating that they have realistic, but ambitious goals.

Chair Gabrieli thanked President Birge, and citing the handouts remarked that he believes this plan is closer to what the prior conversation with BSU referenced. President Birge responded that the common ground shared by all is that we all want to enhance the quality of public higher education in the Commonwealth, and that all the institutions have unique characteristics. He remarked that MCLA aspires to be the number one ranked public liberal arts college in the country. MCLA currently ranks in the top 10.

The Commissioner remarked that he had no further comment, as he thinks the campuses understand BHE's approach. He remarked that he'll be happy to work with both BSU and MCLA, and will share the information going forward about the system-wide focus.

There being no further discussion, Acting Chair Toner called for a motion on an amended SPC 18-02, proposing the same amended language used in passing the BSU motion. On a motion duly made and seconded, the following motion was approved with one abstention (Secretary of Education designee, Tom Moreau, abstained):

18-02

**APPROVAL OF MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS’  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the **Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts “Strategic Plan 2017-2022,”** subject to the development and execution of a strategic analysis of alignment to the BHE’s statewide priorities, with special consideration of the Department’s “Big Three” priorities (i.e., college participation; college completion; and closing achievement gaps).

The BHE further authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

**AUTHORITY:** Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l);  
BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3(d), and Article III.

**CONTACT:** Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D  
Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Before proceeding with final motion, Commissioner Santiago clarified that special mission institutions have different rules under statute for preparing strategic plans. The statute allows for five-year entrepreneurial plans from special mission institutions, in recognition of their position to expand their missions to a more regional or national focus and in exchange for tuition retention. The strategic and partnership plan requirements for Massachusetts Maritime Academy (MMA)—and MassArt for that matter-- are therefore different from the strategic planning requirements for the previous two institutions.

Acting Chair Toner invited MMA President Admiral Francis McDonald to make remarks. President McDonald began his remarks by providing some background information of their five-year renewal plan. He remarked that due to their specialized nature, MMA does not always line up well with peer institutions, and remarked that they draw students from both a statewide and national pool of applicants. He continued that their strategic plan in 2005, and the subsequent renewal, have really brought MMA to where they are today. He cited their growth in graduation rates and enrollment, and remarked that that MMA charges the lowest tuition and fees in the segment. He continued that MMA has increased the percentage of students with full financial need met, despite being a 100% residential campus. MMA additionally has 100% participation in experiential education opportunities, leadership lab participation, and civic engagement participation. He concluded that MMA has had to artificially cap their most employable program because they do not have the space for students. President McDonald introduced Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Commodore Bradley Lima, who remarked that the MMA Strategic Partnership Plan document has been updated subsequent to the institutions board approval. He then invited the SPC to ask questions.



Having no further business, Acting Chair Toner called for a motion to adjourn, which was seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.