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GOVERNOR PATRICK'S CALL FOR UNIFIED COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM MAYOR MENINO AND BUSINESS LEADERS

Governor Patrick joins Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Massachusetts education and business leaders to discuss his proposal to reform the Commonwealth's community colleges. (Photos: Eric Haynes / Governor's Office). View additional [photos](#).

BOSTON – Tuesday, January 24, 2012 – Governor Deval Patrick today received support from Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and leaders from Massachusetts' business and education sectors for his proposal for a unified community college system, which he announced in last night's State of the Commonwealth address.

"For the work they do, community colleges rarely receive proper recognition, let alone adequate funding," said Governor Patrick. "I have visited their campuses and seen their good work. They are an important resource and we must ask more of them. I believe community colleges are uniquely positioned to help close our skills gap and get people back to work."

At Suffolk Construction headquarters in Roxbury today, Governor Patrick continued his call for reforming the Commonwealth's community college system to address the skills gap and expand employment opportunities for workers across the state. His reforms received support from leading elected officials and employers who say they need a trained workforce to fill the 120,000 positions currently open in Massachusetts.

"Jobs are the greatest equalizer when it comes to our economic strength and aligning our jobs with our resources makes sense," said Mayor Menino. "Our communities will be strong if we continue to provide more opportunities for people to improve their skills, develop new ones and help get them into jobs and careers they enjoy."

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.

"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 and commitment on this issue and believe it will allow us to continue to prosper as we grow our strong Knowledge Based Economy."

"Our extensive conversations with business and education leaders, including community college presidents, highlighted that refocusing the mission of the community college system and other reforms were the common sense course for creating a system that is effective, accountable and well-resourced," said Paul Grogan, president of the Boston Foundation. "We look forward to working with the Governor, the business community and the colleges to ensure that student needs are served."

Also announced today was Bunker Hill Community College's (BHCC) "Learn and Earn" pilot co-op program. The "Learn and Earn" program will further the Governor's proposed reforms by providing community college students with the skills necessary to meet the needs of regional employers. BJ's Wholesale Club, EMC, Raytheon and Suffolk Construction have already signed on, committing up to five positions as part of the pilot which will run from January – April 2012. The co-op positions align with BHCC curricula in networking, engineering science, management, information technology, marketing, web development, accounting, paralegal, finance, culinary, graphic design, event planning, communications and health sciences. Co-ops will balance class schedules with weekly on the job training. Participating companies will use a common format involving an assignment manager, a mentor and group learning sessions on business fundamentals. Co-ops will receive performance assessments and BHCC faculty advisors will be engaged in the process. At the conclusion of this semester, BHCC and the employers will consider expanding the co-op program three semesters annually, beginning in June.

Taken together, these changes will strengthen the historical role of community colleges in 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.

For further information: [Community Colleges Plan Fact Sheet](#) 

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