

## MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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February 06, 2024

10:00 a.m.

via Zoom

### Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (BHE or Board) was held on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 remotely via teleconference (Zoom).

The following Board Members were present:

Chris Gabrieli, Chair

Danielle Allen

Mary Burns

Harneen Chernow

Ann Christensen

Veronica Conforme<sup>1</sup>

Alex Cortez

Cindy Mack, Voting Student Member, State University segment

Paul Mattera

Judy Pagliuca

Christina Royal

Patrick Tutwiler, Secretary of Education

Bill Walczak

Andrew Whitcomb, non-voting Student Advisor, UMass segment

Noe Ortega, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

The following Board Members were absent:

Sarah Alzate-Pérez, non-voting Student Advisor, Community College segment

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<sup>1</sup> Arrived at 10:08 a.m. after the roll call attendance due to another meeting.

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Board Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Department of Higher Education (DHE or Department) Assistant Commissioner Elena Quiroz-Livanis took roll call attendance (see above for attendance roster).

## **II. COMMISSIONER'S SPOTLIGHT**

### List of Documents Used

#### [Commissioner's PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Commissioner Ortega provided an overview of the objectives driving the Commissioner's Spotlight agenda item. The Spotlight is intended to inform the conversation around Board key priorities and Commissioner Ortega said he would continue to invite members of the Department team to share updates, as well as frame important policy discussions.

Following that, he elaborated on the ongoing dialogue at the Department concerning affordability, quality, and equity in postsecondary education. They serve as the foundational tenets that guide the endeavors of the Department and Board, encompassing the Strategic Higher Education Finance (SHEF) report and the Strategic Plan on Racial Equity (SPRE). Commissioner Ortega stated that the objective is to establish conditions enabling institutions to provide high-quality, affordable, and equitable postsecondary education for all.

Commissioner Ortega spoke of the Massachusetts promise and how the SHEF framework functions in the best interests of institutions and students while establishing a vision for fair conditions, provisions, and opportunities. He invited Deputy Commissioner of Administration, Finance, and Operations Matthew Cole to provide an update on funding, a critical factor in determining the course of action for multiple strategic initiatives within the Department.

Deputy Commissioner Cole reported that Governor Maura Healey's FY25 Budget Recommendation proposes funding for higher education at around \$2 billion. The funding could be considered in three distinct categories: Campus Direct Appropriations, DHE Operations, Grants & Financial Aid, and DHE Fair Share Funded Initiatives. The Governor's budget proposal includes funding for capital investments in campus facilities, expanding MASSGrant Plus and MassReconnect programs, and investments to support students through financial aid programs to increase affordability. Deputy Commissioner Cole turned to Commissioner Ortega to continue the presentation.

Commissioner Ortega stated the Board set multi-year priorities to ensure continued investments in financial aid and student support, focusing on infrastructure, collaboration, accountability, and performance. He added that the Department is committed to focusing on financial stability and sustainability, and addressing the needs of Pell and Non-Pell students while continuing efforts on

financial aid redesign. Commissioner Ortega turned to Deputy Commissioner of Policy Michael Dannenberg to share an update on the Finance and Administrative Policy (FAAP) Advisory Council.

Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg reported on three key takeaways from the last FAAP Advisory Council meeting: 1) Focusing on the needs of students, 2) Providing students with the ability to choose between different types of public institutions, and 3) Prioritizing student success. He noted the next FAAP Advisory Council meeting would convene on February 13 before he turned it back to Commissioner Ortega.

Commissioner Ortega concluded by stating that the Board's goal is to continue discussions that promote the promise of affordable college in Massachusetts, as the SHEF Framework and the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity intend to accomplish. Chair Gabrieli opened the meeting to Board members for questions.

Board Member Judy Pagliuca requested data on student participation in the various programs and Commissioner Ortega confirmed those could be provided at a future date.

Board Member Danielle Allen asked the Commissioner to forecast a timetable for critical decision points. Commissioner Ortega explained that the late summer rollout of MassReconnect and the MASSGrant Plus Expansion programs made it difficult to inform students and families about available resources. Moving forward, the main decision point is to determine what updates or changes are needed to ensure the success of these financial aid initiatives.

