



Progress Report

OCTOBER 2004

Connect is a partnership of public higher education institutions in Southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod. Its members, Bridgewater State College, Bristol Community College, Cape Cod Community College, Massasoit Community College and the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, maintain a vital presence in Southeastern Massachusetts and have a tremendous impact on the regional economy.

The partnership has a dual mission to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of higher education, and to enhance the economic, educational and cultural development of the region. The member institutions collaborate with one another and with segments of the community of Southeastern Massachusetts, such as school districts, businesses and governmental and nonprofit agencies. Collectively, the five campuses:

- ◆ enroll more than 35,000 students, 83 percent of whom come from Southeastern Massachusetts;
- ◆ graduate more than 4,000 students annually with associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees;
- ◆ employ more than 9,500 people, which ranks as the second largest employer in the region;
- ◆ spend more than \$300 million annually on goods and services, with more than 60 percent of those expenditures in Southeastern Massachusetts.

"We believe Connect can serve as a model for regional cooperation, quality service to students and the public, and the responsible use of resources among public institutions of higher education in the commonwealth," said the five chief executives in their first joint statement.

The Connect partnership is a unique and powerful collaboration because of the involvement of all three sectors of public higher education – the community colleges, a state college, and one of the University of Massachusetts campuses. Although the Connect institutions have a long and proud history of collaboration, the formation of a formal partnership allows the traditional "one-time" and "ad-hoc" relationships to develop on a systematic basis for the benefit of the region. This new era of partnership among the institutions has paid dividends, and this progress report highlights how far Connect has come and where it is headed.

Dear friend,

On behalf of everyone affiliated with the five Connect institutions, we are very excited to present you with this brief report highlighting our many initiatives to improve the quality of public higher education in Southeastern Massachusetts and to strengthen the economic, social and cultural fabric of our community.

Though as an organization Connect is less than two years old, it builds upon our region's long-standing commitment of working cooperatively to find creative solutions to shared problems. In the pages that follow, we hope that you gain a clear sense of Connect's tremendous value as a nexus for fresh discussion, new ideas and novel approaches.

To truly understand the potential that our organization holds, you have to experience firsthand everything we have to offer. Only by visiting our campuses, engaging our people, and learning more about the variety of unique opportunities we offer can you truly begin to understand the reasons for our collective enthusiasm and optimism.

There is tremendous work to be done both here in Southeastern Massachusetts and throughout the commonwealth, and it is our sincere hope that Connect demonstrates the great rewards that come from working together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria

Dr. Jean MacCormack

Dr. John Sbrega

Dr. Kathleen Schatzberg

Dr. Charles Wall

Background of the Connect Partnership

The first meeting of the Connect chief executives took place Dec. 16, 2002, at Bridgewater State College. Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, president, Bridgewater State College, was joined by Dr. John Sbrega, president, Bristol Community College; Dr. Kathleen Schatzberg, president, Cape Cod Community College; Dr. Charles Wall, president, Massasoit Community College; and Dr. Jean MacCormack, chancellor, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. At this initial meeting, the chief executives agreed to meet monthly to continue exploring opportunities for collaboration and to gain a better understanding of their institution's individual and collective impacts in the region.

On June 9, 2004, the executive officers signed a memorandum of understanding to formally establish the Connect organization. The members unanimously elected the following officers to serve in fiscal year 2005: Dr. Mohler-Faria, chairperson; Dr. Wall, treasurer; and Dr. MacCormack, secretary. Bridgewater State College was selected as the first host campus for the Connect office and as the fiscal agent for the first year of operation.



Bridgewater State College President Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria (left), welcomes to campus Connect partnership leaders (from left), Dr. Jean MacCormack, chancellor, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth; Dr. Kathleen Schatzberg, president, Cape Cod Community College; Dr. Charles Wall, president, Massasoit Community College; and Dr. John Sbrega, president, Bristol Community College.

Connect is fortunate to have three well-qualified consultants to assist the Connect CEOs: Ms. Eileen Farley, president emerita of BCC; Dr. Fred Gifun, former associate dean from UMD; and Dr. Adrian Tinsley, president emerita of BSC. These individuals have worked with Connect to plan meetings, conduct research and coordinate Connect projects.

The chief executives also have begun to deploy key leaders on their campuses to design and implement partnership initiatives. Over the past year, the five chief academic officers have begun meeting regularly as have the five chief financial officers. In each of these forums new ideas for greater collaboration have surfaced and important bonds have been formed.

Connect Projects

In support of its mission, Connect engages in five major areas of activity:

- ◆ enhancing academic programs and student transfer;
- ◆ achieving cost savings through collaboration;
- ◆ fostering economic development;
- ◆ promoting cultural activities;
- ◆ sharing expertise and resources.

Major projects since Connect's inception include the following:

Economic Impact Report

The first commissioned study by the Connect chief executives, completed in April 2003, was a comprehensive report on the economic impact of public higher education in Southeastern Massachusetts. Among its key findings: the Connect institutions have an estimated total economic impact of \$750 million in the region and the commonwealth; every \$1 in state appropriation to these institutions generates an additional \$3.61 in regional economic output. A full copy of the report can be found on the Connect Web site, www.connectsemass.org.

Legislative Advocacy

The Connect institutions hosted two legislative events to communicate with the region's legislative delegation about the creation and progress of the partnership. The first event, held in March 2003 at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth's Advanced Technology and Manufacturing Center in Fall River, provided an opportunity to introduce the Connect partnership and present the region's legislators with the results of the economic impact study. The regional delegation was joined at this event by then House Speaker Thomas Finneran.

