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MASSACHUSETTS LAUNCHES BID FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

First annual Vision Project report documents new era of campus innovation and collaboration; captures urgency of need for highly educated workforce in MA

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BOSTON – September 20, 2012 – The Department of Higher Education (DHE), joined by state education, legislative and business leaders today released a new report on the changing role of public higher education in Massachusetts. The first annual Vision Project report, entitled, *“Time to Lead: The Need for Excellence in Higher Education”* offers the first comprehensive view of where the Commonwealth’s public higher education system stands, in comparison to other states, on a number of key indicators including graduation rates, student learning and workforce development. At a time when more students than ever are enrolling in public higher education in Massachusetts, the Patrick-Murray Administration is committed to ensuring that all students in the Commonwealth have access to a world-class public higher education system.

Today’s announcement at the State House included comments from Governor Deval Patrick, Education Secretary Paul Reville, DHE Commissioner Richard Freeland, University of Massachusetts President Robert Caret, Holyoke Community College President Messner, Bridgewater State University President Dana Mohler Faria, and the Chairs of the Higher Education Committee, among others, who all discussed the work underway in the state’s public higher education system to reach the goal of national leadership and the importance of a highly educated citizenry to the future economic strength of the Commonwealth. The speaking program was followed by a panel discussion with business and non-profit leaders and local government officials on the partnership role of businesses, workforce development organizations, local governments and other entities must play to ensure the success of our students in public higher education.

“I am proud of the progress we have made strengthening our public higher education system to create a well-educated workforce,” said Governor Patrick. “This report provides valuable information on the areas where we are doing things right in higher education, and the places we still have room to grow.”

The *“Time to Lead”* report outlines the first two years of work under the [Vision Project](#), the Administration’s strategic plan for public higher education in Massachusetts, and lays

out the Administration's statewide strategy for achieving the goal of national leadership in the areas of college participation, college completion, student learning, workforce alignment, elimination of achievement gaps, civic participation and research to drive economic development.

These strategies include Governor Patrick's plan to make Massachusetts community colleges a centerpiece of the Administration's efforts to help people get back to work by unifying the 15 campuses and giving them additional capacity to better meet the needs of their students, local and statewide employers. The Commonwealth's knowledge-based economy relies on a highly-educated and well-skilled workforce. This plan, now being implemented, will help ensure our students have clear pathways to meaningful employment after college and that our employers have access to a steady talent pool with the skills needed to fill open jobs across the state.

"Massachusetts is home to a world-class education system, with outstanding institutions of higher education in all regions of the Commonwealth," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "It is imperative that we as a Commonwealth continue to emphasize public-private partnership, including collaboration with our academic partners, to advance student achievement, workforce training, and economic growth."

Last year the Administration also launched the Vision Project Performance Incentive Fund (PIF) to spur innovative programs at public institutions of higher education in Massachusetts and reward campus efforts to improve educational outcomes for their students. PIF grants have been used support a variety of new and existing programs to improve college readiness and attendance of high school graduates, as well as college graduation and student success rates. The funds will also be used to expand programs linked to the state's future workforce needs by preparing students for jobs in high-demand fields.

Other work underway at campuses across the state includes:

- A partnership between DHE, Framingham State University and ten other campuses to use performance-based Completion Incentive Grants to keep students on track to graduation;
- The "*Plugging the Leaks in Worcester's Math Pipeline*" program between Quinsigamond Community College and the Worcester Public Schools where high school and college faculty are transforming math coursework based on student's identified skill gaps within the district.
- A partnership between UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College to ease the student transfer pathway from the to the university, based on shared learning goals across both institutions;

"The Vision Project has set a clear leadership goal for Massachusetts," said Education Secretary Paul Reville. "We are doing well already, but doing well isn't good enough. Our aim is to be the best, and the benchmarks set forth in the Vision Project give us a clear path leading there."

"Time to Lead" offers clear evidence to support the thesis that Massachusetts will not succeed unless its public colleges and universities succeed," said Richard M. Freeland, Commissioner of Higher Education. "It will take equal measures of hard work by the campuses of the Massachusetts public higher education system, strengthened

collaboration with partner institutions and organizations, and sustained investment by the Commonwealth to get us where we need to be: national leaders in public higher education.”

Among the report’s findings are that Massachusetts is a national leader in the percent of students who go on to college and in the level of academic achievement at the high school mark. The Commonwealth is also performing above the national average in college completion and success rates, and continues to make steady progress in research outcomes at University of Massachusetts campuses. The report also shows that the Commonwealth’s public higher education system must produce more graduates, particularly in high need sectors like the STEM, health care and finance industries, in order to keep pace with the projected number of workers needed in those fields by the year 2020. Similarly, Massachusetts must do more to close achievement gaps that exist among race, ethnicity and income for students attending public campuses before achieving national leadership in this critical area.

“As a technology leader, our greatest asset in our world-class people,” said William H. Swanson, Chairman and CEO, Raytheon Company. “To consistently innovate, it is critical for businesses like ours to strengthen partnerships with the Commonwealth’s public universities and community colleges, so that the students of today can attain the skills they need to excel in the jobs of tomorrow.”

To view a copy of the full report, *Time to Lead: The Need for Excellence in Public Higher Education*, please visit: www.mass.edu/vpreport.