Board Member Harneen Chernow emphasized the importance of equity, affordability, and high quality in Massachusetts' education system. She highlighted the need to consider the debt burden of certain populations, such as those who drop out or struggle to complete their degrees, and the overall cost of attending school, living, and supporting themselves. The debt-free concept is crucial for Massachusetts' future vision and should be integrated with the SHEF agenda and SPRE work, focusing on students least likely to attend college.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to the next item on the agenda.

### **III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Chair Gabrieli reported that the Board did not receive requests for public comment.

#### **IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the BHE meeting held on December 12, 2023. Hearing no further discussion, and on a motion duly made and seconded, the motion proceeded to a roll call vote as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

#### **V. REMARKS & REPORTS**

##### **A. Chair's Remarks**

Chair Gabrieli expressed his excitement about being part of the Board and looks forward to ongoing discussions. He appreciated the Commissioner's focus on higher education finance, as it is a significant issue, and advances the Board's priorities as established with the adoption of the Strategic Higher Education Finance Framework.

Chair Gabrieli emphasized the importance of supporting institutions' use of proven approaches to increase student success. He noted the team's efforts to bring expertise nationwide as states drive innovation in higher education. Lastly, Chair Gabrieli stated that Massachusetts can learn from other states' practices to define its path. He turned to Secretary Patrick Tutwiler for his remarks.

##### **B. Secretary of Executive Office of Education's (EOE) Remarks**

Secretary Patrick Tutwiler yielded his time after commending Commissioner Noe Ortega, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, Finance & Operations Matthew Cole, and Deputy Commissioner for Policy Michael Dannenberg for their exceptional work detailing the FY25 investments in higher education he intended to report.

## C. Reports from Presidents

### State University Segmental Report

[\*For a copy of President Keenan's full remarks, please see:\*](#)

President John Keenan of Salem State University provided updates on the Massachusetts State University segment on behalf of the State University Council of Presidents. He provided updates regarding recent developments at Bridgewater State University, Framingham State University, and Salem State University, including new facilities, programs, and events. Additionally, he commented on the Governor's FY25 budget, advocating for continued investments in public higher education priorities, such as capital construction, financial assistance programs, student health initiatives, and cybersecurity infrastructure.

President Keenan spoke to the need for a higher education bond bill to fund capital projects and address challenges faced by campuses in funding major projects. He further shared concerns regarding about campus police recruitment and retention issues and the push for legislation to move public higher education police officers to a higher retirement benefits group. He concluded with a discussion on the state universities' efforts to offer Professional Practice Doctorate Degrees and the historical context behind the restrictions on such programs.

### Community College Segmental Report

[\*For a copy of President Laura Douglas' full remarks, please see:\*](#)

In President James Vander Hooven's absence, President Laura Douglas of Bristol Community College provided updates on the Massachusetts Community College segment on behalf of the Community College Council of Presidents. She highlighted and commended the launch of the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) to provide financial aid to undocumented students, the success of the MassReconnect program in increasing adult student enrollment, and the Governor's budget recommendations for higher education funding. President Douglas also discussed the advocacy for increased funding for the SUCCESS program and updates on planning for Free Community College for all. She concluded by emphasizing the need for increased funding for faculty and staff compensation to make free community college a viable option in the Commonwealth.

Chair Gabrieli noted the substantial rise in enrollment at Bristol Community College and asked President Douglas about the factors contributing to students learning about MassReconnect. President Douglas stated that various initiatives, including social media, billboards, campaigns, radio, TV advertisements, and a customer relations management system, have helped promote MassReconnect. Chair Gabrieli invited the Student Advisory Council to begin their report.

