UMASS DONAHUE INSTITUTE • APPLIED RESEARCH & PROGRAM EVALUATION

A Study of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School Governance and Financial Structures

Acknowledgments

This study benefited tremendously from the tremendous cooperation of numerous organizations and individuals. This report simply would not have been possible without their support. Accordingly, the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute offers its gratitude to:

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Thank you all for supporting this important foundational step toward a strong and sustainable future for Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

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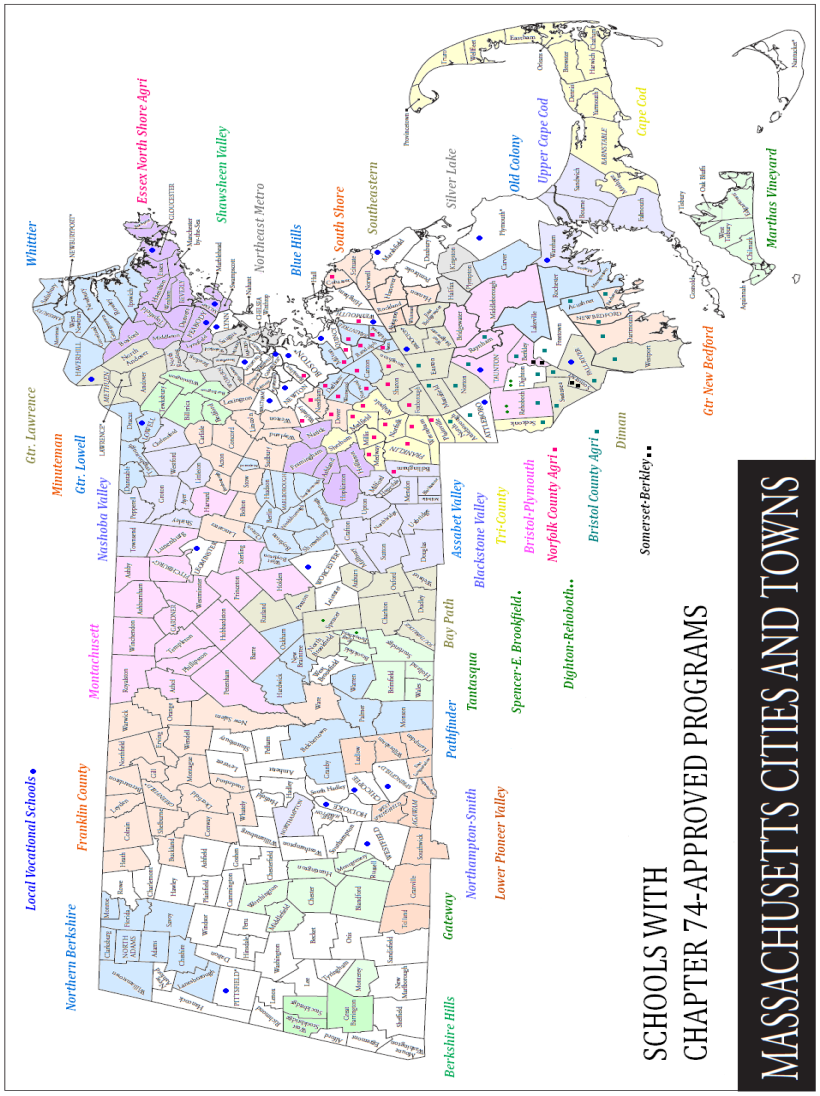


Introduction

A. Study Overview

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS or Smith) has played a unique, broad, and essentially super-regional role within Massachusetts' delivery system of career and technical education over its history, serving quite effectively in this role. However, current education and finance law treats Smith as a second, distinct, but essentially municipal district within the community of Northampton. In this way, the City of Northampton has borne, and continues to bear, the regional responsibility of maintaining an educational program for students well beyond its borders, particularly in the case of agricultural programming.

Given changes in education law and school finance since the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 (MERA), Smith's traditional role has become legally, fiscally, and politically difficult to fulfill. The likely need to engage in a significant upgrade of Smith's capital infrastructure in the near future and recent tensions arising from Smith's unique legal status in the wake of the legislation, led the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to commission this initial study of the school's governance and finance structures in June 2014. To ensure a rigorous approach, ESE engaged the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI), which worked in partnership with education research consultant Kenneth Rocke, to conduct the research.

Acknowledging that decisions related to Smith's legal and financial structure rest in the hands of locally elected officials of Smith, the City of Northampton, and the communities that send students to Smith, the purpose of this study is to establish a foundation of knowledge to support those officials and their constituents as they consider the challenges and opportunities of the present moment in Smith's unique history. Accordingly, it is hoped that this study report will serve as a resource to help local officials and their state counterparts forge a sustainable legal and financial structure for Smith, allowing the school to continue to serve—and thrive—as a regional service provider in the decades to come.

The study is organized into several sections, each presenting a wealth of data that may be useful to future planning committees. In addition to these data, which raise many important considerations for future planning, the report seeks to identify the driving forces for change, which the authors believe to be an imperative. It also presents numerous potential next steps for consideration by state and local officials. These suggestions, as well as ideas for potential alternative models for governance and finance should be taken as the study team's best effort to synthesize what we know about the current context, regional and community needs, and the mechanisms that might serve to support Smith and regional vocational education within the region comprising its historical catchment area.

B. Study Methodology

This study of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School's governance and finance structures was a complex endeavor. Even as an initial step in the research process, there was tremendous ground to cover. The researchers worked to focus inquiry on two overarching goals that drove the study:

- To advance the discussion and decision-making process that Smith, the city, and sending communities may engage in relative to Smith's future governance and financial structure through a study that summarizes existing conditions, the challenges they present, and the needs and expectations of key constituencies; and

- To present a range of alternative governance and financial models that might be considered as Smith considers other, potentially more sustainable, organizational structures that hold promise to

provide the facilities and programming required to meet area students' vocational education needs.

With this focus, the research team sought to examine existing conditions in the Smith enrollment catchment area, to gather insight into the challenges those conditions present to sustainability, and to gain a preliminary understanding of the needs and expectations of the school's key constituencies. Further, the team sought to identify alternative governance and financial models that might be considered as the schools and other stakeholders contemplate strategies for ensuring that Smith continues to thrive. Given the limited nature of the study resources and time frames, it is important to understand that every question could—and should—be pursued further as planning for the school's future advances in the months and years ahead.

To support inquiry, the study team implemented a mixed methods approach that sought to leverage the volumes of existing information and data that is available and relevant to the school's governance and finance situation, to engage numerous key informants through personal interviews, and to conduct a very limited survey of community officials as a first step in gaining perspective on issues of concern to the school's largest sending communities. These data sources are described in brief, below, with key sources described in greater detail throughout the study report.

These included the following:

1. **Interviews with key informants**, including the Superintendent of Smith Jeffrey Peterson, the Mayor of Northampton David Narkewicz, administrative and fiscal staff from both offices, members of the Board of Trustees of Smith, key leaders from the lower Pioneer Valley Education Collaborative, and key staff of ESE. The intent was to understand what these stakeholders consider to be key issues affecting Smith and regional vocational education, as well as potential solutions to address the governance, fiscal, and educational needs of Smith and the communities it serves. These interviews also provided greater understanding of Smith's governance and fiscal structures and procedures, and of other organizations' contributions to regional vocational education, as well as served as an opportunity to gather relevant documents and data.

2. **Review of key documents**, including those describing Smith's governance and financial structures; related communication between key stakeholders, state laws, and regulations with bearing on the governance and financial options available to Smith; and studies and data relevant to vocational education in the Smith service/catchment area. All parties were very cooperative in the document collection process and were gracious in offering consultation in their interpretation, when requested.

3. **Finance and enrollment data**, including extensive fiscal data and information provided by Smith and the City of Northampton, and data from ESE. District and municipal data included details related to school and municipal budgets, in-kind services, capital construction and maintenance costs, funding, and expenditures. ESE also maintains a range of fiscal and enrollment data that provided insight into Smith's evolving circumstances, as well as circumstances at comparable vocational-technical schools and districts across the region and the Commonwealth. Like local officials, ESE staff were very supportive of the study, both in their compliance with data requests and their work to verify key analyses.

4. **A survey of representatives from 15 communities,** including those sending the greatest number of students to Smith from 2010–2014 (excepting Northampton, whose mayor was interviewed separately as part of study protocol). The purpose of the survey was to gain a preliminary sense of sending community leaders' opinions relative to issues that could inform consideration of the fiscal and governance options open to Smith. The survey was mailed to a single municipal official, either the chair of each town's select board or the city council president.

C. Notes on Recently Revised Chapter 74 Regulations

This study includes extensive analysis and commentary on the revisions to Chapter 74 regulations that were proposed to the ESE Board in November 2014 (see Proposed changes to Chapter 74 Regulations in the Appendices).

During the period that the final draft of this study was under review, the ESE Board passed revised Chapter 74 regulations (see Revised Chapter 74 Regulations, as passed by the ESE Board and Memo from Commissioner Chester re: changes to Chapter 74 Regulations (for 2/24/15 ESE Board meeting) in the Appendices). The revised regulations, as passed, differ in some key aspects from the proposed changes.

Although it is no longer possible for stakeholders in the process to affect the regulations themselves, changes to the way those regulations are applied to Smith's unique situation might be accomplished through special legislation. For this reason, the analysis previously performed regarding these regulations is maintained in the text of this report.

D. Final Reflections on Study Purpose

This study of current and potential future finance and governance structures for Smith Vocational and Agricultural School, while voluminous, represents the beginning of a process to determine the right path for Smith and its sending communities. Its findings should be considered preliminary, rather than definitive, and additional research is recommended, particularly with regard to assessment of sending communities' needs and the range of possible governance and fiscal structures that Smith might consider for the future. Consideration of these options may also benefit from ESE support in the form of modeling various governance and fiscal changes as the school and affected communities begin to narrow their focus on feasible alternatives. Schools and towns will need to understand the fiscal effects of proposed changes if they are to agree to them. The fiscal structures, in particular, are so complex that projected changes in fiscal responsibility can likely not be calculated with a reasonable degree of certainty without ESE's assistance.

This report is intended to provide a common starting point for a community-wide discussion concerning the future of Smith, and the researchers expect this broader process to result in the accumulation of additional knowledge of both a technical and nontechnical nature. It is hoped that stakeholders will be able to use this report as a resource and as a common set of facts and descriptions concerning Smith's governance, finance, enrollment, and programming. As will be seen, the fiscal structures affecting Smith are highly complex, as is the broader fiscal and educational context in which the school functions. Particular efforts were taken to make the fiscal and governance arrangements concerning Smith more transparent for all stakeholders in this process. Although some of the information presented in this report may seem overly technical for some audiences, an understanding of the existing fiscal agreements and structures is important. Changes to aspects of the existing fiscal arrangements and structures could have dramatic effects on Smith's overall fiscal viability, and on the finances of other schools and sending towns, including Northampton.

It is the sincere hope of the study team that this report realizes its goals to the extent that local officials are able to identify common challenges and interests, and resolve the seemingly intractable issues associated with Smith's unique legal and financial structures. This is critical as these issues could jeopardize the quality and breadth of services the institution can provide. Given the dependency of many rural communities of Western Massachusetts on Smith to provide career and technical education for their high-school-aged children, the success of these efforts is critical to ensure reasonable and practical access to such education for all students in the Commonwealth.

Driving Forces and Opportunities for Change

A. Driving Forces

Several current regional and historical forces are helping to exacerbate the challenges that arise from Smith's unique governance and finance structure. Recognition of these forces and of the spheres of authority over Smith (or the lack thereof) will be critical to the ability of Smith's educational community to respond in a positive way to a dynamic and changing situation. These include the following:

1. Declining enrollment in the Smith catchment region

As described in this report (see section on Enrollment trends at Smith, 1995–2014), many of the towns and regional school districts sending students to Smith are suffering substantial declines in enrollment. This regional decline creates fiscal pressures on sending towns, sending high school regional districts, and on Smith itself. Those pressures in turn seem to be generating an increasing competition between schools for available students, and have likely contributed to the development of new, competing models for the delivery of career/vocational and technical education (CVTE) programming in the region.

2. Lack of formal binding affiliation between Smith and its sending towns

The only municipality legally affiliated with Smith is the host city, Northampton. All of the other sending towns have only a historical and informal affiliation with Smith. There are currently no equivalents in local agreements or Chapter 74 regulations or law that require Smith's sending towns to continue to send their resident students to Smith.

This is not the case with regional vocational technical schools. In these formal regional districts, students must attend the CVTE programs offered by the districts in which their home communities participate as members. The only exceptions to this are students attending CVTE schools that offer programs not offered by their home district, or students attending CVTE programs through the school choice program. In most areas of the Commonwealth, the number of students enrolled in CVTE programs outside their regional or municipal districts is relatively small. By contrast, at Smith the current rate of nonresident student enrollment is 78%.

3. Poor fit with ESE fiscal models and state requirements

Smith, as has been noted, is in a unique situation with regard to ESE fiscal and governance models. Neither the municipal finance model nor the regional finance model can be applied directly to Smith without some modification. In some cases, application of fiscal models developed for either regional or municipal school districts appear to have unintended consequences when applied to Smith. One example of this, the inclusion of all enrolled low income students in the calculation of the foundation budget for Smith, is treated at length below (see section on Effects of reporting all low income students enrolled at Smith on Northampton-Smith foundation budget calculation on the Net School Spending requirement for City of Northampton).

4. Poor fit with Massachusetts School Building Authority funding formulas

Smith recently attempted to initiate an application for Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funding assistance for major infrastructure improvement, but the funding formula for such aid is based on enrollments from member towns. In Smith's case, only students from Northampton are considered to be resident students. In addition, since the aid assistance formula is based in part on community wealth, and since Northampton is, by Chapter 70 foundation formula and MSBA calculations, wealthier than the average of all towns that send students to Smith, the percentage of aid allotted to Northampton would not be representative of actual student enrollment and town participation (see section on MSBA reimbursement percentages below).

5. Development of a competing CVTE delivery model

The Career and Technical Education Center (Career TEC) program at Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC) offers half-day Chapter 74 programs to its member towns, and to two additional towns that have negotiated tuition agreements with LPVEC. This half-day half-day schedule, unusual in Massachusetts but common in some neighboring states (Vermont, New Hampshire), allows students to attend academic classes in their home school district, and their technical classes at LPVEC. Students are transported from their home high schools on a daily basis, for half-day half-day programming.

With many area districts experiencing significant enrollment declines in recent years, this strategy of retaining some portion of student enrollments (and the state and local revenue sources that derive from them) in order to maintain efficiencies in the delivery of academic classes in the home district likely presents itself as an attractive alternative.

Easthampton, once the largest enrolling town of all Smith's sending towns (including Northampton), negotiated a tuition agreement with LPVEC and now sends most of its students to LPVEC (see section on Easthampton's agreement with LPVEC).

B. Opportunities for Change

A number of the issues surrounding Smith's current fiscal and governance structures are currently under broader discussion and debate in the Commonwealth. Workforce readiness, and the role of CVTE and agricultural education in promoting it, were topics of discussion in the recent gubernatorial debate and are particularly salient in education debates taking place across the Commonwealth.

The challenges facing Smith also present themselves at a time when significant changes in both the laws and regulations governing school finance and vocational technical education may occur. Chapter 74 regulations are now under review, as is the Chapter 70 foundation formula. Advocates for positive changes for Smith's structures should avail themselves of opportunities for input into these key regulations and laws and will be well served by monitoring the evolving legal and regulatory framework under which Smith operates.

1. Revision of Chapter 74 regulations

Chapter 74 regulations are currently under review by ESE. A draft of the revised regulations was presented to the ESE Board at their November 25 meeting.[1] The timeline for bringing the regulations back to the ESE Board for final approval, following the period of public comment, is currently unclear.

Several of the proposed changes to regulations would directly affect Smith, and any planning for the school's future will need to take into consideration the final changes adopted by the Board.

See the Revisions to Chapter 74 regulations section below for an extensive discussion of possible amendments to Chapter 74 regulations.

2. Revision of Chapter 70 foundation formula

The legislature established the Foundation Budget Review Commission through a provision in the FY 2015 state budget. That commission is charged with reviewing the assumptions and factors used to set annual minimum spending levels and state aid allotments for every school district in the Commonwealth. Hearings to gather input and feedback from professional organizations and the general public are now underway. Working sessions of the commission will likely begin in earnest in late February and March. See the Adjustments to the application of the Chapter 70 Formula to Smith section below for a sample of possible revisions to the Chapter 70 formula.

[1] For the draft regulations and associated materials, see http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2014-11/item3.html.

3. Momentum for regional planning regarding CVTE and SVAHS structure

Smith serves a large number of Massachusetts towns without a formal affiliation with a regional CVTE school or a local tuition agreement to send their students to other CVTE programs. This may be in part because Smith's historical role in providing CVTE programs predates the establishment of regional vocational technical schools. In parts of the state where regional CVTE districts predominate, laws and regulations governing those schools create, in effect, a set of rules guiding enrollment, finance, program, and governance within those regions.

Lacking a formal regional CVTE school, the Smith catchment area is an exception to the rule. As is described in this report, the resulting ambiguities have led to some tension between Smith and its sending communities, Smith and its host city (Northampton), and Smith and other providers of CVTE programs in this catchment area. As noted previously, several factors are driving increased public attention and discussion regarding Smith's governance and financial structures, and proposed revisions to Chapter 74 regulations and the Chapter 70 funding formula may present new opportunities for change. These drivers and increased scrutiny of the limitations of existing structures have the potential to catalyze change that appears more than necessary.

ESE's commissioning of this study, which may be a resource to local officials and residents with interest in the topic, could be viewed as a first step in considering what, if any, changes the school should pursue. As highlighted in this report, Smith's governance and financing is a complex *regional* issue that warrants a regional approach to further study and planning. Specifically, there is an unprecedented opportunity to convene officials from affected local communities, area CVTE leaders, regional employment specialists, and other stakeholders to consider the CVTE delivery system as a whole in what is traditionally defined as the Smith catchment area.

The task presented to this group would be challenging on both a technical and political level, and outside facilitation may be beneficial. Whatever its structure, the goal of the group would be to establish a collaborative working relationship among CVTE stakeholders, advance a vision of the role Smith is best positioned to play within that region, and make recommendations regarding the institution of a more sustainable structure for governance and finance. It is clear that this process, even if undertaken with energy and positive intention, would take a good deal of time, perhaps even years, but that time would be well spent if the outcome ensures equitable student access to quality CVTE programming within the region.

Description of Current Systems of Governance, Programming, and Finance

A. Governance

1. Board of Trustees

Smith is directly governed by a five member Board of Trustees. Three members are elected by voters of the city of Northampton, and two members are 'ex officio,' on the board by virtue of their elected or appointed positions: the mayor of Northampton, and the superintendent of the Northampton Public School district.

The Board of Trustees functions in many ways as a traditional school committee, and their policy manual is drawn largely from a model developed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

Some key functions of the Board of Trustees are to directly hire, evaluate, and supervise the superintendent of SVAHS; review and set school policy; recommend SVAHS's annual budget; and set the rate for nonresident tuition, within limits set by ESE.

As reported by the mayor's office, it should be noted that SVAHS was created through the Will of Oliver Smith, and that that will defines the governance structure of the school. In order to deviate from the terms of the will, the City of Northampton would be required to file a petition in the Probate and Family Court against the Attorney General seeking equitable relief from the terms of the will. See M.G.L. c. 214, sec. 10B and c. 215, sec. 6.

2. Northampton City Council and Northampton Mayor

The mayor of Northampton and the Northampton City Council have final budgetary approval authority for the SVAHS budget. Under the provisions of Chapter 70 Massachusetts General Law and ESE regulations, the city is required to meet a minimum Net School Spending (NSS) requirement established by ESE for SVAHS. These requirements are grounded in the concept of foundation budgets that lie at the heart of the Chapter 70 program and are based primarily on the students attending the district from member communities—in this case, the students from Northampton.

The mayor, who as noted above also sits as a voting member on the SVAHS Board of Trustees, recommends a budget for SVAHS to the city council.

It is important to recognize that, despite the fact that Northampton students constitute only 22% of the enrollment of SVAHS, the budget development and approval is governed by state finance laws as if Smith were a typical municipal school district serving the students of any municipality in the Commonwealth.

3. Program advisory committees

In accordance with state CVTE regulations, each Chapter 74 program at Smith has a program advisory committee, composed of industry representatives drawn from local businesses, practitioners, and alumni. These committees meet on a regular basis and advise programs on curriculum, job market opportunities, emerging industry practices and equipment, and so on. In addition, a general advisory committee, whose members are drawn from the individual program advisory committees, performs similar functions for the school as a whole. All of the committees are strictly advisory in function and have no direct authority over policy, budget, program development, or curriculum.

B. CVTE Programs Offered

SVAHS is listed by ESE as an 'independent vocational & agricultural school district,' the only one so categorized in the state. ESE's most recent Chapter 74 vocational technical education program directory lists the following programs for Smith:

- Agricultural Mechanics
- Animal Science
- Automotive Collision Repair & Refinishing
- Automotive Technology
- Carpentry
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Electricity
- Exploratory
- Graphic Communications
- Health Assisting
- Horticulture (with concentrations in Arboriculture and Landscaping)
- Machine Tool Technology
- Plumbing

Smith's website lists two additional (new) programs: criminal justice and cabinetmaking. Cabinetmaking is already an approved Chapter 74 program in Massachusetts, and the proposed new Chapter 74 regulations include criminal justice as a new program area.

