EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We undertook this first-of-its-kind study to determine who is leading on gender and racial balance among Massachusetts institutions of higher education and who is falling behind. Women represent 57% of all students at these institutions and are earning the majority of doctoral degrees, yet they hold only 31% of all presidencies.[4] Why does such gender disparity in leadership exist in a field where women have been excelling for decades?

This study focuses on academic year 2017/2018 (AY2017/2018) and uses June 30, 2018 as the anchor date for data. Our focus is on presidents, the three most common senior leadership positions on the path to presidency (provost, deans, EVP), board chairs, and boards of trustees.

Key Findings

The first step in reaching gender parity in any sector requires data collection and analysis to spotlight key findings. These data show a backslide in the number of women presidents among our public state universities and stagnation of female leadership among our private colleges and universities. In addition, when looking beyond the presidents to the senior leadership teams, the boards of trustees, and board chairs, the data show far too many institutions with virtually no gender balance.

As the birthplace of higher education in America, Massachusetts can and should become the state where women's leadership among higher education institutions is as prevalent as men's. The numbers reveal the challenges to achieving this goal.

- **Massachusetts colleges and universities have a long way to go to reach gender parity across all leadership categories (president, senior team, and board). Far too many institutions have minimal to virtually no gender balance.** 32 schools (34%) have never had a female president, and 26 have less than 30% women on their board of trustees. There are 14 schools which have neither.

- **Our large private universities are significantly lagging the overall sector.** Women represent only 25% of the presidents of this group, fall short in representation among the senior leadership team, and none have a woman board chair. Not one of the 17 large universities

(public and private) scored "satisfactory" in our criteria, and 13 of 17 universities (76%) fall in the two bottom categories of "unsatisfactory" and "needs urgent attention."

- **Massachusetts public universities have the lowest percentage of women presidents of all types of schools, public and private.** In total, women lead only one of our 15 state universities, or just 7%.[1, 2] Further, the number of women presidents/chancellors at our state universities has dropped since 2008, when they led five out of 15 (33%). We should expect our taxpayer-funded institutions to lead on diversity rather than trail the private sector.

- **Progress for women of color is minimal and data hard to obtain.** Data on women of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds is extremely difficult to gather. Women of color lead only five of the institutions in our study, or 5%.

- **We are far from parity among women board chairs in Massachusetts.** Women are underrepresented as board chairs among our public institutions of higher education, leading only five of 25, or 20%. Among private institutions, women chair the boards of 19 of 64 schools, or 30%.

- **Private colleges and public community colleges have done well in terms of the current number of women presidents, with 47% and 40% respectively.** Six women were presidents of the 15 community colleges as of June 30, 2018.[3]

- **Women represent 47% of all provosts and 52% of deans – positions which are the most frequent path to the presidency.** Consequently, the lack of parity among women presidents cannot be explained as a "pipeline issue."

- **California and New York lead Massachusetts in terms of parity for women and for women of color.** Of particular note, the California State University System (Cal State) with 24 chancellors, including the system chancellor, counts 13 women, or 54%, and 16% women of color.

Recommendations to Close the Women's Power Gap in Higher Education

Following is a list of recommendations that government officials, college and university presidents, and boards of trustees can take to achieve gender equity among their ranks. The Eos Foundation will compile, update, and publish the comprehensive rankings annually and prepare a full study every three to five years. We ask state and private institutions to partner with us to provide timely access to the data and share strategies found to accelerate the pace toward gender parity.

- At the institutional level, schools which have not achieved gender parity on their boards should fill immediate vacancies with women, and particularly, women of color, until parity is reached. Many schools look to alumni for board positions, and there are many accomplished and talented alumnae, among others, for schools to choose from.

- All institutions, public and private, should elevate more women to serve as chairs and officers on their boards when the next round of officers' terms expire.

- At the institutional level, schools should routinely require "unconscious bias" training for boards, presidents, and other senior leaders to examine the role unconscious bias plays in hiring and decision-making. The Board of Higher Education should require all public board members to participate in the training.

- At the state level, the Governor and legislature should learn from other states that are making gender and racial parity at public institutions a top priority, setting diversity goals and holding public boards and college presidents accountable for greater diversity at all levels.

- The State Board of Higher Education, which oversees all public institutions except the University of Massachusetts System, should be empowered to select the college and university presidents from the finalists brought forward by local institutions' search committees. Currently, each of the 24 individual boards of trustees chooses one candidate as president and brings that individual to the Board of Higher Education for approval, which has become almost always a formality.

- The Governor should choose the board chairs of all public institutions. Currently, the Governor names the board chairs for the University of Massachusetts System and the community colleges, but not the state universities. S/he should then seek gender parity and racial/ethnic balance among board chairs.

- The Board of Higher Education membership should reflect the demographics of the state, particularly with respect to gender parity and racial/ethnic balance.

- The Governor and legislature should consider other models of governance for our taxpayer-funded public colleges and universities. California, which is a national leader in terms of diversity for its public system, has only three boards, one for each system, to oversee their 147 schools. This centralized structure allows them to be far more intentional about diversity across all categories of institutions.

- At the research level, a number of key questions to explore remain. Is there a "glass ceiling" that prevents qualified women from advancing up the ladder to the presidency? To what extent is unconscious bias operating on boards and on search committees and hindering women from becoming presidents? Is there a "one and done" phenomenon in which, after a board hires its

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first female president, they no longer feel the need to intentionally pursue diversity in future selections? If so, how can this be addressed? What are the effective strategies that schools, which have reached and maintained gender parity, have followed?