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

BHE Student Member Cindy Mack provided an update on the recent activities of the Student Advisory Council (SAC), which involved visits from Senior Deputy Commissioner of Access & Student Financial Assistance Clantha McCurdy and Assistant Commissioner Elena Quiroz-Livanis during their meeting on February 1. The SAC selected Open Educational Resources Week as its spring advocacy initiative, convening from March 4 to March 8. The Financial Literacy Project, conducted in partnership with the Boston Intercollegiate Government (BIG), was also discussed. The SAC is seeking a meeting with student advisors from all public higher education institutions to discuss ways to enhance support and establish connections with them. The SAC is also forming a team for next year's leadership. Student Member Mack addressed and turned to Chair Gabrieli for questions. Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Commissioner Noe Ortega for the Commissioner's Report.

#### **E. Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Ortega highlighted the importance of the landmark new investments in state financial aid, namely MassReconnect and MASSGrant Plus Expansion, highlighting the benefits they have provided to 45,000 students and 8,400 enrollees. The Healey-Driscoll Administration's commitment to invest in these programs allows for continued evaluation of their efficacy. MASSGrant Plus Expansion has helped approximately 25,000 students, providing tuition, fees, and stipends. Commissioner Ortega acknowledged that financial aid officers at community colleges, state universities, and UMass have been responsive to the investments, managing the distribution of an additional \$104M dollars, and thanked them for their work in ensuring timely money was distributed to students. He emphasized the need for innovation and the role of public higher education in the 21st century to meet students' needs. Lastly, Commissioner Ortega stated that the DHE is committed to making Massachusetts a place where every student can attend, promising to make college affordable and available to all. Commissioner Ortega turned the meeting to Chair Gabrieli for the next item on the agenda. Chair Gabrieli opened the meeting to Board members for questions.

Board member Judy Pagliuca discussed the need for students to explore alternative methods to reduce textbook and supply costs in college education. She suggested that students could consider using licensed library resources and different providers of materials instead of big textbook providers. Member Pagliuca suggested that the Board could support students and faculty in implementing these initiatives to make college education more affordable.

UMass Segmental Advisor Andrew Whitcomb added that UMass Lowell is implementing "low-cost courses" in enrollment selection to ensure students know the cost before choosing a course. The school is also encouraging teachers to use traditional books and articles instead, utilizing resources available through the library. This approach aims to provide students with a more cost-effective education experience.

Board member Cindy Mack emphasized the significance of Open Educational Resources (OER) in promoting affordable courses, suggesting increased focus on meeting OER demands and addressing stipends for professors to develop more OER courses.

## **VI. ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORTS**

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next item and noted that Advisory Council chairs typically share reports at the Executive Committee meeting. The Commissioner’s Spotlight included a preview of the upcoming Finance and Administrative Policy Advisory Council meeting and the Chair invited Board Member Alex Cortez to report on the work of the Evidence-Based Policymaking Advisory Council.

### **A. Evidence Based Policymaking**

Member Alex Cortez reported that at the last Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM) Advisory Council meeting, the group discussed quantifying the economic value of our post-secondary pathways and whether to measure value by earnings, economic mobility, or return on investment (ROI). He suggested a thorough discussion with stakeholders to determine how to measure appropriately. Member Cortez said the council will bring national voices and examples from other states for their next meeting on March 13, 2024, to help inform their future moves.

The Board was then invited to ask questions. Board member Danielle Allen commented that significant progress has been made in tracking health effects and other aspects of well-being that can be used as benchmarks in the framework we are developing. Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli continued to the next item on the agenda.

### **B. Finance and Administrative Policy**

No report.

## **VII. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT & MOTIONS**

### **A. Executive Committee Report**

No report.

