

**Remarks from Ellen Kennedy, President, Berkshire Community College;
Chair, Community College Council of Presidents
Delivered at Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Meeting—October 23, 2018**

Good morning Chair Gabrieli, Secretary Peyser, Commissioner Santiago and Members of the Board of Higher Education.

As we begin another academic year together, I look forward to a productive year in serving a chair of the Community College Council of Presidents and to working with you. I also am honored to serve, alongside of my colleague and friend, President Fran MacDonald, and to demonstrating the power of our segments working together.

I plan to utilize my time this year to highlight examples of how the community college segment is contributing to the state's system-level strategic framework, more commonly known as the Big Three priorities.

Whenever possible, I will be highlighting strategies where our community colleges partner with our state universities, businesses, high schools, and community agencies to ensure that we are efficient in our use of state resources, that we are making connections that support and inspire students to complete their studies, and that we enable students to transition to baccalaureate studies or employment.

Today, I'll briefly address two topics – financial aid and STEM Week.

As you know, Financial Aid is directly related to the State's first system-level priority of making college more affordable and accessible. It is an essential component of making college possible for many families and their students. Yet, financial aid is also critical to many students' abilities to persist and complete their degrees. It enables students of all genders, backgrounds, and economic levels to reach their academic goals.

Therefore, on behalf of the 15 Community College presidents, and our boards, and especially our students, I would like to thank the Administration and the legislature for the new FY19 financial aid dollars that are going directly to help provide community college students access to workforce credentials, to degrees and certificates, and to their first steps to their transfer pathways with our public higher education partners.

I'd also like to thank and acknowledge Commissioner Santiago and his team at the DHE for their efforts in working with our segment to make the new dollars available this semester. Just a quick sampling of our colleges indicates that we were able to help more than 2,000 students with these new funds, in this first semester of implementation.

It was especially helpful that these funds were available to part-time students. This enables students with families, with low wage jobs, and with other adult obligations to pursue the

education that can change their life-time income trajectory. We know that education is the great equalizer and these new funds have the power to change lives.

Again, I want to thank the Commissioner's staff because their work is not done. They continue to work with the financial aid staff at our colleges, to ensure that the application of these new funds is consistently and correctly applied for students across the Commonwealth. These funds will enable us to attract new students who may have never-before had access to financial assistance. The Commissioner's staff is working with us to get this word out.

The second area that I'd like to address today is the Governor's new initiative that began this Monday - STEM Week. STEM Week is intended to bring attention to the many STEM careers available and to encourage students at all educational levels to consider and prepare for the new STEM economy. At the kick-off event at Dearborn STEM Academy in Roxbury, Governor Baker rightly predicted that all jobs in the future will include some elements of technology and science. This means that we will need to ensure that students who graduate from our institutions are prepared for this high-tech economy.

From my experience, technology is already changing job requirements. One STEM program in final development at my own college is smart building technology - an emerging field that enables businesses to meet new standards for high energy efficient buildings and to realize cost savings by utilizing new technologies like solar and geothermal systems. Our Smart Building Technology Program started when business leaders sought my college to train the individuals needed for this work. The college was able to develop the curriculum needed with the assistance of Mass Maritime faculty because this institution already had a similar 4-year program. This is the type of partnership that I will be highlighting - those where both segments of higher education benefit and gain efficiencies by working together - Thanks to the Admiral and his staff, we were able to re-vamp our engineering courses to respond to the needs of our business leaders and to also ensure that students who begin at RCC have a path to transfer to Mass Maritime.

The STEM Week events are designed to help students to understand and experience careers like smart building technology. There's still time for you to attend events - over 500 were planned across the state - with over 40 at community colleges.

Please take a moment to review these events that are highlighted on the website of the Massachusetts Community Colleges. You will learn about new technologies like wearable electronics at Springfield Tech and UV light in biotechnology at RCC. Also, learn about the impact of women in STEM careers at discussions at Northern Essex and during a joint event of Berkshire, Greenfield, Holyoke, and Springfield Tech Community Colleges.

Again, I look forward to working with you in the up-coming year!
