

Remarks to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

June 22, 2021

Dr. James Mabry, President

Middlesex Community College

- Good morning Chair Gabrieli, Board Members, Commissioner Santiago, Secretary Peyser, DHE staff, and my colleagues in public higher education. I want to thank you for this opportunity to share updates from the Community College segment.
- First, the presidents are incredibly excited about a recent report by the Boston Foundation, which reflects research conducted by MassINC and Northeastern's Dukakis Center. The analysis has confirmed what community college leaders have always known: a community college education pays off.
 - In this report, the data are very clear: a community college education means greater earnings and a greater likelihood of employment.
 - The lead author of the study also mentioned an important finding related to the role of community colleges for low-income and underrepresented minority students: she stated that "if they can attend a community college, they can get a much higher return than a higher-income individual who has already had better academic opportunities."
 - Some other findings include:
 - Women earn \$1,550 more per year just for attending a community college, even if they don't graduate.
 - this increases to roughly \$8,000 per year once completing their program.
 - Men who complete an associate degree or certificate earn between \$5,500 to \$9,000 more per year compared to peers only completing high school.
- In the report's release, the Boston Foundation and MassINC stated that this demonstrates a strong case for both investing in community colleges and for the value they provide for people in underserved communities.
- Other studies have shown that increased employment and higher pay result in better lives, stronger communities, and a more productive workforce. All of which are critical to building a stronger economy that can sustain robust economic growth over the long term
- As we look at what the pandemic has done to many Black and Latino students, especially many male Black and Latino students, the report's recommendations align with our advocacy to state legislative leaders at many levels. This includes:
 - The **SUCCESS Fund** —which invests in wraparound support services at community colleges that are designed to increase retention and student success.
 - and **Early College** programs, which offer incredible opportunities for students, many low-income and students of color, to earn valuable college credits while in high school.
- The report reflects a growing appreciation of what community colleges offer students of all ages, and we are very optimistic about our ongoing discussions related to the FY22 state budget that reflect this vision.
 - Areas such as the SUCCESS Fund, Early College, the Funding Formula, and MassGrant, among many other programs, that are integral to supporting our students and fulfilling the BHE's Equity Agenda.

- We look forward to the Legislature’s ongoing work to support these critical strategic investments in student access, affordability, and workforce development.
- We also know the state is starting a discussion on how to spend more than \$5 billion from federal ARPA funds, with a focus on rapid economic recovery.
 - We will work with our legislative partners on what this may look like and also want to commend the Administration for its proposals which directs that some of that spending will be used for community college workforce training in the areas of skills credentialing and ESOL.
 - The community colleges are fully committed to working with policymakers and the Board of Higher Education to advocate for making the postsecondary an equity-based system focused on building the skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers, and helps sustain economic success across the Commonwealth.
- A year ago, I addressed this body for the first time as the Chair of the Community College Council of Presidents. Since then, much has transpired, and much has changed, but I can assure you the through it all the community colleges have remained focused on our mission of access, equity, and success. A mission we believe will move the entire Commonwealth toward a better future.
 - We were face-to-face with two powerfully dangerous pandemics: the COVID-19 virus and systemic racism in our nation.
 - We have dealt with the pandemic by prioritizing the safety of students, faculty, staff, and all members of our college communities, we have been both clear-eyed of the challenges *and* incredibly proud of the work of our institutions have done to keep our students on the path to success.
- Through the leadership of the Baker Administration, there has been incredible progress against COVID-19 and with the massive vaccination effort, much progress has been made.
- This Fall, we know that flexibility will be key to meeting the needs of our students, whether in-person, remote, or hybrid options.
 - This will enable us to best serve students who again are on average older, many who must juggle the demands of being parents, working full-time, among many other considerations.
 - We also look forward to our continued leading role in the vaccination front, as our colleges have been promoting and, in many cases, hosting vaccination sites.
 - Our clear focus is on getting all members of our community vaccinated — students, faculty, staff, and others.
 - In fact, we are happy to state that *all 15 community colleges* have signed White House’s initiative, the COVID College Challenge.
 - In this work, we will work together to encourage vaccinations and provide opportunities for all members of our community.
- I end my service as Chair this week and I know you’ll be in incredibly capable hands with my successor, Dr. David Podell President of MassBay CC.
- Just like I mentioned a year ago, I am proud of the work of our community colleges continued to do during this extraordinary period and I’m continually inspired by the resiliency of our students. Therefore, I hope that this bold and proactive partnership continues in order to face future challenges.

- Together, we can strive toward the goals of the Equity Agenda and help build the post-COVID economy the Commonwealth needs.
- Thank you all for this opportunity and what you do to support public higher education in this great state.