

UPDATE



February 2012

The results of Mondays vote is as follows:

Acceptance of New Contract = 1531

Declined the New Contract = 216

Thank you to everyone that played a part in the presentation and the vote that took place. A lot of work went into this and the Table Officers are sincere when we say that we couldn't have done it without everyone pitching and doing their part.

Memorandum between the Board of Higher Education and AFSCME Local 1067 12/3/2011

Article 11 Section 1 Sick Leave

Effective upon signing of Agreement

H. Any employee having no sick leave credits, who is absent due to illness, shall be placed, unless otherwise notified by the employee, on personal leave; if no personal leave credits, then on vacation leave. If no sick leave credits or other accumulated leave credits are available, the employee shall be placed on an unpaid leave of absence to the extent otherwise required by FMLA. Such leave shall be charged on the same basis as provided in subsection G.

Article 11 Section 2 Paid Personal Leave

Full-time employees on the payroll as of the signing of this Agreement will be credited annually with paid personal leave credits as follows:

Unit I from 22.50 hours to 37.5 hours

Unit II from 24 hours to 40 hours

New full-time employees hired after the signing of this Agreement will be credited with the following Personal leave credits:

Unit I will have 22.50 hours

Unit II will have 24.00 hours

Article 11 Section 16 Leave

Effective upon signing of Agreement

Additional Leave on Account of Catastrophic Illness upon the submission of satisfactory medical evidence that demonstrates an existing catastrophic illness, the CEO may grant the employee, on a one-time basis, up to an additional twenty-six (26) weeks of non-intermittent leave. If denied the CEO shall provide the basis for the decision in writing.

Article 11 Section 3 Bereavement Leave

(clear up language in the 3rd paragraph)

For one (1) Day leave for spouse's brother's or sister's spouse.

Article 14 Section 1 Holidays

Effective on 1-1-2012

The following days shall be holidays for employees:

New Year's Day	Martin Luther King Day
Washington's Birthday	Patriots Day
Memorial Day	Independence Day
Labor Day	Columbus Day
Veteran's Day	Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

Article 17 Section 1A Salary Increases (Replace with following language)

A. Effective June 30, 2012 the salary rate of employees shall be increased by three percent (3%).

B. Effective the first pay period in July 2012 the salary rate of employees shall be increased by one and a half percent (1 ½%).

C. Effective the first pay period in January 2013 the salary rate of employees shall be increased by one and a half percent (1 ½%).

D. Effective the first pay period in July 2013 the salary rate of employees shall be increased by one and a half percent (1 ½%).

E. Effective the first pay period in January 2014 the salary rate of employees shall be increased by one and a half percent (1 ½%).

Article 18 Section 2 Health & Welfare

Subsection B. (add after 3rd paragraph) Effective the first pay period in January 2014, the Employer agrees to contribute on behalf of each full-time employee equivalent the sum of \$15.50 per calendar week. Effective the first pay period in June 2014, the Employer agrees to contribute on behalf of each full-time employee equivalent the sum of \$16.00 per calendar week.

Article 25 Section 3 Professional Development (Add language to extend in service training programs.)

Board of Higher Education Level Training Committee Effective July 1, 2012 \$35.

Effective July 1, 2013 \$35.

Article 37 Duration & Signature Page

Current contract ends 6/30/11 and the BHE and Union acknowledge that obligations arising due to tax triggers being met are not in effect. However if this agreement is not ratified by both parties the parties agree to return to the bargaining table.

Change first paragraph to:

New contract 7/1/11- 6/30/14

Negotiation for a subsequent agreement will be commenced on or after March 1, 2014.

.....
New Unit II Steward at

Middlesex Community College

Bruce D. Giannetta

Middlesex Community College
Institutional Maintenance Foreman
Facilities Management

GIANNETTAB@middlesex.mass.edu

DATE: January 3, 2012
TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Donene Williams
RE: Emergency Board meeting January 14, 2012. 10am.

A matter of great urgency concerning our Council 93 budget and staffing has come up quite unexpectedly that requires immediate attention by the board. My apologies for the short notice, but this issue has just arisen, and the timing is beyond my control. Please make every effort to attend.

Notice of this meeting is also coming to you via US mail, and additional supporting information is included.

