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Community College Reforms to Spur Workforce Development



Governor Patrick delivers his State of the Commonwealth address. (Photo: Scott Eisen/Governor's Office). View additional [photos](#).

BOSTON – Monday, January 23, 2012 – In his annual State of the Commonwealth address tonight, Governor Deval Patrick will propose a set of reforms to help Massachusetts community colleges provide residents looking for work with the skills they need to help fill the estimated 120,000 current job openings in the state. The proposal calls for the fifteen individual community college campuses to come together as a unified, state-wide system offering a more streamlined curriculum as well as locally developed, regionally specific jobs and skills training.

By aligning a unified community college system with employers, vocational-technical schools and Workforce Investment Boards, the Governor's proposal will give community colleges the tools they need to help get people back to work. In order to help the community colleges meet this mission, Governor Patrick is proposing a \$10 million increase in funding as well as a streamlined budget and leadership selection process for the campuses.

"A central piece of our economic recovery strategy is ensuring that the skills of our workforce meet the evolving needs of our employers," said Governor Patrick. "That's why we are advancing a new and innovative mission for our community colleges, to train highly-qualified candidates for jobs in every corner of the Commonwealth. I look forward to partnering with our community colleges, educational professionals, students and the business community in these efforts."

"By working with community colleges in all regions of the Commonwealth, Massachusetts has the opportunity to increase partnerships between academia and industry to provide more workforce training resources to help students, employers and job seekers advance critical skills," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray, Chair of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

The Administration's plan to increase the budget and centralize the leadership selection processes of community colleges will

ensure a cohesive system of education and skills training responsive to the needs of local employers.

Under the proposal, the Board of Higher Education (BHE) will have the authority to allocate all state funding to community colleges in Massachusetts, consolidating fifteen separate funding lines into a single line item within the Department of Higher Education budget. The BHE will be responsible for developing a system for making funding allocations to the individual community colleges that will take into account enrollment data; institutional performance and innovation; the creation of "stackable credentials" and credits that can be easily transferred across campuses; and the creation of new programs that are better aligned with regional labor market needs.

This plan also gives the BHE authority to establish new parameters for the setting of student fees at the community colleges and the use of revenues generated from these fees to ensure an appropriate and efficient use of taxpayer and student dollars.

Additionally, the Administration's plan creates new guidelines governing the selection processes for community college presidents, and also charges the BHE with establishing new procedures for the annual review of presidents. Clearly established selection processes and comprehensive performance reviews will help ensure excellence in leadership and a coherent vision throughout the entire system of community colleges across the state.

"This strategy will help us create the structure and incentives necessary to operate an integrated and comprehensive community college system," said Secretary of Education Paul Reville. "A more unified vision among our campuses will better serve our students, our employers and our Commonwealth in the long-term."

"Our community colleges are in a unique position to provide targeted workforce development," said Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Joanne F. Goldstein. "That training and course work is especially important given the gap that exists between the skill sets of job seekers and the skill sets employers need. It will ensure that students entering the workforce are better qualified for job opportunities in their respective regions."

"The Patrick-Murray Administration has made job creation and economic growth a top priority, and the importance of a highly-skilled workforce is a vital part of that strategy as highlighted in the Economic Development Plan submitted by the Governor in December," said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki. "The Administration and the Economic Development Plan recognizes the importance of workforce development, and the role of our community colleges in that effort, as we continue to improve our strong competitive position in the world's economy."

"Our colleges and universities are the state's largest source of educated workers and citizens," said Commissioner of Higher Education Richard M. Freeland. "We have much good work to build upon, with examples of effective partnerships with the employer community like the promising work being done by Bunker Hill Community College in partnership with the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership. We are determined to do all we can to expand such efforts."

Taken together, these changes will strengthen the historical role of community colleges of offering high-quality training and certification programs so that students can immediately enter the workforce – as well as create seamless pathways to additional educational opportunities.

"By leveraging our community colleges, streamlining the system, and aligning the mission, we can reverse this prediction by providing our workers with the skills they need to fill the jobs of the future in all areas of the Commonwealth," said John Fish, CEO of Suffolk Construction. "I applaud the Administration for its focus & commitment on this issue, and believe it will allow us to continue to prosper as we grow our strong Knowledge Based Economy."

"This could not come at a better time and will be a shot in the arm for the economy. We fully support increased funding tied to substantial updates to the structure and alignment of community colleges in Massachusetts," said Andrew H. Tarsey, Executive Director of the Progressive Business Leaders Network. "There are many companies ready to be a full partner on this project with the Governor and with the colleges themselves."

"Workforce development must be a top priority in 2012 and beyond," said Kip Hollister, CEO of Hollister Inc. "There is a clear competency gap and reform at the community colleges can only help us develop and retain talent in Massachusetts. This is a fundamental jobs issue and a big step in the right direction."

"Community colleges play a critically important role in helping Massachusetts develop a workforce that is second-to-none," said Sue Parsons of the Workforce Solutions Group. "We support measures that align our state's community college system with employers' needs for training and mid-level skills development. A highly skilled, well educated workforce is our state's most important competitive advantage, which enables Massachusetts to compete effectively in the global economy."

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