

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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January 26, 2021

10:00 a.m. virtually through ZOOM

### Meeting Minutes

- Committee Members Present:** BHE Chair, Chris Gabrieli; AAC Co-Chair, Sheila Harrity, Secretary of Education Designee Tom Moreau; Judy Pagliuca; and Commissioner Carlos Santiago (ex-officio, non-voting member)
- Other BHE Member Present:** Community College Student Segmental Student Advisor, Jorgo Gushi (non-voting)
- Committee Members Absent:** AAC Co-Chair, Patty Eppinger; Paul Toner
- Department Staff Present:** Robert Awkward, Cynthia Brown, Keith Connors, Patricia Marshall, Constantia Papanikolaou; Elena Quiroz-Livanis

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) Co-Chair Sheila Harrity called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

#### II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes from the January 28, 2020 meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee were unanimously approved by all committee members present.

#### III. REMARKS

##### A. Committee Chair's Remarks

Committee Co-Chair Sheila Harrity started the meeting with a welcome to all members. She spoke of the importance of their work in the midst of the COVID pandemic and briefly outlined the committee's work for the year. Committee Co-Chair Harrity concluded her remarks by inviting the Board of Higher Education (BHE or Board) Chair, Chris Gabrieli, to offer remarks.

Chair Gabrieli echoed Committee Co-Chair Harrity's remarks, acknowledging how the next few years will require new architecture for the higher education system to meet the demands of the changed environment. He also reflected on the value of the more informal and intimate work of the BHE committees. He acknowledged the sitting members and said he looked forward to the collaboration among the committees and full board. Chair Gabriel also commented on respecting the clear lines between the work of the BHE and that of the Department. He highlighted the professionalism of Department staff and the important role they play in

implementing the vision of the BHE. He concluded his remarks by saying he looks forward to the Board working together in new ways brought about by the pandemic.

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

The Commissioner began his remarks by informing committee members he was between meetings of the National Council of Higher Education Accreditation, which he chairs, so his remarks would be brief. He thanked everyone for their service and recognized the support of staff. He then invited Deputy Commissioner Patricia Marshall to add any comments.

Deputy Commissioner Marshall began by thanking AAC Co-Chairs, Sheila Harrity and Patty Eppinger, for their work in preparing for today's meeting, Chair Gabrieli for his work and leadership and Commissioner Santiago for his leadership, and for the listening tours last fall. She spoke about her excitement about the "New Undergraduate Experience" work and stated that she would provide updates on the activity from the last meeting regarding Advanced Placement credit, the SAT Optional Pilot, and the "New Undergraduate Experience."

Deputy Commissioner Marshall updated members on the activity around Advanced Placement (AP) credit. She shared that starting last spring, the Department actively collected and analyzed campus data on the awarding of AP credit. This work centered on the applicability of the credit and around the acceptance of a score of 3 and how higher education could ensure students receive credit for their AP exam scores. The work also considered how the DHE could send consistent messaging to our campuses around the granting of credit for AP scores, while making sure we were being transparent. To unify the work, the committee made a commitment to developing a set of design principles. The pandemic slowed the data collection work due to the many demands placed on our institutions, as well as the Department's loss of the staff member assigned to this work. However, the Department continued to have internal discussions with invested stakeholders (such as the CAO's) on how to best incorporate design principles into the awarding of credit. These focused discussions not only addressed the awarding of credit for AP but also for all prior learning assessment. Deputy Commissioner Marshall mentioned the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Consortium led by North Shore Community College, in partnership with all the Community Colleges, as a good example of this work. This PLA consortium focuses on standardizing the awarding of credit for prior learning and was funded through a Department's Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) grant. The PLA Consortium work has promoted transparency through the creation of an equivalency table to demonstrate the awarding of credit at our Community Colleges. In order to promote transparency, the Department also plans to post an equivalency table that demonstrates the awarding of credit for AP at all of our public institutions. As final comments, Deputy Commissioner Marshall shared how the AP work has promoted policy changes on specific campuses, and she thanked BHE member Paul Toner for surfacing this issue in the fall of 2019.

