

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & STUDENT SUCCESS ADVISORY COUNCIL
June 7, 2022

The June 7, 2022 meeting of the Academic Affairs & Student Success (AA&SS) Advisory Council of the Board of Higher Education ("BHE" or "the Board") was held virtually on the web-conference platform Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Advisory Council Members Present	AAC Co-Chair Patty Eppinger; AAC Co-Chair Sheila Harrity; Judy Pagliuca; Paul Toner; and Secretary of Education James Peyser.
Other BHE Members Present	Bill Walczak; Community College Student Advisor, Jorgo Gushi; State University Student Advisor, Cindy Mac
Advisory Council Members Absent	Commissioner Carlos Santiago
Department Staff Present	Daniel Hay; Allison Little; Constantia (Dena) Papanikolaou; Elena Quiroz-Livanis; Christine Williams

I. CALL TO ORDER:

AA&SS Council Co-Chair Patty Eppinger called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Roll call attendance of members was taken (see attendance roster reflected above).

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes from the April 19, 2022, meeting of the AA&SS Advisory Council were unanimously approved through a roll call vote.

III. REMARKS

A. Chair's Remarks

AA&SS Advisory Council Co-Chair Eppinger began the meeting by thanking Department of Higher Education (DHE) staff for their help throughout the year in preparing for these meetings and thanked the AA&SS Advisory Council members for their commitment and participation. She acknowledged Assistant Commissioners Elena Quiroz-Livanis and Allison Little for their assistance in preparing for today's meeting. She then invited Secretary Peyser to provide remarks and, seeing he had none, invited Assistant Commissioner for Academic Policy & Student Success and Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis to share comments on the Commissioner's behalf.

B. Commissioner's Remarks

Assistant Commissioner for Academic Policy & Student Success and Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis took the opportunity to recognize the work of former Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success, Dr. Patricia Marshall, for leading much of the work being brought forward, particularly the SAT Optional pilot. Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis also spoke of the honor it had been for her to have staffed the Advisory Council, in addition to the Executive Committee and Board, all year. She mentioned that she invited Assistant Commissioner for P-16 Alignment & Outreach Little, to join today's meeting in order to ensure appropriate staffing of the Advisory Council in the future. She concluded by saying she looked forward to working with Assistant Commissioner Little and the Advisory Council Co-Chairs next year.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

List of documents used:
[PowerPoint Presentation](#)

SAT Optional Pilot and Admission Standards: Updates and Work Plan

Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis introduced presenters, Christine Williams, Assistant Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs & Strategic Initiatives, and Daniel Hay, Assistant Director for Access & Success Strategies and Program Approval. Before initiating the presentation over, she took a moment to share that DHE staff were invited by the Education Trust and Lumina Foundation to present the BHE's Equity Agenda policy and program audit before five different states. Massachusetts has been recognized across the country for our policy audit framework, including by the Education Trust which used it to inform its process for other states to model. Education Trust is a national non-profit by former U.S. Secretary of Education, John King, focused on improving outcomes for low-income students and students of color.

Assistant Commissioner Williams began the presentation by providing background and an overview and then asked Assistant Director Hay to provide a topic refresher. He reminded members that the DHE had provided in-depth reviews of the literature on the role of standardized tests and admissions and the national trends in moving away from requiring test scores. Research showed high school GPA is more predictive of subsequent student success than standardized test scores especially where students of color, as well as students from lower income background, systematically scored lower on standardized tests.

DHE staff had also presented on the Massachusetts context, including trends and test scores across the Commonwealth over time, which led to Massachusetts' public institutions pursued a test optional admissions policy. Presentations also included case studies from other states. These cases provided potential ideas for our own policy development as Massachusetts considers whether to make test optional permanent. Considerations will include identifying a minimum GPA requirement for applying without test scores as well as considerations for application review processes. He said the remaining presentation would consider data the DHE

collected and analyzed related to the pilot after he provided a quick reminder of how Massachusetts treats SAT test scores in admission standards.

Moving from a review of past presentations, Assistant Director Hay said that admission standards represent just the minimum requirements applicants must meet to be eligible for admission. Meeting them does not automatically guarantee admission as individual institutions can employ additional requirements or criteria when making decisions. Outside of the test optional pilot, MA admission standards require that applicants submit test scores regardless of their high school GPA. He reviewed the sliding score and discussed the 10% rule which allows institutions to admit up to 10% of an incoming class via special admissions.

As the final part of the review, Assistant Director Hay touched on the differences between test required and test optional. The test required policy requires all applicants submit a test score for admission purposes. Under this policy, regardless of high school GPA, a test score is required. Massachusetts follows this policy in its undergraduate admission standards. A test optional policy enables an institution to consider applicants that do not submit test scores. This approach was part of pilot policy. Under test optional policy, institutions considered additional criteria in reviewing applications to offset not having that SAT score. Additional criteria included the rigor of coursework, extracurricular involvement, leadership opportunities, and other factors that demonstrated a student's potential to succeed in higher education.

