

## BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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February 02, 2021

10:00 a.m.

### Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (“BHE” or “the Board”) was held virtually on Tuesday, February 02, 2021 on the web-conference platform Zoom.

#### **The following Board Members were present:**

Chris Gabrieli, Chair

Sheila Harrity, Vice Chair

Charles Bianchi

Chair Ann Christensen

Veronica Conforme

Alex Cortez

Patty Eppinger

JD LaRock

Paul Mattera

Mike O'Brien

James Peyser, Secretary of Education, Ex-Officio

Judy Pagliuca

Paul Toner

Jorgo Gushi, non-voting Student Advisor, Community College segment

Kush Patel, non-voting Student Advisor, UMass segment

Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

#### **The following Board Members were absent:**

None

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and announced that this meeting is being held remotely and in accordance with Governor Baker's Executive Order which suspended certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law for the purpose of authorizing public bodies to allow remote participation by all members while the state of emergency is in effect. Chair Gabrieli announced that Board members and select Department of Higher Education (DHE or “the Department”) staff would be participating remotely, via Zoom; that the meeting is being livestreamed and recorded; and that members of the public who signed up for public comment would be allowed to join the Zoom meeting to provide comment. DHE Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis, then took roll call attendance (see above for attendance roster).

## **II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

## **III. WELCOME**

## **IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to accept minutes of the last Board meeting, which was held on October 20, 2020. The motion was duly moved and seconded. Jorgo Gushi, the non-voting Student Advisor for the Community Colleges segment, identified a technical issue, noting that the minutes wrongly designated him as the voting student member instead of Charles Bianchi, and he asked that this be corrected. Chair Gabrieli acknowledged the error and asked for the minutes to be approved subject to this technical correction; with no further discussion the motion proceeded to a roll call vote and passed unanimously, subject to the technical correction, as follows:

- Charles Bianchi – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- JD LaRock – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Michael O'Brien – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Secretary James Peyser – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes

## **V. REMARKS & REPORTS**

### **A. Chairman's Remarks**

Chair Gabrieli thanked the Commissioner and Department staff. He opened by addressing the reestablished DHE committees and thanked new FAAP Chair, JD LaRock and, AAC Co-Chairs Sheila Harrity and Patty Eppinger for agreeing to chair those committees. He reported on three committee meetings held within the last week to include: 1. Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) 2. Fiscal Affairs Committee (FAAP) 3. Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM) Task Force. An Early College Joint Committee (ECJC) and an Executive Committee meeting, which will review overall approach to the committee structure, will be scheduled for later this month.

Chair Gabrieli commented on the trend line numbers in enrollment from the class of 2020 presented during the EBPM Task Force meeting. The trends show a steady decline, and while it remains unclear whose duty it is to attend to students who would have normally gone on to college last year and did not; the Commonwealth still has an obligation to them.

Chair Gabrieli also noted the post-secondary indicators used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which showed a significant difference in income by students who immediately go on to matriculate to college. He stated the importance of addressing equity to combat these long-term challenges and incorporating outside talent to assist in the Department's ongoing efforts in this work. The traditional use of task forces could be implemented, but further discussions were needed before determining the best course of action. An update will be provided at a subsequent Board meeting after consulting with DHE Counsel, Dena Papanikolaou. He concluded by thanking the Commissioner, the Board and DHE Staff for their spirit of unity to help students of the Commonwealth advance.

#### **B. Commissioner's Remarks**

Commissioner Santiago thanked Chair Gabrieli for his remarks. He acknowledged the presidents and representatives from the State University and Community College executive offices in attendance. He congratulated Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) President, Pam Eddinger for being awarded the Pinnacle Award, a premier award for women in business, from the Boston Chamber of Commerce. The Commissioner shared his pleasure in working with President Eddinger in her role at BHCC. He then commented on the prospect of State Universities becoming COVID-19 vaccination sites and the importance of getting involved to support their communities. He also announced that Governor Charlie Baker will sign the Campus Sexual Assault Bill this afternoon. The Commissioner commended students for bringing the bill to the public and shared his full support of the legislation.