Smith is one of only three schools in the state that offers agricultural mechanics, and one of only five that offers animal science. Smith is the only public high school in western Massachusetts that offers agricultural programs.

Unlike the two remaining county agricultural high schools, which offer only agricultural programs, Smith's agricultural programs are offered alongside a broader set of CVTE offerings at the school. The model adopted by the newly formed Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical High School also offers its agricultural program along with other CVTE programming.

The table below presents data from ESE on the number of students enrolled in programs at Smith since 2009. Agricultural-related programs are highlighted in tan. Excluding the exploratory program, approximately 20% of Smith students from October 2009 through October 2013 were enrolled in agricultural-related programs. The remaining 80% were enrolled in vocational technical programs.

Table 2: Program enrollment at Smith, 2009–2013

program title	OCT_09	OCT_10	OCT_11	OCT_12	OCT_13
Agricultural Mechanics	7	6	9	7	
Animal Science	32	33	31	26	35
Horticulture	30	34	33	33	32
Graphic Communications	18	21	20	22	17
Information Support Services & Networking	7				
Cosmetology	28	27	26	27	25
Culinary Arts	34	34	36	40	30
Carpentry	26	19	24	21	20
Electricity	35	30	29	28	30
Plumbing	27	26	26	27	26
Automotive Collision Repair & Refinishing	25	24	18	11	14
Automotive Technology	22	26	24	19	22
Machine Tool Technology	35	32	31	26	29
Health Assisting	19	21	24	27	27
Exploratory	119	111	103	104	106
totals	464	444	434	418	413
totals less Exploratory	345	333	331	314	307
percentage of students in Agricultural programs (not including Exploratory)	20.0%	21.9%	22.1%	21.0%	21.8%

C. The Week-about Schedule for CVTE Schools

This section describes the 'week-about' schedule of classes and programs in CVTE schools in Massachusetts. It is included here because alternative delivery models are also being offered in the Pioneer Valley region—for example, the half-day half-day delivery model being offered by the Career TEC program at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.

This descriptive section is a reflection of generally accepted practice, and was not derived from interviews with local officials.

1. Description

Academic and CVTE classes at Smith are structured in the 'week-about' schedule, as are classes in the great majority of CVTE schools in Massachusetts. Students typically spend one week in academic classes, and alternating weeks in their CVTE programs. Schools often develop some modifications to the schedule to help prepare their students for grade 10 MCAS exams, and for academic remediation and intervention strategies.

2. Strengths of this model

The week-about model was developed to emulate (during 'shop week') the experience of a typical day's work. Students spend the full day within the CVTE program, with a given group of students, usually sorted by grade level.

It is commonly accepted that this model lends itself to project-based CVTE learning, to sustained focus on complex and time-consuming technical tasks, and to developing a sense of teamwork within a shop. It is particularly helpful for students who are employed in internships (paid or unpaid) at off-campus professional work sites. Seniors and (sometimes) juniors are able to work full days and full weeks in their internships for the entire shop week. This fits the needs of employers, and gives students a very realistic experience of the expectations, schedule, and demands of typical workplaces in their chosen occupational area.

For specific CVTE programs, the week-about schedule greatly facilitates certain 'outside jobs,' for instance the building of a house at an off-site location. It is also helpful in some campus-based technical programs, such as culinary arts, which typically operates a campus restaurant and offers a noon meal to the public; students spending the full day in the shop are able to engage in all of the aspects of the typical workplace experience (e.g., menu planning, food preparation, cooking and serving, clean up).

3. Mixture of CVTE programs

In order to appeal to a wide range of students and to meet the needs of a wide range of occupational areas, larger CVTE schools typically offer a broad range of CVTE programs. As described above, Smith provides 16 distinct programs, adding to the typical CVTE mix by including agricultural programs.

4. Integration of academic and technical teaching and learning

One of the strengths of the standalone CVTE school, in which both academics and technical education are delivered within the same campus, is the potential for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues to develop an approach that has strong curricular integration. In the context of CVTE, 'integration' commonly refers to curriculum and instruction in which theory and practice are closely interrelated. Examples of well-integrated curriculum might include the explicit teaching of embedded mathematics, science, and English language arts theories and skills within the technical curriculum, and explicit connections made in academic classes to specific applications in technical areas.

5. Limitations of the week-about schedule

One limitation of traditional week-about scheduling in CVTE schools is a lack of continuity of academic instruction for students. Unless the schedule has been modified to infuse some academic instruction into the shop week, or lacking a strong theoretical component of teaching embedded academic skills during the shop week, students can go a full nine days (one school week plus two weekends) between sessions of academic classes. This can create a learning challenge for many students.

The week-about schedule also makes it more difficult for schools so structured to 'share' students with traditionally scheduled academic high schools.

D. Overview of Finances for Smith

This section is descriptive of the major funding streams for SVAHS. Detailed explanations and tables follow in other sections. Data is drawn from tables and spreadsheets published by ESE, and maintained on their website.

1. Resident student financing

For the purposes of the Chapter 70 foundation formula calculations, Smith is considered a second municipal district for the city of Northampton, in addition to the Northampton Public Schools district. The Chapter 70 formula includes calculations that determine a required district contribution from Northampton to SVAHS. This required contribution, when added to Chapter 70 Aid for SVAHS, constitutes required Net School Spending. Northampton meets its obligation for NSS through a combination of allocated indirect costs, direct payments to SVAHS, and transfer of Chapter 70 Aid that is explicitly intended for SVAHS.

This calculation and some consequences of it are treated in greater detail below (see section on Adjustments to the application of the Chapter 70 Formula to Smith, and also selected Chapter 70 Worksheets for SVAHS, City of Northampton in the Appendices).

2. Nonresident student financing

All of the other towns that enroll students at Smith are billed for nonresident tuition on a per pupil basis. The maximum rate for nonresident tuition students is set by ESE each year, although a school has the option of billing its towns at a lesser rate. The nonresident tuition rate calculation by ESE is based on the

prior year's actual expenditures and student enrollment, and is published annually on the ESE website. For SY 14–15, the ESE-set nonresident tuition rate for students attending Smith is $18,270. In addition, Smith bills sending towns a special education increment for nonresident special education students.

This process and calculation is treated in more detail below (see section on Computation of Special Education increment for nonresident students).

3. Transportation reimbursement

Since Smith is not classified as a regional school district, neither Northampton nor any of Smith's sending towns qualify for regional transportation reimbursement.

Smith's sending towns do, however, qualify for 'nonresident vocational transportation.' Towns must apply for this reimbursement directly to ESE by submitting annual expenditures on the end of year financial report. The percentage reimbursed varies from year to year, depending upon legislative appropriations, as it does for regional transportation. Some sending towns are quite distant from Smith, as it is the only CVTE school that offers agricultural programs in western Massachusetts. That distance, combined with relatively small numbers of students from some towns, can generate very high transportation costs on a per pupil basis.

Given the much smaller number of communities materially impacted by nonresident vocational transportation costs, Smith finds itself with far fewer allies in the effort to annually secure this funding than if they were a regional district and thus eligible for regional transportation aid, or if the nonresident aid was part of the broader regional reimbursement funding stream.

This process is treated in more detail below (see section on Revisions to Regional Transportation Reimbursement policies and practices).

4. Capital improvements and debt servicing

Northampton is the legal owner of both the land and the buildings on the Smith campus, and assumes all financial responsibility for the renovation and improvement of its many buildings. Under current law, the city is entirely responsible for both capital improvements and the debt associated with Smith, though only 22% of the school's students come from the city. This unique role of Northampton as the sole contributor of capital costs for a school that serves predominantly nonresident students adds an additional dimension of complexity to the school's financial structure.

Ordinary maintenance costs are included in the overall Smith budget, and sending towns pay a share of those costs through nonresident student tuition payments.

This is treated in more detail below (see section on Capital construction and renovation increment).

5. Financing of new construction

Smith has a long and proud history of delivering agricultural, vocational, and technical programs to students from its sending towns. However, as recent reports have indicated, the facility is aging, and significant improvements to existing buildings, construction of new buildings, or construction of a new campus may be necessary in the near future in order to continue to deliver quality learning experiences for its students. Please see the NEASC 2014 Summary Report and Facilities Report in the Appendices.

In the current governance structure, there is no legal mechanism allowing for apportionment of costs associated with major renovation or construction to the nonmember towns that represent 78% of Smith's student population. The proposed revisions to Chapter 74 regulations, however, do envision some instances when the ESE would be authorized to add a capital construction increment to nonresident tuitions. The extent to which this might improve Smith's circumstances with regard to the allocation of costs associated with capital construction is not yet clear.

In municipal CVTE schools where the home town or city provides the great majority of the school's students, there is a natural and logical connection between the taking on of a major construction project and the direct benefit to the town's or city's students. That link is broken at Smith, through no fault of the school, the City of Northampton, or the sending towns.

In regional vocational technical school districts, major construction and renovation projects are undertaken by the district's member towns, which must vote to approve the project, to finance the project, and to take on the debt associated with the project. No such regional mechanism exists for Smith at the present time.

In an interview with leadership at the Career TEC program at LPVEC, a similar obstacle to expanding CVTE programming was described. Since LPVEC provides CVTE programs for its member and tuitioning districts, it is not legally positioned to apply for or receive Massachusetts School Building Authority funding for new construction or major renovation, nor can it take on debt associated with such a project. Its current expansion of programming to include machine technology has thus had to be wholly funded by its member districts, without recourse to MSBA funding.

6. Smith Trust

The initial funds for the establishment and early maintenance of SVAHS came from the trust established by the will of Oliver Smith, and the school's unique status as a second, independent school district in the city of Northampton which serves the broader region is a legacy of that origin. The funds from the trust, however, now supply only a small percentage of the annual operating funds for Smith: $7,541 for the current fiscal year, and therefore lack the scale to substantially impact the school's fiscal condition.

E. Towns Served

1. Sending towns affiliated with other regional or municipal CVTE schools

Of the 58 towns that sent students to Smith between 2004 and 2014, 25 towns are members of other regional vocational technical school districts, or have municipal CVTE schools of their own:

- Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) (10 sending towns)
- Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC) (5 sending towns)
- Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical School (Pathfinder) (4 sending towns)
- Charles H. McCann Technical School (McCann, Northern Berkshire) (2 sending towns)
- Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School (Monty Tech) (1 sending town)
- Holyoke's William J. Dean Technical High School (Dean)
- Springfield's Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical Academy (Putnam)
- Westfield Vocational Technical High School (Westfield)

All students attending from these sending towns and cities are classified as nonresident students, as are students from communities with no affiliation with other entities that offer CVTE programs.

For the purposes of this analysis, Easthampton is included as having its primary affiliation with LPVEC, because they have a written agreement to provide these services.

2. Sending towns whose primary affiliation is with SVAHS

Of the same 58 sending towns and cities, 33 are unaffiliated, that is, they are not members of regional vocational technical schools, nor do they run CVTE schools of their own.

For many or most of these towns, Smith is functioning as both the default regional technical high school, and also as the regional agricultural high school. Excluding Easthampton from this analysis, these towns include the top 21 sending towns (by enrollment), and 28 of the top 32 sending towns. See Table 3, below,

as well as Table 9, which offers additional detail regarding enrollment levels for each community over time.

Table 3: Affiliations of Smith's sending towns with CVTE schools and districts

Smith's sending towns, 2004 - 2014	no formal affiliation	FCTS	LPVEC	Pathfinder	Municipal	McCann	Monty Tech
Amherst	x						
Ashfield	x						
Becket	x						
Blandford	x						
Chester	x						
Chesterfield	x						
Cummington	x						
Dalton	x						
Goshen	x						
Hadley	x						
Hatfield	x						
Hawley	x						
Hinsdale	x						
Huntington	x						
Leverett	x						
Middlefield	x						
Montgomery	x						
Northampton	x						
Pelham	x						
Peru	x						
Plainfield	x						
Russell	x						
Rutland	x						
Shutesbury	x						
Southampton	x						
Spencer	x						
Sturbridge	x						
Washington	x						
West Brookfield	x						
Westhampton	x						
Williamsburg	x						
Windsor	x						
Worthington	x						
Bernardston		x					
Buckland		x					
Colrain		x					
Conway		x					
Deerfield		x					
Greenfield		x					
Montague		x					
Orange		x					
Shelburne		x					
Whately		x					
Easthampton			x				
Longmeadow			x				
Ludlow			x				
South Hadley			x				
Southwick			x				
Belchertown				x			
Granby				x			
New Braintree (non-op				x			
Ware				x			
Holyoke					x		
Springfield					x		
Westfield					x		
Lanesborough						x	
Savoy						x	
Barre							x
totals	33	10	5	4	3	2	1

F. A Summary of Comparisons to Existing Governance Models

As has been noted, Smith's finance and governance structures are unique in Massachusetts, and share elements from at least three different models for the delivery of CVTE programs: municipal CVTE schools, regional vocational technical schools, and regional agricultural schools.

1. Comparison with municipal CVTE schools

Like most municipal CVTE schools, the mayor recommends Smith's budget to the city council. Also, the mayor sits on Smith's Board of Trustees as a full voting member. The City of Northampton bears full fiscal responsibility for all renovations and new construction at Smith, in spite of the fact that only about 22% of Smith's students come from Northampton.

In addition, Northampton is held responsible for meeting the Net School Spending requirement for SVAHS. If Smith were a purely CVTE school within a municipal school district, current state law and practice would neither calculate nor require a separate NSS requirement for Northampton for Smith. For example, in Smith's immediate region, four other cities (Holyoke, Springfield, Chicopee, and Westfield) have standalone or comprehensive CVTE high schools, none of which are held to an NSS requirement specifically calculated for their CVTE school.

Although this has placed a unique allocation requirement within the City of Northampton's schools, it has likely had the unintended consequence of ensuring that funding levels for Smith are somewhat comparable to what they would be if Smith was organized as a regional vocational school. This can be seen in the section and table on Per Pupil Expenditures, which shows that Smith's FY 13 per pupil expenditures are roughly equivalent to that of other regional CVTE schools in western Massachusetts

ESE's finance office annually calculates maximum nonresident tuition rates for all schools offering comprehensive CVTE programming. Following a pattern witnessed statewide that shows lower tuition rates for CVTE programs offered in municipal versus regional districts, an examination of municipal CVTE schools in Smith's region reveals that Westfield Vocational is the only one whose tuition rate even approaches that of Smith's: $13,341 for FY 15, compared to Smith's rate of $18,270. (See Table 18 on nonresident tuition in the Comparisons to other regional CVTE programs section.) This variance is likely a function in part of how finance data is typically reported to ESE and how the nonresident tuition rates are calculated. In any event, future planning for any change in the governance and finance structure of Smith will need to consider these variances carefully.

The differential in nonresident tuition rates may be having the unintended consequence of pricing Smith out of the regional market for programs offered at nearby municipal CVTE schools. Again, because Smith's sending towns have no legal or regulatory obligation to send their students to Smith, the cost of comparable programs may become a driving factor in sending towns' decisions about entering into formal agreements with other institutions for the provision of CVTE programs for their students.

A direct consequence of holding Northampton to an NSS requirement for Smith is it ensures that the vocational increment in the foundation formula follows Northampton students to Smith, and is not subject to being diffused across the entire Northampton school district.

2. Comparison with regional vocational technical schools

Like most regional vocational technical schools in the state, Smith serves students from many towns, with no one town providing more than about a quarter of its students. Smith's location and historical functions in the region make it the natural default vocational technical school for many towns.

Smith has both program advisory committees and a general advisory committee, ensuring a strong voice of regional industry and employers in program development. However, unlike regional vocational technical schools, Smith's budget must go through a process that requires approval of the mayor and of the city council of Northampton only before being passed and adopted, and does not require approval by other communities that enroll large numbers of students in Smith. Similarly, other communities do not

have representation on a regional school committee that would allow for ongoing input to other programmatic and operational decisions. Additionally, as previously explained, the in-member status of these communities does not allow their enrollment to be factored into NSS or MSBA calculations.

Also, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the cost of capital infrastructure is also not shared or collectively directed by other participating communities.

3. Comparison with regional agricultural schools

Although only about 20% of Smith's programs are agricultural in focus, Smith is still the only agricultural high school or institution with Chapter 74 approved agricultural programming in western Massachusetts. Students who choose agricultural programs at Smith often travel long distances from their towns of residence.

Unlike the two remaining county agricultural schools (Norfolk and Bristol) Smith does not receive funding through annual "cherry sheet" assessments on county members. Also unlike those schools, Smith is unable to set its own nonresident tuition rates independent of ESE caps.

G. Unintended Consequences of Smith Not Being Organized as a Regional School District

There is no prohibition against towns that have traditionally sent their CVTE students to Smith deciding to make agreements with other entities to send future students to a different school and thereby limit access to Smith for some of their students. A particularly significant example of this occurred when Easthampton, which, in 2004, was the town with the largest number of students enrolled at Smith (including the host town, Northampton) entered into an agreement with LPVEC.

Regional CVTE districts benefit from a stable group of towns that are legally committed to sending the vast majority of their CVTE students to the regional CVTE school and are restricted from developing duplicative programs to compete with the regional districts of which they are members. Other aspects of laws and regulations also limit families from voluntarily enrolling their children in duplicate programs offered in neighboring districts at public expense. Regional agreements are deliberately binding, and difficult to change. This ensures some stability of town membership, student enrollment, maintenance of basic operating costs, and provides a predictable fiscal base for taking on capital debt for major infrastructure improvement.

The absence of a formal regional agreement in the Smith catchment area means there is no legal obstacle to prevent sending towns from developing and implementing competitive Chapter 74 programs to be delivered in the home high school. Current regulations prohibit this for member towns in regional CVTE districts: Chapter 71, Section 14B:

> *"(c)…Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the type of regional school may, if it is so stated in the agreement, consist of a vocational school or schools offering such kinds of education as may be provided by towns under the provisions of chapter seventy-four; and any other type of regional school may, if it is so stated in the agreement, offer said kinds of education. A town may simultaneously be a member of a vocational regional school district and any other type of regional school district provided**, however, that when a vocational school district is in operation, no member town of such district, and no other type of regional school district of which such a town is a member shall, without the approval of the commissioner of education, offer the same kinds of education as offered by said vocational school district."***

Under the provisions of a tuition agreement with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, Easthampton now sends the majority of its CVTE students to LPVEC on a half-day half-day basis, with the students receiving their academic courses at Easthampton High School. Some Easthampton students still attend Smith, as they elect to participate in Chapter 74 programs that LPVEC does not offer.

Easthampton's CVTE students attending LPVEC are listed as enrolled at Easthampton, as LPVEC is not a local educational agency for the purposes of ESE enrollment reporting data system. Because Smith was never organized as a regional school district, Easthampton did not, and does not, have a regulatory obligation to refrain from developing Chapter 74 programs that might be duplicative of programs offered at either Smith or LPVEC.

This is not to debate the relative educational effectiveness of the delivery of CVTE programs in various delivery models (stand-along dedicated high schools that deliver both academic and technical instruction, half-day half-day technical programs at regional 'skills centers,' or in-house Chapter 74 programs in traditional high schools). Rather, the point is that the stability of Smith's enrollment is in jeopardy when there is no legal impediment to duplicative Chapter 74 programs being developed within the geographic region and there are no formal regional vocational technical organizational structures in place. Duplicative and competitive Chapter 74 programs may have the unintended consequence of degrading Smith's ability to maintain sufficient overall enrollment to ensure adequate organizational size and a robust set of educational programs.

The Commonwealth makes substantial investments in CVTE facilities through MSBA projects and distribution of federal Perkins funds. The Commonwealth therefore has an interest in ensuring that there are sufficient high-quality Chapter 74 programs in a given area to meet the needs of interested students, but that programs not be unnecessarily duplicated within that same geographic region. The default 'map' of regional vocational technical districts ensures this throughout most of the state. Smith, which has been functioning as the default regional CVTE school for the area, does not receive the programmatic protections built into regional agreements due to its continuing status as an independent, second municipal school district.

Results of Survey of Municipal Contacts

A. Survey Purpose

The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute administered a survey to a municipal representative in each of the 15 communities that have historically sent the highest number of students to Smith. The purpose of the survey was to gain a preliminary sense of community leaders' opinions relative to issues that could inform consideration of the fiscal and governance options open to Smith. The survey was not intended to garner a conclusive statement on the part of community members, rather it represents an important initial step in a community engagement process that may in the future be pursued on a larger scale than the current study resources allowed.

The survey, which appears in the Appendices of this report, asked respondents to provide information and comment on

- their sources of information and level of knowledge about Smith's programs,
- the extent to which they feel Smith's programs align with their communities' needs,
- their experience with and suggestions for opportunities to provide input on Smith's operations and direction,
- satisfaction with the current financial arrangement of sending nonresident tuition to Smith, and
- the willingness of their community to consider becoming a district member in an alternative governance structure for Smith.

B. Survey Administration

The survey was mailed to a single municipal official (the chair of each town's select board or the city council president) in each of the 15 communities that sent the greatest number of students to Smith from 2010–2014, excepting Northampton (See Table 9). Northampton and these 15 communities represent 87% of the students who attended Smith during that time. Eight surveys were returned for a 53% response rate, including one of the three largest senders, five of the hill towns, and two anonymous surveys.

C. Limitations

The results summarized here reflect the opinions of eight individual respondents. Accordingly, they cannot be considered an accurate representation of community-wide opinion regarding Smith. These responses may nonetheless provide insight into perspectives and concerns that may be held more broadly. Efforts to gather input from a range of community members and stakeholders, potentially through surveys, interviews, community forums or other methods, would be needed for a more complete and accurate understanding of community opinion.

