



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Higher Education

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., ESE Commissioner
Carlos E. Santiago, Ph.D., DHE Commissioner
Date: January 12, 2017
Subject: Early College Initiative in Massachusetts

Background

In January 2016, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and Board of Higher Education (BHE) met together to discuss the topic of early college programming and to better understand the entire spectrum of early college models found throughout the Commonwealth. One result of the meeting was a joint expression of interest from BESE and BHE to further explore the early college landscape in Massachusetts. Through the generous support of the Barr Foundation and partnership with Parthenon-EY, a joint steering committee and working group was charged with exploring the role that early college pathways could play in helping improve college access and postsecondary completion in Massachusetts.

Early College Research Project – Parthenon-EY

Parthenon-EY presented their initial findings to BHE in September 2016 followed by a presentation at the BESE's [December 20, 2016](#) meeting. The Parthenon-EY [report](#) highlights a number of advantages to the state's use of early college high schools as a means of improving college access and postsecondary completion, particularly for first-generation college students, including the strategy's alignment with state goals, the strong foundation of local early college programs, and the ability to achieve improved outcomes at reasonable costs.

The idea of using early college pathways to promote postsecondary completion is not new to the Commonwealth. Local school districts, postsecondary institutions, and non-profit organizations across the state have pioneered early college models and promoted their expansion for many years. The goal of the Parthenon-EY study is to knit together this work, along with other dual enrollment efforts, and provide recommendations regarding what it would take to build a broad-scale, statewide early college initiative. This effort is wholly consistent with a broader parallel initiative to define and develop high quality career pathways, for which we have just received a [2 million grant](#) from the Council of Chief State School Officers and JP Morgan Chase.

For all students, particularly first-generation and students traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary education, early college is an opportunity to engage in college-level work, develop a deeper understanding of the college experience, and envision themselves as college students.

Early college programs can help improve high school graduation and college completion rates, and allow students to compress the amount of time and reduce the cost necessary to complete an associate or a bachelor's degree, while experiencing career-related activities in a particular field or industry.

Early College Presentation and Preliminary Endorsement of Joint Resolution

At our joint meeting on January 24, 2017, staff leadership from DESE and DHE will provide a brief presentation of the early college proposal followed by an opportunity for the boards to discuss and vote on a joint resolution to move the early college work forward in Massachusetts. You will also hear from a leader of a school that currently provides early college programming. The proposed joint resolution establishes a 5-member Early College Joint Committee comprised of the chairs of the BESE and BHE or their designees, an additional member of each board designated by the chairs, and the Secretary of Education, to oversee the development of a process for designating *Massachusetts Early College Schools*, working with both commissioners and departments to develop a process for reviewing, approving, overseeing, and evaluating applicants for the new designation as well as helping to guide the growth of the effort. More details can be found in the attached *Massachusetts Early College Designation – Preliminary Outline of Key Elements* document (Attachment A). A full proposal will be brought back to both boards for final approval by June 30, 2017.

Enclosures: Parthenon-EY Report
Joint Steering Committee and Working Group Membership
Massachusetts Early College Designation – Preliminary Outline of Key
Elements
Joint Resolution

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND
BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
JOINT RESOLUTION**

NO.: BHE 17-06

BESE

BOARD DATE: January 24, 2017

RESOLUTION REGARDING EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAMMING

MOVED: The Board of Elementary & Secondary Education (BESE) and the Board of Higher Education (BHE) (collectively "the Boards") receive the December 2016 report issued by Parthenon-EY entitled *Breaking Down Silos to Put Students on the Path to Success: The Promise of Early College in Massachusetts*. The Boards express their appreciation to Parthenon-EY, the members of the Steering Committee and the Working Group for their efforts.

The Boards affirm their shared commitment to helping students attain the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to succeed in college and careers, be engaged citizens and lead productive and fulfilling lives. The Boards recognize that "early college" programs that allow high school students to experience and complete college level academic work and reduce the time and expense of earning a college credential can be a powerful tool to achieve the Commonwealth's overall goals for educational achievement.

Therefore, the Boards jointly resolve as follows:

1. The Boards hereby establish an Early College Joint Committee (ECJC) comprised of: the BHE chair, the BESE chair; one member of the BHE appointed by the chair of the BHE; one member of the BESE appointed by the chair of BESE; and the Secretary of Education. The Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), or their respective designees, shall be non-voting members of the ECJC and shall staff the ECJC.
2. The ECJC is charged with designing, developing and coordinating the administration of a Massachusetts Early College program based on the process and key design principles set forth in Attachment A to the memorandum

presented to the Boards at the joint meeting on January 24, 2017.

