

Need-based Financial Aid Talking Points

We welcome and support investments made in public higher education; the entire higher ed sector in Massachusetts is strong because of the diversity and truly unique ecosystem of its public and private institutions.

However, the current recommendation proposed by the Board of Higher Education and its chair, Chris Gabrieli, to take an additional \$200 million in need-based financial aid and award it to only students attending public higher education is misguided. The Gabrieli plan prioritizes one Pell-eligible student over another simply because of the student's choice of a college. This policy will no doubt cause long-term harm to the many private institutions that serve first-generation and low-income college students, and most importantly, loses sight of what is most important, and that is the student.

It is important that the Legislature ensures that all Pell MA students – regardless of their choice of institution – have equal access to scholarship funding for low-income students.

Therefore, in the name of equity and fairness, we believe the Legislature should also provide similar need-based scholarship funding to aid Pell-eligible students attending a Massachusetts private college and university.

Need-based financial aid needs to follow the students, not the schools. This is how the Pell Grant program works, and Pell has long proven to be incredibly successful at helping deserving students get a college degree.

At my institution, we serve

- XX number of Pell student, including XX Pell students from Massachusetts,
- XX number of MassGrant students, and
- provide XX in institutional aid to those low-income students.

And in this state, four-year private colleges and universities educate more Pell Grant students – bright students who are deserving of financial help – than do the four-year public institutions.

Roughly 50 percent of Massachusetts high school graduates remaining in the state to enroll at a four-year college do so at a private institution. We shouldn't tell deserving students from working-class families they will only get the state's help if they choose a public college. Those students should attend the best college for them – not one that Chris Gabrieli prefers that they attend.

The Commonwealth's public and private institutions share a common mission – educating the students who will drive the state's innovation economy and be civically engaged. To needlessly pit one sector against the other shortchanges all our institutions, our employers and most important, our students.

To be clear, my institution is not seeking Question One dollars; what we are asking is for the Commonwealth's financial aid programs to focus on the needs and interests of all low-income students and help all those students pursue the education that works best for them and, in many instances, may be the less costly option.