

MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

October 1, 2025

10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (BHE or Board) was held on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, remotely via teleconference (Zoom).

The following Board Members were present:

Chris Gabrieli, Chair
Harneen Chernow, Vice Chair
Lisa Battaglinio
Mary Burns
Ann Christensen
Veronica Conforme¹
Alex Cortez
Bob LePage, Secretary of Education Designee
Bill Walczak

Noe Ortega, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

Hannah Rosenkrantz, non-voting Student Advisor, University of Massachusetts Segment

The following Board Members were absent:

Danielle Allen
Judy Pagliuca
Christina Royal

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Chris Gabrieli called the regular meeting of the Board to order at 10:01 a.m. Roll call attendance was taken (see above for attendance roster).

¹ Audio issues, presence recorded via chat.

II. COMMISSIONER'S SPOTLIGHT

a. [Board Priorities Presentation](#)

Board Priorities Framework

Commissioner Ortega opened the Commissioner's Spotlight presentation by reviewing the purpose of the series, which he articulated as keeping the Board anchored in key priorities and providing insight and visibility into the Department of Higher Education's (Department's or DHE's) work. Commissioner Ortega then offered updates related to the Board's four strategic priorities adopted at the 2025 retreat: (1) Student Success and Financial Aid; (2) Economic Mobility; (3) Public Good Outcomes; and (4) Innovation. Commissioner Ortega reiterated that the Board's equity goal—significantly improving enrollment, attainment, and post-completion success for underrepresented populations—remains embedded across all four priorities.

Financial Aid and Student Success

Commissioner Ortega acknowledged the Commonwealth's investment into state financial aid programming, noting that Massachusetts has more than doubled its investment in financial aid in recent years and has positioned itself as a national leader in per-student financial support. He noted that the majority of state funding is devoted to need-based aid, which reflects the Commonwealth's commitment to students who require the greatest support.

Commissioner Ortega next shared recent developments related to the Board's Financial Aid strategic priority such as free tuition and fees for all Pell-eligible students across all of the Commonwealth's public undergraduate campuses ; a comprehensive Free Community College program accessible to all eligible students; and enrollment growth of nearly 24% across the Community Colleges between Fall 2022 and Fall 2024.

Student Success Initiatives

Next, Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg discussed parallel growth in funding for student success initiatives. He stated that under the Healey-Driscoll Administration, Massachusetts has more than doubled funding for student success services. He described the Community College SUCCESS program (launched in 2021) and the new State University SUCCESS program in

development, which collectively account for a \$28 million investment toward supporting student persistence and degree completion.

He explained that the State University SUCCESS design merges Georgia State University's predictive-analytics model and the City University of New York's (CUNY's) ASAP program, which have both been associated with significant gains in degree completion. Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg also summarized the work of the Commission on Higher Education Quality and Affordability's (CHEQA's) work to address noting: unmet student needs such as housing, food, childcare, and other indirect costs. Deputy Commissioner Dannenberg stated that investment in wraparound services and full-time attendance can yield up to a 20-percentage-point increase in degree program completion and that faculty and staff compensation, while comparable nationally, lags when adjusted for Massachusetts' high cost of living. He noted that the Commonwealth's FY26 budget directs a comprehensive study of Community College faculty and professional staff compensation, which DHE is developing in consultation with the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges and other stakeholders...

Economic Mobility Measurement

Next, Associate Commissioner Delci reported on progress made toward integrating economic mobility metrics into the Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS), which tracks institutional indicators for State Universities and Community Colleges. He outlined PMRS's evolution from static annual reports to an interactive dashboard and noted that a system update scheduled for Fall 2025 will add an Economic Mobility section featuring a "High-Demand/High Value" metric aligned with state labor market needs, as well as two earnings metrics that will compare the earnings of college graduates to high-school graduates, and tracking pre- and post-earnings of mid-career students over the age of 25 years. Developed in partnership with the Department of Economic Research, these additions will clarify the value and workforce impact of public higher education.