Commissioner Santiago turned to the enrollment issue first discussed at the October 2020 Board meeting. He reported that after collecting detailed fall enrollment data from all Community Colleges, State Universities and UMass campuses, the data is sobering. Undergraduate enrollment is down across the public system by 7% seven percent compared to last fall. These declines are sharpest in the Community College segment, at an 11% decline from last year and by comparison to State Universities are down 8% percent. UMass is down approximately 1% percent. There is also a sharp decline for Community College freshman ranging between 23-26%, a 13% decline in the State Universities, and 8% within the UMass segment.

In viewing trends by race/ethnicity, he noted the overall decline in enrollment among White students since 2010, while enrollment among Black and Latinx students continued to grow. The COVID pandemic has since changed this dynamic causing a decline among these groups as well. One critical question he asked is "will students will return to higher education?" The answer to this question is important as Department moves its policy agenda forward. He shared that we must do what is necessary to return to an environment where enrollment for students begins to trend upward.

Commissioner Santiago commented on the Evidence Based Policy Making Task Force meeting's data presented on first time undergraduates under the age 25. The declines show a range of 30-35% for Black and Latinx students at Community Colleges, 15-20% for White students in the State Universities. Black and White enrollment is down 15% and Latinx enrollment is down 6%. A full data report will be available by mid-February the Board's review. He concluded by stating that he is reserving his comments regarding the Equity Agenda for later in today's meeting.

### C. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education's (EOE) Remarks

Secretary Peyser thanked Chair Gabrieli and Commissioner Santiago for their leadership. He opened by stating that the financial impact of delayed enrollment has a significant impact on the Massachusetts economy and earnings by the time someone reaches age 30. He commented on the level of academic preparation not being on par with college readiness, and measures taken to develop college readiness curriculum programs with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Community Colleges. The programs would begin for students graduating from high school this spring to align them with going to college this fall.

The Secretary provided an overview of the Governor's FY22 H:1 Budget, which is complemented by the allocation of new federal dollars in the form of direct allocations to schools and colleges. He reported that baseline funding across all three education sectors relative to FY21 would be maintained, in addition to a full year implementation of MASS Grant Plus for both Community Colleges and State Universities, and increased Federal Pell Grant awards to close the gap on unmet financial need.

Secretary Peyser highlighted other aspects of the budget which includes changes to the way we fund Early Education, and the development of college success strategies to ensure increased graduation rates for underrepresented student populations. Finally, investments in Early College and Career Pathways will help expand growing early college and career pathways with planning and work-based learning experiences, He concluded that the H:1 budget provides a level of stability for the higher education sector moving into the year

### D. Report from Presidents

#### State University Segmental Report

*For a copy of President Birge's full remarks, please see: <https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/2020-12-15%20Report%20from%20SU%20Presidents.pdf>*

*Vaccine distribution letter of support: <https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/2021-02-02%20SU%20Presidents%20Vaccine%20Letter.pdf>*

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts College President James Birge thanked Chair Gabrieli, Secretary Peyser, Commissioner Santiago and members of the Board of Higher Education, for the opportunity to share updates on behalf of the Massachusetts State University System. He also thanked the Board of Higher Education, Commissioner Santiago and Secretary Peyser for the

support given to our State Universities throughout the pandemic.

President Birge noted that in accordance with state guidance and, in collaboration with public health experts, each State University updated and operationalized their COVID-19 return plans with a primary focus on the health and safety of our students and the workforce needed to support their educational and health needs. All nine campuses have started welcoming students back to classes for the spring semester and will continue to offer a mix of in-person, on-campus instruction, along with online remote learning, and work options to their campus communities. Student housing options are implemented following CDC, DPH and DHE guidance.