D. Summary Findings

Overall, respondents' answers and comments suggest that they have limited sources of information on Smith, and those sources generally do not originate from Smith itself. Those with knowledge of Smith felt its programs align well with their community needs. However, some also noted that "newcomers" may not recognize Smith's value, and that they would welcome more communication and outreach from Smith to develop a stronger relationship with their communities.

Half of the respondents indicated that they were "not satisfied" with the current financial arrangement of paying nonresident tuition to Smith. Respondents expressed concern about the cost of tuition and

transportation, a lack of input with regard to budget, tuition, and overall operations, and a desire to have a better understanding of how costs are determined. Responses to a question on whether their communities should maintain their current arrangement of sending students to Smith reflected uncertainty, a need for more information, and a desire to for more communication with Smith.

Nearly all respondents were willing to consider the possibility of their town becoming a member of a new governance structure for Smith, if it allowed "a vote in school decisions at about the same cost per student." However, respondents were clear they would need information on the details before making such a commitment.

E. Information and Communication

Local media, including radio, television and the newspaper, was the most commonly reported source of information regarding Smith, and was selected by four respondents. The next most common response, written in by two respondents, was the Hampshire Regional School District central office. A presentation at a town or select board meeting, social media, current students, and alumni were each selected once. One respondent selected "written communication from Smith" as a source of information.

Three respondents reported they had attended a meeting at Smith, however two wrote that the meeting was not initiated by Smith, but by the Hampshire Regional School District member towns. One commented, "Communication with sending districts is lacking."

Respondents were asked to indicate their "level of understanding regarding the programs currently offered at Smith." Half of the respondents indicated they had "general working knowledge" of the programs offered at Smith. The remaining four indicated they had "little or no knowledge" of Smith's programs. Those who reported having a "general working knowledge" felt that Smith's programs aligned well with the vocational, technical, and agricultural education needs of their community. None offered suggestions for expansion or improvement of Smith's programs when asked. However, one commented:

> *"I think the general community holds a lot of knowledge of what Smith offers. [I] would like to see more outreach of Smith to sending district towns. Many who grew up here think of it as 'our school' but newer residents see no connection and don't understand its value to our community and students."*

F. Decisions and Opportunity for Input

Survey respondents indicated they would like more opportunities to be informed and to provide input on Smith's operations and direction. None of the eight respondents had ever attended a Smith Trustee meeting. None of the respondents answered yes in response to a question regarding whether their community "has had sufficient opportunity to provide input on Smith's operations." Half (four of eight) answered "unsure" and half answered "no."

Three respondents offered suggestions to increase input. They recommended that sending communities and school officials, including finance committee members, be kept informed and notified of Smith Trustee meetings. They encouraged Smith's superintendent or other school representatives to attend and speak at school committee, select board, and other town meetings. One commented, "Currently there is no relationship."

G. Structure and Finance

Four respondents indicated they were "not satisfied" with the current financial arrangement of paying nonresident tuition to Smith. These respondents expressed concern about the cost of tuition and transportation, the lack of input with regard to budget and tuition, and a desire to better understand how costs are determined. The comments below illustrate these concerns:

"Tuition rates and transportation cost [are] too high."

"We are very happy with the school and programs but we would like to have a stronger relationship with school, more knowledge of processes, and some say in cost—or at least a better understanding of how costs are arrived at and have an ability to weigh in w/ community impact."

"The town's students can attend Smith Voke, at the town's expense. The town has no say in the tuition or number of students we can afford to cover at the expense of other departments."

"Community leaders should better understand this process and communities need to have a better relationship and connection to Smith."

"Budgeting for Smith Voke is difficult. Unlike our regional schools, we have no vote in regard to their budget and tuition"

"Sending districts need more of a voice in the process—more of a presence. [I] would like to see communities / town government[s] have more involvement in Smith."

Responses to a question regarding whether respondents' communities should maintain their current arrangement of sending students to Smith through nonmember tuition reflected uncertainty, the need for more information to inform decision making, and a desire for more communication with Smith. (Two respondents answered yes, four were unsure, and two answered no.) One respondent did not want to continue the current relationship based on a belief that if Smith were to become regionalized, "more state money [would be] available."

Nearly all respondents (seven of the eight) expressed their willingness to consider becoming members of a new governance structure for Smith if allowed "a vote in school decisions at about the same cost per student." In comments, respondents said they would need more information before making such a recommendation, and restated their desire for districts to have more of a voice and involvement with Smith.

Enrollment and Indicators for SVAHS and Comparable Schools

A. ESE Indicators for CVTE Schools in the Smith Catchment Area

In the SVAHS (Smith) catchment area in 2014, Smith had the highest ESE accountability level (Level 1), the third highest percentile ranking (after McCann and FCTS), and was tied for the second highest four-year graduation rate with McCann, and after FCTS. Student growth percentiles (SGPs) for mathematics and English language arts were within the statistical median (40%–60%).

Note that ESE indicators are unavailable for the Career TEC program at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative because students attending CVTE programs there are counted on their home district statistical reports. Seven districts are members of LPVEC, and two additional districts have CVTE program tuition agreements with LPVEC. Such achievement data could be generated through student-level data analysis, but this task was not a major focus of the present study.

Table 4: CVTE schools within the Smith catchment area: enrollment and ESE indicators (obtained from Massachusetts ESE District and School Profiles: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/)

CVTE Schools within Smith catchment area	Enrollment (SY13-14)	2014 DESE indicators				
		Percentile ranking	Accountability level	ELA SGP	Math SGP	4 yr. Graduation rate
Chicopee Comprehensive HS	1,432	7	3	30.0	26.0	78.1
Dean THS	460	3	4	50.0	33.5	39.3
Franklin County TS	523	31	2	50.0	53.0	94.7
LPVEC Career TEC	475	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
McCann TS	505	36	2	46.0	44.0	93.1
Pathfinder RVTHS	611	17	3	39.0	38.5	86.3
Putnam VTHS	1,337	17	3	41.5	52.0	77.1
Smith AVHS	413	29	1	46.0	53.0	93.1
Westfield VTHS	470	16	3	42.0	50.0	75.5

B. Comparison of Smith's Enrollment to Other Regional CVTE Schools

In SY 13–14, if Smith were considered a regional school, it would have had the smallest enrollment of any regional CVTE school in Massachusetts. The small size of Smith's enrollment may make it particularly vulnerable to swings in demographic shifts, in corresponding student enrollment, and in decisions of its sending towns regarding where to seek CVTE programming for their students.

Note that North Shore Regional and Essex Agricultural are not included in this table because they combined to form one school in SY 14–15, and prior year data was not readily available for them.

Table 5: SY 13–14 enrollment at regional CVTE schools, smallest to largest

LEA code	Regional CVTE School	SY 13-14 school enrollment
406	NORTHAMPTON SMITH	413
910	BRISTOL COUNTY	451
915	NORFOLK COUNTY	476
851	NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	505
818	FRANKLIN COUNTY	523
855	OLD COLONY	579
873	SOUTH SHORE	600
860	PATHFINDER	611
815	CAPE COD	654
879	UPPER CAPE COD	677
829	SOUTH MIDDLESEX	691
852	NASHOBA VALLEY	711
830	MINUTEMAN	715
806	BLUE HILLS	842
801	ASSABET VALLEY	1,026
878	TRI COUNTY	1,037
876	SOUTHERN WORCESTER	1,104
805	BLACKSTONE VALLEY	1,164
853	NORTHEAST METROPOLITAN	1,261
872	SOUTHEASTERN	1,280
885	WHITTIER	1,285
810	BRISTOL PLYMOUTH	1,287
823	GREATER LAWRENCE	1,340
871	SHAWSHEEN VALLEY	1,372
821	GREATER FALL RIVER	1,407
832	MONTACHUSETT	1,433
828	GREATER LOWELL	2,112
825	GREATER NEW BEDFORD	2,148

As the table below shows (Table 6), Smith's percentage of nonresident students is the highest by far of any regional CVTE school in Massachusetts. As is discussed further in sections below, Smith is lacking the regulatory protections afforded to regional vocational technical schools serving multiple towns in formal regional school districts. Thus the high percentage of nonresident students enrolled at Smith, pursuant to their Chapter 70 entitlement to attend programs not offered by their home or affiliated districts, leaves SVAHS particularly vulnerable to affiliation decisions made by towns that have historically sent their CVTE students to Smith.

Table 6: Regional CVTE schools with nonresident students, ordered by % of nonresident students

District	SY 11-12 non-resident students	SY 11-12 total enrollment	percentage of non-resident students
NORTHAMPTON SMITH	311	434	71.7%
MINUTEMAN	278	648	42.9%
ASSABET VALLEY	359	1,013	35.4%
NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	85	470	18.1%
OLD COLONY	90	572	15.7%
NASHOBA VALLEY	56	686	8.2%
TRI COUNTY	77	1,006	7.7%
FRANKLIN COUNTY	36	511	7.0%
PATHFINDER	36	658	5.5%
SOUTH SHORE	11	608	1.8%
SOUTHERN WORCESTER	7	1,073	0.7%
UPPER CAPE COD	2	646	0.3%
BLUE HILLS	2	836	0.2%
BRISTOL PLYMOUTH	1	1,231	0.1%
totals	1,351	10,392	13.0%

Regional Demographic and Enrollment Trends

A. Enrollment Trends at Smith, 1995–2014

While many vocational technical schools have experienced significant increases in enrollment over the past two decades, Smith's enrollment has shown a decrease over the same time period. Tables 7 and 8 offer a view of decline by grade level over time and at the whole school level (all students fall into the grades 9–12 category in Table 8). These data show a persistent, if incremental, decline in enrollment with a decrease from a high of 540 students in in FY 98 to a low of 413 in FY 14.

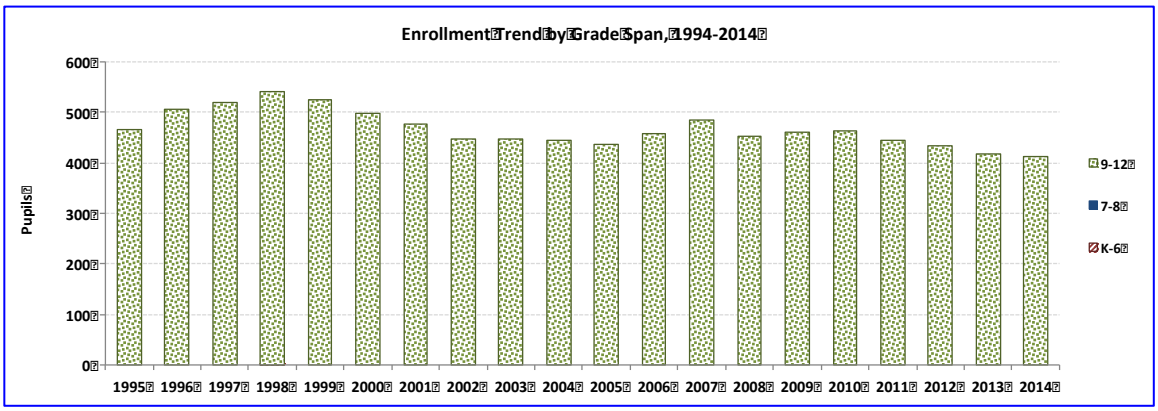
Table 7: Long-term enrollment trends at SVAHS, 1995–2014 (derived from ESE Excel workbook 'Chapter 70 district profiles,' located on the ESE website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Long-Term Trends in October 1 Enrollment
Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural

406 Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural

FY	9	10	11	12		9-12
1995	135	111	116	104		466
1996	148	144	109	105		506
1997	150	152	123	95		520
1998	148	145	138	109		540
1999	138	132	131	124		525
2000	129	128	118	123		498
2001	125	124	115	112		476
2002	111	122	104	109		446
2003	124	113	113	97		447
2004	126	114	106	98		444
2005	112	135	102	88		437
2006	136	110	119	92		457
2007	122	141	105	116		484
2008	107	125	128	93		453
2009	114	110	116	120		460
2010	119	129	108	108		464
2011	111	115	120	98		444
2012	103	111	105	115		434
2013	104	105	110	99		418
2014	106	108	97	102		413

Table 8: Long-term enrollment trends at Smith, 1995–2014, chart



B. Enrollment Patterns at Smith, 2004–2014

In the 11 years from 2004–2014, students from 58 different towns attended Smith. Using 11-year averages, the 16 towns with the highest enrollment totals over that time period accounted for 87% of the total enrollment.

Table 9: Enrollment at Smith, by town, 2004–2014

	non-Northampton enrollment	329	313	312	330	319	329	330	322	311	312	322	3529
	SENDING TOWN	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	11 yr. totals
1	Northampton	115	124	145	154	134	131	134	122	123	106	91	1379
2	Easthampton	128	120	95	84	69	57	54	36	35	34	37	749
3	Southampton	26	22	34	41	36	35	35	34	28	29	29	349
4	Huntington (non-op)	10	6	14	16	22	25	24	26	29	27	28	227
5	Hatfield	14	16	18	23	23	23	17	9	8	11	12	174
6	Williamsburg	13	13	15	16	13	18	19	18	16	17	10	168
7	Hadley	12	10	14	16	15	9	10	14	18	25	23	166
8	Chesterfield (non-op)	9	13	12	18	15	13	13	12	21	18	18	162
9	Amherst	18	16	15	14	**8**	13	14	17	16	13	16	160
10	Westhampton	15	12	13	10	8	15	15	16	11	13	14	142
11	Cummington (non-op)	10	5	7	8	12	14	14	19	10	11	11	121
12	Goshen (non-op)	11	11	9	10	11	11	12	9	13	13	11	121
13	Chester (non-op)	7	8	6	9	9	10	8	10	11	11	9	98
14	Worthington (non-op)	14	14	10	10	8	6	5	4	8	7	12	98
15	Ashfield (non-op)	4	5	3	5	7	10	11	13	13	6	4	81
16	Hinsdale (non-op)	5	6	6	9	7	6	4	6	8	9	10	76
17	Russell (non-op)	4	4	2	3	5	7	7	10	6	4	6	58
18	Plainfield (non-op)	2	2	4	6	7	8	8	4	4	3	4	52
19	Blandford (non-op)	1		1	1	4	5	5	9	6	7	8	47
20	Dalton (non-op)	1	1		2	3	3	5	9	8	6	8	46
21	Peru (non-op)	3	3	6	5	5	4	2	2	3	5	6	44
22	Becket (non-op)		1	2	3	2	2	4	6	7	8	8	43
23	Westfield	1	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	6	8	39
24	Shutesbury	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	5	5	6	5	31
25	Leverett	3	5	6	5	4	1	3	1				28
26	Holyoke				1	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	26
27	Windsor (non-op)	1	2	4	4	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	23
28	Hawley (non-op)					1	2	3	2	4	3	3	18
29	Middlefield (non-op)	1				3	3	3	3	1	2	2	18
30	Pelham	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	2	1	1	2	17
31	South Hadley	2	1			1	2	4	3	2	1		16
32	Montgomery (non-op)					1	3	3	3	2	1	1	14
33	Whately		1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	13
34	Belchertown	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1				11
35	Southwick (non-op)	2	3	2							1	1	9
36	Savoy				1	1	1	2	1	1	1		8
37	Spencer (non-op)	1	1	1	1				1	1	1	1	8
38	Deerfield					1	1	1			2	2	7
39	Bernardston (non-op)						2	2	1	1			6
40	Greenfield					1	1	2	1				5
41	Shelburne (non-op)							1	1	1	1	1	5
42	Sturbridge	1	1	1	1	1							5
43	Conway								1	1	1	1	4
44	Longmeadow					1	1	1	1				4
45	West Brookfield (non-		1	1	1							1	4
46	Barre (non-op)	2					1						3
47	Ludlow						1	1	1				3
48	Montague (non-op)	1				1	1						3
49	Orange		1								1	1	3
50	Ware	1	1	1									3
51	Washington (non-op)					1	1	1					3
52	Buckland (non-op)						1	1					2
53	Granby										1	1	2
54	Springfield				1	1							2
55	Colrain (non-op)											1	1
56	Lanesborough	1											1
57	New Braintree (non-op											1	1
58	Rutland (non-op)	1											1
	totals	**444**	**437**	**457**	**484**	**453**	**460**	**464**	**444**	**434**	**418**	**413**	**4908**

Students from Northampton comprised a high of 31.8% enrollment in 2007, and a low of 22.0% in 2014. Nonresident students enrolled at Smith comprised, on average, 71.9% of the student body, with a high of 78.0% in 2014, and a low of 68.2% in 2007.

One community, Easthampton, displays a unique enrollment pattern within this data set. In 2004 more students were enrolled from Easthampton than from any other single town, including Northampton. Although in 2014 Easthampton was still the town with the second highest enrollment after Northampton, the percentage of Smith students from Easthampton fell from 28.8% in 2004 to just 9% in 2014.

As noted earlier in this report, during this period, Easthampton negotiated a nonresident tuition agreement with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, and transitioned to sending the great majority of their Chapter 74 students to technical programs at LPVEC, on a half-day half-day scheduling basis.

Excluding Easthampton students from the analysis, Northampton's percentage of enrollment (relative to all sending towns except Easthampton) has fallen from 36% in 2004 to just 24% in 2014.

C. Students with Disabilities and Low Income Students at Smith, 2013 Data

As displayed in Table 10 and Table 11, based on data obtained from ESE's District Analysis and Review Tool (DART), percentages of special education students at Smith are well above comparable percentages in the following groups of schools:

- Regional CVTE schools in western Massachusetts
- All agricultural high schools in Massachusetts
- Municipal standalone vocational technical high schools in western Massachusetts (with the exception of Dean)
- High schools from the top sending districts to Smith
- State averages

Table 10: Special education and low-income enrollment: comparisons of Smith to western Massachusetts regional CVTE schools, all Massachusetts agricultural schools, and selected western Massachusetts municipal technical high schools, 2013.

District Comparisons 2013 (from DARTFinanceStaff Excel file) and DESE school profiles	SAVHS	Regional Vocational Technical High Schools				Regional Agricultural Technical High Schools			Municipal stand-alone Vocational Technical High Schools			State
		FCTS	Pathfinder RVTS	Montachusett RVT	Northern Berkshire RVT	Bristol County	Essex	Norfolk County	Putnam VTHS	Wm J Dean VTHS	Westfield VTHS	
All students	418	518	662	1,432	488	451	479	485	1,284	517	465	954,773
Low-income	46.2%	51.4%	39.0%	30.6%	39.5%	25.7%	20.9%	13.4%	89.5%	95.6%	50.8%	37.0%
With disabilities (SWD)	39.0%	28.6%	30.4%	15.3%	14.8%	9.5%	13.2%	13.0%	23.2%	40.4%	25.4%	17.2%
English language learner (ELL)	2.4%	--	0.2%	0.3%	--	--	--	--	12.3%	30.8%	3.7%	7.7%

Table 11: Special education and low income student enrollment: comparisons of Smith to sending regional high schools and sending districts, 2013

District Comparisons 2013 (from DARTFinanceStaff Excel file) and DESE school profiles	SAVHS	Northampton High School	Easthampton High School	Hampshire Regional High School	Gateway Regional High School	Mohawk Trail RHS	Amherst RHS	Smith Academy (Hatfield)	Hopkins Academy (Hadley)	Wahconah Regional High School	State
Number of towns served	58	1	1	5	7	9	4	1	1	7	
Number of towns sending students to Smith		1	1	5	7	4	4	1	1	7	
All students	418	905	455	766	308	499	1,059	194	278	545	954,773
Low-income	46.2%	22.8%	30.1%	12.1%	26.0%	29.3%	25.9%	17.5%	18.7%	20.7%	37.0%
With disabilities (SWD)	39.0%	15.4%	16.9%	15.9%	9.7%	22.0%	19.6%	18.0%	10.1%	8.3%	17.0%
English language learner (ELL)	2.4%	1.9%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.6%	3.3%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	7.7%

The unusually high percentage of special populations students enrolled at Smith is something of an anomaly, and may indicate a student access problem. Two key questions should be pursued:

1. Are <u>all</u> students in all sending schools informed of educational opportunities at Smith?

   (While the proposed changes to the Chapter 74 regulations seek to address this statewide for members of regional districts, Smith's would not be covered as it lacks formal membership agreements.)

2. Is access consistent across all sending schools?

   (For example, if one school or district only provides Smith with street addresses for all matriculating 8th grade students, so that students and their families can be invited to 'open house' events at Smith, and another school sends all students for a full-school-day tour of Smith, opportunities for informed choices for students would not be considered equal across all districts in Smith's geographical catchment area.)

D. Enrollment Trends at High Schools in Smith Catchment Area, 2004–2014

As presented in Table 12, declining student high school enrollment is a clear trend in the majority of public high schools in the Smith catchment area. The most serious declines are in the sending regional school districts: Gateway Regional, Mohawk Trail, Amherst-Pelham, and Central Berkshire. Both Northampton High School and Smith Agricultural also show declining enrollment during this period. Easthampton seems to show an increase in student enrollment, but this is due to how data is reported: Easthampton students enrolled in CVTE programs at LPVEC are now counted in the enrollment for Easthampton High School, where they receive their academic classes. When comparable students were enrolled at SVAHS, they were counted in Smith's enrollment numbers.