The second legislative event, held in November 2003 at Bridgewater State College, allowed the partnership to review its progress, highlight future projects and seek legislative support for public higher education issues. Rep. Marie St. Fleur, chair of the House Education, Arts and Humanities Committee, joined the regional delegation and participated in a taped television program with the Connect partners on issues related to public higher education in the region.

Cross-Campus Writing Project

Connect campuses are collectively reviewing writing requirements at each institution. The goals are to ensure that writing requirements are similar and that student writing is evaluated in comparable ways, permitting introductory writing courses to transfer seamlessly among Connect institutions. This project is expected to become a model for similar efforts in other areas of general education among Connect institutions.

Transfer Articulation Project

The need for greater cooperation and more efficient systems for transfer articulation was among the first issues taken up by Connect chief executives. A series of discussions between campus leaders from the academic affairs and admissions offices has provided insight into how to improve transfer articulation. As a result, both Bridgewater State College and the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth are hiring transfer coordinators in their respective academic affairs divisions to support advising and transfer credit processes. These individuals will also be tasked with bringing faculty from the Connect institutions together to develop articulation programs and keep them current.

Bank Services RFP Project

The three Connect community colleges and Bridgewater State College are participating in this project. Each institution had contracted individually for bank cash management services, and this project sought to reduce costs through institutional collaboration. The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth already participates in a similar collaboration established within the University of Massachusetts system. Cash management services include automated clearing house (ACH), depository services, wholesale lockbox and other services. BankNorth was the successful bidder, edging out Bank of America/Fleet, Citizens and Sovereign. Estimated cost savings to Connect institutions will exceed \$100,000 per year.

Connect Distinguished Speaker Series

During Black History Month 2004, the Connect institutions collaborated on a special cultural event, bringing to the region inspirational speaker Lesra Martin, the attorney credited with exonerating Rubin "Hurricane" Carter of murder charges. Mr. Martin spoke before large audiences of students, faculty and other guests on several of the campuses.

Collaborations Report

To understand their individual and collective impacts in the region, the Connect institutions collaborated on a report to document their wide range of regional outreach efforts and community partnerships. The final report, entitled "Connect: Why Higher Education Matters," shows a myriad of examples of how the Connect institutions impact school districts, businesses, nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies. A full copy of the final report can be found on the Connect Web site at www.connectsemass.org.

Current and Future Connect Projects

Pipeline South East Alliance

Funded by the Pipeline program, Connect institutions and their project partners have been awarded a two-year grant to enhance regional PreK-12 education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). BSC serves as the lead agency for this regional initiative, which has been awarded \$238,251 for fiscal years '04 and '05 from the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Project partners also include the Southeast Workforce Investment Board, Wheaton College, Massachusetts Maritime Academy and the regional PreK-12 school districts.

With the goals of increasing the participation of students, upgrading the preparation of teachers and improving curricular offerings, the projects major objectives are:

- ◆ To establish an infrastructure, including a communication system and resource center to collect and analyze network activity, serve as a central repository of STEM-related information for the southeast region and build horizontal linkages in the pipeline.

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“Cooperation has to come from a place of respect, and these institutions certainly have that for one another . . . All of us have the same objective – quality, affordable, accessible public higher education so that we can have a better workforce and a society more engaged in our democracy.”

State Representative Marie St. Fleur

Co-chair, Committee on Education, Arts and the Humanities

◆ To establish and support programs and activities that build relationships between students, teachers, higher education and industry, which will build a competitive work force for the “innovation economy.”

“Collaborative Leadership Development Program”

This Connect-based program, overseen by a 13-member planning committee, is being implemented during the 2004-2005 academic year. The program will rotate among the five Connect campuses with the introductory session at BSC in October. Eight monthly sessions will deal with various aspects of supervisory and other managerial responsibilities. Thirty-nine participants from nine colleges and universities are enrolled. Most occupy positions at the entry or mid-management level and have limited formal supervisory preparation.

Joint Facilities Master Planning Project

BSC and Connect’s three community colleges are participating in this collaborative master planning project, much like the plan already underway within the University of Massachusetts system. The campuses have experienced substantial growth over the past decade and are bracing for additional growth. The institutions need master plans to guide their expansions, and this project is expected to generate substantial cost savings. The institutions will work with the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and the Board of Higher Education.

Public Higher Education in the Region Vision Project

To understand the current environment and future direction for public higher education in Southeastern Massachusetts, the Connect institutions are undertaking a historic “futures” project. The project, entitled “A Vision for Public Higher Education in Southeastern Massachusetts,” will provide an analysis of public higher education’s past, present and future in this region and will culminate in a comprehensive written report and set of recommendations. Set for completion in spring 2005, the project will include substantial original data collection, key informant interviews and a regional higher education summit.

As highlighted by these projects, the executive officers of Connect are committed to acting cooperatively to enhance their institutional missions and for the enrichment of the region. As public institutions of higher education, the schools take seriously their mission to serve the region and the commonwealth. Each of the five Connect institutions offers an extensive array of degree and non-degree programs designed to prepare individuals for life and careers, and all are imbedded in their communities with expertise and resources to share. In a short time, Connect has become a model for regional cooperation among institutions of higher education and for interaction with vital segments of society.