President Birge expressed gratitude to the legislature for their increase in financial aid. The legislature funded and included \$5.5m in the final FY21 General Appropriations Act. Increased spending by the legislature was also included in the state's financial aid line item, at \$14m. However, in the Governor's revised FY21 spending, the State Universities' Funding Formula account was eliminated. He stated this account is the only mechanism in the state budget that supports their efforts, through a performance-based funding formula, to offer high-quality and affordable post-secondary educational pathways for Massachusetts residents. The legislature funded this account and included \$5.5m in the final FY21 General Appropriations Act. Governor Baker's FY22 spending plan, released last week, does not include this item. He expressed his concern that the Governor's FY22 budget recommendations do not include the amortized funds approved by the legislature in FY21. Without amortizing those funds, the H:1 budget recommendation amounts to a \$5.5m reduction for our State Universities. President Birge asked that the DHE Board join in their legislative advocacy efforts in the House and Senate.

President Birge provided an update on the State Universities' progress despite the challenges of COVID-19. The system continues to provide high-quality, public education for all students. He shared gratitude for the support received and looks forward to the spring semester.

Lastly, President Birge requested the Board's support on behalf of his colleagues to prioritize the higher education workforce in the state's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. They are advocating for inclusion in (Phase 2), on par with the Early Education and Care and the K-12 educators. He expressed concerns that higher education employees will not be adequately vaccinated prior to the start of the fall semester. President Birge concluded with a letter of support to Secretary Sudders and Secretary Peyser urging the prioritization of their higher education workforce in Phase 2 of the vaccination schedule.

#### Community College Segmental Report

*For a copy of President Mabry's full remarks, please see:*

<https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/2021-02-02%20Report%20from%20CC%20Presidents.pdf>

Middlesex Community College President James Mabry thanked Chair Gabrieli, Board Members, Commissioner Santiago, Secretary Peyser, DHE staff, and colleagues in public higher education for the opportunity to share updates from the Massachusetts Community College segment.

President Mabry commented on the impacts of COVID-19 on employment and education throughout communities in the Commonwealth. He shared the immediate plans for the future of higher ed post-pandemic. In collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, they coordinated a summer bridge program for graduating high school seniors without full MCAS proficiency. He also described outreach efforts to school districts to increase students completing the FAFSA

President Mabry shared that the consensus among students is a need for emergency financial assistance. He highlighted the widening equity gap and data results depicting the likelihood of low-income Community College students being twice as likely to cancel their plans to attend college than students from high-income households. The same is true for students who are also parents. President Mabry reiterated the devastating effects of COVID-19 but stressed how the inequities existed prior to the pandemic. Looking towards the future, he shared optimism about the future. He stated the priority of the Community Colleges is to provide Massachusetts residents with an affordable pathway to education, particularly low-income, first-generation, and racially minoritized students.

President Mabry concluded by emphasizing how reductions in funding could jeopardize the future dreams of students and reduce workforce development in the Commonwealth. He commented on the need for additional investments in our public institutions to ensure their long-term stability and fiscal health in supporting students.

#### **E. Report from Student Advisory Council**

Student Member Charles Bianchi shared insight relative to discussions between the Executive Committee and Student Advisory Council (SAC) on vaccine distribution and the Equity Agenda. He then asked Community College Segmental Student Advisor Jorgo Gushi to offer the report on behalf of the SAC.

Mr. Gushi thanked Student Member Bianchi, Chair Gabrieli, Commissioner Santiago and the Board. He opened his report by addressing COVID vaccine distribution efforts and expressed concern over the current vaccination schedule for Massachusetts higher education workers, who face exposure to the virus daily. He said the SAC is urging the administration to include the higher education workers in Phase 2 of the roll out. Mr. Gushi stated that 32 states around the nation have moved higher education up their priority list, and the Commonwealth should follow suit.