Table 12: Declining enrollment trends: public high school enrollment patterns in Smith catchment area, 2004–2014

Public high school enrollment patterns in Smith catchment area, 1995 - 2014																				
type of school	**lea code**	**name of district**	**name of high school**	**# of towns in district**	**# of towns that sent students to Smith**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**11-year totals**	**average**	**gain or loss over time period, in student FTEs**	**% change over time period**
CVTE Agricultural HS	406	Smith-Northampton	**Smith Ag.**	n/a	n/a	444	437	457	484	453	460	464	444	434	418	413	4,908	446.18	-31	-6.98%
Municipal (one town) districts / high schools	210	Northampton	**Northampton HS**	1	1	930	903	901	887	905	896	899	881	881	905	904	9,892	899.27	-26	-2.80%
	86	Easthampton	**Easthampton HS**	1	1	409	442	472	514	521	498	447	445	445	452	455	5,100	463.64	46	11.25%
	117	Hadley	**Hopkins Academy**	1	1	163	159	160	170	180	192	193	192	187	179	175	1,950	177.27	12	7.36%
	127	Hatfield	**Smith Academy**	1	1	125	135	124	128	129	119	133	122	134	137	125	1,411	128.27	0	0.00%
Regional districts, regional hs	672	Gateway Regional	**Gateway RHS**	7	7	430	430	418	396	369	340	343	332	332	305	278	3,973	361.18	-152	-35.35%
	717	Mohawk Trail	**Mohawk Trail RHS**	9	6	529	519	468	453	383	373	360	342	340	331	306	4,404	400.36	-223	-42.16%
	605	Amherst-Pelham	**Amherst RHS**	4	4	1378	1340	1319	1304	1219	1201	1168	1103	1083	1053	998	13,166	1196.91	-380	-27.58%
	683	Hampshire Regional	**Hampshire RHS**	5	5	505	533	544	511	528	532	506	514	497	498	503	5,671	515.55	-2	-0.40%
	635	Central Berkshire	**Wahconah HS**	7	7	787	755	701	700	685	661	624	588	584	542	560	7,187	653.36	-227	-28.84%
totals				36	33	5700	5653	5564	5547	5372	5272	5137	4963	4917	4820	4717	57,662	5242.00	-983	-17.25%

E. Smith Enrollment Trends, Largest Senders and All Regional High Schools

During this period of declining regional enrollment at public high schools, enrollment at Smith increased significantly for some sending regional school districts, both in number and percentages of available students. For example, during the period 2004–2014, Wahconah High School, the regional high school for Central Berkshire Regional School district, suffered an enrollment decline of 28.8%, a loss of 227 students over 11 years. During that same period, the number of Central Berkshire students enrolled at Smith increased by 125%, growing from 20 students in 2004 to 45 students in 2014. Similar, if less dramatic, enrollment patterns prevail for Gateway Regional and Mohawk Trail Regional. Although overall enrollment at Amherst-Pelham declined by 27.6%, enrollment of students at Smith from that district held steady. Overall enrollment at Hampshire Regional showed virtually no decline (2 full-time equivalent students in 11 years), while enrollment from Hampshire to Smith increased almost 11%.

Northampton High School experienced an enrollment decline of 2.8%, while the percentage of Northampton students enrolled at Smith declined by 20.9% during the same period.

F. Implications of Enrollment Trends in the Smith Catchment Area

The enrollment trends in the Smith catchment area point to a significant decline in available high school students. The natural result is a competition for available students between 'competing' high schools. In one sense, this becomes a zero-sum game: if the number of available high school students does not increase, and if the catchment area (virtual regional district) does not increase in geographic size or in number of towns served, enrollment increases at Smith will result in corresponding enrollment declines in sending high schools. The fiscal pressures that result, given generally level Chapter 70 funding for districts with declining enrollment, may result in degraded capacity to deliver quality programming across the broader geographic region.

In both vocational-technical-agricultural high schools and academic high schools, when enrollment declines, economies of scale are lost, and percentages of school funding that go to maintain basic infrastructure and administrative services increase, with a corresponding decrease in funds available for teaching and learning.

Table 13: Public high school enrollment patterns in the Smith catchment area, 2004–2014

Public high school enrollment patterns in Smith catchment area, 2004 - 2014

type of school	lea code	name of district	name of high school	# of towns in district	# of towns that sent students to Smith	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	11-year totals	average	gain or loss over time period, in student FTEs	% change over time period
CVTE Agricultural HS	406	Smith-Northampton	**Smith Ag.**	n/a	n/a	444	437	457	484	453	460	464	444	434	418	413	4,908	446.18	-31	-6.98%
Municipal (one town) districts / high schools	210	Northampton	**Northampton HS**	1	1	930	903	901	887	905	896	899	881	881	905	904	9,892	899.27	-26	-2.80%
		Northampton students enrolled at Smith				115	124	145	154	134	131	134	122	123	106	91	1379	125.36	-24	-20.87%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				11%	12%	14%	15%	13%	13%	13%	12%	12%	10%	9%	12%			
	86	Easthampton	**Easthampton HS**	1	1	409	442	472	514	521	498	447	445	445	452	455	5,100	463.64	46	11.25%
		Easthampton students enrolled at Smith				128	120	95	84	69	57	54	36	35	34	37	749	68.09	-91	-71.09%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				24%	21%	17%	14%	12%	10%	11%	7%	7%	7%	8%	13%			
	117	Hadley	**Hopkins Academy**	1	1	163	159	160	170	180	192	193	192	187	179	175	1,950	177.27	12	7.36%
		Hadley students enrolled at Smith				12	10	14	16	15	9	10	14	18	25	23	166	15.09	11	91.67%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				7%	6%	8%	9%	8%	4%	5%	7%	9%	12%	12%	8%			
	127	Hatfield	**Smith Academy**	1	1	125	135	124	128	129	119	133	122	134	137	125	1,411	128.27	0	0.00%
		Hatfield students enrolled at Smith				14	16	18	23	23	23	17	9	8	11	12	174	15.82	-2	-14.29%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				10%	11%	13%	15%	15%	16%	11%	7%	6%	7%	9%	11%			
Regional districts, regional hs	672	Gateway Regional	**Gateway RHS**	7	7	430	430	418	396	369	340	343	332	332	305	278	3,973	361.18	-152	-35.35%
		Gateway students enrolled at Smith				37	32	33	39	52	59	55	65	63	59	66	560	50.91	29	78.38%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				8%	7%	7%	9%	12%	15%	14%	16%	16%	16%	19%	12%			
	717	Mohawk Trail	**Mohawk Trail RHS**	9	6	529	519	468	453	383	373	360	342	340	331	306	4,404	400.36	-223	-42.16%
		Mohawk students enrolled at Smith				6	7	7	11	15	21	24	20	22	13	13	159	14.45	7	116.67%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%	3%			
	605	Amherst-Pelham	**Amherst RHS**	4	4	1378	1340	1319	1304	1219	1201	1168	1103	1083	1053	998	13,166	1196.91	-380	-27.58%
		Amherst RHS students enrolled at Smith				23	24	23	21	14	17	24	25	22	20	23	236	21.45	0	0.00%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%			
	683	Hampshire Regional	**Hampshire RHS**	5	5	505	533	544	511	528	532	506	514	497	498	503	5,671	515.55	-2	-0.40%
		Hampshire students enrolled at Smith				74	71	83	95	83	92	94	89	89	90	82	942	85.64	8	10.81%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				13%	12%	13%	16%	14%	15%	16%	15%	15%	15%	14%	14%			
	635	Central Berkshire	**Wahconah HS**	7	7	787	755	701	700	685	661	624	588	584	542	560	7,187	653.36	-227	-28.84%
		Central Berkshire students enrolled at Smith				20	18	25	31	32	31	31	44	38	41	45	356	32.36	25	125.00%
		% of combined cohort enrolled at Smith				2%	2%	3%	4%	4%	4%	5%	7%	6%	7%	7%	5%			
totals				36	33	5,700	5,653	5,564	5,547	5,372	5,272	5,137	4,963	4,917	4,820	4,717	57,662	5242.00	-983	-17.25%
percentages of each cohort enrolled at Smith, by year						7.8%	7.7%	8.2%	8.7%	8.4%	8.7%	9.0%	8.9%	8.8%	8.7%	8.8%	8.5%			

The School Finance Landscape in the Smith Catchment Area

A. Per Pupil Expenditures

For FY 13, Smith's expenditures per student are below the average of equivalent spending by other western Massachusetts regional vocational technical schools, and below the average for the other three agricultural high schools in Massachusetts.

This calculation may increase for FY 14 and FY 15, as Northampton's NSS requirements are now being met, which should generate an increase in per pupil expenditures, and a corresponding increase in the calculation for the nonresident tuition rate.

It should be noted that both Bristol County Agricultural High School and Norfolk County Agricultural High School are authorized by law to establish their own nonresident tuition rates.

Table 14: FY 13 per pupil expenditures for Smith and comparable districts (from DARTFinanceStaff.xlsx workbook, modified table):

	Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural	Franklin County RVT	Pathfinder RVT	Northern Berkshire RVT	Bristol County Agricultural	Norfolk County Agricultural	Essex Agricultural Technical	North Shore RVT
All students	418	518	662	488	451	485	479	475
Low-income	46%	51%	39%	40%	26%	13%	21%	33%
With disabilities	39%	29%	30%	15%	10%	13%	13%	29%
English language learner	2%	--	0%	--	--	--	--	--
Expenditure per pupil	20,144	21,994	20,470	19,041	19,255	21,252	23,149	23,378
average of W. Mass RVT		20,502						
average of Ag HSs					21,219			

B. Chapter 70 Aid to SVAHS, Sending Communities, and Comparable Systems

1. Target aid percentages

Target aid percentages for Smith's top 20 sending towns run from a low of 17.5% to a high of 61.1%. This is a rough measure of towns' comparative wealth, as measured by aggregated property values and aggregated income.

If Smith's sending towns were to regionalize, district target aid percentages would drive town assessments to meet Net School Spending requirements. Most regional CVTE schools' budgets average well above NSS requirements. Amounts above NSS are typically assessed to member districts on a per pupil basis.

Table 15: List of top 20 sending towns to Smith, plus regional and CVTE districts, their target foundation aid and local contribution percentages, target and local contribution dollars per CVTE FTE, for FY 15. (Derived from chapter_15.xlsm worksheet available at ESE website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/chapter_15.html.)

LEA		district	district target aid percentage	district target local contribution percentage	target aid per Ch. 74 FTE (13004.90)	target local contribution per Ch. 74 FTE
69		CUMMINGTON	17.50	82.50	2,276	10,729
349		WORTHINGTON	17.50	82.50	2,276	10,729
127		HATFIELD	17.50	82.50	2,276	10,729
117		HADLEY	17.50	82.50	2,276	10,729
406		NORTHAMPTON SMITH	18.49	81.51	2,405	10,600
210		NORTHAMPTON	18.49	81.51	2,405	10,600
237		PLAINFIELD	18.74	81.26	2,437	10,568
13		ASHFIELD	20.13	79.87	2,618	10,387
340		WILLIAMSBURG	22.28	77.72	2,897	10,107
132		HINSDALE	23.52	76.48	3,059	9,946
33		BLANDFORD	25.07	74.93	3,260	9,745
8		AMHERST	28.57	71.43	3,715	9,289
327		WESTHAMPTON	28.93	71.07	3,762	9,243
108		GOSHEN	35.41	64.59	4,605	8,400
86		EASTHAMPTON	36.35	63.65	4,727	8,278
275		SOUTHAMPTON	37.49	62.51	4,876	8,129
60		CHESTERFIELD	42.26	57.74	5,496	7,509
143		HUNTINGTON	44.73	55.27	5,817	7,188
818		FRANKLIN COUNTY	46.81	53.19	6,088	6,917
70		DALTON	49.03	50.97	6,376	6,629
59		CHESTER	53.53	46.47	6,962	6,043
860		PATHFINDER	56.42	43.58	7,337	5,668
851		NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	60.08	39.92	7,813	5,192
256		RUSSELL	61.11	38.89	7,947	5,058

2. Above foundation aid

At its most basic level, the Chapter 70 state aid program is designed to fill the gap between a local community's fiscal capacity to contribute in support of its schools and a "foundation" level of expenditure for those schools. Any Chapter 70 aid sent to a city, town, or regional school district in excess of this gap-funding purpose is often referred to as "above-foundation aid"

Above-foundation aid comprises a substantial percentage of Chapter 70 aid to SVAHS.

In the FY 15 foundation aid calculation for Smith (see Chapter 70 Worksheets for SVAHS, City of Northampton in the Appendices) foundation budget totals for Northampton's 91 students (SY 13–14 enrollment) equal $1,764,814. Northampton's required district contribution is $1,447,978. Foundation aid (as calculated by the formula) is $316,836, with a minimum aid increase of $25 per student (91 students generates $2275) for a total of $319,111.

If Smith had not been receiving historically higher levels of foundation aid, and if the city was just meeting required district contribution, Smith would have the foundation budget total of $1,764,814 available to it (for the Northampton students). However, since Smith, like many districts, particularly those with declining enrollment, is grandfathered for prior levels of aid, Smith receives $895,485 in aid, an above-foundation total of $576,374.

If one views this additional aid as generated (and assigned) to just the Northampton students, it represents an additional $6,334 per FTE student. If this aid is viewed as aid for all of the students enrolled at Smith for SY 13–14 (431 FTEs), the additional aid is then approximately $1,337 per student.

A similar analysis for Northampton public schools shows a substantial, but lesser amount of additional grandfathered foundation aid: $2,105,205 for 2,805 students, or $751 per student.

All students enrolled at Smith benefit directly from the additional aid, and this aid is assigned historically to Smith. The aid passes through the finance offices of Northampton, but does not reduce the aid available to students in the Northampton public schools. The above foundation aid that is being received by many of Smith's sending towns helps to support those towns' nonresident tuition payments to Smith.

Table 16: Showing the top 15 sending towns, their aid, their foundation enrollment, their above foundation aid, and their per pupil above foundation aid (derived from chapter_15.xlsm worksheet available at ESE website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/chapter_15.html).

LEA	District	Foundation aid with effort fully reduced	FY15 foundation enrollment	FY15 Foundation aid	Above foundation aid	Above foundation aid per student FTE
406	NORTHAMPTON SMITH	326,314	91	895,485	569,171	6,255
237	PLAINFIELD	14,623	6	51,024	36,401	6,067
70	DALTON	171,644	25	272,926	101,282	4,051
69	CUMMINGTON	29,402	11	73,684	44,282	4,026
13	ASHFIELD	41,674	14	93,413	51,739	3,696
108	GOSHEN	59,493	11	96,111	36,618	3,329
132	HINSDALE	60,928	18	104,683	43,755	2,431
256	RUSSELL	134,461	15	168,465	34,004	2,267
8	AMHERST	3,407,649	1,205	5,925,198	2,517,549	2,089
143	HUNTINGTON	208,474	32	257,686	49,212	1,538
275	SOUTHAMPTON	1,723,805	496	2,468,676	744,871	1,502
349	WORTHINGTON	31,678	12	49,000	17,322	1,444
60	CHESTERFIELD	109,473	18	133,114	23,641	1,313
860	PATHFINDER	4,931,301	566	5,376,310	445,009	786
210	NORTHAMPTON	5,065,354	2,805	7,093,554	2,028,200	723
86	EASTHAMPTON	6,475,213	1,782	7,731,667	1,256,454	705
340	WILLIAMSBURG	387,805	188	514,620	126,816	675
851	NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	4,322,056	472	4,629,241	307,185	651
59	CHESTER	117,783	15	126,262	8,479	565
327	WESTHAMPTON	380,341	138	454,345	74,004	536
127	HATFIELD	613,508	375	786,221	172,713	461
818	FRANKLIN COUNTY	3,476,012	476	3,437,611	(38,401)	(81)
33	BLANDFORD	45,381	12	43,655	(1,726)	(144)
117	HADLEY	1,046,708	627	938,254	(108,454)	(172.97)

Table 17: Showing the top 15 sending towns, their aid, their foundation enrollment, their above foundation aid, and their per pupil above foundation aid, with Smith enrollment adjusted for all students enrolled (not just Northampton residents). (Derived from chapter_15.xlsm worksheet available at ESE website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/chapter_15.html.)

LEA	District	Foundation aid with effort fully reduced	FY15 foundation enrollment	FY15 Foundation aid	Above foundation aid	Above foundation aid per student FTE
237	PLAINFIELD	14,623	6	51,024	36,401	6,067
70	DALTON	171,644	25	272,926	101,282	4,051
69	CUMMINGTON	29,402	11	73,684	44,282	4,026
13	ASHFIELD	41,674	14	93,413	51,739	3,696
108	GOSHEN	59,493	11	96,111	36,618	3,329
132	HINSDALE	60,928	18	104,683	43,755	2,431
256	RUSSELL	134,461	15	168,465	34,004	2,267
8	AMHERST	3,407,649	1,205	5,925,198	2,517,549	2,089
143	HUNTINGTON	208,474	32	257,686	49,212	1,538
275	SOUTHAMPTON	1,723,805	496	2,468,676	744,871	1,502
349	WORTHINGTON	31,678	12	49,000	17,322	1,444
406	NORTHAMPTON SMITH	326,314	431	895,485	569,171	1,321
60	CHESTERFIELD	109,473	18	133,114	23,641	1,313
860	PATHFINDER	4,931,301	566	5,376,310	445,009	786
210	NORTHAMPTON	5,065,354	2,805	7,093,554	2,028,200	723
86	EASTHAMPTON	6,475,213	1,782	7,731,667	1,256,454	705
340	WILLIAMSBURG	387,805	188	514,620	126,816	675
851	NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	4,322,056	472	4,629,241	307,185	651
59	CHESTER	117,783	15	126,262	8,479	565
327	WESTHAMPTON	380,341	138	454,345	74,004	536
127	HATFIELD	613,508	375	786,221	172,713	461
818	FRANKLIN COUNTY	3,476,012	476	3,437,611	(38,401)	(81)
33	BLANDFORD	45,381	12	43,655	(1,726)	(144)
117	HADLEY	1,046,708	627	938,254	(108,454)	(173)

C. Nonresident Tuition

1. Comparisons to other regional CVTE programs

Table 18: FY 15 nonresident tuition rates for schools with CVTE programs

Nonresident tuition rates are annually calculated by ESE's finance office, and are published on ESE's website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/cte/admissions/.

District	FY14 nonresident tuition rate	FY15 nonresident tuition rate	FY14 - FY15 change	% change
NORFOLK COUNTY	22,594	21,094	-1,500	-6.6
BRISTOL COUNTY	18,860	18,860	0	0
FRANKLIN COUNTY	17,505	18,467	962	5.5
BLUE HILLS	18,275	18,467	192	1.1
SOUTH MIDDLESEX	18,309	18,467	158	0.9
MINUTEMAN	18,309	18,467	158	0.9
ESSEX NORTH SHORE	17,804	18,294	490	2.8
NORTHAMPTON SMITH	16,650	18,270	1,620	9.7
SOUTH SHORE	16,964	18,260	1,296	7.6
PATHFINDER	16,992	17,990	998	5.9
LYNN	16,312	17,943	1,631	10
GREATER LAWRENCE	18,309	17,943	-366	-2
NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	18,080	17,508	-572	-3.2
SHAWSHEEN VALLEY	16,327	17,110	783	4.8
CAPE COD	17,385	17,105	-280	-1.6
UPPER CAPE COD	17,119	17,015	-104	-0.6
GREATER FALL RIVER	16,439	16,791	352	2.1
ASSABET VALLEY	16,284	16,587	303	1.9
MEDFORD	18,309	16,478	-1,831	-10
GREATER NEW BEDFORD	15,651	16,052	401	2.6
OLD COLONY	15,448	15,998	550	3.6
SOUTHEASTERN	15,918	15,984	66	0.4
GREATER LOWELL	15,381	15,768	387	2.5
NASHOBA VALLEY	14,336	15,663	1,327	9.3
NORTHEAST METROPOLITAN	14,274	15,642	1,368	9.6
BLACKSTONE VALLEY	14,968	15,454	486	3.2
WHITTIER	14,824	15,164	340	2.3
MONTACHUSETT	14,591	15,060	469	3.2
SOUTHERN WORCESTER	14,623	14,416	-207	-1.4
BRISTOL PLYMOUTH	13,726	14,224	498	3.6
TRI COUNTY	13,908	14,199	291	2.1
CAMBRIDGE	14,846	13,361	-1,485	-10
WESTFIELD	14,823	13,341	-1,482	-10
PLYMOUTH	12,326	12,287	-39	-0.3
PITTSFIELD	10,746	11,821	1,075	10
SOMERVILLE	11,307	11,746	439	3.9
BERKSHIRE HILLS	9,878	10,866	988	10
LEOMINSTER	9,528	9,763	235	2.5
SILVER LAKE	10,673	9,753	-920	-8.6
BOSTON	8,968	9,642	674	7.5
WALTHAM	10,554	9,499	-1,055	-10
TANTASQUA	10,000	9,418	-582	-5.8
WORCESTER	9,796	9,159	-637	-6.5
HOLYOKE	9,655	8,857	-798	-8.3
MARTHA'S VINEYARD	9,191	8,272	-919	-10
SPRINGFIELD	7,770	8,023	253	3.3
DIGHTON REHOBOTH	7,187	7,561	374	5.2
CHICOPEE	6,653	6,875	222	3.3
GLOUCESTER	6,626	6,546	-80	-1.2
NEWTON	7,106	6,395	-711	-10
WEYMOUTH	7,083	6,375	-708	-10
BROCKTON	7,044	6,340	-704	-10
SALEM	5,579	5,930	351	6.3
QUINCY	6,128	5,894	-234	-3.8
FALL RIVER	3,929	4,322	393	10
TAUNTON	4,538	4,084	-454	-10
PEABODY	4,209	3,788	-421	-10
ATTLEBORO	3,877	3,489	-388	-10
SPENCER E BROOKFIELD	2,912	2,621	-291	-10
WAREHAM	2,082	2,290	208	10

2. Calculation of actual cost to a (declining enrollment) sending town paying nonresident tuition to Smith for Chapter 74 students

An analysis of the true costs to a sending district of a student's decision to attend either a regional vocational technical high school (e.g., FCTS, Pathfinder, Northern Berkshire) or an 'independent' agricultural vocational high school (Smith) is not simple or obvious, and is dependent upon a number of factors, including

- the sending town's Chapter 70 target aid percentage rate,
- the effects of declining enrollment on a sending district, and
- the relationship between Chapter 70 aid received in FY 14 and the target aid calculation.

