



## **Student Success and Academic Affairs Committee**

Board of Trustees

Massachusetts Bay Community College

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

By WebEx and Facebook

### **MINUTES**

**Trustees Present:** Lili Silva (Chair), Teddy Choi, Alfonso Hidalgo, Sandy Lish, Rebecca Negreli, Ilissa Povich, Diane Schmalensee

**Staff Members Present:** Liz Blumberg, Vice President of Student Development and Dean of Students; Karen Britton, Executive Director and Board Liaison; Josh Cheney, Associate Dean for Student Development; Lynne Davis, Dean of Health Sciences; Catherine Gildae, Assistant Dean for Institutional Effectiveness; Dejour Hollins, Coordinator of Engagement, Identity, and Belonging; Nina Keery, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences; Courtney Jackson, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost; Henry Lopez, Director of End User Services; David Podell, President; Hannah Sevian, Dean of STEM; Donyae Strickland, Assistant Coordinator of Engagement, Identity, and Belonging; Halye Sugarman, Dean of Business and Professional Studies; Richard Williams, Dean for Student Success and Strategic Initiatives; Tamika Williams, Director of Engagement, Identity, and Belonging

### **CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS**

Committee Chair Silva called the meeting to order and declared that a quorum was present.

### **FEBRUARY 11, 2025, MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Trustee Schmalensee moved to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2025, meeting, and Trustee Negreli seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Trustee Choi – ABSTAINED; Trustee Hidalgo – YES; Trustee Lish – ABSTAINED; Trustee Negreli – YES; Chair Povich – ABSTAINED; Trustee Schmalensee – YES; Committee Chair Silva – YES

### **Board Orientation to Academic Affairs – What Do New Board Members Need to Know?**

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Jackson reported that the survey completed for NECHE showed a need for more robust orientation for new trustees so that they can gain a better understanding of the College and how the College functions as part of the state. The following suggestions for such an orientation packet were made by committee members:

1. Who is who? Key people to know - department leaders; with pictures and descriptions of roles/departments
2. Basic information about the academic organization as shown in the College Organizational chart

3. Institutional Dashboard introduction
4. How noncredit offerings fit within the College
5. Central repository of reference documents
6. NECHE self-study
7. Strategic Plan
8. Board goals and committees - clarity on the role and responsibilities of Trustees; committee membership/orientation (also one-on-one for new committee members with Chair and new member, and David and Vice Presidents over areas)
9. Board members – information about Board members and their terms
10. State required Trustee trainings
11. Descriptions of external groups/offices (BHE, DHE, MACC)
12. 15-community college system information
13. Glossary of key acronyms
14. Offices - Activities and Projects

President Podell explained that all Board meetings are subject to Open Meetings Law and that no “behind the scenes” deliberations are allowed. The Board Chair and Committee Chairs meet with the President weekly but for updates only. He then explained the various state agencies and organizations. The Board of Higher Education (BHE) is the statewide board overseeing higher education in Massachusetts, including the community colleges. The BHE has public bi-monthly meetings when it considers proposals for new programs, mergers, closings, and makes policy (for example, it is currently discussing a 90-credit bachelor’s degree). Each segment – University of Massachusetts, community colleges, and state colleges – is represented by one person on the BHE.

Each public college has its own Board of Trustees whose members are appointed by the Governor with two elected members, the Elected Alumni Trustee and Student Trustee. There is a second Alumni Trustee who is appointed by the Governor. The Boards make decisions on issues specific to each college. Chris Gabrieli is the Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Education, appointed by the Governor. Within the Governor’s administration are various secretaries; Patrick Tutwiler – who will be MassBay’s Commencement Speaker this year – is Secretary of Education, overseeing Early Childhood, K-12, and Higher Education, each of which has its own Commissioner. Noe Ortega is the Commissioner of Higher Education. His responsibilities includes the evaluation of college presidents, a responsibility he shares with the colleges’ boards.

The 15 community colleges joined together to create the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC), which advocates and works for the community colleges. MACC is chaired by each year by a different community college president, but the organization is run by a CEO, Nate Mackinnon. The Presidents and MACC have worked on lowering costs through joint purchases. Later this week, some members and Mr. Mackinnon are meeting with the Senate President to talk about the community college budget needs.

MassBay also works with other state secretariate’s including the Executive Office of Labor and the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, within which is the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), which handles the state’s construction and real estate work.