Mr. Gushi reminded the Board that Massachusetts General Law Chapter 15A was amended to remove the requirement of a full-time enrollment to run for the position of the student trustee, with implementation now in the hands of the Board to establish guidelines and the campuses. The SAC requests the Board and the individual campuses to initiate the change process so that the changes can be implemented before May, in time for upcoming elections for student trustees.

Lastly, Mr. Gushi advised of the SAC collaboration with the Open Educational Resources (OER) Advisory Council. He commented on the funding advocacy campaign and what additional funding meant to secure resources such as OER. It also means a more affordable and equitable higher

education system. The group called upon legislators to take their concerns into consideration during these unprecedented times. He concluded by thanking the Department and the SAC, before turning it over to UMass Segmental Student Advisor Kush Patel.

Mr. Patel provided brief remarks about the UMass and Amherst campus vaccinations to health care workers and nursing students. He commented on the importance of moving higher education workers to Phase 2 for vaccinations. Mr. Patel shared his excitement about the SAC's scheduled meeting with the Department's cabinet members next week and working more closely to align with their projects moving forward.

## **VI. MOTIONS**

### List of Documents Used

AAC Motions 21-01 through 21-02

FAAP Motions 21-01 through 21-02

Links to Videos accessible before the meeting:

- [AAC 21-01 through AAC 21-02](#)
- [FAAP 21-01 through FAAP 21-02](#)

### **A. Academic Affairs Committee**

Chair Gabrieli turned the meeting over to AAC Co-Chair Sheila Harrity. AAC Co-Chair Harrity reported that the AAC met last week and was given an overview of the major projects in Academic Affairs and Student Success. This included a summary on efforts related to:

- Common Assessment Policy
- Open Education Resources (OER)

The Committee also learned more about updates to the progress made with OER and considered one degree-granting revocation, and one new program approval.

AAC Co-Chair Harrity asked for a motion of approval for AAC 21-01: Revocation of the Degree Granting Authority of New England College of Business and Finance. On a motion duly made and seconded, AAC 21-01 was approved unanimously by all board members present, without discussion.

- Charles Bianchi – Yes
- Anna Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair-Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice-Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- JD LaRock – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Michael O'Brien – Yes

- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Secretary Jim Peyser – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes

**AAC 21-01      REVOCATION OF THE DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY OF NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE. INC. (NECB)**

**MOVED**      The Board hereby revokes the legal authority of **New England College of Business and Finance, Inc.** to operate a physical instructional location and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts retroactive to April 1, 2020.

Authority:      Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact:      Patricia A. Marshall, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success  
                          Ashley H. Wisneski, Esq. Deputy General Counsel

AAC Co-Chair Harrity then asked for a motion for approval on AAC 21-02: *Approval of Letter of Intent of University of Massachusetts Amherst to Award the Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy and Authorization for Fast Track Review.* The motion was moved and seconded. AC 21-02 was approved unanimously by all board members present, without discussion.

- Charles Bianchi – Yes
- Anna Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair-Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice-Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- JD LaRock – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Michael O'Brien – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Secretary Peyser – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes

**AAC 21-02      APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST TO AWARD THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PUBLIC POLICY AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW**

**MOVED**      The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of the **University of Massachusetts Amherst** to award **the Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy** and has determined that the proposal aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the program and to make a final

determination on degree granting authority pursuant to the Fast-Track review protocol.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9 (b); AAC 18-40

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D., Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public Program Approval

## **B. Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy**

Chair Gabrieli introduced the Financial Affairs Administrative Policy (FAAP) Chair, JD LaRock for the next part of the agenda. FAAP Chair LaRock reported that the Committee met last week and heard preliminary recommendations from Parthenon on proactive financial monitoring of public colleges and universities. The group also considered two motions for approval.

FAAP Chair LaRock asked for a motion of approval for FAAP 21-01: *Fiscal Year 2022 Rent Schedule and Operating Budgets Massachusetts State College Building Authority*. On a motion duly made and seconded, FAAP 21-01 was approved unanimously by all board members present, without discussion.