Consider a student from a sending town with declining enrollment who elects to enroll at Smith. That student is carried on the sending town's foundation budget calculation, so neither the foundation budget total nor the foundation aid to the sending town changes as a result of that student's enrollment at Smith.

The sending town is billed by Smith for nonresident tuition, at a rate calculated by ESE, and pays $18,270 to Smith.

That same student is included in the calculations for the sending town's foundation budget, at the rate of $13,004.90 for a Chapter 74 student. However, if the sending town is grandfathered for a higher level of foundation aid than the target aid calculated in the Chapter 70 worksheet, the sending town's aid is not annually generated by foundation aid but by "hold harmless aid," and the student's inclusion in foundation budget calculations does not trigger any additional foundation aid to the sending town.

From the sending town's point of view, the student's decision to enroll at Smith represents a net loss to the district of the full amount of nonresident tuition ($18,270).

From Smith's point of view, the student's enrollment helps Smith achieve appropriate economies of scale (full classrooms and programs equals efficient use of resources), and the amount of nonresident tuition received is appropriate, since it is calculated by ESE based on the prior year's actual spending.

When both the sending town and the receiving school have empty seats in available classrooms or programs, the student's enrollment decision is a net gain to one and a net loss to the other. Thus the competition for students, especially in districts and regions with declining enrollment, can become intense.

D. MSBA Reimbursement Percentages

1. Possible effects of regionalization on computation of MSBA reimbursement rates for a building project

The MSBA uses three main factors to calculate the adjustment to the base rate percentage of 31 reimbursement points:

- Community Income Factor: the district's per capita income as a percentage of statewide average per capita income (Department of Revenue data);
- Community Property Wealth Factor: the district's per capita equalized property valuations as a percentage of statewide average per capita valuations (Department of Revenue data); and
- Community Poverty Factor: measured by the district's proportion of low income students as a percentage of the statewide average proportion of low income students (ESE data).

For a regional school district, each socioeconomic factor is weighted to reflect each municipality's representation of the total regional district enrollment.[2]

Since the Chapter 70 foundation formula also uses community income and property wealth factors to calculate target aid share for foundation aid, target aid percentages in the foundation formula may be used as an approximate proxy for two-thirds of the MSBA formula.

At just 18.49%, Northampton's target aid percentage is one of the lowest of the top 20 sending towns as measured by number of students enrolled in SY 13–14. Some of the towns sending the largest numbers of students also have relatively high district target aid percentages:

Table 19: FY 15 Chapter 70 target aid percentages for top 20 enrolling towns, 10 year enrollment at Smith, and hypothetical Smith regional target aid percentage, for MSBA reimbursement rate

LEA	District	district target aid percentage	enrollment at Smith, 2004 - 2014	percent of total enrollment, 2004 - 2014	weighted factor	regional target aid percentage
210	NORTHAMPTON	18.49	1379	0.31	25,498	
86	EASTHAMPTON	36.35	749	0.17	27,226	
275	SOUTHAMPTON	37.49	349	0.08	13,084	
143	HUNTINGTON	44.73	227	0.05	10,154	
127	HATFIELD	17.50	174	0.04	3,045	
340	WILLIAMSBURG	22.28	168	0.04	3,743	
117	HADLEY	17.50	166	0.04	2,905	
60	CHESTERFIELD	42.26	162	0.04	6,846	
8	AMHERST	28.57	160	0.04	4,571	
327	WESTHAMPTON	28.93	142	0.03	4,108	
69	CUMMINGTON	17.50	121	0.03	2,118	
108	GOSHEN	35.41	121	0.03	4,285	
59	CHESTER	53.53	98	0.02	5,246	
349	WORTHINGTON	17.50	98	0.02	1,715	
13	ASHFIELD	20.13	81	0.02	1,631	
132	HINSDALE	23.52	76	0.02	1,788	
256	RUSSELL	61.11	58	0.01	3,544	
237	PLAINFIELD	18.74	52	0.01	974	
33	BLANDFORD	25.07	47	0.01	1,178	
70	DALTON	49.03	46	0.01	2,255	
totals			4474	100.0%	125,914	28.14

Although this calculation would need to be modeled using actual Department of Revenue and ESE data, including all towns in a potential regional school district, it is safe to say that the MSBA reimbursement rate for a building project undertaken by a regionalized Smith district would be substantially more than the same rate calculated for the City of Northampton alone.

E. The School Choice Picture

Net gains and losses from the school choice program may affect local decision making relative to CVTE program participation. As displayed in Table 20, among Smith's historical sending communities, Easthampton is particularly hard hit by school choice, with a net loss of 110 FTE students in FY 14, with a resulting loss of funding amounting to $760,018. Several other sending communities, including Northampton, Amherst, and Hatfield, show substantial gains in enrollment associated with school choice. This underscores the complexity of the school enrollment and finance picture as it affects local

[2] From MSBA Reimbursement Rate Calculation, see http://www.massschoolbuildings.org/sites/default/files/edit-contentfile/Guidelines_Forms/Guidelines_Policies/RateCalculation.pdf.

communities, as well as the range of incentives that presents to education officials working to maintain quality educational programs for their students.

Table 20: The school choice picture for the Smith catchment area for FY 14

LEA	district that provide high school education in the Smith catchment area (from Smith's top 20 sending towns, plus W. Mass. regional vocationals, and agricultural high schools)	FY14 Receiving FTEs	FY14 Receiving Tuition	FY14 Sending FTEs	FY14 Sending Tuition	Net FTEs	Net Tuition
210	NORTHAMPTON	216.88	1,555,805	72.51	490,114	144.4	1,065,691
605	AMHERST PELHAM	104.46	698,926	23.91	138,991	80.6	559,935
127	HATFIELD	124.89	812,882	37.69	258,324	87.2	554,558
683	HAMPSHIRE	119.23	803,224	65.4	401,440	53.8	401,784
275	SOUTHAMPTON	65.01	396,231	7	38,400	58.0	357,831
325	WESTFIELD	122.04	679,242	90.62	498,767	31.4	180,475
327	WESTHAMPTON	13	95,138	3	21,492	10.0	73,646
860	PATHFINDER	27.42	156,677	14.88	84,375	12.5	72,302
117	HADLEY	78.47	443,532	58.52	383,076	20.0	60,456
635	CENTRAL BERKSHIRE	130.21	760,668	133.24	701,189	-3.0	59,479
717	MOHAWK TRAIL	82.79	527,926	80.2	510,331	2.6	17,595
406	NORTHAMPTON SMITH	0	0	0	0	0.0	0
910	BRISTOL COUNTY	0	0	0	0	0	0
913	ESSEX COUNTY	0	0	0	0	0	0
915	NORFOLK COUNTY	0	0	0	0	0	0
818	FRANKLIN COUNTY	0	0	1	5,000	-1.0	-5,000
851	NORTHERN BERKSHIRE	0	0	2	10,000	-2.0	-10,000
854	NORTH SHORE	8.93	44650	15.61	90235	-6.68	-45,585
832	MONTACHUSETT	25.26	134,906	37.05	215,251	-11.8	-80,345
86	EASTHAMPTON	76.75	403,836	186.81	1,163,854	-110.1	-760,018
137	HOLYOKE	50.19	259,782	310.78	1,893,104	-260.6	-1,633,322
281	SPRINGFIELD	9.54	70,960	708.21	4,071,126	-698.7	-4,000,166

Adjustments ESE Could Make to the Existing System

In addition to the local and regional decisions that are available regarding organizational structures for Smith, one can envision a number of actions that could be taken by ESE, in concert with the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to modify existing law, regulations, policies, or practices as they affect SVAHS. These actions could alleviate some of the ambiguities and inconsistencies in current application of existing systems to Smith. These actions fall under the following broad categories:

A. Revisions to Chapter 74 regulations
B. Adjustments to the application of the Chapter 70 formula to Smith
C. Calculating a Net School Spending requirement for all CVTE schools
D. Monitoring the comparative effectiveness of differing CVTE delivery systems
E. Revisions to regional transportation reimbursement policies and practices
F. Setting the nonresident tuition rate for Smith

A. Revisions to Chapter 74 Regulations

As mentioned above, Chapter 74 regulations are currently under review by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.[3] A summary of the proposed changes is included in Proposed Changes to Chapter 74 Regulations in the Appendices.

As described in the sections below, Chapter 74 regulatory language could easily be modified to include Smith in many of the provisions designed to regulate regional vocational technical schools. A useful distinction in crafting appropriate language may be that Smith serves two distinct CVTE functions for its collection of sending towns:

- For at least 25 towns, Smith functions as the default regional vocational technical school (we will call these unaffiliated towns), and students from these towns participate in the full range of programs offered at Smith, including both vocational and agricultural programs.
- For at least 25 additional towns (towns which have a primary affiliation with another regional vocational or municipal technical school), Smith functions as the only regional CVTE school offering agricultural programs. Students from these towns are primarily enrolled in Smith's agricultural programs.

For many provisions of the Chapter 74 regulations, including Smith in sections regulating regional vocational technical schools may be most appropriate. For other sections, including Smith in language aimed at agricultural CVTE programs may be most appropriate.

An example of this might be student access to information about exploratory programs offered at CVTE schools. For sending towns for which Smith functions as the default regional vocational technical school, full access to contact information for 8th grade students will ensure that students have full knowledge of exploratory and technical programs available to them. However, a comparable level of access to students from towns that have a primary affiliation with a regional or municipal CVTE school may be confusing or misleading to some potential students. Outreach to those students may be best confined to information concerning the agricultural programs available at Smith.

1. 125% cap on nonresident tuition

As the analysis in Table 20 (below) demonstrates, a 125% cap on nonresident tuition would result in a significant reduction of revenue for Smith.

[3] For the proposed regulations, see http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2014-11/item3.html.

Table 21: Estimated effects of 125% (of Chapter 70 Aid) cap on nonresident tuition, using FY 15 data

	FY15 Foundation aid to Smith (based on Northampton enrollment alone)	FY15 required district contribution for Northampton	FTEs	FY15 non-resident tuition rate, allowable	total allowable non-resident tuition for FY15	FY15 foundation formula vocational increment	125% of vocational increment	revenue totals
Northampton resident students	895,485	1,447,978	91					2,343,463
All non-resident students - uncapped rate			322	18,270	5,882,940			5,882,940
All non-resident students, capped at 125%			322			13,004.90	16,256.13	5,234,472
difference, current allowable rate and capped rate								648,468
loss of revenue per student FTE								1,570

Since the allowable amount would be capped for nonresident tuition, Smith would either have to reduce its budget by the difference shown above, or that difference would have to be made up by another funding source, for example additional grants or additional revenue from Northampton.

Possible position: For the purposes of these regulations, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School will be exempt from the 125% cap.

Rationale: The proposed cap may be most appropriate for situations where regional CVTE high schools are filling a few seats with nonresident students. Filling those seats with nonresident students helps defray the overall operational costs for member towns, without restricting access to those seats for students from member towns and without significantly lowering the level of per pupil overall spending.

Smith is in a unique position, with 78% of enrollment filled by nonresident students. This cap, if applied to Smith, would have the unintended consequence of effectively capping actual NSS at 125% of the per pupil foundation budget rate for vocational technical students.

Please see the section below on an alternative methodology for setting a nonresident tuition cap for students attending Smith: Modified regional CVTE school, budget established by state.

2. Admission of students

Since Smith is functioning in many ways as a 'virtual' regional school district, a requirement that all qualifying resident students be admitted prior to consideration of nonresident students may not be appropriate.

Possible position: For the purposes of these regulations, SVAHS will be considered a regional vocational school, and sending towns that have enrolled an average of x or more students per year over the past ten years will be considered member towns.

Rationale: Only 22% of Smith's students are from Northampton, and thus currently classified as resident students. Adoption of this provision for Smith would place the great majority of students applying for admission at a competitive disadvantage relative to Northampton resident students.

3. Notification of 8th grade students

Again, since Smith is functioning as a 'virtual' regional vocational technical school district, Smith should be given similar access to names and addresses of 8th grade students.

Possible position: For the purposes of these regulations, SVAHS will be considered to be a regional vocational school, and sending towns that have enrolled an average of x or more students per year over the past ten years will be considered member towns and will be required to provide contact information for all 8th grade students.

Rationale: For many of its sending towns, Smith functions both as a regional agricultural high school and the default regional vocational technical high school. Depriving Smith of the regulatory right to obtain contact information for 8th grade students from its primary sending towns would limit those students' access to quality career and technical educational opportunities.

4. Oversight of program approval process

Current regulations provide protection to regional vocational technical schools in that member towns are not allowed to develop programs which essentially duplicate programs offered at their regional vocational technical school so as not to compete for the same students.

The current ESE CVTE program approval process allows the commissioner to take overall regional educational needs and opportunities into consideration in the approval of new programs. This oversight helps ensure the sustainability of existing CVTE schools, which are dependent on adequate enrollment in specific programs to maintain program viability.

Some consideration should be given to extending similar oversight and protection to Smith's programs. In the absence of programmatic protection similar to that afforded to regional vocational technical schools, Smith's ability to offer regionally unique CVTE programs may be undermined, and this could in turn threaten the overall viability of the school.

This is an appropriate place to note that regional vocational technical schools traditionally offer a wide mixture of programs. This ensures that students will have adequate choices for career pathways within a given school, and that a school's range of offerings is well aligned with current occupational openings in the region. Some programs are much more expensive to develop and operate than others. For example, an adequate lab for machine tool technology requires many hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment, all of which is expensive to maintain, and which must be updated periodically. Other programs' equipment needs may be satisfied with little more than a computer lab to function effectively.

Traditional regional vocational technical schools do not assess towns different rates for different CVTE programs, nor do they guide students' training and career choices according to the costs involved.

In the absence of regional agreements or regulatory requirements that protect the enrollment base of a given regional technical school, that base could be undermined, over time, by a competing organization offering a 'menu' of technical programs which are relatively inexpensive to operate. This could, in turn, undermine a regional technical school's resources and ability to continue to offer the more expensive technical programs.

It's also worth noting that some of the CVTE programs that are most expensive to develop and maintain also have some of the strongest industry support. Again, machine tools technology is an example, where

industry groups are calling for a substantial increase in skilled graduates in order to fill the current demand for workers. These are high-skill, high-wage opportunities for graduating students.

5. Capital construction and renovation increment (to be added to nonresident tuition rate)

Even though only about 22% of the students at Smith are from Northampton, the city is responsible for all capital improvement of Smith's facilities and for all annual debt associated with borrowing for facility construction and renovation. This creates a disincentive for investment in the facility. As recent reports have noted, the buildings on the Smith campus are aging, and significant renovation or construction costs are projected for the near future.

In FY 14, Northampton's costs for Smith for capital construction, renovation, and debt service amounted to $371,643. Since Northampton had only 91 FTE students counted for FY 14, this created a net per student additional cost of $4,084. Had this cost been spread across all enrolled students, all sending towns would have shared the cost at an equal per student rate of about $900. This would have resulted in a reduction of costs to Northampton of $289,756.

It should be noted that facilities for vocational technical schools are much more expensive to build, maintain, and update than comparable facilities for more traditional academic education.

The proposed revisions allow MSBA, in consultation with ESE, to allow an increment added to nonresident tuition for new construction only:

> • *In general, the Chapter 74 nonresident tuition rates do not reflect the capital costs of constructing school buildings, because in most instances these students occupy seats originally planned for resident students. In rare instances, the Massachusetts School Building Authority, in consultation with the Department, may determine that it is in the public interest to design and construct a vocational school to accommodate a significant number of nonresident students. In these instances, I am proposing to allow an additional increment to the tuition rate to reflect the local share of the debt service attributable to the extra space required.*

Limiting the application of this increment to the construction of a new vocational school would not solve the immediate problem facing Smith and Northampton—an equitable way of sharing significant facility upgrade and renovation costs with its sending towns.

Allowing Smith to add an annual increment for current and future facility upgrading and renovation, and the debt associated with those costs, would share those costs more equitably among the towns sending students to Smith, and remove some of the disincentive towards facility improvement.

Table 22: FY 14 Capital construction, renovation and debt service, per FTE student, actual and hypothetical

Town or city	FY14 student FTEs	FY14 total actual costs for capital construction, renovation and debt service	cost per student enrolled
Northampton	91	371,643	4,083.99
All other sending towns, combined	322	-	-
All towns combined, including Northampton	413	371,643	899.86

6. Computation of special education increment for nonresident students

In addition to the state-set nonresident tuition rate, Smith also bills sending towns a 'tuition differential' for each special education student sent. In FY 15, this meant billing sending towns $4,190 on top of the $18,270 nonresident base tuition rate. Though the base rate for nonresident students was $16,200 in FY 14, the special education increment was the same in both years. Sending towns were billed this increment for 116 students in FY 14, for a total of $487,270.

Because Northampton is the host city, not a sending town, it is not billed in a similar fashion for special education students. The provision that allows regional school districts to bill sending towns an additional increment (either fixed or tracked) might have been intended to ensure that member towns do not bear the costs for nonresident special education students. This appears to be the rationale for allowable specialized billing for special education services for choice students, and the nonresident CVTE student may be treated similarly. However, when a school's enrollment is 78% nonresidents, this model may not be appropriate.

In the computation of assessments to member towns in regional school districts, costs for special education students are included as regional district costs and are not assigned to individual member towns according to the number of special education students they enroll. This methodology may be most appropriate for Smith. If all in-district special education costs for Smith students were included in the computation for nonresident tuition, then an additional increment (or tracked costs) for individual students would not be necessary.

The distinction previously made between affiliated and unaffiliated sending towns may again be useful here. Unaffiliated sending towns could have their 'regionalized' or aggregated costs for their special education students included in the computation for their tuition costs, and affiliated sending towns, which send far fewer students, could be billed for nonresident tuition plus additional charges for special education students, where appropriate. This would ensure that the towns for which Smith is the default regional vocational technical school do not bear inappropriate responsibility for special education costs of students from other sending towns.

Approaching the billing of special education costs in this way would align Smith's practices more closely with those of regional vocational technical schools, and thus normalize the fiscal effects of their policies.

B. Adjustments to the Application of the Chapter 70 Formula to Smith

1. Effects of reporting all low income students enrolled at Smith on Northampton-Smith foundation budget calculation on the NSS requirement for City of Northampton

Since Smith is classified as an 'independent' school for the purposes of Chapter 70 foundation budget calculations, some elements of the calculation are typical of calculations for municipal school districts, and some are typical for regional school districts.

Table 23: FY 15 Foundation Budget worksheet for Northampton Smith (pdf from chapter_15.xlsm workbook)

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of School Finance

FY15 Chapter 70 Foundation Budget

406 NORTHAMPTON SMITH

		Base Foundation Components									Incremental Costs Above The Base				
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	
		Pre-	Kindergarten			Jr High/	High	ELL	ELL	ELL	Voca-	Special Ed	Special Ed	Low Income		
		School	Half-Day	Full-Day	Elementary	Middle	School	PK	K Half	KF - 12	tional	In District	Out of Dist	Elem	Other	TOTAL*
	Foundation Enrollment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	91	4	0	0	174	91
1	Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,706	9,922	0	0	0	42,629
2	Instructional Leadership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59,071	0	0	0	0	59,071
3	Classroom and Specialist Teachers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	595,894	32,741	0	0	352,018	980,653
4	Other Teaching Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41,633	30,570	0	0	0	72,203
5	Professional Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18,628	1,579	0	0	10,256	30,463
6	Instructional Equipment & Tech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	109,770	1,379	0	0	0	111,148
7	Guidance and Psychological	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,888	0	0	0	0	32,888
8	Pupil Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44,301	0	0	0	0	44,301
9	Operations and Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	147,971	11,084	0	0	71,965	231,020
10	Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,584	12,557	0	0	47,298	160,439
11	Special Ed Tuition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	**Total**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1,183,446**	**99,832**	**0**	**0**	**481,536**	**1,764,814**
13	Wage Adjustment Factor	100.0%												**Foundation Budget Per Pupil**		**19,394**

* Total foundation enrollment does not include columns 11 through 14, because those columns represent increments above the base. The pupils are already counted in columns 1 to 10.

Total foundation enrollment assigns pupils in pre-kindergarten and half-time kindergarten an enrollment count of .5.

Special education in-district headcount is an assumed percentage, representing 3.75 percent of K to 12 non-vocational enrollment and 4.75 percent of vocational enrollment.

Special education out-of-district headcount is also an assumed percentage, representing 1 percent of non-vocational K-12 enrollment.

Low income headcounts are the number of pupils in columns 1 through 10 who are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Each component of the foundation budget represents the enrollment on line 1 multiplied by the appropriate state-wide foundation allotment.

The wage adjustment factor is applied to underlying rates in all functions except instructional equipment, benefits and special education tuition.