Saturday January 14, 2012
10am
IBEW Local 103 – 256 Freeport St., Dorchester, MA 02122

Donene Williams
President, AFSCME Council 93



Council 93 Emergency Executive Board Meeting

The Council 93 Emergency Executive Board Meeting was held on January 14, 2012 in Dorchester at the IBEW Hall. It was my first Council 93 Executive Board Meeting and it was an experience that I won't soon forget. There were AFSCME Members that showed up to the meeting holding signs of protest against Harvard University AFSCME Members. It appears that Tony Caso, Executive Director, had decided to lay off 20 workers that supported Harvard University's 7000 members. There was a lot of controversy during this meeting and the meeting only touched upon the surface of what was going on. It seems that Harvard's members pay in the same amount to Council 93 every month, but they are returned all of the money except for \$3 which is kept by Council 93 for administrative fees, for example payroll. They were self-supporting and serviced all of their 7000 members. The only flaw that I can see is that there are other issues besides the dues which were never even discussed. For example, Harvard was supposed to organize more members and this did not happen, why I don't think that we will ever know. However it was pointed out that this arrangement has been going on for many, many years.

The problem as I could see it was that the way the layoffs were initiated and carried out. We fight every day for our members and when layoffs come we fight hard and we have a clause in our contract that is supposed to give us enough notice so that we can impact bargain the situation and speak with management. To the best of my knowledge none of this happened. A letter was sent out to the Harvard Members stating that they had 2 choices. One being that they lay off 20 employees within 2 weeks or that they do a direct affiliation with AFSCME International. Harvard wanted to remain with Council 93 and thus they had to lay off 20 staff members who serviced their members. The people there in support in my opinion were given an agenda and they followed it. I don't know still how I really feel about it because I would also fight for anyone one of our members that were being laid off by management, especially with such a short notice.

The vote went that Harvard University should be the same as everyone else and that they lay off 20 employees. There were personal political agendas that we will never know about fully but I do know that with adding in the mix another 7000 members, I have to question how the existing staff is going to be able to accommodate the new work load. They did keep some staff but I was not sure of the number.

For my first meeting, I would have to say that I was very disappointed the way things were handled and feel that we really need to be keeping a closer eye on what they are doing.

Thomasine (Tommie) Corbett
NECC, Service desk Supervisor
Recording Secretary Local 1067

Dear AFSCME Leader:

As I am sure you are aware the Governor has released his Fiscal year 2013 Budget which will begin July 1, 2012.

The Governor's budget seeks a reduction in funding to some items, while level funding others. We are still analyzing the individual line items to determine the specific impact of proposal. The Governor has also included funding for contracts as part of the Fiscal Year 2013 proposal to address outstanding obligations of the administration.

While many areas are facing reductions, the Governor has proposed **NO** change in the employee contribution for the GIC, the state health insurance plan. In addition, the annual re-enrollment process that was introduced last year has been reversed and will return to automatic renewal unless you seek to change plans.

Also, there are several outside sections that will be monitoring as we move through the process. One in particular is the consolidation of the Community College structure under one board.

In addition, we have been notified of the administrations proposal to close Taunton State Hospital by the end of this year. Closure of the facility would have a dramatic impact on how Mental Health services are provided to the residents of the Commonwealth and negatively impact the staff at the facility. We are still in the beginning stages of analyzing the details and gathering information and we will continue to keep you informed. <http://www.afscmecouncil93.org/?l=news&newsdetail=1&id=1083>

It is important to remember that this is a proposal and it is the first step in creating the Fiscal Year 2013 budget. The House and the Senate will present their appropriations pieces in April and May, respectively. We will be working to maintain the current healthcare proposal and minimize cuts to essential services provided by our members. We may be asking for the assistance of you and your members in the near future as we proceed over the coming months. Thank you in advance and as always please feel free to contact us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Peter Wright

Nancy McGovern

Jim Durkin

Better not to retaliate

Abraham Lincoln, according to one of the many stories told about him, was once asked about a member of his Cabinet who had sharply criticized him.

"What do you have to say about that?" demanded the questioner, hoping to spark a conflict.

Lincoln replied: "I have great respect for that man. If he has concerns about me, there must be some truth to it."

Not only did Lincoln effectively deflect the criticism, he won the greater respect of his friends and foes for being willing to consider other viewpoints.

In other words, sometimes you win by not fighting back.