3. No later than June 30, 2017, the ECJC shall report back to and seek final approval from the BHE and BESE boards, either individually or through a joint session, on the proposed design, development and administration of the program.

Authority: M.G.L. c. 15A, §9(u) and M.G.L. c. 69, §1B

Contact: Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education
Mitchell D. Chester, Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Massachusetts Early College Designation – Preliminary Outline of Key Elements
*As presented to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the
Massachusetts Board of Higher Education on January 24, 2017*

Proposed Massachusetts Early College Designation Process

1. There shall be a five-member Early College Joint Committee (ECJC) consisting of: the chair of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE); the chair of the Board of Higher Education (BHE); a member of the BESE appointed by the chair of the BESE; a member of BHE appointed by the chair of BHE; and the Secretary of Education. The Commissioner of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, or their respective designees, shall be non-voting members of the ECJC and shall staff the ECJC.
2. The ECJC shall design, develop and coordinate the administration of a Massachusetts Early College program across agencies with existing and new resources.
3. The ECJC shall develop criteria for designating partnerships among public K-12 institutions and public or private Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) as Massachusetts “Early College Schools.” The ECJC shall seek stakeholder input in developing the designation criteria. Said designation criteria shall:
 - a) be based on the key design principles set forth below;
 - b) include a review and designation approval process; and
 - c) include performance measures to aid in evaluating the performance of participating institutions/ partnerships and the overall effectiveness of the program.
4. The ECJC shall also review options for funding the planning, start-up, and on-going operation of “Early College Schools,” including continuing state support per enrolled student (currently estimated at \$700-900) in a designated “Early College School” and a method for counting student enrollment in such schools as a potential enrollment category for the purpose of calculating foundation budgets under Chapter 70 of the Massachusetts General Laws.
5. The ECJC shall report back to the BHE and BESE boards, either individually or through a joint session, on the proposed designation criteria and grant procurement criteria by June 30, 2017.

Key design principles of a Massachusetts Early College School

The ECJC is responsible for developing a review process to designate applicant programs as “Early College Schools” and therefore eligible to receive funding. In order to be considered to receive the designation, programs should be consistent with the following five design principles:

1. Equitable Access

Designated programs should prioritize students underrepresented in higher education enrollment and completion. To facilitate this, programs should be structured to eliminate barriers to student participation. Design might therefore include, but not be limited to, tuition-free participation, open enrollment without regard to prior academic performance, student supports to promote success, scalability, multiple entry points for students, and student supports to prepare students for entry into the program.

2. Guided Academic Pathways

Designated programs should be structured around clear and detailed student academic pathways with regard to coursework, sequencing, and experiences beyond the classroom, requiring students to complete at least twelve college credits that count towards a postsecondary credential. Programs should also offer students substantive exposure to career opportunities in high demand fields, allowing them to make an informed decision about which career pathway to pursue. Students should also be exposed to the authentic experience and academic rigor of postsecondary education. This would require validating that courses are as rigorous as college level courses offered on campuses. Further, programs should prioritize allowing students to take courses on college and university campuses where possible, and otherwise offer experiences intended to acculturate students to the post-secondary experience.

3. Enhanced Student Support

Designated programs should incorporate sufficient wraparound services to promote academic success and completion, taking into consideration the needs of diverse populations of students.

4. Connection to Career

Designated programs should expose students to a variety of career opportunities including greater depth in careers relevant to their selected pathway, for example, by providing opportunities for targeted workforce and career skills development, career counseling, and elements of experiential and workplace learning.

5. Effective Partnerships

Designated programs should be a partnership between at least one institution of higher education and one secondary school and/or district, and may include one or more employers. Partnerships should present evidence that the program is consistent with collective bargaining agreements and memoranda of understanding detailing the nature of governance, budget, sustainability, scheduling, respective responsibilities, and performance measures. Programs should be sufficient in size to capture economies of scale goals and to ensure long-term sustainability.

The ECJC shall work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Higher Education, and the Executive Office of Education to ensure that the development of design principles and a designation process for "Early College Schools" is coordinated and aligned with similar planning efforts that are underway regarding "High-Quality Career Pathways."