Innovation and Next Steps

Commissioner Ortega concluded the Commissioner's Spotlight section with updates related to the Board's Innovation strategic priority. He explained that innovation is designed to build on existing efforts, such as Early College and Open Educational Resources (OER), while developing capacity through an Innovation Hub within DHE to coordinate pilot programming and scale proven models across institutions. He stated that recent developments include the expansion of

Early College partnerships to 75 partnerships serving nearly 10,000 students statewide (with an aspirational goal of 100,000 students); efforts to expand work-based learning opportunities (apprenticeships, co-ops, internships, and credentials of value); and the preparation of a proposed Innovation Regulation that would provide institutions with greater flexibility in time-to-degree and program design aligned with workforce needs.

Board Discussion

Vice Chair Chernow thanked the Commissioner for the succinct framing of the Department's three principal focus areas and reaffirmed the Commonwealth's equity commitment. She emphasized the importance of workforce recruitment and retention, noting that the forthcoming compensation study will be useful in understanding the impact of Massachusetts' cost of living on faculty and staff.

Board Member Bill Walczak asked how campuses can propose ideas to the Innovation Hub.

In response, Commissioner Ortega explained that innovation investments will be guided by defined focus areas and available funding. He explained that the Department's plans to issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) tied to those focus areas, enabling institutions to submit proposals for review with the Board while ensuring strategic, scalable investments.

Chair Gabrieli stated that the Department has posted two positions—a Chief Innovation Officer and a Project Manager—to operationalize the Innovation Hub. He further noted that, through grant funding from the Axim Collaborative, the Department plans to issue an RFP in early 2026 to recruit multi-institution, bottom-up proposals.

Deputy Commissioner Jose Luis Santos emphasized that the Department is specifically seeking collaborative, multi-institution submissions.

Chair Gabrieli the segment expressed his interest in the co-op initiative among the State Universities and UMass. He observed that the Department is prioritizing areas with clear campus

enthusiasm, recognizing that innovation typically begins with early adopters and expands as results emerge.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests for public participation were received.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Chair Gabrieli requested a motion to bundle and approve the minutes from the following BHE Meetings: April 8, 2025, May 20, 2025, and June 17, 2025.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the April 8th, May 20th, and June 17th BHE meeting minutes were approved unanimously by all Board Members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (voted via chat)
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

V. REMARKS

A. Board of Higher Education Chair

Chair Gabrieli opened the remarks by welcoming members to the first meeting of the academic year and thanking all for their flexibility in scheduling. He expressed appreciation to Commissioner Ortega for his continued work aligning the Department's initiatives with the Board's strategic priorities. Chair Gabrieli added that the Board will have an opportunity at its next retreat to review progress made over the past year with the adopted priorities and to further develop the remaining area still in progress.

Chair Gabrieli shared that Massachusetts has moved from 37th in the nation in financial aid in 2019 to likely among the top 10 states today—particularly in need-based aid.

Chair Gabrieli stated that improving completion must remain central to the Board's strategy because student outcomes are diminished when students enroll in but do not complete degree programs. He also acknowledged the collaboration between Commissioner Ortega and Commissioner Pedro Martinez of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to advance an ambitious expansion of Early College opportunities statewide.

Chair Gabrieli acknowledged the important role that Fair Share Amendment revenues, legislative appropriations, and continued gubernatorial support have played in advancing affordability initiatives. He cautioned, however, that the Commonwealth may face tighter fiscal conditions during the coming year due to slowing revenue growth and uncertain federal funding, and emphasized the need for continued vigilance and innovation in resource allocation. He noted that while there was no formal federal update at this meeting, the Board would remain attentive to developments in Washington and their potential impact on higher education funding.

