



Affordable high-quality public higher education is essential to expand opportunity in all of our communities and create a more equitable and prosperous Commonwealth.

Higher Ed For All is advocating for fully funded community colleges, state universities and UMass campuses and proposes the following actions to knock down the barriers that too many potential college graduates encounter – and to create a public higher education system that demonstrates its respect for workers by providing fair wages and working conditions.

Implement a debt-free college plan that covers not just tuition and fees but also living expenses, including food and housing

There are tens of thousands of Massachusetts students who graduate from high school but don't enroll in college. And there are 700,000 adults in our Commonwealth who have attended college but never graduated. These potential college graduates are disproportionately people of color. Many of them are English learners. They are from low-income households, and they would be first-generation college students. Lack of access to debt-free college limits residents' individual opportunities and hurts the civic and economic life of the Commonwealth, which – more than many other states – depends on a well-educated population.

Expand existing programs that support student success and address staffing shortages

- ◆ Our campuses have developed and modeled many effective programs for mentoring, tutoring, and providing intensive support from faculty and staff. Many of these programs, including those funded by the SUCCESS program, have proven effective and have increased graduation rates. The problem has been that they have ended when temporary funding has vanished, and they have never been taken to scale. The state should dedicate permanent funding to make these effective supports widely available to students.
- ◆ In Massachusetts, advisors typically have caseloads of hundreds of students. It is crucial for all students, and particularly first-generation students, to have attentive advisors to help them navigate the complexities of higher education. By increasing the staffing levels of advisors and related support professionals, we can make sure students get the assistance they need to succeed. This will also reduce excessive pressure on faculty and staff.

Promote the recruitment and retention of high-quality and experienced faculty and staff – and make it possible for them to meet the needs of their students, particularly those who face the most significant challenges

- ◆ Adjust salaries to account for the value lost to inflation over the past three years.
- ◆ Reform the financing of benefits so the state funds health insurance, pensions, and related costs for all faculty and staff – rather than having students and their families pay through higher tuition and fees.
- ◆ Create wage equity for adjunct faculty and make sure they have access to health insurance, pensions, and paths to full-time jobs.
- ◆ Conduct an Equity Study to examine and implement changes to workloads and salaries:
 - Ensure that there are enough full-time faculty and staff to provide reasonable workloads so they can provide all students with the support they need to thrive.
 - Perform an analysis looking at equity by race, gender, and other non-dominant identities for all faculty and staff positions by examining all wages and benefits and inequities that arise for any other reason (including additional demands on faculty and staff to respond to students who seek them out for support).
 - Set the base salary of full-time faculty at a rate that allows them to make ends meet without having to teach additional courses on top of the 10 a year taught by community college faculty and the eight a year taught by state university faculty. Reducing the need for faculty to teach more than their standard caseloads, which are already high compared to peer institutions, would improve their ability to meet the needs of all students.

Return to the historic model of public funding for public buildings on college and university campuses and include faculty and staff when assessing campus needs

- ◆ Ensure campus buildings provide safe and healthy learning and working conditions and help the state meet climate mitigation goals.
- ◆ Fund building initiatives with state resources rather than passing the cost on to students in the form of fees, including funds from public-private partnerships.
- ◆ Have the state pay off outstanding capital debt so those costs are not continually shifted to students. On average, students at Massachusetts state colleges and in the UMass system pay over \$2,500 in fees annually just to cover building debt.
- ◆ Have all new construction and renovations on public higher education campuses incorporate the best practices for addressing climate change and environmental protection.

The Higher Ed For All campaign is dedicated to expanding access to Massachusetts public colleges and universities and to ensuring that learning and working conditions are equitably meeting the needs of all students and workers.