Next, Deputy Commissioner Marshall spoke about the SAT Optional Pilot, providing an overview of the sliding scale in the "Admissions Standards Reference Guide" and the 10% exemption rule, which allows institutions to accept up to 10% of the incoming first-year cohort who do not meet the sliding scale. She then gave an overview of the SAT Optional Pilot, which started in 2015 at

the request of our campuses. The pilot has since grown in popularity and currently almost all of our public institutions are participating in the SAT Optional Pilot due to COVID. Currently, eight of our nine state universities, and all the UMass campuses, participate in the pilot. Deputy Commissioner Marshall indicated that since we currently have 6 years of student success data from the pilot, our plan is to move this pilot into the policy recommendation phase. She added that our admissions policies will be evaluated as part of our policy equity audit, and that she expects that our recommendations regarding the use of the SAT and the 10% exemption policy will be part of a comprehensive evaluation of our admissions policies through an equity lens.

Lastly, Deputy Commissioner Marshall spoke about the Department efforts around the “New Undergraduate Experience” (NUE) and thanked BHE members Paul Toner and Patty Eppinger for their contributions. The DHE has convened the Steering Committee and the two subcommittees of the NUE and these committees are well staffed by DHE. Deputy Commissioner Marshall indicated that she would provide a more formal update on this work at the BHE meeting the following week.

#### **IV. MOTIONS**

*List of documents used:*

AAC Motions 21-01 through 21-02

Links to Videos accessible before the meeting:

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

Committee Co-Chair Harrity introduced the two motions for member consideration. She referenced the staff video presentations that were made available prior to the Board meeting, and thanked Department staff for preparing those.

##### **A. AAC 21-01 Revocation of the Degree Granting Authority of New England College of Business and Finance, Inc.**

Deputy Commissioner Marshall briefly introduced AAC 21-01, noting that the motion is centered on tying up loose ends regarding the referenced institution. She thanked Associate Commissioner for Regulatory & Veterans Affairs, Cynthia Brown, and Deputy General Counsel Ashley Wisneski for their work on this matter.

Hearing no discussion, Committee Co-Chair Harrity asked for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, the following motion was approved unanimously by all board members present.

##### **AAC 21-01 REVOCATION OF THE DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY OF NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE, INC.**

**VOTED:** The Board hereby revokes the legal authority of **New England College of Business and Finance, Inc.** to operate and grant degrees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts retroactive to June 30, 2018.

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

**B. AAC 21-02 Approval of Letter of Intent of the University of Massachusetts Amherst to Award the Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy and Authorization for Fast Track Review.**

Next, Committee Co-Chair Harrity introduced motion AAC 21-02, along with the two UMass Amherst representatives, Dr. Hajir, Senior Vice Provost for Academic affairs, and Dr. Roberts, Director of the School in Public Policy. Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning & Public Program Approval, Winifred Hagan presented the motion by pre-recorded video.

Chair Harrity opened the floor for discussion. Secretary of Education Designee Tom Moreau asked the campus representatives for additional information on the history and context for the program.

Dr. Hajir, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at UMass Amherst asked his colleague, Dr. Roberts to address the question. Dr. Roberts explained that in 2015 UMass Amherst wanted to establish a School of Public Policy. Dr. Roberts joined the University in 2017 when the school was pursuing two components of the addition: 1) the expansion of the graduate school, and 2) the establishment of the undergraduate degree. During this time, the school added tenured faculty and planned to ramp up the faculty hiring through the program expansion.

Secretary of Education Designee Tom Moreau followed by asking if the UMass planned to also offer a minor in Public Policy. Dr. Roberts responded in the affirmative.

Hearing no further discussion, Committee Co-Chair Harrity asked for a motion to approve. On a motion duly made and seconded, the following motion was approved unanimously by all committee members present.

**AAC 20-08 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST TO AWARD THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PUBLIC POLICY**

**VOTED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the letter of intent and authorization for fast track review of **Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy** at the **University of Massachusetts Amherst.**

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, §9(b).

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D. Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success.

## **V. PRESENTATION**

### *List of documents used:*

*AAC Meeting PowerPoint, January 26, 2021*

#### **A. Overview of Major Projects in Academic Affairs and Student Success: Common Assessment Policy and Open Educational Resources**

Committee Co-Chair Harrity welcomed Deputy Commissioner Patricia Marshall to introduce the presentation, noting that the presentation would cover two major projects: 1) the Common Assessment Policy; and 2) Open Educational Resources.