### **B. Motions**

List of Documents Used

[BHE 24-29](#): Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 24-24 through 24-28 on a Consent Agenda

[BHE 24-24](#): Approval of Letter of Intent of Fitchburg State University to Award the Bachelor of Arts in Creative Art Enterprise and Authorization for Fast Track Review

[BHE 24-25](#): Approval of Letter of Intent of Fitchburg State University to Award the Bachelor of Arts in Expressive Arts therapies With Concentrations in Music, Visual Art, and Drama and Authorization for Fast Track Review

[BHE 24-26](#): Approval of Letter of Intent of Greenfield Community College to Award the Associate in Science in Allied Health and Authorization for Fast Track Review

[BHE 24-27](#): Approval of Letter of Intent of Northern Essex Community College to Award the Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business and Authorization for Fast Track Review

[BHE 24-28](#): Approval of Letter of Intent of Northern Essex Community College to Award the Associate in Science in Marketing and Authorization for Fast Track Review Approval of Letter

[BHE 24-37](#): Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 24-30 through 24-36 on a Consent Agenda

[BHE 24-30](#): Community Colleges Resident Tuition Rates for FY2025

[BHE 24-31](#): Community Colleges Non-Resident Tuition Rates for FY2025

[BHE 24-32](#): State Universities Resident Undergraduate Tuition Rates for FY2025

[BHE 24-33](#): State Universities Non-Resident Undergraduate Tuition Rates for FY2025

[BHE 24-34](#): State Universities Resident Graduate Tuition Rates for FY2025

[BHE 24-35](#): State Universities Non-Resident Graduate Tuition Rates for FY2025

[BHE 24-36](#): Alternative Non-Resident Undergraduate Tuition Rates – Berkshire Community College and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for FY2025

[ATTACHMENT A](#) Berkshire Community College Letter of Support

[ATTACHMENT B](#) Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Letter of Support

[BHE 24-38](#): Approval of Massachusetts State College Building Authority Fiscal Year 2025 Rent Schedule and Operating Budget

[Attachment A](#) - Schedule of Proposed Rents and Operating Budget

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion to approve **BHE 24-29**, *Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 24-24 through 24-28 on a Consent Agenda*. He said the motion includes five institutional Letters of Intent (LOIs) to offer new programs from Fitchburg State University (FSU), Greenfield Community College (GCC), and Northern Essex Community College (NECC), respectively, consolidated on a consent agenda. Chair Gabrieli turned to the Board for questions.

Board Member Harneen Chernow asked if students graduating from Greenfield Community College (GCC) with an Associate of Science in Allied Health would be able to secure jobs in their field upon graduation, since the job listings require an advance degree. GCC's Vice President of Academic Affairs, April Parsons, clarified that the Associate of Science in Allied Health at GCC is the transfer pathway and couples with the larger Allied Health guided pathway at GCC. Member Chernow stated that measuring the long-term outcomes of programs approved by the DHE should be a topic of discussion separate from the program approval process. Chair Gabrieli noted that historically, measuring an approved program's performance over time has not been the DHE's role. However, tying into the Evidence-Based



Policymaking discussion led by Member Cortez, Chair Gabrieli stated that it's on the table as a narrative to help change.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-29 was approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 24-29      APPROVAL OF BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MOTIONS 24-24 THROUGH 24-48 ON A CONSENT AGENDA**

**VOTED:**            The Board of Higher Education approves the following motions on a consent agenda:

- BHE 24-24      Approval of Letter of Intent of Fitchburg State University to Award the Bachelor of Arts in Creative Art Enterprise and Authorization for Fast Track Review
  
- BHE 24-25      Approval of Letter of Intent of Fitchburg State University to Award the Bachelor of Arts in Expressive Arts therapies With Concentrations in Music, Visual Art, and Drama and Authorization for Fast Track Review
  
- BHE 24-26      Approval of Letter of Intent of Greenfield Community College to Award the Associate in Science in Allied Health and Authorization for Fast Track Review
  
- BHE 24-27      Approval of Letter of Intent of Northern Essex Community College to Award the Associate in Science in Entrepreneurial Business and Authorization for Fast Track Review

BHE 24-28 Approval of Letter of Intent of Northern Essex Community College to Award the Associate in Science in Marketing and Authorization for Fast Track Review Approval of Letter

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

**Contact** Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-37**, *Approval of Board of Higher Education Motions 24-30 through 24-36 on a Consent Agenda*. He summarized the motion and noted that BHE 24-37 sets the tuition rates for FY25, largely continuing the flat rate tuition on campuses.

