Creating State Policy to Boost College Completion
Growing public interest to increase college graduation rates to eliminate disparities across race/ethnicity, income, and gender; and to increase overall number of degrees
Working Group on Graduation & Student Success Rates

Background: Massachusetts Context

- **MA need for a highly educated workforce**
  - 49% of young adults in MA hold college credential
  - 68% of jobs will require college credential by 2018
  - Demand at multiple levels

- **Challenges**
  - Decline in number of high school graduates
  - Decline in the value of financial aid
  - Uneven state support for public higher education

- **Focus on graduation and student success rates**
  - Builds on ongoing work
  - Sets direction for future work
Introduction

- Vision Project - May 2010
- Graduation & Student Success Working Group - June 2010
- 17 engaged members representing diversity of stakeholders
  - Regular meetings and communications
  - Research literature
  - State and national data
  - Comprehensive campus survey
  - National conferences
  - Leading experts
I. Recommend graduation and student success rate goals by 2016 and 2021 for the community colleges, state universities, and the University of Massachusetts benchmarked to peers.

II. Review campus goals and plans to improve graduation and student success rates and make recommendations on how campuses and the Department of Higher Education can most effectively proceed.

III. Review and prioritize existing and emergent statewide policies and practices which support the increase of graduation and student success rates.
Goal 1: Meet the following segmental goals and reduce system achievement gaps by 25% by 2016 and by 50% by 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State University Segment</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Graduation Rate % (IPEDS): 51.9%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage point gap between Hispanics and Whites: 13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage point gap between Blacks and Whites: 10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage point gap between women and men: 7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part I: Recommendations on graduation and student success rate goals

Goal 1: Meet the following segmental goals and reduce system achievement gaps by 25% by 2016 and by 50% by 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College Segment</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Graduation Rate (IPEDS): 16.2%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage point gap between Hispanics and Whites: 9.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage point gap between Blacks and Whites: 8.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage point gap between women and men: 1.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Persister/MD Model: 73.5%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving the Dream Model: 34.5%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal 2: Leverage financial resources

- Ensure and prioritize student financial aid to promote college access and completion
- Prevent and reverse the erosion of student financial aid and state support
- Secure funding to implement and reward campuses
- Create Vision Project Working Group focused on student financial aid to promote degree and certificate completion
Goal 3: Enhance degree completion goals

- Campuses to set individual goals
- Campuses to maintain a clear commitment to student access and high academic standards
- Establish a unifying Vision Project goal for increasing the total number of degrees and certificates produced by public higher education
- Adopt national community college success measure when available
Part II: Recommendations on how campuses and DHE can proceed

**Survey**
- 100% response rate
- Examples of Strengths
  - Committed Leaders
  - Significant amount of data collection
  - Campus collaboration
  - Broad range of programs and support services
- Examples of Challenges
  - Publication of goals
  - Use of data to create change
  - Fuller faculty involvement
  - Fiscal resources

**Research Literature**
- Certain campus policies and practices associated with higher graduation and student success rates
- Structure, choice, and time
- Lack of student academic preparation is a major barrier to college completion
Part II: Recommendations on how campuses and DHE can proceed

Goal 1: Make graduation and student success a clear institutional priority

- Establish a permanent *standing committee*
- Increase the engagement of full-time and part-time faculty
- Boards of Trustees to require that strategic plans include *graduation and student success rate goals* and publicly report annual progress
- *Engage* with local business, civic, and community organizations to complement and support institutional efforts
Goal 2: Use campus data and evidence to improve policies, programs, and services

- Implement strategies that allow for *greater access and skilled use of data* throughout the campus community
- Monitor and analyze the *amount of time* it takes for students to earn degrees in order to identify obstacles to degree completion
Goal 3: Make full use of empirically-supported strategies that support student completion and accelerate time-to-degree. Examples of proven strategies include but are not limited to the following:

- learning communities
- first-year experience courses
- course redesign projects
- coherent academic program pathways
- individualized graduation plans
Goal 4: Transform developmental education

- Review the growing body of *literature* focused on developmental education
- *Experiment* with research-supported strategies which improve student completion of developmental education
- Explore *redesigned and accelerated approaches* to developmental education
- Investigate refocusing *developmental math education from algebra to statistics and quantitative reasoning*
Discussion of Part II Goals
Part III: Prioritize existing and emergent state policies and practices

Goal 1: Transform developmental education

- DHE to create a statewide *developmental education task force* charged to review and update the current statewide assessment policy to reflect research findings
- DHE to collect and analyze developmental education *student progression data* in support of institutional innovation efforts
- DHE to *identify mathematical competencies needed* at the public higher education campuses to inform proper focus for developmental math education
Goal 2: Advance student transfer

- Build a directory of statewide online course-to-course equivalencies
- Develop statewide transfer guides by majors that guarantee admission and full transfer and applicability of credit
- Implement an online system to support faculty review of course syllabi and development of common student learning outcomes
- Encourage and support regional and discipline-specific breakout
- Standardize the transfer of nationally-recognized exams international credits, and credits earned through prior learning assessments
Goal 3: Explore the creation of one-year certificates of value in the workforce

- Explore the creation of quality, occupational certificates connected to workforce needs and transferable into associate degree programs
- Support campuses in the identification of middle-skill job areas and to gauge potential employer interest
- Provide incentives and support to institutions to develop one-year certificate programs
- Review North Carolina’s model
- Develop a clearinghouse of workforce certificate and degrees targeted to prospective employers
Goal 4: Provide leadership through coordination and advocacy

- Make permanent the Working Group on Graduation and Student Success Rates
- Hold an annual statewide completion summit
- Advocate for more accurate and comprehensive student success measures
Goal 5: Institute policies and practices that accelerate degree completion and reduce time-to-degree

- Perform an audit of credit requirements for currently-offered undergraduate degrees
- Examine credit requirements of proposed new academic programs
- Coordinate statewide effort to develop “reverse transfer” agreements
- Audit the April 1997 policy requiring campuses to charge students the full cost of education for course registrations in excess of 118 percent of academic degree program credit-hour requirements
Discussion of Part III Goals and Final Questions
Background: The Metrics

- **Baccalaureate-seeking:**
  - College/university graduation rates *from initial institution*, with national comparisons and disaggregation by student population groups.
  - College/university graduation rates *from any institution in the system, state or anywhere in the United States.*

- **Associate’s/Certificate-seeking:**
  - Community college completion rates *for degrees/certificates*, with national comparisons and disaggregation by student population groups.
  - Community college success rates that measure a *range of student outcomes (including transfer to four-year institution and continuous enrollment)*, with national comparisons and disaggregation by student cohort populations.