#### **1) Common Assessment Policy**

Deputy Commissioner Marshall first spoke on the Common Assessment Policy which she informed members is referred to by its acronym "CAP." CAP is a revision of a policy that was in effect for 20 years. The CAP development occurred over several years in close collaboration with our public campuses because Accuplacer, the tool used for the original common assessment since 1998, became very imbedded in the culture of our institutions and in their pre-requisites. The new CAP is a result of working together with our campuses over the past six or seven years. Deputy Commissioner Marshall acknowledged the work of Assistant Commissioner for Academic Policy & Student Success and Chief of Staff, Elena Quiroz-Livanis, during that time and indicated that the Department is now in the implementation phase of CAP.

Deputy Commissioner Marshall spoke about the impact the pandemic has had on the policy implementation timeline and the Department's need to be flexible with the campuses. She also spoke of the Department's role in monitoring the guidelines campuses submit for evaluation to ensure that they do not exacerbate racial disparities. She stated that Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis and Assistant Commissioner for Evaluation & Policy Analysis, Dr. Mario Delci would share promising preliminary data around enrollment in developmental education and the completion of gateway courses, in addition to providing an overview of the reform efforts. The enrollment in developmental education courses has been impacted by Department's multi-pronged approach that includes multiple measures as a way to place students. She highlighted that the presentation would also address the more complex topic of gateway course. Deputy Commissioner Marshall concluded by expressing the value of the Board's input in shaping this policy work and she assured the Board of the DHE's commitment to keep monitoring the CAP efforts to make sure they promote student progress. Deputy Commissioner Marshall then turned over the conversation to Assistant Commissioners Quiroz-Livanis and Delci.

The presentation highlights included: 1) the history of developmental education; 2) developmental education in MA; and 3) evaluation of reform efforts. The presentation included

Massachusetts' three-pronged approach to transforming developmental education that includes: 1) multiple assessment and placement measures; 2) mathematics pathways; and, 3) co-requisite support. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis delivered the first half of the presentation. Upon concluding her presentation, Committee Co-Chair Harrity asked Ms. Quiroz-Livanis if the DHE had any data regarding student outcomes placement into college-level and co-requisite courses. Committee Co-Chair Harrity also asked about the Department's knowledge about high school level work with the higher education system around math modeling courses embedded into the high school curriculum and the impact of that work. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis answered the questions in reverse order starting with the response to the K-12 inquiry. The math pathways work was done with the identification of consistent pathways in four concentrations adopted by the BHE– calculus, elementary education, quantitative reasoning and statistics. Ms. Quiroz-Livanis spoke about how this work led to the partnership with DESE over curricular alignment which resulted in the formation of a group called the Massachusetts Mathematics Alignment for Equity. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis noted that the data we are collecting now will allow staff to see what standards are being used for assessment and placement, as well as to what extent those standards are being used.

Secretary of Education Designee Tom Moreau asked if the data collected during the pandemic should be considered anomalous, and if any conclusions drawn from the data are questionable given the current circumstances. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis answered that the Department will definitely consider the reliability and quality of the data amid the pandemic and that great care was taken to develop a new collection to support the analysis of CAP effectiveness.

Assistant Commissioner Delci presented next and spoke about how the data is collected and aligned with Department policy. His first slide presented the good news of the steady declines in the number of students enrolled in developmental education over the last 10 years in both Math and English and in all three higher education segments. His second slide showed the percent of gateway completion courses for first-time, full-time students over the past 10 years with steady increases in the community college sector. The presentation included the challenges in data collection and evaluation as well as the expansion of collected data. Committee Co-Chair Harrity asked for clarification on how we defined the term "gateway" courses. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis answered that gateway courses are the foundational courses in a student's progression that signal success and she provided examples. Gateway courses, within an academic major, are often identified as "introductory" courses. Deputy Commissioner Marshall added that these courses are often pre-requisite courses.

Chair Gabrieli asked who fills out data requests and how do we assess the data accuracy? Committee Member Judy Pagliuca added to the Chair's inquiry making mention of the individualistic nature of campuses, and the concern over more complicated data request and those institutions with high levels of applications. Assistant Commissioner Delci replied with a reminder that the data in question is assessment data while agreeing the collected data is more complex. He then went on to explain that the DHE receives the data from the Institution's Research (IR) office and how the IR offices collect their data. Mr. Delci added that the Department supports the collection by providing IR departments with a Data Collection

Dictionary so that the data ask is clear, clean and comprehensive. Assistant Commissioner Delci added that the Department communicates with the campuses often on what is needed, why and how, stating that he shares all the questions he fields with IR offices and he spends time explaining the new data fields.

