

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 23-62

BOARD DATE: June 20, 2023

APPROVAL OF SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves **Springfield Technical Community College Strategic Plan, Momentum 2023-2028**, and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the plan to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

VOTED: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 6/12/2023; and adopted by the BHE on 6/20/2023.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l).
Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.
Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Public Program Approval

Background

A fundamental responsibility of the BHE is to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. The Board enacts this responsibility by establishing statewide goals and by regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals. Articulating statewide goals has no impact on creating greater equity in public higher education unless these goals and performance metrics are embraced by the individual colleges and universities and incorporated into their strategic plans. Massachusetts state statute therefore charges the BHE and the Secretary of Education with reviewing and approving campus strategic plans. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§9(f), 9(l) and 22(l).

Springfield Technical Community College Planning Process

Touch Point I took place as a site visit on January 18, 2023 following a series of meetings and discussions precipitated by delays due to COVID, to Springfield Technical Community College's NECHE Self-Study timing, and to the DHE Commissioner transition in November 2022. The site visit was attended by Commissioner Ortega and staff. Initially, Dr Ortega and President Cook met one-on-one to discuss STCC's campus strategic plan. President Cook communicated that he is looking forward to a 'restart' based on changes, recent programmatic challenges, and the impact of COVID. Staff met with the STCC leaders and emphasized the importance of institutional ties to the region in developing the plan. The use of the foundational document *The New Undergraduate Experience and the Frameworks for Student Success* were encouraged as the STCC plan takes shape, and exemplar plans were cited for review by STCC. Staff also emphasized that the Touch Points were reinforced as a valued and significant part of the process by Presidents and BHE members in June 2022. Commissioner Ortega and staff next met with 20 administrators, faculty, staff, and students where the Campus Strategic Planning process was presented followed by questions and responses. It was emphasized by Commissioner Ortega that the plan should be highly

inclusive of all internal and external stakeholders, including industry and community organizations. Staff noted that campus plans must align with the institutional mission, individual character and culture of campus and be widely inclusive of both internal and external stakeholders in addition to clear alignment with BHE priorities. It was noted that the Touch Point II formative review would be conducted by the Commissioner and staff. Subsequently, Commissioner Ortega met with a small group of diverse staff and students to discuss the BHE strategic plan for racial equity. The site visit concluded with a tour of the SIMs Medical, Advanced Manufacturing, and Dental Labs which underscored student hands-on learning experience and the STCC vision to be a premier technical college in the region.

Touch Point II began when STCC submitted four documents on March 13, 2023 that would become part of a draft of the campus plan. The documents reflected an earnest effort by STCC to develop a campus strategic plan through a period of tumult and transition. Staff found the draft was insufficient and recommended that STCC shape these documents into a cohesive plan and describe actions and indicators that link to the metrics and goals. On April 3, 2023, the virtual Touch Point II meeting took place. Staff provided detailed formative feedback for STCC, intended to support the further development of an organized and comprehensive plan. This included recommending that each of the goals within the plan become more iterative and clearer in reflecting and back mapping to STCC's data. The plan spoke to equity and defined equity as equal outcomes, but it was noted that centering equity is not just disaggregating data by race/ethnicity. Staff emphasized that in the next draft, the goals should speak more directly to closing or at least narrowing gaps in achievement. Staff outlined the additional content that would be necessary to bring the plan forward to BHE with a recommendation for approval. It was noted that BHE members and the Commissioner would look for evidence of how the campus plan will progress-monitor itself during implementation over the five-year period. It was recommended that the SPRE and the Framework for Student Success (FSS) recommendations be integrated into the body of

the plan's goals and objectives, and that STCC provide evidence of how their data cross walks with recommendations from SPRE or FSS. In addition, Commissioner Ortega's emphasis at Touch Point I was underscored in that STCC's leadership role in the region and its technical mission should be more fully explained. STCC responded at the virtual meeting by sharing a consolidated draft version of the plan which had been recently developed. In doing so, STCC showed further progress of a plan that was more cohesive than the four documents that were reviewed. Commissioner Ortega requested this document be provided for staff review and on April 21, 2023. STCC delivered a cohesive draft plan for staff to continue its Touch Point II review. Staff received the plan and indicated the review would be completed in time for STCC to bring it forward to the STCC Board of Trustees meeting on May 22, 2023. STCC indicated a need to obtain its local governance approval sooner than that and contrary to BHE Touch Point protocols. On April 24, 2023 the STCC Board of Trustees approved the strategic plan. On April 25, 2023 President Cook submitted the approved plan to Commissioner Ortega with the proviso that if substantive changes were warranted, President Cook and the STCC Board of Trustees were committed to making the necessary adjustments.

Touch Point III: In reviewing the draft plan submitted on April 25th, staff found the plan to be in proximity to BHE priorities. Staff requested additional data points clarifying that STCC would be able to monitor its progress toward goals and objectives. Staff also required an addendum to the plan to include more details regarding the partnerships within the ecosystem described in the first goal of STCC's strategic plan, a crosswalk depicting STCC goals and BHE priorities, as well as data for the appendices as supporting documentation for areas of the plan's narrative. The appendices for the proposed plan include this information. DHE and STCC leadership teams worked together until the proposed plan was in clear alignment with BHE priorities.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Springfield Technical Community College at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed **Springfield Technical Community College Strategic Plan, Momentum 2023-2028**.