Without further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Elena Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-37 was approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 24-37 APPROVAL OF BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MOTIONS 24-30 THROUGH 24-36 ON A CONSENT AGENDA**

**VOTED:** The Board of Higher Education approves the following motions on a consent agenda:

- BHE 24-30 Community Colleges Resident Tuition Rates for FY2025
- BHE 24-31 Community Colleges Non-Resident Tuition Rates for FY2025
- BHE 24-32 State Universities Resident Undergraduate Tuition Rates for FY2025
- BHE 24-33 State Universities Non-Resident Undergraduate Tuition Rates for FY2025
- BHE 24-34 State Universities Resident Graduate Tuition Rates for FY2025
- BHE 24-35 State Universities Non-Resident Graduate Tuition Rates for FY2025
- BHE 24-36 Alternative Non-Resident Undergraduate Tuition Rates – Berkshire Community College and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for FY2025

**Authority** Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 6 and 9(I); BHE By-Laws, Article III, Section 5.

**Contact** Matt Cole, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, Finance, and Operations

Chair Gabrieli turned to the next agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-38**, *Approval of State College Building Authority Fiscal Year 2025 Rent Schedule and Operating Budget*. He summarized the motion and noted that BHE 24-38 sets out rent to be charged to students for occupancy in residence halls.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-38 was approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 24-38 APPROVAL OF MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGE BUILDING AUTHORITY FISCAL YEAR 2025 RENT SCHEDULE AND OPERATING BUDGET**

**VOTED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the attached Massachusetts State College Building Authority Fiscal Year 2025 Schedule of Proposed Rents and Operating Budget for the Authority and State University Residence Halls, effective July 1, 2024, provided that any increase in the rent schedule shall be subject to the approval of the Board of 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 the Massachusetts State College Building Authority.

**Contact** Matt Cole, Deputy Commissioner of Administration, Finance, and Operations

## VIII. BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

### List of Documents Used

[BHE 24-39](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

Approval of the Board of Higher Education Naming of Framingham State University's 45 Adams Road Property in Honor of Joan E. Murtaugh

Chair Gabrieli turned to the final agenda item, a motion to approve **BHE 24-39**, *Approval of the Board of Higher Education Naming of Framingham State University's 45 Adams Road Property in Honor of Joan E. Murtaugh*. Board Member Bill Walczak offered a comment expressing concern around the Board's lack of oversight in naming institutions of public higher education. Chief Legal Counsel Dena Papanikolaou clarified that the naming of state colleges and universities is outside the purview of the Board, as that authority is with the legislature. However, under Massachusetts General Law (MGL), Chapter 15A, Section 9(m), the BHE has statutory authority over real property on the State University and Community College campuses. And it is based on that authority upon which the BHE has set guidelines on the approval of building naming rights, both for promoting fundraising and recognizing individuals who have made a significant professional contribution and/or distinguished service to the campus. Chief Legal Counsel Papanikolaou turned to Chair Gabrieli to facilitate any questions and the Board vote.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli turned to Assistant Commissioner Quiroz-Livanis for the vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 24-39 was approved by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Danielle Allen – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes

- Harneen Chernow – Yes
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Cindy Mack – No vote, Left at 11:50 a.m. due to prior conflict .
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Judy Pagliuca – Yes
- Christina Royal – Yes
- Secretary Patrick Tutwiler – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 24-39      APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION NAMING OF FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY’S 45 ADAMS ROAD PROPERTY IN HONOR OF JOAN E. MURTAUGH**

**VOTED:**            The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the request of the Framingham State University Board of Trustees to name the college’s 45 Adams Road property the **Joan E. Murtaugh ’61 Alumni Center**.

**Authority**            Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(m); BHE Policy Regarding Building Naming Rights at Massachusetts Public Higher Education Institution, FAAP 17-23 (January 24, 2017).

**Contact:**            Matthew Cole, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, Finance, and Operations

**IX. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Gabrieli adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Noe Ortega, Ph.D.  
Commissioner and Secretary to the Board*