Assistant Commissioner Delci further explained that the DHE is in the process of expanding our data collection as supported by the Board Chair. The goal is more real-time data and higher quality data. Committee Member Pagliuca followed up by asking if there is any way the DHE can give guidance on where the data resides and how it is collected as a way to encourage the campuses to have a more consistent data collection process. Assistant Commissioner Delci responded by speaking to the expanded HEIRS system and the process of including the campuses in the expanded process and he spoke to the collaborative nature of the work the DHE does with its campuses and needing their cooperation. Committee Member Pagliuca asked about incentivizing the quality and timeliness of data submissions. Mr. Delci mentioned the performance measurement reporting system used to have a performance indicator related to timely completion of quality data but that it was difficult to evaluate. Committee Member Pagliuca responded with a reflection on UMass and their more consistent method of collecting data. She commented on how it speaks to the importance of getting good data more consistently. Chair Gabrieli suggested the committee put a “pin” (i.e. hold) on the discussion of incentivizing data collection and securing better data because he agrees with the importance of the topic and wants to give it more attention without distracting from the current presentation. Questions on this future topic could include: How do we monitor the data collection? How do we audit campus collection efforts? How do we measure data accuracy and ranges across campuses and what are the incentives? Committee Co-Chair Harranty noted that there were additional topics to cover today, and in the interest of time she suggested that the committee move on. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis suggested that she could hold back sharing her Equity Agenda Policy and Program Audit slides today, since she would be presenting on the topic at the full Board meeting the following Tuesday; Committee Co-Chair Harranty agreed.

## **2) Open Educational Resources (OER)**

Deputy Commissioner Marshall introduced the presentation by noting that OER is a good example of a collaboration with our students, reminding members of the 2018 Student Advisory Council resolution advocating for OER and how OER arose from student advocacy. She said that Dr. Robert Awkward, Assistant Commissioner for Academic Effectiveness at the DHE, would speak to the progress made since the OER workgroup submitted their implementation report in the fall of 2019. OER is similar to CAP in that the initiative is in the implementation stage with staff working on the short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations that were part of the fall 2019 report. One recommendation was the formation of a Council. The committee will hear about the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) developed by the Council to measure the progress of this work.

Assistant Commissioner Awkward led a slide presentation which included background history on the beginnings of OER and progress over time; the OER working group charge; and the short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations. Deputy Commissioner Marshall recognized

the KPI's established by the Council as very encouraging measures in advancing the work, especially in the area of cost savings, total number of OER courses, number of students enrolled, changes in DFW rates, and demographics of students taking OER courses. Deputy Commissioner Marshall extended congratulations to the OER Council, and thanked Assistant Commissioner Awkward for his leadership.

Chair Harrity stated that she imagined Pell money and student loans that are targeted toward the purchase of textbooks could now be saved and she wondered if OER data-tracking includes student and family cost savings. Assistant Commissioner Awkward agreed that OER saves most students the costs of purchased textbooks but might not be as helpful for students reliant on financial aid who have vouchers designated for book purchases.

Committee Member Pagliuca asked if the Council gave any thought to including total cost saving vs. total cost for execution – i.e. a "Return of Investment" - in the KPI section. And second, she wondered if there was any 'bunching' for particular types of courses or areas of study. Member Pagliuca also mentioned the issue of publishers not making it possible for published materials to be easily transferred to other students because of the need to update and republish and so she wondered if OER is putting pressure on publishers to rethink their business model. Mr. Awkward confirmed that OER is a disrupter to the "oligarchy" of publishing, with changes such as access to new online materials, redistribution of materials, etc. However, it is unknown how far publishers can offer reductions because of their own costs. Committee Member Pagliuca said the changes in how publishers react might be another valuable indicator. Deputy Commissioner Marshall added that the DHE is committed to quantifying the ROI, saying that the very small investment in faculty professional development has resulted in significant gains. The surveys on this initiative show there has been a bunching of the use of OER in certain subject areas-- with the faculty in the STEM fields being more reluctant to turn to OER than in other academic areas. Surveys show more use of OER in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Assistant Commissioner Awkward concluded the presentation by summarizing relevant legislative outreach on this issue, noting that legislative briefings were held at six of our higher education institutions, with the legislators hearing from students and faculty and the benefits to both. He also indicated that our campus presidents are very supportive of the initiative. Before turning the meeting back over to Committee Co-Chair Harrity, Deputy Commissioner Marshall reviewed the final slide of the presentation which outlined MA's contributions to and strong involvement in national OER initiatives.

## **VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.