- Charles Bianchi – Yes
- Anna Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair-Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice-Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- JD LaRock – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Michael O'Brien – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Secretary Jim Peyser – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes

### **FAAP 21-01 FISCAL YEAR 2022 RENT SCHEDULE AND OPERATING BUDGETS MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGE BUILDING AUTHORITY**

#### **MOVED**

The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the attached Fiscal Year 2022 Schedule of Proposed Rents and Operating Budget for the Authority and State University Residence Halls, effective July 1, 2021, provided that any increase in the rent schedule shall be subject to the approval of the Board Higher Education.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 73 App., Section 1-9 as amended and the

*Contract for Financial Assistance, Management and Services*, dated February 1, 2003, made between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting by and through the Board of Higher Education and Massachusetts State College Building Authority.

Contact: Thomas Simard, Deputy Commissioner of Administration & Finance Fiscal and Administrative Policy

FAAP Chair LaRock then asked for a motion of approval for FAAP 21-02: *Approval of Massachusetts State College Building Authority Refunding Revenue Bonds*. On a motion duly made and seconded, FAAP 21-02 was approved unanimously by all board members present, without discussion.

- Charles Bianchi – Yes
- Anna Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair-Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice-Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- JD LaRock – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Michael O'Brien – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Secretary Jim Peyser – Yes
- Paul Toner – Yes

**FAAP 21-02      APPROVAL OF MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGE BUILDING AUTHORITY  
REFUNDING REVENUE BONDS**

**MOVED**

The Massachusetts State College Building Authority is hereby authorized to issue refunding bonds for the purpose of restructuring the Authority's debt service payment obligations in a manner that provides fiscal relief to the State Universities in fiscal year 2021, fiscal year 2022 and/or fiscal year 2023 and satisfies the other requirements of the vote of the Authority on January 20, 2021 authorizing such refunding bonds; provided further that the Commissioner is hereby authorized and directed, in the name and on behalf of the Board of Higher Education, to approve in writing the issuance by said Authority of bonds for such refunding purpose.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 73 App., Section 1-9 as amended and the *Contract for Financial Assistance, Management and Services*, dated February 1, 2003, made between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting by and through the Board of Higher Education and Massachusetts State College Building Authority.

Contact: Thomas Simard, Deputy Commissioner of Administration & Finance Fiscal and Administrative Policy

## VII. PRESENTATIONS

- A. Equity Agenda Update
  - 1. New Undergraduate Experience
  - 2. Policy and Program Audit

### List of Documents:

- [Equity Agenda Update](#)

### **1. New Undergraduate Experience**

Commissioner Santiago provided updates on the Equity Agenda describing it as a call to social justice and economic mobility. He shared the heart of the Equity Agenda as one of participatory democracy, where all play an active role in decision making. As validation of this work, he highlighted *The Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equality and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government*, an initiative signed by President Joe Biden. The initiative requires US departments and agencies to conduct equity assessments of their current policies to determine if these policies further systemic racism in accessing benefits and opportunities to their constituents.

He continued with an addition to the initiative which includes the quote of President Biden's Domestic Policy Advisor, Susan Rice. She states it as a "Whole-of-government initiative to embed racial equity across federal policies, programs, and institutions. That starts with a review of policies and institutions to redress systemic racism where it exists and to advance equity where we aren't doing enough. Every agency will place equity at the core of their public engagement, their policy design, and program delivery to ensure that government resources are reaching Americans of color and all marginalized communities" Ambassador Rice's comments confirm the Equity work being done by the Department, but other crucial elements are required to better perceive the problems we need to address. Of great importance are desegregated data and adequate training.