A boss creates fear,

a leader confidence.

A boss fixes blame;

a leader corrects mistakes.

A boss knows all;

a leader asks questions.

A boss makes work drudgery;

a leader makes it interesting.



STEWARD'S TRAINING

**Saturday, April 21st, 2012, at Holiday Inn Mansfield,
MA**

AFSCME Council 93 will be conducting a Union Steward's Training for any AFSCME member that is interested in attending. All current and/or newly elected Union Officers and Stewards are urged to attend.



The training will cover such topics as:

- *Grievance administration, writing, investigating and presentation*
- *Rights of a Union Steward and members, such as Information Requests, "Weingarten Rights", Duty of Fair Representation, etc.*

Training runs from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided. You will only need to bring a copy of your contract.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Pat Gordon at 617-367-3686 or Alva Arellano via e-mail at aarellano@afscmecouncil93.org by April 16th, 2012.

In order for you to attend, we must receive your name, phone number, mailing address and your Local #. The class size is limited to 35.



Are All Your Members Registered to Vote?

As the Labor Movement begins laying the groundwork for working family victories in this year's critical elections, outreach to union voters will be absolutely vital. Our message works and we are experts at getting our members out to vote. But we can only do so if they are registered! Please reach out to your members and ensure that they are registered to vote. If they are not registered, please provide them with the necessary forms and information. Click the headline above for all information related to voter registration at the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website. Don't wait until the final stretch. Begin reaching out to your members now so that working families can be a force at the ballot box this fall!

Become a Labor Delegate to the 2012 Democratic State Convention!

It is extremely important this year to have a strong labor presence at this year's Convention so that the Party knows that working families in Massachusetts want the Party's number one priority to be jobs and economic fairness. Click the headline to find out how you can become a delegate to the 2012 DSC. To find out the date and location of your city or town's caucus, check with your city or

Cut down on noise to protect employees' health

Noise surrounds us all day, from the transportation we take to work, to the music in the elevator, and the clicking and humming and buzzing of computers and other office equipment in the workplace. And in many workplaces the noise is worse, as anyone who's worked near a construction site—or in one—can testify.

It's not something to ignore or shrug off. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 22 million employees in the U.S. are exposed to potentially damaging levels of noise at work every year. In addition to hearing loss, exposure to excessive noise can cause other health problems, such as hypertension and ulcers. Here are some steps to protect your employee's ears and overall safety:

- **Assess the situation.** Measure the noise in your workplace—both the average daily exposure, and the maximum or peak levels your employees experience. For an eight-hour work shift, OSHA's permissible limit for noise exposure is 90 decibels.
- **Invest in quieter equipment.** Compare workplace tools and equipment, and choose those that minimize noise and vibration.
- **Break up the pathway.** Enclose noisy areas: Shut doors, erect sound-dampening barriers, and buy sound-absorbing wall coverings to reduce noise.
- **Provide ear protection.** Expandable foam earplugs and other protective gear should be available to all employees who are exposed to high levels of noise.
- **Limit exposure.** Don't expect employees to work in excessively noisy conditions endlessly. Provide frequent breaks, and schedule them in shifts so they're not constantly exposed to noise hazards



Not a love story: The St. Valentine's Day Massacre

On Feb. 14, we remember our sweethearts, our loved ones, and of course . . . the St. Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929, in which seven Chicago mobsters were lured to a garage on the north side of the city and gunned down by killers hired by notorious gangster Al Capone.

The killings erupted from a conflict between Capone and a rival gang led by George "Bugs" Moran, who was the primary target of the massacre. According to one account, Capone hired members of Detroit's infamous Purple Gang to carry out the hit. They promised Moran's crew a shipment of bootleg whiskey in order to get them to a warehouse on Clark Street. Moran was late for the delivery, and the killers may have mistaken one of the gang leader's men for Moran himself.

Two of the four gunmen wore uniforms of the Chicago Police Department and drove a stolen police car. When they entered the warehouse, the gangsters inside initially believed they were being arrested. They allowed themselves to be disarmed and lined up against the wall before realizing that they were about to be murdered.

After the gunshots died out, the two uniformed killers and their two accomplices left the building, with bystanders assuming the police had carried out an arrest. A barking dog prompted neighbors to investigate, and they quickly discovered the gruesome scene and summoned the real police. One of the victims, still hanging onto life, reportedly told the police, "Nobody shot me," despite the bullet holes riddling his body. He died at the hospital three hours after the shooting.

