**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:

1. be based on the key design principles set forth below;
2. include a review and designation approval process; and
3. 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.

* + - 1. **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.

* + - 1. **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.

* + - 1. **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.

* + - 1. **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.”