The Commissioner outlined the driving principles of the Equity Agenda, with racial equality as a top policy and performance priority. He shared that equity will be achieved when race no longer determines one's outcomes in the Massachusetts public higher education system. Racial equity must also be embedded systemwide where all our institutions participate in the Equity Agenda's culture, structure, and policies. He then shared the principles guiding the Equity Agenda.

Commissioner Santiago also addressed the need of all students to see that these are principles that support all their work in higher education. One of the first steps to ensure the foundation is laid as a Department is training. Taking an active approach, the Department has moved forward in participatory leadership as well as other projects to help the Department prepare for these assessments. Internal communication has increased, to include convening all staff members to discuss the Board's policies and actions which impact the Department, and how it impacts our work daily. He then turned it over to Deputy Commissioner, Pat Marshall for the next part of the presentation.

Deputy Commissioner Pat Marshall opened by setting the context, noting that the Commissioner's presentation focused on the "why" behind the New Undergraduate Experience (NUE) work and how it fits within the larger context of the Department's Equity Agenda, while her section would focus on the "what" and the "how." Deputy Commissioner Marshall provided a brief history of the original undergraduate experience. She stated that the original document was a 60-page report written in 1989 with 44 recommendations that focused on the 28 undergraduate serving institutions. It reimagined public higher education with the goal of enhancing excellence. The original document served as a foundational document to conceptualize a new undergraduate experience, focusing on academic programs, quality, and excellence. This document provided recommendations on what general education would look like and focused on the assessment of basic academic skills. While recognizing the importance of academic quality, Deputy Commissioner Marshall highlighted that the original document established the groundwork and philosophy for policies and practices that would later inform the 1998 Common Assessment Policy and other deficit-based and exclusionary practices.

Deputy Commissioner Marshall shared that the nature of higher education must be viewed through an equity-minded lens to achieve racial equity. Best practices have evolved since the document was written 30-years ago, which includes advances in pedagogy, student development, student needs and barriers to success. Additional changes occurred in admissions, assessment of college readiness, early college, and developmental education. She also mentioned that the economic and social contexts have changed significantly, citing the increased cost of higher education, income inequality, and the increasing diversity of Massachusetts students. She stated that creating student-centered, equity-minded, and civically engaged institutions is now an explicit priority, driving all recommendations that will emerge from the New Undergraduate Experience.

The objective is to reimagine our systems, to create student ready institutions rather than college ready students, and to use asset-based language rather than a deficit-based approach. Deputy Commissioner provided an overview of the NUE committee membership, represented by all 29 public institutions, a diverse state and national "brain trust," and DHE staff. In total there are 60 committee members, each chosen and recruited due to their expertise and dedication to equity-driven institutional transformation. The NUE committee includes a Steering Committee (chaired by Board Member Patty Eppinger and Dr. Constanza Cabello) and two subcommittees: Teaching and Learning Committee, and Student-Ready Institutions Committee. The Teaching and Learning Committee is chaired by Dr. Paul Hernandez, Cynthia Lynch, and Dimitri Moore, and the Student Ready Committee, is chaired by Deanna Yameen, Marquis Taylor and Dezary Guzman. Deputy Commissioner provided a comprehensive overview of the working groups that have emerged from the work of the subcommittees:

#### Teaching and Learning Committee

1. Faculty, Curriculum and Pedagogy
2. Professional Development and Assessment
3. Foundational Elements

## Student-Ready Institutions Committee

1. Institutional Culture
2. Transitions
3. Holistic Student Supports

Transitioning to the timeline for the NUE work and the expected outcomes, Deputy Commissioner Marshall stated the NUE committee anticipates bringing a draft of recommendations before the Academic Affairs Committee in June to gather feedback. It will then present the NUE Final Report and Recommendations at the October 2021 Board meeting. Lastly, in the fall of 2021, the Department will launch the Strategic Planning process informed by the NUE Final Report and the Policy and Program Audit.

