

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 23-47

BOARD DATE: May 9, 2023

APPROVAL OF SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves **Salem State University Strategic Plan 2023-2028** and authorizes the Commissioner to forward the same 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 5/1/2023; and adopted by the BHE on 5/9/2023.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3 and Article III.

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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 building upon the foundation of the Vision Project and Closing Gaps. 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).

Salem State University Planning Process

In October 2020, Commissioner Santiago approved President Keenan's request to extend the existing plan through 2022 and delay submission of new strategic planning materials until 2023 due to the impact of COVID and to the timing of Salem State University's NECHE accreditation self-study.

On May 25, 2022, SSU launched the new planning process at Touch Point I in a meeting between SSU and DHE staff through a telephone review of the Campus Strategic Planning Guidelines that included clarifications regarding in-progress recommendations from the Strategic Planning Advisory Council expected to be presented to BHE at the June 2022 Executive Committee meeting. Commissioner Santiago had indicated to President Keenan in written approval of the extension that any substantive changes to the process would not be expected to negatively impact campus planning that is underway. DHE staff offered assurances to Salem State that the Touch Points process is expected to continue, and that either DHE staff or BHE members will be engaged to provide formative feedback on a draft of the plan at Touch Point II (TP II). President Keenan and Commissioner Santiago had previously agreed that under the changing circumstances to the SPC and the SPAC work-in-progress the discussion between staff would suffice as Touch Point I.

SSU submitted the TP II draft plan on February 9, 2023, followed by a comprehensive DHE staff review and formative feedback session on February 22, 2023. Staff noted that the plan was being developed through an inclusive process with multiple perspectives that include a broad range of students, faculty, staff, and many internal and external stakeholders. The plan is nested in a context of mission and values; draws upon and builds on the many strengths of SSU. The goals were seen to be broadly defined and all-encompassing, making the draft comprehensive, well-conceived, and leaving room for dynamic and emergent qualities to give life to the plan as it is implemented. A clear logic followed from the goals into the objectives and reflected attention to BHE's Strategic Plan for Racial Equity as well as SSU's particular commitment and leadership in the region. Staff found Goal IV related to Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action to be a promising example for other State Universities. The plan did not appear to include a direct link to the segmental mission and staff suggested this be included in the TP III draft. The Strategic Roadmap included seven major goals that were related to a BHE priority from various initiatives. DHE staff suggested that the goals be written in more clear alignment to them. In addition, staff indicated that specific references to the Student Support and Success Framework, recently adopted by the BHE in June 2022 be made explicit in the next draft. Staff suggested that while the TP II draft plan was on-track to meet BHE criteria for campus strategic plans, it should incorporate more specific details that demonstrate alignment to BHE priorities before being brought forward with a recommendation for approval. SSU was provided with specific written notes on elements of the plan that should be addressed before the final draft is approved by the SSU Board of Trustees and brought forward for BHE action. These included encouraging SSU to highlight its unique place on the public education continuum that includes PK-12 districts and community colleges in the region, its meaning in Salem and on the North Shore.

Staff also underscored specific elements for further development and inclusion in the TP III submission that included further details on the aspirational outcome statements such

that more actual indicators that lend themselves to measurable outcomes are evident. Staff emphasized that metrics and indicators showing how SSU will mark progress would strengthen the plan. For each set of objectives that will lead SSU to its goals, staff recommended that indicators should be added and designed to provide SSU with evidence as to whether and how the institution is approaching, meeting, or exceeding the desired outcomes, objectives, and goals over the course of the plan's implementation.

Touch Point III: On April 12, 2023, the SSU Board of Trustees approved the strategic plan that President Keenan submitted to Commissioner Ortega and DHE staff on April 3, 2023. Subsequent to receiving formative feedback at Touch Point II, the plan added *Key Progress Indicators* to monitor advancements. SSU reshaped parts of the narrative to include SSU's role within the larger education system, and its intention to provide a liberal arts education, career preparation and upward social mobility for students. The plan was distributed to the members of the Board of Higher Education on April 21, 2023.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Salem State University at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for BHE approval of the proposed **Salem State University Campus Strategic Plan 2024-2029**