Chair Gabrieli then introduced the Board's newest member, Dr. Lisa Battaglini, who currently serves as Vice Chair of the Bridgewater State University Board of Trustees, and will serve on the BHE as the State University segmental representative. Board Member Battaglini acknowledged DHE and BHE's shared commitment to equity and collaboration while referencing items such as the Board's draft innovation regulations, faculty salaries, and financial aid adjustments affecting public institutions. Board Member Battaglini emphasized the importance of college–community–school partnerships, expressed her excitement for expanding Early College opportunities statewide, and affirmed her commitment to collaboration.

The Chair then welcomed UMass Segmental Student Representative Hannah Rosenkrantz, the Student Adviser. Rosenkrantz shared that she is a junior biology major at the University of Massachusetts Boston and an EMT. She reported on most recent SAC meeting which included a discussion of students' concerns over federal funding restrictions – particularly at the Community College campuses - and the impact such restrictions will have on programs that support mentorship, advancement, and student services. Student Adviser Rosenkrantz expressed concerns that such restrictions would disproportionately affect Black, Hispanic, first-generation, and low-income students. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that

students from all races, genders, and backgrounds are included in budget-related decision making and policy choices.

B. Secretary of Education

Attending on behalf of Secretary of Education Patrick Tutwiler, Assistant Secretary LePage discussed the Discovery, Research, and Innovation for a Vibrant Economy (DRIVE) Initiative's efforts to create and sustain careers in manufacturing, bioscience, and health sciences across Massachusetts as well as the allocation of \$500,000 in Fair Share Amendment funding to each Massachusetts public institution of higher education for capital planning purposes, such as the modernization of laboratory and learning spaces. Assistant Secretary LePage mentioned recent events at UMass Dartmouth and other State Universities that showcased the BRIGHT Act's early impacts.

C. Presidents

[Community College Segmental Report](#)

North Shore Community College President William (Bill) Heineman reported that the Community College segment has experienced a 15% increase in headcount and a 17% increase in credit hours in light of tuition free programming such as MassReconnect. In light of persistent fiscal uncertainty, President Heineman emphasized that affordability must be matched with sustained investment in student supports. He referenced the legislatively mandated classification study for faculty and professional staff compensation, underscoring the need to address pay disparities. Finally, he cautioned that reduced book/supplies allowances may affect students with the greatest need in spring and urged consideration of supplemental funding

Member Bill Walczak expressed concern about the reduction to the book and supply allowance for the spring 2026 semester and urged proactive advocacy for supplemental funding to maintain the originally intended level of student support.

Chair Gabrieli acknowledged the concern, explained the constraints of the annual appropriations process, and emphasized the Department's priority to preserve tuition-free and fee-free access for Pell-eligible students while pursuing predictability for families.

State University Segmental Report

Westfield State University President Linda Thompson provided updates on behalf of the State Universities. She referenced a recent meeting at Worcester State University between Lieutenant Governor Driscoll and the Council of State University Presidents regarding the use of BRIGHT Act funds to align public campus learning environments with current technologies and workforce needs. President Thompson also shared her concern about potential shortfalls in MassGrant Plus and advocated for supplemental appropriations in the FY26 state budget to help offset federal reductions in student aid across the State University and UMass segments. President Thompson also asked that Board Member Battaglini be immediately appointed to the MSCBA Board and that State University representatives be included in the search for MSCBA's next Executive Director.

C. Commissioner

Commissioner Ortega welcomed members to the new academic year, and provided a summary of actions taken under the Board's summer delegation of authority, which included: updates to financial aid guidelines; approvals of institutional strategic plans (MCLA, Cape Cod CC, MassBay CC); technical HR adjustments; and the revocation of degree-granting authority for assessed closed institutions (Eastern Nazarene College, Johnson and Wales University and St. Louis University). He highlighted FY26 budget items: \$120M for free community college (MassReconnect/MassEducate), \$85M for expansion programs, \$115M for capital improvements, \$28M for SUCCESS programs, and \$0.5M for Hunger-Free Campus initiatives. He closed by expressing confidence in continued Board–Department–institution collaboration to advance affordability, student success, and quality amid a dynamic fiscal environment.