Board Members Patty Eppinger and Paul Toner were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the importance of this work and their experience thus far as two members of the Board who have been very engaged in this work. Board Member Eppinger, who also serves as the Steering Committee Co-Chair, expressed her excitement to work with a diverse and committed group of experts in their respective areas. She indicated that there is an equally strong commitment to amplifying student voices and that the SAC is working to ensure that each of the institutions know about this work. Board Member Toner reinforced Board Member Eppinger's impressions, and added how the engagement of people in the community from nonprofit sectors yields a perspective well beyond the borders of higher education. Deputy Commissioner Marshall clarified a question posed by Board Member Sheila Harrity, stating that although a draft NUE report is scheduled for feedback during the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) in June, the NUE Committee will provide updates to the AAC and the Board as their work develops. She then turned it over to Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis for the next section of the presentation.

### **2. Policy and Program Audit**

Chief of Staff Quiroz-Livanis provided an overview of the Equity Agenda Policy and Program Audit. Building upon the components of the NUE, and other elements of the Equity Agenda discussed earlier, she shared how they are fully informed by Equity principles outlined during Commissioner Santiago's presentation. The principles were developed by staff in December 2019 and January 2020 when the Department partnered with the University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center to provide professional development to staff. The partnership has allowed DHE staff to authentically engage in the work of advancing racial equality and justice in public higher education. She next acknowledged colleague, Christine Williams, a partner at the Department with the policy and program audit.

The effort to complete Policy and Program Audit is funded under the Lumina Foundation's Talent, Innovation and Equity (TIE) designation. Its' purpose is to assess all the Department's policies and programs to identify how these policies potentially mitigate or exacerbate racial disparities. All work is done in collaboration with our public institutions to determine what the new policy direction of the

system of public higher education will be in the Commonwealth.

Chief of Staff Quiroz-Livanis shared the different areas of the policy and program audit: racial equity is the top policy and performance priority for the Department of Higher Education; racial equity requires acknowledgement, remedy, and repair of policies and practices formulated for the purposes of exclusion; clarity in language, goals, and measures is vital to racially equitable practices; racial equity requires the use of asset based language to minimize the threat of harm, deficit, and stereotype reinforcement; racial equity requires that the Department promote culturally responsive campus climates in which all students, faculty, and staff can thrive, and in which all students, faculty, and staff are seen and regarded in the totality of their human dignity; the Department must create and cultivate an inclusive environment to encourage the support and participation of relevant stakeholders; racial equity includes continuously conducting rigorous critical evaluation; and the Department must incentivize the development and support the implementation of equity minded, evidence based solutions; racial equity requires budgeting reflecting racial equity as a top priority, and which seeks to rectify the harms of a history of racist policy.

Afterwards, Chief of Staff Quiroz-Livanis described which policies and programs would be audited during the first year. She also spoke about the Department's learning community and the intentional way staff who are not auditing policies this year were brought in to provide support on different fronts including data, fiscal, historical, and legal.

## **B. Massachusetts Public Higher Education Financial Assessment Project Update**

### List of Documents:

- [Massachusetts Public Higher Education Financial Assessment Project Update](#)

EY-Parthenon's Haven Ladd thanking Chair Gabrieli to present and provide updates. He stated that today's presentation would build upon the three objectives of the project, which focuses on the financial health of institutions, reporting key metrics, and collaborative efforts to increase financial sustainability. Mr. Ladd addressed three components to the assessment of the financial health of the Community Colleges and State Universities:

1. Financial Health
2. Reporting Key Metrics
3. Collaboration Opportunities

To highlight the fiscal health of the Community College and State University systems, Mr. Ladd traced the project's timeline to its initial start in June 2020, where fiscal indicators increasingly displayed positive outcasts. Mr. Ladd stated that after continuous monitoring, the fiscal health of each of the institutions is reasonably strong. The recommendation is to take a proactive view of fiscal monitoring to ensure the viability of institutions through future challenges.

