



CoP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education

June 17, 2025

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Gabrieli, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and members of the Board of Higher Education. My name is Nancy Niemi, and I serve as President of Framingham State University.

On behalf of Chair Thompson and the State Universities Council of Presidents, I thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Massachusetts State University System.

Chair Linda Thompson is unable to attend today's meeting, as she is currently leading a delegation of state university leaders on a trip to Ireland. The purpose of this visit is to explore and develop exchange programs with higher education institutions in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. She looks forward to providing the Board with a full report on the trip at your September meeting.

The Council of Presidents extends a warm welcome to President Bill Heineman of North Shore Community College, the newly appointed Chair of the Community College Council of Presidents. Bill, we look forward to working with you and your colleagues as we continue to strengthen the important and mutually beneficial partnerships between our campuses.

The challenges facing public higher education in the Commonwealth – and country – require a unified voice to ensure that all students have the opportunity to pursue and complete a high-quality postsecondary education. I look forward to our continued collaboration with the community colleges and this Board as we navigate our work ahead.

Recognition of Paul Mattera

I would also like to take a few moments to recognize and thank our friend, Paul Mattera, for his distinguished service to the state universities and to the Board of Higher Education. Today marks the conclusion of Mr. Mattera's service on the Board.

As many of you know, Paul was first appointed by Governor Patrick in August 2011 to the Salem State University Board of Trustees and was reappointed by Governor Baker in 2016. In 2015, he was elected by his peers to serve as Chair of the Salem State Board and was subsequently elected by the nine state university board chairs to serve as the State Universities Segmental Representative to the Board of Higher Education.

Because Mr. Mattera has completed two full terms on the Salem State Board of Trustees, he is ineligible for reappointment. As a result, his service as our segmental representative to the Board of Higher Education also comes to a close. On behalf of the entire state university community, it is my honor to thank Paul for his extraordinary service to Salem State University, the Massachusetts state universities, and the Commonwealth as a whole.

Throughout his career, Paul has been deeply engaged in civic and industry service. He remains active on the boards of the New England Council and the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation. His leadership and commitment have also been evident in his service to Salem State University and the broader state university system.

Paul's dedication to Salem State, to the Massachusetts state universities, to the Commonwealth, and to our nation reflects the very best of public service. Although your official roles as trustee and segmental representative are concluding, we are confident your commitment to our universities will continue. Thank you, Paul, for your outstanding service.

I would also like to thank Dr. Lisa Battaglino for agreeing to represent the state universities on the Board of Higher Education. Lisa is no stranger to the state university system, having spent the past thirty years serving as a faculty member, department chair, university administrator, and now trustee. We are excited that Lisa has agreed to take on this important role, and we look forward to working with the Board to address the critical issues ahead, while remaining true to our shared mission and goals.

End-of-Year Retreat

Two weeks ago, the Council of State University Presidents gathered for our annual end-of-year retreat at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. My colleagues and I would like to thank Chair Gabrieli for joining us to advance our work on a co-op pilot program.

We also testified remotely from our conference at the BRIGHT Act hearing on June 3rd and welcomed Commissioner Ortega for a significant portion of our meeting on June 4th. We continued important conversations around developing professional practice doctoral programs, strengthening alignment with community colleges, and improving the MassTransfer program.

Should you be interested in further details of our meeting, the Council of Presidents has submitted an overview of our two-day conference for your review.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by thanking Chair Gabrieli, Secretary Tutwiler, and Commissioner Ortega, for the opportunity to work with the Department this summer on regulations that will open pathways for new academic programs aligned with the shared mission, goals, and values of postsecondary educational leaders. Thank you to this board, the staff at the department and executive office and all those who support our important work of educating our citizenry.

You have our best wishes for a wonderful summer. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.