Police identified the shooters, but they were never actually prosecuted for the killing (although one did go to jail for shooting a police officer in an unrelated incident). Still, the outcry over the killings marked the beginning of the end of the Capone gang's power in Chicago, and it captured the imagination of the public for years afterward.



Why listen to a groundhog?

Most of us know the tradition of Groundhog Day. On Feb. 2, the legend goes, a groundhog that comes up out of its burrow to check the weather will go back inside if it sees its shadow, and winter will continue for six more weeks. But if the sky is cloudy and it casts no shadow, the harsh winter weather is over.

Punxsutawney, Pa., hosts the best-known Groundhog Day event, featuring "Punxsutawney Phil" (who gained fame in the 1993 film *Groundhog Day*), but other towns in Pennsylvania and Maryland hold similar celebrations.

Where does the legend come from? It may have origins in ancient European beliefs involving a badger or a bear as a weather forecaster, as well as the Pagan festival Imbolc, whose traditions point to a bear or a serpent as a herald of good or bad weather. In the United States, Groundhog Day can be traced back to 1841, when a Pennsylvania shopkeeper wrote in his diary that that Candlemas day (Feb. 2) was the day on which, "according to the Germans, the Groundhog peeps out of his winter quarters and if he sees his shadow he pops back for another six weeks nap, but if the day be cloudy he remains out, as the weather is to be moderate."

So keep an eye out for the groundhog's report, and dress appropriately.

How to snap back after a negative performance evaluation.

You've just gotten your review from the boss, and it didn't go well. A negative review isn't the end of your career, though. Your ability to recover and move forward marks you as a professional and shows your value as a team member. Follow this advice:

- **Keep your cool.**

Avoid getting defensive. Arguing will only make your position worse. Listen to what your manager is telling you, and don't react impulsively. Take some time to think over his or her points.

- **Ask questions.**

Get specifics from your boss. What deadlines did you miss? What results was he or she looking for? You need to understand your manager's expectations in order to fulfill them.

- **Stick to facts.** If you disagree with the boss's evaluation, and the issue is worth taking a stand over, support your case with factual evidence. Show that you're committed to the truth, not just winning the point.

- **Get feedback elsewhere.**

Talk to colleagues and other managers to evaluate your manager's evaluation. If you hear criticism from more than one source, it's probably something to work on.

- **Set goals for improvement.**

Ask your boss what you could do better, or differently, to earn a positive review next time around.

ARTICLE 31 - EVALUATION OF EMPLOYEES

Section 1.

Performance evaluations are designed to serve the needs of both the employee and Employer. An organized program for employee performance evaluation will:

- A. Improve employee satisfaction and potentially reduce employee absenteeism, turnover, and grievances;
- B. Serve as an important motivational tool and improve the quality of job performance;
- C. Enhance the ability to achieve Affirmative Action goals through improved supervisor-employee communications;
- D. Base personnel actions on objective, accurate and fair performance appraisals; and,
- E. Monitor the performance of probationary employees on a timely basis.

Performance evaluation is the review and rating of all factors relevant to an employee's effectiveness on the job. It involves observation, guidance, training and open communication between

the employee and supervisor. For it to be of significant benefit to both the individual employee and the Employer, it should be a continuous process.

Performance evaluation should be seen primarily as a developmental tool. Its purpose is to assess an employee's job-related strengths and weaknesses and develop his/her competence to the fullest. In a correctly executed evaluation, the supervisor and the employee work together to find the means by which the employee's ability can be strengthened and directed.

Section 2.

With the exception of a probationary employee who shall be evaluated at the completion of the first three (3) months of probationary service and again at the completion of the first five (5) months of probationary service, a performance evaluation of an employee shall be made annually by the supervisor within thirty (30) days prior or subsequent to the anniversary date of initial hire or appointment to present position.

Such evaluation will be recorded in writing on the form attached hereto, as Appendix G and shall be made on the basis of the following criteria:

- A. Quality and quantity of work;
- B. Work habits;
- C. Work attitudes;
- D. Working relationships with others; and,
- E. Supervisory ability (if employee supervises others).

Section 3.

