

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability

NO.: AAC 09-05

COMMITTEE DATE: November 14, 2008

BOARD DATE: November 21, 2008

TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education recognizes the need to ensure that graduates from the public institutions of higher education are prepared with the skills necessary for success in a technologically complex, globally competitive world. If the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is to prosper in the future, college graduates must master the academic knowledge and applied skills necessary for success in the knowledge-driven 21st century.

In furtherance of the above, the Board of Higher Education hereby establishes the **Task Force on 21st Century Skills**, the purpose of which is to make recommendations on how 21st century skills—such as global awareness, critical thinking, and ethical leadership—can be more fully integrated into college student learning to better prepare students for today's career and citizenship challenges and demands. Task Force members shall be appointed by the Chair of the Board of Higher Education.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9

Contact: Dr. Francesca Purcell, Associate Commissioner for Academic and P-16 Policy

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November 2008

Background

Over the past year, there have been a number of initiatives in Massachusetts focused on preparing K-12 students to succeed in today's complex and competitive world.

- Under Governor Deval Patrick's leadership, Massachusetts was accepted into the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a network that brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a vision to ensure every student's success to be citizens and workers in the 21st century. The Partnership works to infuse into education 21st century skills, such as communication, information processing, critical thinking, media literacy, creativity, global awareness, cultural competency, problem-solving, teamwork, self-directed learning, and leadership.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education convened a task force to make recommendations on how 21st century skills can be integrated into the state's existing educational program. Part of this work included identifying appropriate standards, assessment and accountability components, as well as curriculum, professional and teacher development that will lead to successful inclusion of 21st century skills in K-12 education.
- The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education published a report in October 2008, *Educating a 21st Century Workforce*, which provides strategies to ensure that all high school students graduate prepared for college, career, and citizenship.

In addition to these efforts, the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have worked collaboratively on numerous initiatives seeking to improve student college and career readiness. These initiatives have been part of the Commonwealth's commitment to the National Governors Association High School Honor States Initiative and the American Diploma Project.

To build and expand upon the work completed by policymakers, education and business leaders, and community organization in Massachusetts dedicated to 21st century skill development focused predominantly at the K-12 level, the Board of Higher Education seeks to ensure that graduates from the public institutions of higher education are prepared with the skills necessary for success in a technologically complex, globally competitive world. If the Commonwealth is to prosper in the future, college graduates must master the academic knowledge and applied skills necessary for success in the knowledge-driven 21st century.

To make recommendations on how 21st century skills can be more fully integrated into college student learning to better prepare students for today's career and citizenship challenges and demands, the Board of Higher Education will establish the **Task Force on 21st Century Skills**, the purpose of which is the following:

- To review the work of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Task Force on 21st Century Skills;
- To review the literature on 21st century skills pertaining to higher education;
- To make recommendations on how to better align 21st century skills between K-12, higher education, and workforce development, and

- To make recommendations on how 21st century skills can be more fully integrated into the undergraduate experience, such that graduates can demonstrate greater competence in areas, such as written and oral communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, and information literacy.

The Task Force on 21st Century Skills shall be chaired by a member of the Board of Higher Education and shall include representatives from members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Task Force on 21st Century Skills; the Legislative Joint Committee on Higher Education; and higher education, business, and community organization leaders. Task Force members shall be appointed by the Chair of the Board of Higher Education.

The Task Force on 21st Century Skills shall meet on a regular basis from December 2008 through April 2009 and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Commissioner, who shall present the findings and recommendations to the Board of Higher Education no later than the June 2009 meeting.