### **Center for Student Engagement, Identity, and Belonging**

Vice President Blumberg, Associate Dean Cheney, Coordinator of Engagement, Identity, & Belonging Hollins, Assistant Coordinator of Engagement, Identity, and Belonging Strickland, and Director of Engagement, Identity, and Belonging Williams gave a presentation on the Center for Student Engagement, Identity, and Belonging

Certain elements of the presentation were elaborated upon in the discussion that followed, including:

### **Student Government Association (SGA) Vice Presidents meeting with College Vice Presidents**

The connection between SGA with the administration has grown stronger through several initiatives. The SGA Vice Presidents meet with their respective administrative Vice Presidents individually, and lunches are held for the Executive Teams of SGA and the College. These are opportunities to get to know one another, hear what each group is working on, be collaborative, and for students to be heard and to shine.

### **Dream Initiatives and Dream Ambassadors**

Trustee Hidalgo asked for further details on the Dream Initiative. Retention is a challenge at all community colleges, including here at MassBay. One reason is that students sometimes do not feel they belong or are connected to the college they attended. The lack of a sense of belonging alone or in combination with academic or financial difficulties may lead some students to leave school. MassBay has been very focused on how to make the college experience positive for students so that when they encounter challenges, they feel connected and understand there are people who can help them. MassBay wants students to develop emotionally and personally and to grow, not just academically. The purpose of the Center for Student Engagement, Identity, and Belonging office is to promote that feeling among students so that they are more likely to grow and more likely to stay and thus more likely to graduate.

Chair Povich asked if students can be turned away from programs like the Dream Initiative. President Podell explained that the Dream Initiative program, originally named Students of Color, does not turn away students. In addition to participating in Dream initiatives, students may apply to be Dream Ambassadors, completing a form on the MassBay website as they would any other student job on campus. Throughout the interview process, they are asked questions related to identity and how their identity shapes how they want to contribute to the MassBay community. There are a fixed number of Dream Ambassadors, student leaders who help with organizing the program. While these positions are limited, the overall program itself, including meetings, is open to all students, and past data have shown a 97 % retention rate among students involved in this program.

### **Outreach to Potential Students**

Committee Chair Silva reported that she was recently with the parent of a young adult who is finding her way in the world and, as the daughter was describing some of her experiences, Committee Chair Silva recommended she look into MassBay. As a Trustee, she has learned about all of the College's programs, resources, and overall commitment to making students feel welcome and supported, remain at the College, and be successful. She asked how potential applicants are able to see the College firsthand. President Podell suggested they come to the Open House on Saturday May 3 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, where they can learn about everything offered at MassBay, including the academic programs, financial aid, student development programs, physical spaces, and our various resources. Anyone who attends enters through the main entrance and goes into the cafeteria, which is filled with faculty and staff from all the different departments as well as offices representing their programs. There are hands-on experiences and sessions held throughout the day on various topics. Prospective students can also come visit at other times and meet with someone in Admissions.

Trustee Negreli asked why the Open House is scheduled in early May and not in March or April, given there are other Open Houses then and commitments being made sooner. President Podell explained that Admissions Counselors are in high schools from September to April, and students are hearing about MassBay through mailings, social media, and texts focusing on high school seniors and juniors. In addition, tours of the campus for high school classes take place regularly. The Open Houses are usually in late April or early May and in late October or early November. Registration of new students begins in May and continues until the new semester begins; however, they are concentrated in July and August. Community college students tend to make their decision late compared to students who go to four-year colleges. The majority of MassBay students apply after May because they take longer to make decisions as they are weighing other options. In addition, MassBay does not require a deposit and also does not require an application fee, both of which make the College appealing.

## **Promoting MassBay**

Trustee Lish asked if potential funders are invited to see and experience the Open House and other programs. She asked if the Foundation Board has seen this presentation, as it would help them gain an understanding that would make MassBay even easier to promote to people potentially supporting the college. President Podell explained that the Foundation Board has not seen this presentation. The Foundation Board has not been engaged in much fundraising; instead it has focused on investing Foundation funds and administering the scholarships generated by these funds. Most of the development MassBay does takes place through the College's Development Office, which reports to Vice President Jeremy Solomon and is directed by Michelle Biscotti, with whom he will share the idea of inviting donors and potential donors to the next Open House.

## **Unity Center**

Trustee Hidalgo asked about future plans for the Unity Center. Based on student feedback, a main priority for the Center in 2025-2026 is to engage all three campuses with its activities, events, and programming.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Trustee Schmalensee motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Trustee Povich seconded.

The motion passed with the following roll call vote: Trustee Choi – YES; Trustee Hidalgo – YES; Trustee Lish – YES; Trustee Negreli – YES; Trustee Povich – YES; Trustee Schmalensee – YES; Trustee Silva – YES

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 24, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 am.



6/24/25

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Lili Silva, Committee Chair    Date

## **MATERIALS IN BINDER**

Agenda

Minutes from February 11, 2025, meeting

Student Engagement, Identity, and Belonging Presentation