Each employee shall receive a written copy of his/her evaluation and shall be entitled to discuss the evaluation with his/her immediate supervisor and, if requested, with the supervisor of the next higher level than the immediate supervisor who has been assigned to review the performance evaluation. For the purpose of this Article, the term immediate supervisor shall mean an individual who is outside of the bargaining unit.

Section 4.

The Chief Human Resources Officer shall receive all evaluations from the immediate supervisors and shall retain such evaluations, together with any recommendations made on the basis of any such evaluation, and evidence or materials submitted in support of such evaluation, in the respective Official Personnel File of each employee.

Section 5. Application.

Any evaluation so retained in respect of any employee may be reviewed by such employee in the office of the Chief Human Resources Officer at any reasonable time upon prior written notice, or whenever otherwise mutually agreed upon by the Chief Human Resources Officer and the employee. An employee shall have the right to file a written statement in response to any such evaluation.

Section 6.

- A. An employee may not grieve the substance of his/her evaluation, except where such evaluation results in a negative action.
- B. Employees may grieve the evaluation procedure, as set out in the preceding sections of this Article, to Step IV of the grievance procedure.

Section 7.

Any provision to the contrary notwithstanding, individuals must be evaluated on the Form attached as Appendix G in order to be eligible for and receive the salary increases due and payable on July 1, 2009, July 1, 2010, and July 1, 2011.

To the extent that an additional evaluation is necessary or required, such evaluation shall not be deemed to alter or amend the normal sequence of evaluations otherwise set forth in the Agreement.

GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES PLAN TO FOCUS MISSION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO CREATE ROBUST WORKFORCE FOR REGIONAL EMPLOYERS

BOSTON – Monday, January 23, 2012 – In his annual State of the Commonwealth address tonight, Governor Deval Patrick will propose a set of reforms to help Massachusetts community colleges provide residents looking for work with the skills they need to help fill the estimated 120,000 current job openings in the state. The proposal calls for the fifteen individual community college campuses to come together as a unified, state-wide system offering a more streamlined curriculum as well as locally developed, regionally specific jobs and skills training.

By aligning a unified community college system with employers, vocational-technical schools and Workforce Investment Boards, the Governor's proposal will give community colleges the tools they need to help get people back to work. In order to help the community colleges meet this mission, Governor Patrick is proposing a \$10 million increase in funding as well as a streamlined budget and leadership selection process for the campuses.

"A central piece of our economic recovery strategy is ensuring that the skills of our workforce meet the evolving needs of our employers," said Governor Patrick. "That's why we are advancing a new and innovative mission for our community colleges, to train highly-qualified candidates for jobs in every corner of the Commonwealth. I look forward to partnering with our community colleges, educational professionals, students and the business community in these efforts."

"By working with community colleges in all regions of the Commonwealth, Massachusetts has the opportunity to increase partnerships between academia and industry to provide more workforce training resources to help students, employers and job seekers advance critical skills," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray, Chair of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

The Administration's plan to increase the budget and centralize the leadership selection processes of community colleges will ensure a cohesive system of education and skills training responsive to the needs of local employers.

Under the proposal, the Board of Higher Education (BHE) will have the authority to allocate all state funding to community colleges in Massachusetts, consolidating fifteen separate funding lines into a single line item within the Department of Higher Education budget. The BHE will be responsible for developing a system for making funding allocations to the individual community colleges that will take into account enrollment data; institutional performance and innovation; the creation of "stackable credentials" and credits that can be easily transferred across campuses; and the creation of new programs that are better aligned with regional labor market needs.

This plan also gives the BHE authority to establish new parameters for the setting of student fees at the community colleges and the use of revenues generated from these fees to ensure an appropriate and efficient use of taxpayer and student dollars.

Additionally, the Administration's plan creates new guidelines governing the selection processes for community college presidents, and also charges the BHE with establishing new procedures for the annual review of presidents. Clearly established selection processes and comprehensive performance reviews will help ensure excellence in leadership and a coherent vision throughout the entire system of community colleges across the state.

"This strategy will help us create the structure and incentives necessary to operate an integrated and comprehensive community college system," said Secretary of Education Paul Reville. "A more unified vision among our campuses will better serve our students, our employers and our Commonwealth in the long-term."