The foundation budget shown on this page may differ from the final number used in the formula, due to rounding error.

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All Northampton resident students enrolled at Smith are counted in this calculation (91). However, the incremental increases for low income students enrolled at Smith—resident and nonresident alike—are counted in the low-income column (174). Since the low-income increment for high school students for FY 15 is $2767, this results in a significantly higher foundation budget total for Smith. The inclusion of the low-income increments in the district actually educating the student rather that the community of origin is a longstanding practice by state budget writers. That policy is based on a desire to have the money follow the student or, put differently, have the resources available to the institution incurring the cost of an expanded educational program for low income students. However, in the case of Smith, the extraordinarily high percentage of nonresident students has the effect of materially distorting the allocation of Northampton's required contribution among its two school districts.

As reported by ESE, the actual low-income headcount for only Northampton students enrolled at Smith for the FY 15 foundation budget is 58. The calculation changes significantly when using this headcount.

Table 24: FY 15 Foundation Budget worksheet for Northampton Smith (modified to show effects of including only low-income students from Northampton):

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of School Finance

FY15 Chapter 70 Foundation Budget

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		Base Foundation Components										Incremental Costs Above The Base				
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	
		Pre-School	Kindergarten Half-Day	Kindergarten Full-Day	Elementary	Jr High/ Middle	High School	ELL PK	ELL K Half	ELL KF - 12	Vocational	Special Ed In District	Special Ed Out of Dist	Low Income Elem	Low Income Other	TOTAL*
	Foundation Enrollment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	91	4	0	0	58	91
1	Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,706	9,922	0	0	0	42,629
2	Instructional Leadership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59,071	0	0	0	0	59,071
3	Classroom and Specialist Teachers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	595,894	32,741	0	0	117,339	745,975
4	Other Teaching Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41,633	30,570	0	0	0	72,203
5	Professional Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18,628	1,579	0	0	3,419	23,626
6	Instructional Equipment & Tech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	109,770	1,379	0	0	0	111,148
7	Guidance and Psychological	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,888	0	0	0	0	32,888
8	Pupil Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44,301	0	0	0	0	44,301
9	Operations and Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	147,971	11,084	0	0	23,988	183,043
10	Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,584	12,557	0	0	15,766	128,907
11	Special Ed Tuition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	**Total**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1,183,446**	**99,832**	**0**	**0**	**160,512**	**1,443,790**
13	Wage Adjustment Factor	100.0%												**Foundation Budget Per Pupil**		**15,866**

* Total foundation enrollment does not include columns 11 through 14, because those columns represent increments above the base. The pupils are already counted in columns 1 to 10.

Total foundation enrollment assigns pupils in pre-kindergarten and half-time kindergarten an enrollment count of .5.

Special education in-district headcount is an assumed percentage, representing 3.75 percent of K to 12 non-vocational enrollment and 4.75 percent of vocational enrollment.

Special education out-of-district headcount is also an assumed percentage, representing 1 percent of non-vocational K-12 enrollment.

Low income headcounts are the number of pupils in columns 1 through 10 who are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Each component of the foundation budget represents the enrollment on line 1 multiplied by the appropriate state-wide foundation allotment.

The wage adjustment factor is applied to underlying rates in all functions except instructional equipment, benefits and special education tuition.

The foundation budget shown on this page may differ from the final number used in the formula, due to rounding error.

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Using the Northampton-only low-income headcount, the total foundation budget changes from $1,764,814 to $1,443,790, a reduction of $321,024. The 'foundation budget per pupil' falls from $19,394 to $15,866. Since Northampton's 'target local share' is 81.51%, Northampton's required district contribution to Smith would be reduced by a proportional amount, approximately $250,204. On the 'regional allocation' worksheet, this would result in a comparable shift of FY 15 required contribution from Smith to the Northampton Public Schools (Table 26). Since Northampton is already meeting NSS requirements for NPS, and is in fact spending at approximately 123% of NSS requirements (FY 14), the reduction in required spending for Smith would not trigger a comparable increase in required spending for NPS.

It's worth noting that by including all low income students enrolled at Smith in the foundation budget calculation for Smith (and thus for the City of Northampton), no additional foundation aid is generated for Smith. This is because Chapter 70 FY 14 aid for Smith was $893,210, although the foundation aid 'target' is just $316,314. In effect, foundation aid for Smith is 'grandfathered,' with an additional minimum $25 per pupil increase for FY 15. This is not an unusual situation for schools with declining enrollment.

The net effect is a disproportionate NSS requirement for Northampton for Smith, with no corresponding increase in Chapter 70 aid.

If the low income students from Smith's sending towns were instead counted in the foundation budget calculations for each towns, those towns would see a corresponding increase in their foundation budget totals. The effects for each town would vary. In order to calculate the actual effects, ESE would have to run the foundation spreadsheet using the new numbers.

Table 25: FY 15 Chapter 70 'summary' worksheet for Northampton Smith (unmodified)

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

FY15 Chapter 70 Summary

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Aid Calculation FY15

Prior Year Aid		
1	Chapter 70 FY14	**893,210**
Foundation Aid		
2	Foundation budget FY15	1,764,814
3	Required district contribution FY15	1,447,978
4	Foundation aid (2 -3)	316,836
5	Increase over FY14 (4 - 1)	**0**
Downpayment Aid		
6	Target aid %	18.49%
7	Foundation aid with fully reduced effort	326,314
8	Increase over FY14 to reach 35% phase-i	0
9	Downpayment aid	**0**
Minimum Aid		
10	Minimum $25 per pupil increase	**2,275**
Non-Operating District Reduction to Foundation		
11	Reduction to foundation	**0**
FY15 Preliminary Chapter 70 Aid		
12	**sum of line 1, 5, 9 and 10 minus 11**	**895,485**

Comparison to FY14

	FY14	FY15	Change	Pct Chg
Enrollment	106	91	-15	-14.15%
Foundation budget	2,020,055	1,764,814	-255,241	-12.64%
Required district contribution	1,627,859	1,447,978	-179,881	-11.05%
Chapter 70 aid	**893,210**	**895,485**	2,275	0.25%
Required net school spending (NSS)	2,521,069	2,343,463	-177,606	-7.04%
Target aid share	18.31%	18.49%		
C70 % of foundation	44.22%	50.74%		
Required NSS % of foundation	124.80%	132.79%		

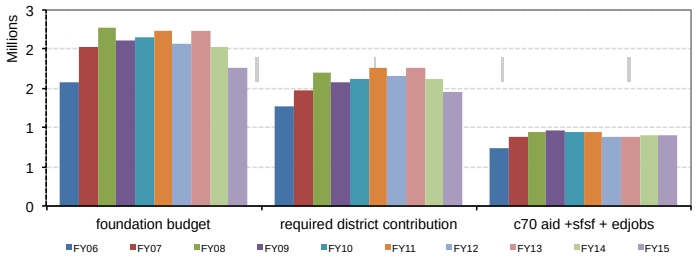

Table 26: FY 15 Chapter 70 'regional allocation' worksheet for Northampton Smith (unmodified)

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

FY15 Chapter 70

Apportionment of Local Contribution Across School Districts

	210 NORTHAMPTON	NORTHAMPTON	NORTHAMPTON SMITH			COMBINED TOTAL ALL DISTRICTS
	Prior Year Data (for comparison purposes)					
1	FY14 foundation enrollment	2,773	106			2,879
2	FY14 foundation budget	26,834,027	2,020,055			28,854,082
3	Each district's share of municipality's combined FY14 foundation	93.00%	7.00%			100.00%
4	FY14 required contribution	21,624,168	1,627,859			23,252,027
	Apportionment of FY15 contribution among community's districts					
5	FY15 total unapportioned required contribution ("municipal contribution" sheet row 19 or 24)					23,924,855
6	FY15 foundation enrollment	2,805	91			2,896
7	FY15 foundation budget	27,395,101	1,764,814			29,159,915
8	Each district's share of municipality's total FY15 foundation	93.95%	6.05%			100.00%
9	**FY15 Required Contribution**	22,476,877	1,447,978			23,924,855
10	Change FY14 to FY15 (9 - 4)	852,709	-179,881			672,828

2. Effects of assumed percentages of special education students on vocational high schools with high percentages of special education students

The percentage of students with disabilities at Smith is the highest among all regional vocational technical schools in western Massachusetts, and the highest of all agricultural high schools in the state.

Table 27: FY 13 percentages of students with disabilities, compared to western Massachusetts regional vocational technical schools, and all Massachusetts agricultural high schools (from DARTFinanceStaff.xlsx workbook, modified table)

	Northampton-Smith Vocational Agricultural	Franklin County RVT	Pathfinder RVT	Northern Berkshire RVT	Bristol County Agricultural	Norfolk County Agricultural	Essex Agricultural Technical	North Shore RVT
All students	418	518	662	488	451	485	479	475
Low-income	46%	51%	39%	40%	26%	13%	21%	33%
With disabilities	39%	29%	30%	15%	10%	13%	13%	29%
English language learner	2%	--	0%	--	--	--	--	--

As stated in the 'foundation budget' worksheet in the Chapter 70 Excel workbook, "Special education in-district headcount is an assumed percentage, representing 3.75% of K to 12 non-vocational enrollment and 4.75% of vocational enrollment." The Special Ed-in School (see Table 28, below) increment is $24,958.05, and the differential for Chapter 74 students in the foundation budget calculation is approximately 1% of enrollment.

Since an assumed vocational headcount is used for all districts, regardless of actual percentages of students with disabilities (SWD) enrolled, schools with relatively high percentages of SWD are disproportionally disadvantaged in the calculation of the foundation budgets for those districts.

Although using a number linked to actual percentages of SWD enrolled would boost the foundation budget calculation for Northampton, it would be unlikely to result in additional foundation aid because of the differential noted above between the target aid and 'grandfathered' actual aid.

However, if a regional district was formed, and SWD comprised a disproportionately high percentage of total enrollment, the new regional district's foundation budget calculation would increase given an SWD increment linked to actual enrollment.

Note that CVTE high schools' actions do not create the large percentages of special education students in CVTE schools. The great majority of special education students in CVTE high schools are classified as such before entering high school.

Table 28: FY 15 Foundation Budget Rates (pdf from chapter_15.xlsm workbook, 'rates' worksheet)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of School Finance

Foundation Budget Rates Per Pupil, FY15 Chapter 70

		admin-istration	instructional leadership	classroom & specialist teachers	other teaching services	professional development	instructional materials, equip-ment & tech	guidance & psychological	pupil services	operations & maintenance	employee benefits & fixed charges	special education tuition	total all categories
1	Pre-School	179.71	324.57	1,488.26	381.69	58.86	215.41	108.28	43.07	413.27	372.52	0.00	3,585.64
2	Kindergarten-Half	179.71	324.57	1,488.26	381.69	58.86	215.41	108.28	43.07	413.27	372.52	0.00	3,585.64
3	Kindergarten-Full	359.41	649.13	2,976.51	763.41	117.77	430.81	216.59	86.17	826.54	745.00	0.00	7,171.34
4	Elementary	359.41	649.13	2,976.47	763.41	117.79	430.81	216.59	129.25	826.54	745.05	0.00	7,214.45
5	Junior/Middle	359.41	649.13	2,619.31	549.54	127.69	430.81	288.31	211.11	896.08	708.39	0.00	6,839.78
6	High School	359.41	649.13	3,851.91	457.50	123.81	689.30	361.41	486.82	868.84	680.58	0.00	8,528.71
7	Special Ed-In School	2,480.59	0.00	8,185.33	7,642.53	394.86	344.65	0.00	0.00	2,770.95	3,139.14	0.00	24,958.05
8	Special Ed-Tuitioned Out	2,480.59	0.00	0.00	37.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23,551.93	26,070.41
9	Limited English PK	179.72	324.57	2,241.36	305.21	79.73	215.41	144.14	64.61	559.50	468.62	0.00	4,582.87
10	Limited English K Half Time	179.72	324.57	2,241.36	305.21	79.73	215.41	144.14	64.61	559.50	468.62	0.00	4,582.87
11	Limited English Full Time	359.41	649.13	4,482.71	610.42	159.44	430.81	288.31	129.25	1,118.95	937.24	0.00	9,165.67
12	Vocational	359.41	649.13	6,548.29	457.50	204.70	1,206.26	361.41	486.82	1,626.06	1,105.32	0.00	13,004.90
13	Low Income Elem	0.00	0.00	2,677.91	0.00	58.94	0.00	0.00	0.00	413.59	271.83	0.00	3,422.27
14	Low Income Secondary	0.00	0.00	2,023.09	0.00	58.94	0.00	0.00	0.00	413.59	271.83	0.00	2,767.45

C. Calculating an NSS Requirement for All CVTE Schools

As discussed in the section above (Comparison with municipal CVTE schools), Northampton is required to meet the NSS requirement for Smith. Similar to regional vocational technical schools, this calculation and funding requirement ensures that the vocational rate in the foundation formula follows students to their CVTE schools. As noted elsewhere, Smith's $13,004.90 rate for FY 15 is considerably more than the $8,258.71 high school rate, a difference per foundation enrollment of $4,746.19.

No such requirement currently exists for CVTE schools within municipal school districts (comprehensive or standalone), nor do the current state accounting reporting requirements track costs for those schools. In a similar way, no such calculation or requirement applies to collaboratives offering CVTE programs for their member districts.

If an NSS calculation and requirement were extended to all CVTE programs in municipal school districts and collaboratives, increased funding for those CVTE programs might be ensured, and a more level playing field would be established for districts offering CVTE programs to nonresident students.

D. Monitoring the Comparative Effectiveness of Differing CVTE Delivery Systems

In the proposed amendments to Chapter 74 regulations, the commissioner of ESE expressed strong interest in exploring additional delivery systems for quality CVTE programming (Proposed changes to Chapter 74 Regulations):

> ***Expanded opportunities for career education***
>
> *There is a growing recognition that we need to offer more career education to all our students, not just those enrolled in full-time vocational programs. We are seeing strong student performance at many of our vocational schools, but getting local approvals and financing for expansion is a difficult process at best. I want to encourage districts to seek out and experiment with other models for delivering career and vocational education, including expanded offerings in our academic and comprehensive high schools, programs sponsored through our educational collaboratives, and partnerships among academic high schools, vocational high schools, and community colleges.*

At present, the state does not have ways of broadly assessing the comparative effectiveness of differing models of CVTE delivery. Both local communities and the Commonwealth as a whole have a common interest in providing high quality CVTE programs in the most cost-effective manner possible.

Given the heightened public interest in CVTE and the interest in developing more opportunities for students to access CVTE programs, it is important that cross-model comparisons be developed to measure the relative value of Chapter 74 programs offered in differing school structures: regional vocational technical high schools, municipal vocational technical high schools, comprehensive municipal high schools, collaborative delivery of technical programs, and CVTE programs offered within primarily academic high schools (RVTHS, MVTHS, CHS, Collaborative). Although some MCAS data reports provide some comparative data, academic achievement data ends with the 10th grade MCAS exams, and other measures of student success should be included in any appropriate measure.

Unless such a cross-model program evaluation is developed, the state will lack the capacity to assess and monitor systems sufficiently to inform critical decision making.

Lacking such critical monitoring and tracking systems, there is a danger that critical decisions regarding delivery systems and student pathways may be made solely on a fiscal basis, with the possibility that the quality of existing CVTE programs may be degraded. This danger is particularly present in geographic regions experiencing significant enrollment decline across all schools.

ESE's research and evaluation team, in collaboration with the CVTE team at ESE, could develop and implement appropriate metrics for evaluating the comparative effectiveness of the various CVTE delivery models, focusing on the two primary state educational goals—college readiness and career preparation. This data would be invaluable in guiding state decision making concerning CVTE laws, regulations, and policies, and would provide guidance to local districts looking to develop or access CVTE programs that are both effective and fiscally efficient.

E. Revisions to Regional Transportation Reimbursement Policies and Practices

Other agricultural schools in Massachusetts are able to access regional transportation reimbursement for the transportation costs of all their member towns since they are regional school districts. Since Smith is not classified as a regional school district for purposes of regional transportation reimbursement funds, neither Northampton nor sending towns qualify for these funds.

Smith's sending towns are thus dependent on annual funding of nonresident transportation reimbursement. This reimbursement practice is probably most appropriate for regional or municipal districts with relatively few nonresident students. For Smith, whose nonresident student population was 78% in FY 15, regional transportation reimbursement may be most appropriate. Again, in this case, regulations, policies or law could be modified to regard Smith as a regional school district for purposes of transportation reimbursement.

The distinction previously made between affiliated and unaffiliated sending towns may be useful here. Unaffiliated towns—towns for which Smith functions as the default regional vocational technical school—could qualify for regional transportation reimbursement. This would leave a much smaller number of students, from affiliated towns, whose transportation costs could be partially covered by nonresident transportation reimbursement.

Expanding Opportunities for Students

Although most of this report focuses on governance and finance structures for Smith and its sending schools and towns, it's important to remember that all of the schools and districts exist solely to serve the needs of students, particularly the need for rigorous and effective career technical training and education. Massachusetts has a very strong and comprehensive system for delivering CVTE, but the most common models for delivery may not always serve the changing needs of students. In the following section, we will discuss some creative options for expanding opportunities for students to access quality CVTE.

Most of these possibilities could only come about from effective and sustained dialogue between Smith, the leadership of Smith's sending towns and schools, and, ideally, the educational and civic leaders across the broader region. Creation of a stable, rationally distributed, equitably funded CVTE delivery system in the region should be embraced as an opportunity to serve as leaders in the movement to increase student access and elevate program quality statewide.

A. Creating Flexible Entry Points for Students

1. Some limits of the 9–12 system in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts system of municipal and regional CVTE schools is structured as a four-year, 9th grade through 12th grade system. With few exceptions, students are asked during the latter half of their 8th-grade year to make an extremely significant educational choice, either enrolling in a primarily academically structured high school, or enrolling in a four-year program at a CVTE school. In general, the system does not provide options for students to change their minds after this initial decision point. The vast majority of ninth grade students remain in their original school of choice for all four years of high school.

Recent reports focusing on regional CVTE schools in Massachusetts emphasize the very high completion and retention rates of vocational technical schools. Although some of this may be due to the selective admissions policies and processes for Chapter 74 schools, in many cases it may be that CVTE successfully re-engages students who may be at risk of dropping out.

Regional vocational technical high schools might be the only option for some students. It is unclear what opportunities exist for these students who are not admitted to CVTE schools in 9th grade, the primary entry point, but creating an additional entry point later in their academic career could help these students pursue their career and technical goals.

2. Creating an additional 11th grade entry point for Chapter 74 programs

Many students might benefit from an additional entry point to Chapter 74 programs at SVAHS. Grade 11 might be a very natural option to add, especially since, under the current MCAS system, the last MCAS exams are administered in 10th grade. Schools' intense focus on preparation for 10th grade MCAS exams is natural, given the high stakes for schools in the state accountability system. Following successful passing of the 10th grade MCAS exams, some students might benefit from entry into two years of a rigorous Chapter 74 program at Smith.

There is usually some attrition in program enrollment over the four years of technical high school, and there are often seats available in those programs for the 11th and 12th grade years.

In some neighboring states, CVTE programming is structured primarily for the last two years of high school. Students in those states lack the option of entering CVTE programs at the 9th grade level. Smith could offer the best of both systems, maintaining 9–12 programming for the majority of its students, but

adding an 11–12 option for additional students. Scheduling would be more difficult, for sure, and teachers might have to accommodate very different levels of preparation of students in the 11th and 12th grade classes. However, it would open up rigorous career and technical education to many more students.

A school might even choose to require that students entering in the 11th grade have successfully passed both MCAS exams. This might help ensure that these students are academically prepared for rigorous technical and academic education at Smith. It might also serve as a motivating force for students who applied but were not admitted in 9th grade, creating, in effect, a second chance at gaining admittance to Smith and linking that admission to academic (MCAS) success.

B. Offering Schools (and Students) a Choice of CVTE Delivery Models at Smith

Smith might also consider offering half-day half-day programming to its sending schools and towns as an additional option for students, with the students receiving their core academic instruction at their home high schools, and receiving half-day technical programming at Smith. This is, as mentioned above, the model that Career TEC is offering its member and sending towns at LPVEC. This option might be attractive to sending schools suffering declining enrollment, as it would mitigate some of the fiscal and organizational impact of their students' enrollment at Smith.

A truly student-centered regional approach to the question of CVTE programming might even be flexible enough to allow students to choose which delivery model they prefer. Some students might prefer, for social or academic reasons, to take their academic classes at their home high school, and their technical classes at Smith. Others might much prefer the full enrollment option at Smith, ensuring that they take all their classes at the same campus and with the same students and teachers.

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of the two models—week-about and half-day half-day—are covered in more detail above (see section on the week-about schedule for CVTE schools). Again, moving from a week-about schedule to a half-day half-day schedule would be challenging for Smith, but, in addition to opening up additional enrollment options for some students, it might also address some persistent problems inherent in the model, like continuity of academic instruction.

C. Dual Enrollment at the High School Level

Much to its credit, Smith has negotiated and introduced a dual enrollment (high school and college) option for Smith students this year, enabling students to enter college with credits earned and some coursework completed. Similar thinking could perhaps be applied to enrollment between Smith and Northampton High School, since they are less than one mile apart. For instance, Smith might provide Northampton High School students with some technical courses, while Northampton High School might provide Smith students with AP courses.

Such arrangements would set aside the traditional boundaries of the two schools, and open up significant academic and enrichment opportunities for high school students in both schools.

