

## **Massachusetts Higher Education Pays Off, New State Report Finds**

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BOSTON, MA.--- Governor Maura Healey proudly announced new reports at the Massachusetts Statehouse today showing that higher education delivers a significant and powerful return on investment for individuals and the state economy.

“Today is about talking to the public and making sure that the public knows the value, the financial value, you get as a resident, as a family, by investing in our state colleges and universities, by sending loved ones to those institutions,” Healey said.

Healey spoke at the Grand Staircase to about 100 people, including many press members. Legislators, her higher education team, and other collaborators stood behind her as she recognized the findings of a new report, Go Higher: The Earnings Outcomes of Public Postsecondary Education in Massachusetts.

Healey highlighted that Massachusetts ranks No. 1 in education in the United States, which she credited to the state’s investments.

The value of these investments is measured in income, Healey explained. She presented data stating that on average, five years after graduation, someone with a two-year associate degree would earn \$20,000 more than they would without it. A four-year graduate with a bachelor’s degree would earn \$30,000 more.

Healey announced that since taking office, investment in financial aid has doubled for students attending all 29 Massachusetts schools. “In the 2023 school year alone, we saved Massachusetts college students over \$130 million as a result of those actions,” she said.

Healey also mentioned another major milestone: Enrollment rose statewide for the first time in a decade, exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

“Look, education, it's a winner. We figured that out a long time ago in Massachusetts. It's why it's in our Constitution. It's why we're the first in the country to have a school, to have a university, to have a library. It makes a lot of sense, and it makes for better opportunities and prosperity for our residents,” Healey said.

Senate President Karen Spilka discussed the Senate’s journey in transforming the delivery of higher education in Massachusetts. She highlighted how their recent decisions to make college more accessible resulted in skyrocketing enrollment.

Applause erupted when Spilka announced that people from families making \$85,000 or less can now attend any Massachusetts public higher education school for free.

“We fought hard, and today shows us that the fight is worth it and our investment is worth it, because nothing, and I'd say nothing, is more important than delivering the tools that our residents need to succeed,” Spilka said.

UMass president Marty Meehan stood at the podium to echo the importance of higher education. Meehan recognized not just the affordability of UMass degrees, but also their quality.

John Keenan, president of Salem State University, provided his perspective on higher education as someone who watches education blossom into careers and economic stability for many students.

Keenan recognized that state universities give first-generation, working-class and immigrant students a launchpad into the middle class.

Keenan introduced Salem State alumni Gaetano Mortillaro.

“At an early age, the realization hit me that higher education wasn't a better path to improve my economic situation, it was the only path,” Mortillaro said.

Mortillaro described how living with a genetic disorder eliminated many options to escape his family's poverty. With economic assistance, Mortillaro gained his bachelor's at Salem State, attended Boston University Law, and is now a tax analyst at UKG. Mortillaro is living proof of the recent report.

Members of the audience agreed that education investments are beyond worth it.

“I am super excited to finally have a quantitative understanding of what we have always sort of known, which is that higher education is a good investment ... Now, since higher education is under credibility attacks federally, we have the data to prove that in Massachusetts,” said Olivia Oestreicher, a Harvard University graduate student.

Francesca Purcell, a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, expressed that she was also thrilled with the report.

“I think it shows what most of us already knew. But it's nice to actually have it on paper and have real evidence that going to college and graduating from college is good for individual students, it's good for their communities, and it's good for the state as a whole,” Purcell said.