



MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of  
Higher Education

June 22, 2020

Matt Gravel  
Dean  
Springfield Technical Community College  
1 Armory Street  
Springfield, MA 01105

Paul Neal  
Principal  
High School of Commerce  
1550 Main Street  
Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Matt and Paul:

This letter is to confirm that Designation for the Springfield Technical Community College and High School of Commerce Early College partnership has been deferred in order to allow the partnership to finalize aspects of your program to fully align with the statewide Designation Criteria. Although the review team, interview team, and department staff felt that this partnership showed tremendous potential, they noted that there are a few areas requiring more clarity or additional modifications to meet the criteria. Please note that this feedback relates to your program as of March 2020. It was at this time we concluded our Part B review, however, due to the Covid pandemic, the Early College Joint Committee did not meet until June to consider recommendations.

In March, the areas of general concern included: *Reference to recruitment materials needing to be finalized; lack of full understanding of how equitable access was being addressed and supported in enrollment process; lack of full understanding of which aspects of the program were finalized (some plans were still in development).*

In terms of next steps, we would like to extend the opportunity to work with our program staff and technical assistance team to address these concerns, as well as any additional feedback from our team, thereby continuing the process of seeking Early College Designation. Please note that this next phase of the Designation process will require only supplemental materials and consultation, not a distinct application. Staff from our agencies will be reaching out to your team to set up a virtual meeting to provide specific assistance and feedback for your proposed program. We are aware that your partnership most likely has moved forward with Fall 2020 planning and as part of the supplement, so we will give you the opportunity to provide an update on your most current program plans. We recognize your commitment and look forward to reviewing the submission of those supplemental materials.

Please note that with respect to funding, we are currently waiting to identify possible resources to support this work while the FY21 budget is pending. We will be sending out further communication to the field as we learn more. Given the uncertainty around Covid-19 and state funding, we plan to follow our program's lead in terms of the pace necessary to address the Designation criteria. For programs that need to pause the process, we will work with you to do so.

Together with the Early College Joint Committee, we thank you for your engagement with this process and your demonstrated commitment to your students' postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion. We are confident that your program's design will be able to offer students a transformative experience to thrive academically and beyond. We acknowledge the depth of this endeavor, particularly given the rigor of the established criteria and the extensive requirements of the application.

Early College is a significant priority for each of us and for the Commonwealth, and we look forward to partnering with you as you continue towards this critically important designation. Again, thank you and all the best.

Respectfully,

Kristin Hunt