D. Establishing and Supporting Satellite Chapter 74 Academies in the Region's High Schools

One of the driving forces contributing to the relatively high cost of CVTE schools like Smith is the administrative costs involved in essentially running two schools in one building—that is, supporting both technical and academic programming.

Several of Smith's sending schools have established or have had their own Chapter 74 programs within their home 9–12 high schools. The oversight and administration of Chapter 74 programs requires that administrative staff within the schools have significant CVTE experience, licensure, and skills. When that cost is spread over a number of CVTE programs, as is usual in regional vocational technical schools, it becomes a reasonable administrative cost, as economies of scale are realized.

That is somewhat harder to accomplish in high schools maintaining just a few Chapter 74 programs. One model that has been used in the state in the past is that of a regional vocational technical school running satellite programs in sending high schools. Blue Hills RVTHS had such programs in the past, maintaining, overseeing, and administering a cluster of certified Chapter 74 programs at Randolph High School. These satellite programs not only allowed some students to access technical programs while staying in their home high school, but it also expanded the capacity of Blue Hills to provide program seats in addition to those at the Blue Hills campus.

Again, the development of such a delivery model could only take place within a more regionally based approach to the delivery of CVTE programming, and within an atmosphere of sustained dialogue between Smith and its sending schools.

A more ambitious approach to this kind of thinking would explore the possibility of bringing CVTE programs across the broad geographic region under a common administration in order to provide multiple models to schools and to coordinate programs across schools to maximize quality, access, and efficiency. Such models might require special legislation to facilitate, but a unified regional approach might be well received by state policy makers if the model could also collectively address the challenges arising from declining enrollment across the region.

E. Establishing a Common Regional Schedule for Exploratory Programs

Exploratory programs in CVTE schools allow students to explore a number of technical program areas, before selecting one to enroll in. The programs are typically at least half a year in length, and rotate students through all available programs for initial exposure, then focus on three or more programs to explore in more depth.

In the Smith catchment area, certified Chapter 74 exploratory programs are offered at Smith, Career TEC at LPVEC, FCTS, and in municipal CVTE schools (Westfield, Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee). The proposed new Chapter 74 regulations would allow schools that offer at least five CVTE programs to have students do all their career exploration at their home high school, and only be able to enter other programs at other schools (e.g., Smith) upon completion of that exploratory program.

Although no doubt reasonable from a regulatory point of view, this could have the unintended consequence of reducing students' options for exploring and choosing appropriate career paths. The proposed regulation stipulates that students are free to designate other technical programs, and then attend the schools that offer them. However, students in exploratory programs often have their initial exposure to a given career field in that program—that is, in fact, the purpose of the exploratory program. Since they are unlikely to choose programs that they know nothing about, their educational options may be limited by the number and specific menu of technical programs offered in a given exploratory program.

This situation is aggravated in a CVTE school like Smith, which also offers the only high school Chapter 74 agricultural programs in western Massachusetts. If students cannot attend exploratory classes at Smith's agricultural programs, they may not be able to determine whether or not those programs are a good fit with their skills, interests, and ambitions.

One possible solution to this might be a regional calendar and schedule for all exploratory programs. If all exploratory programs in the region were offered on a half-day half-day basis, with a given rotation and

length of time in each program, students might be able to participate in portions of the exploratory program in other schools and thus find the best fit for them.

Other possibilities might include weekend open house visits to regional vocational technical schools by visiting teams of teachers and students from Smith's agricultural programs, a 'sharing' of students for a week during the exploratory program in the home technical high school, visits to both Smith and the default regional vocational high school during the 8th-grade enrollment period, and so on.

Next Steps

A. Policy, Regulations, and Law

Recommendations concerning potential adjustments to current policy, regulations, and laws governing Smith are covered in the section above Revisions to Chapter 74 regulations.

As noted above, a limited revision of current Chapter 74 regulations is currently happening. If some of the suggestions made in this report are seen as beneficial to Smith and its sending towns, individuals and organizations now have an opportunity to advocate strongly for adjustments in the regulations. In any event, as the community begins to consider its various options to support Smith's future, it will be important to maintain awareness of any proposed, pending, or adopted changes to the regulations.

B. SVAHS's Board of Trustees and Administration

This report identifies many challenges that currently face Smith. As the Board of Trustees plans the future course for Smith, it will need to find ways to meet those challenges. Some of the power and discretion to meet those challenges are within their scope of powers. To effectively meet other challenges the Board will need to work with partners both within Northampton and beyond.

Before listing existing challenges and possible next steps, it's important to acknowledge that the SVAHS administrative team and Board of Trustees already engage in a number of actions designed to inform and involve sending districts, including:

- Letters of information to sending district superintendents announcing tuition rates for the coming year;
- Invitations to towns to attend and comment during Board of Trustees' discussions on setting the tuition rate;
- Attendance by the SVAHS superintendent at area superintendent meetings;
- Mailing of tuition invoices by the SVAHS business office (three times per year); and
- Outreach luncheons held by the SVAHS outreach recruiter to inform and advise sending district guidance counselors;

There are a number of additional steps that Smith's Board of Trustees and administrative team could take to improve communication with sending towns and schools, and to begin to establish the kind of community-based dialogue that will be essential for any major changes in organizational or fiscal structures.

The initial survey of municipal contacts, although limited in scope and outreach, clearly identified a desire on the part of officials and concerned citizens in sending towns and schools to be more involved in decision making at Smith, to have more open and robust lines of communication, and to have a voice in any possible changes to organizational structures in the future. Although Smith's board and administration are limited in their legal ability and authority to share decision making with sending towns, nothing would prevent Smith from engaging in various kinds of outreach to sending towns to establish the start of a regional dialogue. Ultimately, the board may choose to join with its external partners to advocate for changes in the existing legal framework that governs Smith.

Whatever course the board pursues it will be critical that some of the fundamental challenges identified in this study are engaged and addressed by the board. Given the increasing interest in CVTE in the Commonwealth, there are likely to be efforts to expand opportunities for all students to access these

programs. If Smith is not properly positioned to respond to this dynamic atmosphere, it may be adversely affected by changes beyond its control in its geographic region.

1. Share findings of this study

A first step might be to share the findings of this study with the regional towns and schools that are connected with Smith. This could easily be done through formal presentations, distribution of this report itself, and community forums to discuss the findings.

This is not to imply that Smith's board and administration will necessarily agree with or endorse all the findings of this report. Hopefully, this report provides sufficient information and ideas to provide a common factual basis to facilitate a discussion of key issues within the community.

2. Outreach to sending towns

Smith's board and administration may also consider making a concerted and systematic effort to reach out to sending towns and schools. The kinds of questions asked in the survey conducted as part of this study could be asked in more detail and in meetings with officials, administration, and concerned citizens in Smith's sending towns and schools.

In pursuit of this option, Smith may want to consider bringing in someone outside of Smith to help plan and facilitate meetings of this kind.

3. Creation of an advisory board

Smith may also want to consider the creation of an informal advisory board of representatives from sending towns and schools. The issues facing Smith and its sending towns are complex, and having a stable and committed group of people discussing these issues over time, and bearing some responsibility for communicating back to their own school or towns, may be very helpful.

4. Presentations at sending towns

Informational presentations at select board meetings, finance committee meetings, and school committee meetings might do much to improve lines of communication between Smith and sending towns, though approval for Smith's annual budget by sending towns is not legally required. Traditionally, budget presentations to member or sending towns also provide an opportunity for a school's leadership to inform key groups about educational initiatives, needs and progress.

With such a large number of sending towns, it may not be feasible for Smith representatives to attempt to attend meetings in each town. However, Smith could easily plan and schedule geographically dispersed budgetary meetings within its catchment area for the sole purpose of informational outreach to officials, citizens, and administrators of its sending towns and schools.

5. Formation of a committee to explore regionalization of Smith

A more formal and structural approach that Smith could take would be to initiate the creation of a regionalization committee. Current legislation describes the process by which regional school district planning committees and planning boards are established:

> *Section 14. Any town, either by a majority vote of its board of selectmen and a majority vote of the school committee or by vote in town meeting duly called therefor, may create a special unpaid committee to be known as a regional school district planning committee, to consist of 3 members, including 1 member of the school committee to be appointed by the moderator. At the same meeting or at a subsequent meeting, the town may appropriate for the expense of the regional school district planning committee such sums, not exceeding 1/10 of 1 per cent of the assessed valuation of such town in the preceding year, as it may deem necessary. Regional school district planning committees from any 2 or more towns may join together to form a regional school district planning board. Such regional school district planning board shall organize forthwith upon its formation by the election of a chairman and secretary-treasurer.*

The small number of students that many communities send to Smith likely will be a significant barrier to the creation of a traditional regional governance structure for Smith. However, even if a formal regional planning committee did not ultimately recommend the creation of a traditional regional school district, such a committee could provide the opportunity to discuss the feasibility of other, more regionally based responses to the challenges Smith needs to meet as it moves forward.

Given the various looming threats to the long-term stability of Smith identified by this study, the exploration of creative alternatives to the delivery of CVTE programming throughout the broader region may be welcomed beyond Smith's traditional catchment area so other area schools and districts that are facing similar, if not identical, challenges are included.

6. Seek input of professional organizations

Smith's leadership may also want to consult various professional organizations in the state with specific and extensive knowledge concerning CVTE laws, regulations, finances, and governance—Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools, and Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, for example—in order to assess the relative merits and likely consequences of some of the suggestions made in this report.

C. Research and Investigation

Further research and investigation would help to clarify fiscal and governance options for Smith, build stakeholder involvement and voice in the process, and identify key issues around student access to programs at Smith. This further research could be initiated and conducted by local and regional organizations, or could be supported by the state in response to local and regional initiatives. This research and dialogue could also take place within the context of a regionalization planning process. Key areas to focus on would include:

- Further in-depth interviews, surveys, and discussions with major sending towns, Northampton Public Schools administration, the SVAHS business office, former SVAHS and NPS administrators, and representatives of neighboring CVTE programs in the area.
- A survey of entering 9th-grade students in the Smith catchment area to gauge knowledge of and access to CVTE exploratory programs.
- An examination of student enrollment patterns in 9th-grade exploratory and CVTE programs, by sending town across the broader region and including institutions that border or lie within Smith's catchment area.

Designing Alternative Governance and Fiscal Models

A. Challenges of Redesign

The challenges of redesigning Smith's current hybrid system of governance and finance include both technical and political elements. It is unlikely that the technical elements can be successfully addressed without simultaneous development of a collaborative, positive, and regional dialogue concerning Smith's current and future role and function.

A perceived lack of transparency around key fiscal issues may be a direct result of the complexity of the systems in place: simple questions do not always have simple answers. Even improved fiscal structures are likely to be complex since the state fiscal and regulatory structures upon which they will be built (e.g., the foundation formula) are themselves complex, particularly in regional or multi-district settings.

The process of considering potential fundamental changes in the governance and fiscal structures of SVAHS will have to be an educational process if it is to be successful, as the key stakeholders will need to gain a full understanding of the structures under consideration, and the fiscal and governance consequences of specific solutions. While any solutions will ultimately have to be local initiatives given the local control tradition that characterizes the creation and maintenance of school districts in the Commonwealth, the state can play an important role in this process by offering technical assistance in areas such as fiscal modeling of proposed changes. This type of support will be crucial to any planning process as representatives of sending towns and cities will want to have a full understanding of the fiscal consequences of specific models under consideration.

The very large number of towns sending students to Smith also represents a challenge in the planning process for change, as does the dual function of Smith as both a regional CVTE school and a super-regional agricultural school. The process for successful changes in fiscal and governance structures will need to include the voices of all key stakeholders.

In addition, if some of the changes in Chapter 74 regulations described above are implemented, some of the key issues regarding finance, student access, and program approval may be resolved. That resolution itself would change the regional governance landscape concerning Smith and would have the potential to pave the way for an improved regional dialogue.

Sending towns and organizations providing CVTE programs in the region have demonstrated an ability to adapt to a changing fiscal and regulatory environment, and some period of adjustment to the new Chapter 74 regulations will likely be occurring while other structural changes in SVAHS are being considered.

B. Identifying Key Elements of Potential Governance and Fiscal Systems

1. Inclusion of stakeholders

The current direct governing body for Smith is the Board of Trustees, which includes three elected representatives, plus the mayor of Northampton and the superintendent of Northampton Public Schools. Although this ensures some oversight and voice from the municipal and public school side of the host city of Northampton, no avenue is provided for input from the many sending towns. Any effort to secure long-term enrollment commitments to Smith from neighboring communities, to use Smith as the preferred provider of CVTE and agricultural education for their students, will likely require a governance system that includes representation in the governance of Smith for sending or member towns across the region.

In addition, the inclusion of representatives from industries and employers in order to create a new and more representative governing body would broaden the perspective of such a group, and do much to ensure alignment between programs offered at Smith and the regional job opportunities of graduating students.

Neighboring educational institutions are being affected by many of the enrollment and fiscal pressures affecting Smith. Coordination of program offerings and sharing of program costs across the region would likely be more feasible and acceptable to neighboring communities if a governance structure could be identified that represented the broadest possible representation of those institutions and the communities they serve.

2. Ensuring student access to CVTE and agricultural programs

As described in sections above, the landscape of CVTE and agricultural programs available to students in the Smith catchment area is complex, with a variety of delivery models offered (comprehensive municipal high schools with Chapter 74 programs, standalone municipal CVTE schools, regional CVTE schools, CVTE programs offered by an area collaborative, and Smith, an independent vocational and agricultural school). Since sending towns currently have no legal and binding affiliation with Smith, towns are free to develop and deliver their own CVTE programs, negotiate access to CVTE programs with other schools, and/or to direct their students to specific schools for access to nonresident CVTE programs.

Given the fiscal pressures being faced by Smith's sending communities and districts in the face of significant enrollment decline, the exploration of alternative delivery models is likely to continue and accelerate. Left to each individual community, acting in isolation, the response to these challenges has the potential to destabilize the future of both Smith and its neighboring institutions. Any improved governance and fiscal model will have to address this issue directly, and establish a set of rules and expectations governing student access to CVTE programming in the area.

3. Finances

An improved model for financing Smith will need to be carefully designed. It will need to provide stable and predictable state revenue streams, ensure fair and appropriate sharing of costs by sending towns, and be as transparent as is possible given the complexity of state funding methodologies. It will need to provide for the setting of tuition rates for all students attending, irrespective of residence, and provide a method for a fiscally prudent and manageable process for the taking on of debt for the purpose of facility maintenance, improvement, and expansion, as well as new construction.

A new model for Smith would also need to carefully consider the cost impact of transporting students across broader district boundaries. While this will represent a significant planning challenge, a carefully developed plan for regionally based program delivery would establish a justification for a corresponding transportation aid program to facilitate its operation.

Any movement of Smith to a more regionally based system of finance and governance will also need to address the substantial capital asset that the current Smith campus represents to the City of Northampton.

4. Governance functions

Critical governance functions will need to be maintained in any revised structures, providing for clear and appropriate processes for hiring and evaluating the superintendent, setting the budget, and establishing and monitoring educational policy and programming.

Some Potential Governance Models

A. Improved Version of Current Model (Independent Agricultural School)

As described in sections above, Smith's current system of governance and finance is a hybrid model, incorporating some elements of both municipal and regional school districts. This model could be made considerably more transparent, inclusive, clear, and effective through revision of some of the regulatory and institutional practices currently in effect. The sections above on possible revisions to Chapter 74 regulations, regional transportation reimbursement policies, and the application of the foundation formula describe these revisions in detail.

However, even with clarification and improvement of the current model, two key elements of the strategic challenge Smith faces would remain unresolved: a way of securing long-term commitments from sending towns to use Smith as its regional CVTE provider, and a way for SVAHS to finance a major facility renovation or construction project without the community of Northampton assuming the risk of building the facility for approximately 75% of enrollments that are not secured by such long-term commitments.

Any major change in governance and fiscal structures designed to secure such commitments or otherwise make Smith's enrollment more predictable will likely need to ensure both increased voice for sending towns and a means of planning and carrying out major infrastructure improvement.

B. Regional CVTE School District

Regional CVTE school districts are by far the most common and (some would argue) the most successful of CVTE delivery models in Massachusetts. Regulations and laws supporting the establishment and functioning of regional school districts are extensive, widely understood, and well protected through the support of professional organizations. The state encourages and supports the development and establishment of regional school districts, through beneficial legislation and extensive technical support. Regional school districts are seen as both efficient and educationally effective delivery systems in many areas of the Commonwealth.

1. Fiscal advantages of regional school districts

Regional CVTE school districts function in many ways as municipalities, and include the following key fiscal functions:

- The authority to take on debt for capital improvements, to receive MSBA funding, and to assess member towns for debt.
- The establishment and enforcement of required local contributions from member communities in support of their students attending the school.
- The authority to establish excess and deficiency accounts, and to maintain funds in those accounts of up to 5% of operating budgets.
- The authority to directly manage all revenues associated with schools, including school choice revenues, nonresident tuition revenues, grant funds, and so forth. In municipal CVTE schools, by contrast, some of the management of these revenues is through the municipality, and

agreements on the sharing of revenues are subject to a process of negotiation within the district and with the city.

Also, regional CVTE school districts are eligible for specialized state funding, subject to annual legislative appropriations, including regional transportation reimbursement and regional planning grants.

2. The process of forming a regional school district

It's important to note that regional school districts are created by cities and towns, not by school committees, select boards, or the state education agency. The process by which local communities form regional school districts is established and clearly delineated by state law and regulation.[4] Regional planning committees and regional planning boards can be established by select boards and regional school committees, and by town meetings. The planning process is encouraged and supported by personnel in the ESE finance office, and the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools offers extensive support to towns considering regionalization.

Towns establish regional school districts through regional school district agreements, which must be approved by town meeting votes and by the commissioner of ESE. Laws and regulations concerning the establishment and functioning of regional school districts allow some latitude in the construction of key functions in regional school district agreements, including the election or appointment of regional school district committee members, the method of setting and assessing member towns, the prioritization of resident student applications, the process by which the regional agreement may be revised or amended, the process by which additional towns may become members of the regional district, and the process by which member towns may withdraw from the regional school district.

The obvious lead partners in the convening and establishment of a planning group for a regionalized SVAHS are the Smith Board of Trustees and the City of Northampton.

3. Participatory advantages of regional school districts

Regional school district agreements are formal and binding agreements between towns, and represent significant commitments of groups of towns to educate their children together. The process of developing regional agreements that are likely to receive positive votes in town meetings (or their municipal equivalent) ensures that agreements have focused on educational and fiscal interests common to all the prospective member towns.

Regional agreements ensure that all member towns and cities have significant voice in the governance of the school district. An example of this is the process by which budgets are recommended and then approved in regional school districts. Regional school district superintendents—who are hired and evaluated by the school committee—recommend annual budgets to the school committee. That school committee, which has representation from all member towns, must then vote by a two-thirds majority to approve the budget and send it on to the member towns for local approval. Two-thirds of the member municipalities of a regional school district must then approve the annual budget. Extensive law exists to regulate situations where initial budgets fail to pass the requisite number of towns. This three-stage process ensures that the member towns—as a group—have authority over the annual budget. It should be noted, however, that towns and regional school districts must still meet Net School Spending requirements set by the state.

There is considerable latitude allowed in regional agreements in regard to the composition and method of election or appointment of school committee members. School committee members may be appointed by other locally elected officials of the town (such as school committee members or boards of selectmen), elected by towns, or elected at large in the region, with or without a residency requirement. School committees must be representative of the relative populations of member towns, which can be accomplished through weighted voting at school committee meetings or through proportional

[4] Existing law governing the creation of regional planning boards can be found at: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section14. Existing regulations governing regional school districts can be found at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr41.html.

representation on the school committee itself. These methods are described and articulated in the regional agreements.

Section 14E of Chapter 71 states:

> ***Regional school district committee membership options***
>
> *A regional school district may, by amendment to its regional school district agreement, provide for one of the following options concerning the members of its regional district school committee: (1) electing committee members by voters in member communities with each community's representation apportioned according to population; (2) electing members in district-wide elections to be held at the biennial state elections; (3) electing members with residency requirements in district-wide elections to be held at the biennial state elections; (4) weighing the votes of committee members according to the population they represent; and (5) appointing committee members by locally elected officials such as school board members. Each regional school district shall designate an individual to serve as district clerk.*
>
> *If a regional school district decides to elect members in district-wide elections to be held at the biennial state elections or if any vacancy is to be so filled, the district clerk shall notify the state secretary by April fifteenth of the year of the biennial state election of that fact and also of his name and mailing address.*

Given the very large number of sending towns to SVAHS, when and if a regionalization planning group is convened, consideration should be given to the adopting a school committee structure that limits the overall size of the school committee to a manageable number.

4. Time constraints on the establishment of a new regional school district

Given the large number of sending towns to Smith, as well as the recent fiscal issues that have dominated dialogue between Smith, Northampton, and sending towns, it is likely that the process of establishing a regional school district may take considerable time. The identification and exploration of shared common interests would necessitate a shift in perspective, from one of a zero-sum competitive outlook to one of collaboration and the recognition of shared opportunity.

Nevertheless, the establishment of a planning process to move Smith to a regional school district structure would be a local and regional process and promise a future for Smith that would maintain key elements of local control.

As mentioned above, even if Smith is not ultimately organized under a traditional regional school district structure, the exercise of going through a regional planning process could help identify other opportunities to regionally based solutions not yet evident to the leaders of Smith, the city of Northampton, and the communities they serve.