"Our community colleges are in a unique position to provide targeted workforce development," said Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Joanne F. Goldstein. "That training and course work is especially important given the gap that exists between the skill sets of job seekers and the skill sets employers need. It will ensure that students entering the workforce are better qualified for job opportunities in their respective regions."

"The Patrick-Murray Administration has made job creation and economic growth a top priority, and the importance of a highly-skilled workforce is a vital part of that strategy as highlighted in the Economic Development Plan submitted by the Governor in December," said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki. "The Administration and the Economic Development Plan recognizes the importance of workforce development, and the role of our community colleges in that effort, as we continue to improve our strong competitive position in the world's economy."

"Our colleges and universities are the state's largest source of educated workers and citizens," said Commissioner of Higher Education Richard M. Freeland. "We have much good work to build upon, with examples of effective partnerships with the employer community like the promising work being done by Bunker Hill Community College in partnership with the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership. We are determined to do all we can to expand such efforts."

Taken together, these changes will strengthen the historical role of community colleges of offering high-quality training and certification programs so that students can immediately enter the workforce – as well as create seamless pathways to additional educational opportunities.

"By leveraging our community colleges, streamlining the system, and aligning the mission, we can reverse this prediction by providing our workers with the skills they need to fill the jobs of the future in all areas of the Commonwealth," said John Fish, CEO of Suffolk Construction. "I applaud the Administration for its focus & commitment on this issue, and believe it will allow us to continue to prosper as we grow our strong Knowledge Based Economy."

"This could not come at a better time and will be a shot in the arm for the economy. We fully support increased funding tied to substantial updates to the structure and alignment of community colleges in Massachusetts," said Andrew H. Tarsey, Executive Director of the Progressive Business Leaders Network. "There are many companies ready to be a full partner on this project with the Governor and with the colleges themselves."

"Workforce development must be a top priority in 2012 and beyond," said Kip Hollister, CEO of Hollister Inc. "There is a clear competency gap and reform at the community colleges can only help us develop and retain talent in Massachusetts. This is a fundamental jobs issue and a big step in the right direction."

"Community colleges play a critically important role in helping Massachusetts develop a workforce that is second-to-none," said Sue Parsons of the Workforce Solutions Group. "We support measures that align our state's community college system with employers' needs for training and mid-level skills development. A highly skilled, well educated workforce is our state's most important competitive advantage, which enables Massachusetts to compete effectively in the global economy."

SENATE PREZ QUESTIONS CENTRALIZED OVERSIGHT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By Kyle Cheney
STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, JAN. 31, 2012.....Senate President Therese Murray lobbed a grenade Tuesday at Gov. Deval Patrick's plan to more closely coordinate the state's 15 community colleges, suggesting the proposal could lead to Boston bureaucrats setting agendas for campuses all over the state.

"I do have concerns about taking the local control away and putting it all under the Board of Higher Ed in Boston," Murray said in an interview on WCAI. "Does Boston know what the Berkshires need? Does Boston know what the Cape needs and the business needs of the Cape? I think we need to go a little bit slower."

Patrick has proposed consolidating budgetary, leadership and curriculum decisions within the state Board of Higher Education, arguing that a more streamlined approach would save money, improve students' skills and prepare Massachusetts residents to fill as many as 120,000 job openings for which employers say they lack qualified workers. The governor's top education adviser, Secretary Paul Reville, said the bill does not eliminate local control and seeks a balance between the influence of local boards and state policymakers.

"I think what we're trying to do here is not to move control of the community colleges to Boston but to recognize that there's both a local function and a state function to community colleges," he said in a phone interview after touring Bristol Community College with the governor. "Right now we're not a system, we're a very loose affiliation of 15 separate campuses. What we're trying to do is strike a balance by having some incentives in the system for colleges to collaborate."

"There's a legitimate policy discussion about state versus local. What we're saying is, let's not have it be one or the other," he continued.

The Massachusetts Competitive Partnership, a collection of business executives that has allied with and advised the Patrick administration on policy initiatives, intends to lobby legislators in support of the proposal, according to the group's president, Dan O'Connell, a former aide to the governor.

O'Connell said part of convincing wary lawmakers to back the proposal is to highlight other states, such as Virginia, where he said a centralized community colleges system as succeeded in "reflecting the regional economy's needs but under an overall program where the best ideas are being shared between" 23 schools.