D. Student Advisory Council

Remarks from the Student Advisory Council were delivered by University of Massachusetts segmental representative Hannah Rosenkrantz during the opening remarks.

VI. BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MOTIONS

List of documents used:

[BHE 26-21](#); [BHE 26-22](#); [BHE 26-23](#); [BHE 26-24](#); [BHE 26-25](#); [BHE 26-26](#); [BHE 26-27](#)

Chair Gabrieli introduced the first motion, BHE-21, the *Board of Higher Education Fiscal Year 2026 Meeting Schedule*, by referencing the Board’s intent to hold two in-person meetings each year, in addition to the Board’s annual in-person retreat, following stakeholder requests for in-person engagement. He clarified that the six regularly scheduled meetings (beginning with this meeting) count toward members’ attendance requirements; special meetings require a quorum but do not count toward the minimum attendance metric. Chair Gabrieli added that the Board aims to present the FY27 schedule at the January meeting to stay one year ahead. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-21 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglini – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 26-21 BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION FISCAL YEAR 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

Chair

VOTED That the Board of Higher Education approve the schedule of regular and special Board meetings for Fiscal Year 2026 (Academic Year 2025-2026); provided further that this motion supersedes and revokes BHE Motion 24-45.

Authority M.G.L. c. 15A, § 4(f); By-Laws of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, Article II.

Contact Constantia T. Papanikolaou, Chief Legal Counsel

Gabrieli next introduced, BHE 26-22, *Approval of Letter of Intent of Middlesex Community College to Award an Associate of Science in Robotics*. He provided context for new members, explaining that under the Board’s fast-track process, programs determined to be mission-aligned and strategically relevant may proceed directly through Departmental review following Board authorization. This delegation streamlines implementation while maintaining the Board’s oversight role in ensuring quality and alignment with statewide priorities.

Chair Gabrieli noted that most programs before the Board are targeted for a Fall 2026 launch and have already received campus-level approval. The fast-track approach, he said, helps institutions move more efficiently from concept to delivery while enabling the Board to focus on broader policy and system stewardship.

Assistant Secretary LePage added that the concept of a Robotics degree program at MCC emerged from an employer-driven partnership with Insulet Corporation, a global biotech company located on the North Shore. Subsequent conversations between the company and nearby community colleges led to collaboration in advanced manufacturing and robotics—first through short-term industry credentials and now through this proposed degree program. He emphasized that this development reflects the long-term relationship-building necessary to meet regional workforce needs.

On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-22 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 26-22 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO AWARD AN ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN ROBOTICS

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of Middlesex Community College to award the Associate of Science in Robotics 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 Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Gabrieli next introduced BHE 26-23, *Approval of Letter of Intent of Mount Wachusett Community College to award a Hybrid/Electric Vehicle Certificate*.

Member Walczak expressed strong support for the proposal, emphasizing the growing demand for electric vehicle maintenance and repair expertise. He noted that few existing programs currently prepare technicians for this specialized work and encouraged the expansion of similar programs across other campuses.

Chair Gabrieli invited institutional response from Mount Wachusett representative Ana M. Gaillat. Ana M. Gaillat, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs at Mount Wachusett Community College, affirmed the importance of the program, noting that while electric vehicles are generally reliable, there remains a shortage of trained professionals to service and maintain them. Ms. Gaillat described the proposal as a timely and valuable opportunity to prepare students for careers in this rapidly growing sector.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-23 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 26-23 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF MOUNT WACHUSETT
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO AWARD THE HYBRID/ELECTRIC
VEHICLE CERTIFICATE AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK
REVIEW**

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of Mount Wachusett Community College to award the Hybrid/Electric Vehicle Certificate 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 FastTrack

review protocol.

Chair

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

Gabrieli next introduced BHE 26-24, *Approval of Letter of Intent of UMass Lowell to Award the Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics and Authorization for Fast-Track Review*. Chair Gabrieli commended the proposed program for its attention to the economic value of doctoral students through their teaching contributions and for its strong alignment with UMass Lowell's STEM mission.