Mr. Ladd provided a brief overview of the fiscal health of Community College and State Universities as of October 2020, presented at the December 15 DHE Board meeting. The

presentation update is based on a January updated budget from each one of these institutions. He asked the question: Where do we expect institutions to be by June FY21? What has happened since October through now? Do they have enough money to get through the year? As of October, Community Colleges were expecting to lose \$6.3m. Since then several significantly positive things have occurred. State appropriations have come in higher than expected back in October, along with a \$9m increase in grants and auxiliaries. The increases have been offset by a slight decline in tuition and fees revenue, due to slightly lower enrollments, as well as \$11m in increased spending. The expectation as of February 2, is that Community Colleges will end the year \$17m better than expected back in October. The news should be viewed as very positive, an indicator of the management of these institutions, and their budgeting and spending during these unprecedented times

Mr. Ladd next noted a similar update on State Universities. As of October, State Universities were expecting to lose \$17.6m. Since then, and partly driven by a \$25m increase in state appropriations and an offset in assets due to decreased residential housing revenues, State Universities fare better as of February 2. The news is positive as compared to the period of uncertainty back in June. The current expectations are that there will be \$122m in additional federal stimulus dollars available over the next calendar year for these institutions.

Mr. Ladd continued with indicators of fiscal viability. He stated that one of the biggest measures of financial health is how much liquidity each one of the institutions has on hand. It is measures as a metric of months of available cash to cover the average monthly cash outflows. He emphasized liquidity as being a cash picture, rather than one of accounting. In addition, as the ability to write checks, pay for salaries, and expenses. Community Colleges have on average held between 3.3mo and 4.6mo of liquidity for FY18-FY21. State Universities have held between 4.2mo and 5.1mo of liquidity. On average Community Colleges and State Universities are doing well financially.

Another key point of the project's focus has been to identify the types of metrics and types of data that should be reported to the Board of Higher Education. A set of metrics have been identified that the group of CFOs and the Board and the subcommittee believe will be important to track on an ongoing basis. The goal is to be able to use the metrics frequently and easily interpret them as needed. Mr. Ladd reviewed the seven proposed metrics to identify potential risk as:

1. Liquidity in Terms of Average Monthly Cash Outflows
2. Operating Margin
3. Net Cash Flow
4. Debt service coverage
5. Change in enrollment
6. State and Student Revenue per credit or FTE (\$)
7. Cash Outflows per Credit or FTE (\$)

He concluded that the objective is to understand what are driving the differences so that the Department, can assist institutions as they move forward. Mr. Ladd then turned it over to FAAP

Chair JD LaRock to discuss recommendations.

FAAP Chair LaRock opened by thanking Mr. Ladd for his presentation. He stated that EY-Parthenon's work was helpful in learning more about the financial strength of public institutions. He provided a FAAP committee update based on EY-Parthenon's analysis with a target date of June 30, 2021. It was noted that the update on Slide 15 of the presentation captured the FAAP committee's general consensus that the DHE should work with the institutions to develop, for Board approval, policies and procedures for monitoring the fiscal health of the Community Colleges and State Universities, including policies related to financial reporting.

FAAP Chair LaRock then turned the presentation back to Mr. Ladd who commented on maximizing opportunities to collaborate with institutions by utilizing the foundation developed by Parthenon to move towards the identification of a key set of financial key performance indicators to create policies and procedures. It was noted that the meetings would be open to all Board members, even if they do not serve on the FAAP Committee. Mr. Ladd closed by summarizing next steps to further collaboration opportunities at the regional and state level.

Chair Gabrieli shared his appreciation for Parthenon's contributions to the project. He stated that although it concludes their report, the Board and the Department's work is ongoing. He stated an eagerness to see the Board working alongside of the various committees and collaborative efforts with institutions. There being no additional comments, Chair Gabrieli moved to adjourn the meeting.

#### **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Gabrieli adjourned the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Carlos E. Santiago  
Commissioner and Secretary to the Board*