Member Judy Pagliuca expressed interest in seeing the percent of high school students admitted into MA higher education institutions using a student's GPA compared to admission by SAT to better understand the impact of these two different approaches. She also wanted to know if subject tests for certain majors might require a certain test score for admittance. Assistant Director Hay responded saying the Department had begun looking at different ranges of GPA related to student success outcomes and would present that information at a future meeting. He said in some cases, certain programs, such as Nursing and Engineering programs, did have special requirements. The future policy would need to be designed in order to allow institutions to use criteria best suited for their programs.

After a brief discussion on the sliding scale, Assistant Director Hay returned to the presentation. Data from the Test Optional Pilot data showed a substantial increase in the number of students applying without test scores from 2016 to 2021, particularly among Black and LatinX students. Further, the data shows that by and large Black and Latinx applicants are admitted at higher rates with retention equal to or higher than those who submit test scores when test scores are not considered for these applicants. The data also shows a clear trend that a student admitted without test scores is more likely to matriculate than those that do submit test scores. The test optional pilot is too new to know the effectiveness of it on graduation rates.

Advisory Council members and staff then discussed possible reasons why students who did not submit test scores matriculated at higher rates than a student who did and the need to try and control for unintended consequences. Assistant Director Hay concluded the presentation by identifying the three main takeaways as follows: 1) test optional is a step toward more equitable admissions, 2) certain programs may benefit from requiring test scores, and 3) admissions

standards should clarify the functionality of test optional policies. The presentation was then handed over to Assistant Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs & Strategic Initiatives, Christine Williams.

Assistant Commissioner Williams discussed approaches to eradicating racial disparities in the admission standards that create barriers to admission for students. Her presentation included a review of the Equity Agenda and concluded with a review of the admission policy next steps for FY23 which included: 1) a Test Optional Policy and 2) the Complete Racial Equity Audit of all Admissions Components. The Test Optional Policy would include the continuation of the pilot and the Racial Equity Audit would include the convening of stakeholders to both inform and review findings.

MassTeach: A Statewide Strategy to Increase STEM Teacher Representation

The meeting was then turned over to Assistant Commissioner Little. She shared that MassTeach is part of a larger landscape of STEM teacher programs across the country funded through the National Science Foundation as part of the Noyce Foundation. The goal of Noyce Foundation is to encourage more STEM majors and professionals to become teachers, based on research that shows strong content knowledge results in strong K-12 outcomes.

MassTeach encourages undergraduate STEM students of color to become STEM teachers. About 8% of K-12 teachers identify as people of color while 60% of our students identify as people of color. The grant provides participating students \$10,000 per year as an incentive to not only get their bachelor's degree in a STEM field, but also to earn their licensure in order to become a teacher and teach in a high-needs district. In Massachusetts, approximately 300 of our 360 school districts meet this definition. This focus is supported by Massachusetts substantial diversity gap with the data supporting the need to racially diversify our STEM teacher pipeline.

The Department was awarded \$1.5 million over five years to support MassTeach. The program is exclusive to Massachusetts community college transfer students. This focus was intentional given the diversity of the segment. Prior to MassTeach, very few community college programs had secondary education teacher pathways. Building on the MassTransfer A2B Pathways, the program offers transfer opportunities between institutional partners. MassTeach started out with six partners - Berkshire Community College partnering with Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Holyoke Community College partnering with Westfield State University, and Quinsigamond Community College partnering with Worcester State University. While these partnerships were thoughtfully formed for regional access, students are not obligated to transfer to the associated partner.

Awarded scholars received \$20,000 while earning their STEM baccalaureate degree. They do not get any funding while at the community college. Scholars have to teach in a high-need district for at least four years after receiving their degree. An important aspect of MassTeach is the encouragement of program graduates to teach in their home community, which is amplified by recruiting community college students.

MassTeach is aligned with the Department's STEM Starter Academy leveraging the existing relationships and the program participants which include a high concentration of students of color earning STEM degrees and certificates at the community colleges. Students are well supported from their community college experiences to a university through to completing their baccalaureate degree in a STEM field.

Community college students were chosen as the target population because they have a tremendous amount of cultural and experiential assets. All these attributes contribute to a positive teaching experience for their students in their K-12 classroom. Assistant Commissioner Little then provided time for Jay Turner, Worcester State University graduate, to share their experience.

Following the student presentations, Assistant Commissioner Little shared that MassTeach just recruited its fourth cohort and just graduated its first three program participants. Come September, the program will be supporting 18 scholars if all of the nine new candidates who accepted the scholarship actually start. She concluded her presentation with a slide on next steps which included: 1) redesigning the intro to education syllabus to be used as a recruitment tool, 2) A2B Secondary Education Pathway, 3) continuing pre-teaching internships, 4) attending national conferences and 5) seeking out future funding.

Member Pagliuca asked whether the educator STEM gap existed at the elementary school level as well as high school. Assistant Commissioner Little responded by stating that teachers at the elementary school level do not typically get special licensure, though one can be a science or math specialist, so MassTeach is focused on high school. When the proposal was submitted, STEM educators in middle school and high school were in high demand, and this is part of the reason why the program is focused on that population. In addition to racial diversity, the program considers other diversity. The program also addresses basic needs insecurity, noting that one scholar in MassTeach had experienced homelessness and is a mother. She also shared that most of MassTeach scholars are non-traditional age bringing with them different types of experiences going into the classroom, with one scholar battling cancer in the past year.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

VI. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.