Vice Chair Harneen Chernow commented that she was pleased to see a proposal for a new doctoral program at a time when many across the country are reducing or suspending admissions due to financial constraints. She asked for assurance that the program would attract sufficient enrollment and be supported sustainably.

Dr. Nouredine Melikechi, Dean of UMass Lowell's Kennedy College of Sciences stated there is growing demand for doctoral training in broader areas of mathematics. He noted that UMass Amherst is currently the only public institution in Massachusetts offering a Ph.D. in mathematics and that the new program would help meet regional workforce and research needs. Dr. Melikechi added that UMass Lowell has received expressions of interest from several students and employers, and that the program would support the Commonwealth's innovation economy.

In response to questions from Chair Gabrieli and Vice Chair Chernow, Dr. Melikechi explained that while federal funding remains an important support mechanism, the university also anticipates support from industry-based partnerships as well as the use of teaching assistantships to sustain the program. He added that while some coursework may be available online, the program would primarily operate in person. He also highlighted the program's connection to the university's UTeach initiative, which prepares STEM educators and is expected to generate interest among current teachers seeking to advance their qualifications.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-24 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)

- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

**BHE 26-24 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF UMASS LOWELL TO AWARD
THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MATHEMATICS AND
AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW**

Chair

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of UMASS Lowell to award the Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics 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 Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Gabrieli next introduced, BHE 26-25, *Approval of Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to award a Master of Business Administration*. While acknowledging that MBA programs are struggling nationally, Chair Gabrieli stated that Westfield State University's proposal demonstrated thoughtful design through significant online delivery, regional employer alignment, and a strong cost-effectiveness analysis.

Member Walczak expressed support and highlighted the program's "bootcamp" component as an innovative feature. Deputy Commissioner Richard Riccardi agreed, noting that the proposal demonstrates innovation at both macro and micro levels.

On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-25 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)

- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 26-25 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY TO AWARD THE MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW

Chair

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to award the Master of Business Administration 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 Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

Gabrieli next introduced BHE 26-26, *Approval of Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to award a Master of Science in Athletic Training*. Chair Gabrieli noted that he proposal effectively analyzed market need and credential requirements at the master's level.

On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-26 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 26-26 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY TO AWARD THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ATHLETIC TRAINING AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to award the Master of Science in Athletic Training 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 FastTrack review protocol. Chair

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

Gabrieli next introduced BHE 26-27, *Approval of Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to award a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner degree*. He expressed strong support, citing urgent statewide need for both nurse practitioners and mental-health practitioners. Member Walczak and Vice Chair Chernow echoed their support, calling the proposal timely and exciting. Segmental Representative Hannah Rosenkrantz also voiced support for the proposal.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Gabrieli called for a vote. On a motion duly made and seconded, BHE 26-27 was approved unanimously by all members present through a roll call vote, as follows:

- Chris Gabrieli, Chair – Yes
- Lisa Battaglino – Yes
- Mary Burns – Yes
- Harneen Chernow
- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Veronica Conforme – Yes (audio issues, voted via chat)
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Assistant Secretary Bob LePage – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 26-27 APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY TO AWARD THE PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER DEGREE AND AUTHORIZATION FOR FAST TRACK REVIEW

VOTED The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of Westfield State University to award the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Degree 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 Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Ortega requested a correction to his earlier remarks regarding summer delegation actions. He clarified that his reference to “revoking degree-granting authority” may have conflated matters with the Financial Assessment and Risk Monitoring (FARM) process. Chief Legal Counsel Dena Papanikolaou confirmed that the revocations executed over the summer were technical and ministerial only. Eastern Nazarene College was a voluntary institutional closure, and Johnson & Wales University and St. Louis University are both out-of-state institutions that closed their Massachusetts branch campuses.

With no further business, Chair Gabrieli adjourned the meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

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