"I don't think we're going to see a lot of opposition in the Legislature on those points," he said.

Patrick has also called for a greater emphasis on "middle skills" training to help ready Massachusetts residents to fill employers' unmet needs. On that point, Murray agreed.

"I think he's absolutely right on talking about mid-level training and mid-level skills. We have all of these medical companies I talked about earlier, the life sciences and the health care institutions we have are in need of trained individuals that meet certain skills," she said. "There are approximately between 120,000 and 130,000 of those jobs that are going unfilled ... I absolutely agree we need to change our curriculum in both the vocational schools and some of the community colleges so that they train for the jobs of today and tomorrow and not yesterday."

Murray also said that credits within the community college system should transferable from one institution to another. She called policies that prevent that transferability in some cases "crazy."

Murray's comment on the governor's plan offered a glimpse into what Patrick warned last week would be a "blood fight" on Beacon Hill over his community college plan. Administration officials emphasized that the governor's proposal would maintain responsibilities for local community college boards and characterized the plan as a partnership between the colleges and the Board of Higher Education.

The responsibilities that will continue to fall to local boards under Patrick's plan include: developing a mission statement, overseeing academic and administration operations, allocating the school's annual appropriation, setting student fees, approving tenure and promotions, maintaining and expanding facilities and developing new academic programs. Patrick filed his plan along with his fiscal 2013 budget last week, and it was one of three major policy priorities he outlined in his State of the Commonwealth address two days earlier.

"There are 240,000 people still looking for work in Massachusetts – and nearly 120,000 job openings. Why? How can we have so much opportunity available and so many people still looking for their chance?" Patrick said during his address.

February



Month

American Heart Month. Sponsored by the American Heart Association, which points out that heart disease, including stroke, is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. To keep your heart healthy, watch your weight, stop smoking, stay away from secondhand smoke, and control your cholesterol and blood pressure.

Black History Month. In 1976, the nation's bicentennial, President Gerald R. Ford urged Americans to "honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history." Explore the contributions that African-Americans have made to the history and cultural development of the United States.

Library Lovers' Month. A monthlong celebration of school, public, and private libraries of all types. This is a time for everyone to recognize the value of libraries and to work to ensure that the nation's libraries will continue to serve everyone. Also, go check out a book or two.

National Grapefruit Month. Grapefruit juice is naturally loaded with the antioxidant vitamin C, which boosts the immune system, as well as Lycopenene, a powerful antioxidant that may help prevent certain types of cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Week

Boy Scout Anniversary Week, Feb. 5-11. Modeled after Robert Baden-Powell's Scouting movement in Britain, the Boy Scouts of America was introduced to the United States on Feb. 8, 1910, by Chicago publisher W.D. Boyce "to teach patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred values."

National School Counseling Week, Feb. 6-10. Sponsored by the American School Counselor Association to highlight the impact school counselors have in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career, and to focus public attention on the important contribution of professional school counselors within U.S. school systems.

National Future Farmers of America Week, Feb. 18-25. The week of George Washington's birthday was designated as National Future Farmers of America Week in 1947. FFA Week always runs from Saturday to Saturday, and is designed to educate the public about agriculture.

National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, Feb. 26-March 3. Eating disorders are serious, life-threatening illnesses. NEDAwareness Week seeks to recognize the pressures, attitudes, and behaviors that shape the disorder; prevent eating disorders and body image issues; reduce the stigma surrounding eating disorders; and improve access to treatment.

Day

Groundhog Day, Feb. 2. If the groundhog sees his shadow, we're in for six more weeks of winter (or possibly a showing of the 1993 Bill Murray movie).

World Cancer Day, Feb. 4. Each year on Feb. 4, the World Health Organization promotes ways to ease the global burden of cancer. WHO estimates that without intervention 84 million people will die of cancer between 2005 and 2015.

Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. Send your sweetheart some roses.

PTA Founders Day, Feb 17. A reminder of the substantial role that the Parent Teacher Association plays in supporting parent involvement and working on behalf of all children and families.

National Women's Heart Day, Feb. 21. Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women. The good news is that heart disease is preventable: Be sure to exercise, eat fruits and vegetables, and don't smoke.

Leap Year Day, Feb. 29. Every four years, we add a day to February to keep the calendar in balance.