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DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

December 27, 2013

First Lady Michelle Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mrs. Obama:

We applaud your efforts to highlight the critical issue of improving college access and completion of low-income and underserved students. As the Administration considers proposed changes to the Higher Education Act, we invite you to Boston—the nation’s higher education mecca—for a public event at Northeastern University focused on student experiences with institutional outreach strategies and support programs.

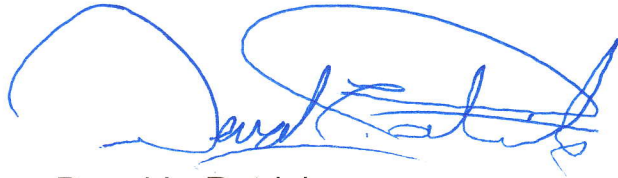
We are proud that the Commonwealth’s students consistently perform at the top in national, and in some cases, international assessments of academic achievement. Yet, we know that achievement and attainment gaps persist, particularly for students from lower-income families, threatening our ability to remain globally competitive. We are committed to increasing public and private investment in financial aid programs, including the Commonwealth’s Completion Incentive Grant Fund, to help more low-income and first-generation students graduate from college.

For its part, Northeastern’s Torch Scholars program provides full scholarships and “360 degree” wrap-around services to help students persist despite challenging personal circumstances. In addition, the university’s Foundation Year program provides Boston

Public Schools students one year of college credit at little or no cost after which they can transfer within Northeastern or to another college. These efforts have helped the university increase the graduation rate of African-American students by 27.4 percent over the last decade—progress that Secretary Arne Duncan recently commended.

The Obama Administration's continued focus on access and outcomes is appreciated and personal to us both. We look forward to working with you to highlight these vital issues and hope you will respectfully consider our invitation to visit Boston and Northeastern,

Sincerely,



Deval L. Patrick
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Joseph E. Aoun
President
Northeastern University