C. Modified Regional CVTE School, Budget Established by State

The large number of communities that have traditionally depended on Smith as the regional provider of agricultural and CVTE programs, and other idiosyncratic aspects to Smith's role in the region, may ultimately prove to be significant obstacles to the formation of a traditional regional school district structure for the governance of Smith.

In regional school districts, a great deal of time and energy is devoted each year to the development, approval and passing of the budget. Given the very large number of towns sending students to Smith, some modification of the regional school district model might be very beneficial. If the amount of the annual budget was developed by a regionally representative governing board and subject to state approval within the general parameters of state finance laws, both administration and the school committee would be able to devote increased time and energy to key educational policies and issues, to program oversight and development, and to forging and developing increased connections and alliances with sending schools, regional businesses and employers, and postsecondary programs and institutions.

If, in addition, industry and employer representatives were given seats on the governing school committee, by divorcing the budget-setting function from programmatic and supervisory functions, this model could have the potential to give industry representatives a genuine voice, rather than just an advisory function.

As was noted in sections above, Smith's current per pupil spending is roughly commensurate with spending by other regional CVTE schools in western Massachusetts, and is a little less than the average of agricultural high schools across the state.

The decision on whether or not to pursue this option could reasonably be considered by a regional planning committee or planning board, and could be part of overall regionalization discussions.

Since Northampton's minimum contribution to Smith is currently set by the state through the Net School Spending calculation and requirement, and since sending towns' contributions to Smith are currently limited by a state-established nonresident student tuition cap, to a large extent Smith is already functioning under a revenue stream largely established by state policies and calculations.

Given the central challenge of stabilizing Smith's enrollment and the role of competitive program offerings and general enrollment declines within the Smith catchment area and beyond, a hybrid regional structure that encompasses all area communities and CVTE programs, if accessible, would likely be the most advantageous from a planning and efficiency perspective. Therefore if a regional planning process is initiated, it should not be limited in its consideration to existing models only.

D. Municipal CVTE School

The municipal CVTE school model has also been put forward as an alternative one for Smith as it moves in to the future. While this model may be viable as an alternative for the students of Northampton in a more limited and narrow set of programs, it would not materially change the underlying challenges facing Smith as it is currently structured.

If the goal is to provide students of Northampton, and others, a broad set of high-quality agricultural and CVTE programs in a cost efficient manner, it is not likely that drawing those programs into the Northampton Public Schools will help meet that goal. As with the "improved version of the current model" discussed above, this approach would leave the two key elements of the strategic challenge Smith faces in place. Those are the need to secure long-term commitments from sending towns to use Smith as its regional CVTE provider in order to financially support a broad range of programs at reasonable cost, and a way to prudently finance a major facility renovation or construction project to operate such quality programming without Northampton having to secure such long-term commitments from those sending towns.

Given the discrepancy in nonresident tuitions between regional and municipal districts across the state, it is also possible that any such merger would decrease the tuition amounts that would be authorized by the state for nonresident students attending programs operated by the Northampton Public Schools.

Appendices

A. NEASC 2014 Summary Report and Facilities Report

Excerpt from the NEASC Summary

The Visiting Committee also identified a number of suggestions for improvement, the most significant of which were:

1. Develop a comprehensive plan to address school facilities issues.

2. Continue to aggressively seek funding for renovation and/or new construction to address the systemic facilities issues facing the school.

3. Continue to work to increase student enrollment, thereby improving the overall school budget. This may include expanding technical, academic, and athletic offerings and improving public relations with the surrounding school systems and communities.

4. Review, update and evaluate recruitment materials including the website, written materials, social media, and videos with a lens of equity and meeting the student of the 21st century.

5. Revise the existing technology plan, with significant Advisory Committee input, to more aggressively meet the needs of the 21st century classroom and workplace. The technology plan should include computer technology, interactive white boards and the technology and equipment needed for each vocational technical program.

6. Continue professional development initiatives and supports that led to the significant improvement in the school's performance on the MCAS.

Facilities

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) is located on a ninety-three acre campus, approximately a mile and a half from the center of Northampton. The campus has eight major buildings consisting of four large brick structures labeled A, B,C, and D, a Career and Student Service Center, a farm building, three greenhouses, a Multi-Species Facility of Agriculture, and a Forestry & Horticulture building .

The facilities relating to the farm operation include the use of the 521 acres of land owned by Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. There is an additional 16 acres of leased land that is utilized by the school on a handshake agreement. Approximately 187 acres of land are in managed forests that are selectively harvested for cordwood and logs sold for potential board lumber. Approximately 24 acres of the main campus is fenced as a pasture for livestock and horses. There are 60 acres of land available for hay production in various locations. Although composted manure is applied as organic matter to fields, lime and conventional fertilizer are not consistently applied, and regular soil tests are not conducted.

Approximately 287 acres of land referred to as the State Hospital North and the "jail land" are owned by the State of Massachusetts and leased to the school on a 100 year lease agreement. This land is under a permanent deed restriction held by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program, limiting land use and preventing future development.

The school produces a limited amount of square and round baled hay for the livestock and horses at the school. The farm operation harvested one cutting of hay in 2013, compared to the industry

standard of three cuttings in one season. Hay storage presents a problem, as engineering limitations only allow hay to be stacked 8 bales high in the historic 1924 barn.

The school has three solar arrays on campus that supply 19% of the energy requirements for the school and provides a supplemental income annually to the town of Northampton. A cell tower on campus also generates monthly income.

The school buildings range in age from twenty-seven to eighty-seven years old.

School facilities are maintained to the best of the school's ability, but the facilities pose a significant challenge for the school. Many of the facilities recommendations made ten years ago in the last decennial report remain unresolved areas of concern, and are only heightened by the intervening years. The facility needs extensive work to successfully meet NEASC standards for school facilities. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School has been approved for Massachusetts School Building Authority funding to support a building/renovation project but needs to secure the required matching funds before the project can move forward.

The Visiting Committee agrees that Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School does not meet Standard 10: School Facilities.

Commendations:

The Visiting Committee commends Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School for the following:

1. The effective use of staff and resources to keep the campus in good condition.
2. The preservation of open space in a climate of fiscal pressure and urban sprawl.
3. The school's continued efforts to modernize and maintain the facility.
4. Faculty, staff, and students are actively involved in the maintenance of the campus.
5. New windows have recently been installed in Building C.

Recommendations:

The Visiting Committee recommends Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School:

1. Install a fire suppression system in Building D as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
2. Continue management of existing asbestos in the buildings as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
3. Complete the renovation of the heating systems so that buildings will be independent of each other as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
4. Bring all electrical violations up to code, including but not limited to locked panel covers, GFCI receptacle protection where required, panel circuit breaker directories, exposed wires, missing covers, broken exit signs, non-working lighting fixtures, missing or inaccessible emergency stop buttons in science and technical areas, safety motion switches on electrified overhead garage doors. Similar recommendations were made in the Decennial Report of 2003.
5. Properly mark/label all chemical storage cabinets, MSDS and safety eye wash stations, emergency shut-off stations, and all other signage requirements for student/staff/public safety.
6. In the multi-species barn, fire alarm signage should protrude from the wall surface.
7. Update and prominently display MSDS sheets in each classroom/technical program throughout the campus.

8. Update and post evacuation procedures and maps in every classroom/technical program throughout the campus.
9. Install fire extinguishers in the animal science and associated agricultural buildings as well as where required throughout the campus.
10. Install eye wash stations, markings, and eye wash station maintenance record cards in all technical, science, and other locations where required.
11. In the animal science classroom building, include a Quarantine Room to meet compliance requirements for a Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources Pet Shop License.
12. Install gutters or some other installation to prevent rainfall run off from the roof of the piggery to prevent ice/tripping hazards.
13. Install hand-washing facilities in the piggery.
14. Properly mark all exit and non-exit doors as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
15. Utilize SchoolDude for all facilities related correspondence regarding vehicle maintenance, inventory, and work request orders.
16. Create a comprehensive land management plan that establishes a schedule to maximize the use of available hay land under management practices that align with current industry standards.
17. Explore alternative revenue streams that would maximize the use of school land for various types of agricultural production activities.
18. Purchase a round bale wrapper to enable forages to be stored outside, and enable the farm crew to produce hay for the livestock.
19. Update bathroom facilities. Ensure all bathrooms that are designated as handicapped accessible are fully accessible. Many of these bathrooms do not have the required door handles, sinks, and/or faucets to ensure accessibility.
20. Bathrooms adjacent to the restaurant in Building A are used by the public but are not handicapped accessible.
21. Update agricultural buildings to ensure proper heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and fire alarm systems as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
22. Install exhaust venting for agriculture mechanics for both welding and the maintenance/repair of combustion engine equipment.
23. Repair the water problems in Forestry/Building E as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
24. Ensure that all door handles, ramps, and designated handicapped building entrances are in compliance with the applicable provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act.
25. Ensure that all doorknobs have locking access on both sides and that all classroom and technical areas have entrance, exit, and connecting doors. The Visiting Team found many door lock issues, including A-124, C-124, and A-

131. Doors should be able to be left unlocked when appropriate and easily locked when needed for security.

26. Evaluate and consider implementing a security system between buildings to prevent intruders and theft and help ensure a safe facility.
27. Remove debris and repair panel on the heater in the hallway near room C-116.
28. Repair or replace broken and drafty windows in building A (library).

29. Secure or re-route electrical, computer network and audio-visual cords in all classrooms to eliminate tripping hazards.
30. Consider locking computers and technology equipment to prevent theft.
31. Repair roof leaks in building A (library and surrounding rooms).
32. Address staining and possible mold growth evident on ceilings in the Multispecies Building storage area.
33. Repair sinks in the C-104 science classroom so that they drain properly.
34. Repair the fume hood to allow for proper exhaust in C-104.
35. Repair or replace flooring in cosmetology and ensure there is no underlying mold growth due to bubbling from water damage.
36. Ensure that papers, books, and supplies are not being stored on top of heaters, Hazmat cabinets, and electrical equipment.
37. Repair or replace blinds in the library that are not in working order. (Lockdown procedures require them to be shut.)
38. Provide air conditioning in areas such as the library and cafeteria.
39. Install exhaust fans in the cafeteria kitchen to improve air circulation and address heat concerns.
40. Provide sufficient electrical service to the ovens in the cafeteria to eliminate circuit tripping.
41. Repair/replace broken and raised metal floor grates in automotive technology.
42. Remove large tree limbs hovering over the garage/shed behind the historic barn.
43. Remove the large hornet hive, adjacent to a dormer on the back side roof of the barn.
44. Repair/replace the 2nd story floor in the carpentry shop. There are raised wooden blocks and floor opening covers which are not at a uniform level, causing a tripping hazard.
45. Install a handrail along the masonry wall in the stairwell of the carpentry shop and deck to remove the tripping hazard which exists between floors.
46. Repair/replace outdated windows as needed and including the following locations: Room B-170, library, manufacturing, and anywhere else air gaps, or where poor mechanical operation, cracks, and other disrepair exists.
47. Repair the dust collection machine outside the carpentry program and replace the collection barrels.
48. Install additional guarding/fall protection at the double wide “barn doors” of the 2nd floor.
49. Repair/replace broken lockers in boys and girls gymnasium locker rooms to eliminate sharp edges.
50. Install eye wash station, safety shower, and scullery in kitchen to improve student safety and prevent cross-contamination.
51. Repair/replace door outside agriculture related theory space.
52. Address peeling paint issues in the former dairy barn.
53. Address proper heating, ventilation and air conditioning in the former dairy barn.
54. Reinforce structure of former dairy barn to accommodate greater hay bale storage.
55. Install a working telephone jack and fire alarm system connected to the rest of the campus in the former dairy barn.
56. Properly label and store chemicals in the former dairy barn.

57. Remove fuel dispensing equipment from the former dairy barn.
58. Remove all obstacles, cleaning supplies, and other hazards blocking access to electrical panels throughout the campus to comply with the electrical code.
59. Relocate water shut-off valves for the greenhouse adjacent to the forestry related greenhouse.
60. Address the following issues in Room B151: cracked ceiling tiles, multiple wires and cords stretched across the floor, computer/internet cables hanging out of the wall.
61. Provide shelter for animals located in the pasture behind the old barn.
62. Replace lockers in the Collision Repair shop.
63. Repair basketball shot clock cover on the south wall in the Gymnasium.
64. Secure cover for the exit sign on the south wall in the Gymnasium.
65. Replace the air vent cover missing near the shower in the boys' locker room.
66. Replace missing light bulbs in Boys and Girls locker rooms.
67. Repair bulging and cracked floor tiles in Health Tech lab area.
68. Install emergency gas shut-off valves in the Collision Repair shop for the ceiling mounted radiant heaters.
69. Resolve the tripping hazard on the Collision Repair shop floor, caused by raised sections that run the length of the drain.
70. Improve safety of Hazmat storage in the Automotive Technology shop. Overflow containers are too small to handle leakage and tanks are stored outside and are unmarked and unprotected.
71. Replace the mirror and faucets in the bathroom of the Automotive Technology shop.
72. Install a permanent fence to replace the temporary snow fence between the barns near the manure pit.
73. Evaluate all shop equipment for safety and functionality and update shop equipment to meet current industry and safety standards.
74. Install safety guards on carpentry table saws and the first floor grinder.
75. Repair the frayed wiring on the carpentry panel saw.
76. Repair or replace the lab tables in science that are broken and falling apart as also recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
77. Store all chemicals in the prep room in the proper, locked cabinet as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
78. Label chemical storage cabinets and clearly mark hazards (organic, inorganic, and flammable) as recommended by the Decennial Evaluation of 2003.
79. Establish a school-wide Safety Committee made up of appropriate administrators, instructional staff, facilities and maintenance personnel.
80. Develop a comprehensive plan to address school facilities issues and continue to seek funding for renovation and/or new construction to address the systemic facilities issues facing the school.

B. Proposed changes to Chapter 74 Regulations

The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Proposed Amendments to Vocational-Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Date: November 14, 2014

I am presenting to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education this month proposed amendments to 603 CMR 4.00: Vocational-Technical Education Regulations, for initial discussion and a vote to solicit public comment. With the Board's approval at the November 25 meeting, we will solicit public comment on the proposed revisions to the regulations and bring them back to the Board for a final vote in February 2015.

Background

Career and vocational-technical education programs at the high school level are provided in a variety of settings in Massachusetts: in regional and municipal vocational high schools; in comprehensive high schools; and in partnerships with educational collaboratives, post-secondary institutions, and other organizations. Many of these programs are designated by the Department as "Chapter 74 approved" vocational programs, indicating that they meet the high standards outlined in Chapter 74 of the General Laws and in the Board's regulations on vocational-technical education (603 CMR

4.00). Chapter 74 approval entitles districts to higher funding levels under the Chapter 70 state aid formula. Comprehensive high schools can also offer career education courses without seeking Chapter 74 approval; these courses allow students to learn about career opportunities without the need to enroll in a full-time vocational program.

In 2013, in response to issues and concerns raised by superintendents and others, I convened an informal working group of school district and municipal officials and Department staff to review our policies relating to Chapter 74 program approval and enrollment. Based on these discussions and other considerations, including those I outlined for the Board at the March 2014 Board meeting, I am recommending the following changes to the regulations:

Chapter 74 program approvals

Vocational programs that meet the statutory requirements of M.G.L. c.74 and the Department's regulations and guidance are designated by the

Department as approved Chapter 74 programs.

• Establish a formal two-stage process for Chapter 74 program approval. The first stage will focus on establishing the need for a proposed program, and will require the submission of clear evidence of both student demand and labor market demand. In assessing need, the Department may also take into account available capacity in other nearby programs. The first stage approval will serve as support for the district's school building assistance application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

• Under state law, a town that belongs to a regional vocational district may not offer a Chapter 74 program in its municipal high school if that program is offered in the regional district, unless the Commissioner approves an exception. Requests for exceptions will need to undergo the same determination of need described above. As part of its review, the Department will solicit comments on the application from the regional vocational district's school committee.

• The second stage of the approval process will focus on compliance with all program requirements, many of which cannot be judged until the program is in operation. In the initial year of a program's operation, if

the Department is unable to complete its review prior to October 1, it will provide provisional approval for purposes of the student data submission.

• All Chapter 74 approvals will be reviewed and signed by the Commissioner.

• Add a new vocational education program in Criminal Justice.

Chapter 74 program admissions

Many of our regional vocational schools do not have sufficient space to accommodate all of the students interested in attending. It has been suggested by some that vocational schools should be required to admit students based on a lottery, as is required for Commonwealth charter schools. Although I am not seeking such a change at this time, I am proposing several other changes related to admissions.

• Vocational schools are currently permitted to establish minimum admissions requirements.1 In the case of students who are deemed ineligible for admission because they do not meet the minimum requirements, I propose to require each school to maintain documentation as to the specific requirements that were not met, and to provide such documentation to the Department or to the student's parent/guardian upon request.

• Require vocational schools to admit all qualified resident students before admitting nonresident students. Schools would be prohibited from skipping over a resident student who meets the minimum requirements in order to admit a nonresident student or an out-of-state student who is deemed more qualified.

• Make clear that recommendations from students' current guidance counselors are required in the admissions process, in an effort to better serve those students who could benefit from vocational education but who might not score as high on other criteria.

• Require all districts that are members of a regional vocational school district to provide the names and addresses of their 8th grade students to the regional vocational school upon the school's request, so that students can be fully informed of their options for high school.

Non-resident tuition rates

The Chapter 74 nonresident program allows students to attend a vocational school outside of their home district if they are enrolling in a Chapter 74 program that is not offered in their home district. Tuition is paid by the student's home town. The tuition rate is calculated by the Department based on the vocational school's per pupil spending.

• In FY 05, the Department established a cap on the nonresident tuition rates equal to 150% of the foundation budget rate for vocational students, and announced plans to reduce the cap over time to 125% of foundation. The proposed amendments provide that starting in FY 2017, the cap will be 125% of foundation. (It should be noted that under current statutes, county agricultural schools are not subject to this tuition process and would not be subject to the proposed cap.)

• I will be proposing some adjustments to the calculation of the per pupil spending amounts used in setting the tuition rates. These adjustments would eliminate the use of current year budgeted amounts for certain spending categories, recognizing that budgeted amounts do not always reflect actual spending. We will also clarify the accounting for extraordinary special education costs.

• In general, the Chapter 74 nonresident tuition rates do not reflect the capital costs of constructing school buildings, because in most instances these students occupy seats originally planned for resident students. In rare instances, the Massachusetts School Building Authority, in consultation with the Department, may determine that it is in the public interest to design and construct a vocational school to accommodate a significant number of nonresident students. In these instances, I am proposing to allow an additional increment to the tuition rate to reflect the local share of the debt service attributable to the extra space required.

• The proposed revisions make it clear that the Chapter 74 nonresident tuition rates do not apply to tuition agreements entered into by two school committees under the authority of M.G.L. c.76, s.12. When school

committees voluntarily enter into a tuition agreement for students in one district to attend school in another district, the tuition rates are negotiated between the two school committees.

Exploratory programs

Vocational high schools with five or more approved Chapter 74 programs are required to offer a half-year or full-year exploratory program for incoming ninth graders. In an exploratory program, students rotate through the different occupational programs offered at the school to learn about the programs and help them decide in which program they want to enroll. Currently, these exploratory programs are open to nonresident students under the Chapter 74 nonresident program described above. Under the proposed regulatory changes, students would no longer be permitted to enroll in an out-of-district exploratory program if their home district, or the regional vocational district to which their home town belongs, offers an approved Chapter 74 exploratory program. The Chapter 74 nonresident program is intended for students who have already decided on a particular vocational program. Students will continue to have the opportunity to apply for an out-of-district placement for a particular full-time program area when it is not offered in the student's home district(s).

Transportation limits for nonresident students

For students attending a vocational school under the Chapter 74 nonresident program, the student's home town must also pay the full cost of transporting the student to and from the school. Although there is a state program to reimburse cities and towns for this transportation cost, it has not been fully funded in recent years. As a result, there have been some instances where the financial burden on a student's home town has been unreasonable. To address this problem, I am proposing that the following factors may be taken into consideration in determining whether a town is required to pay for a student to attend an out-of-district vocational school: the availability of a comparable program that is closer in proximity to the student's residence, and whether the cost of transportation would exceed the district's prior-year average nonresident transportation rate.

Expanded opportunities for career education

There is a growing recognition that we need to offer more career education to all our students, not just those enrolled in full-time vocational programs. We are seeing strong student performance at many of our vocational schools, but getting local approvals and financing for expansion is a difficult process at best. I want to encourage districts to seek out and experiment with other models for delivering career and vocational education, including expanded offerings in our academic and comprehensive high schools, programs sponsored through our educational collaboratives, and partnerships among academic high schools, vocational high schools, and community colleges.

Proposed amendments: process and timeline

The Vocational-Technical Education Regulations have not been revised since 2009. These amendments are being presented for public comment in order to implement them in a timely manner for the 2015-16 school year. In addition, we anticipate proposing further updates over the next year including, but not limited to, regulatory recommendations to be developed to update the requirements for licensure of vocational-technical teachers.

These proposed amendments to the regulations accomplish several purposes: 1) update our regulations to reflect current Department policy recommendations to provide students with access to educational opportunities; 2) address some of the challenges identified by school and municipal officials; and 3) ensure that all of our schools have a fair share of fiscal resources.

In drafting the proposed amendments, Department staff consulted informally with the Massachusetts School Building Authority and the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators. We will continue our outreach to interested parties during the public comment period, and expect to bring the regulations back to the Board for a final vote in February.

Jeff Wulfson, Deputy Commissioner and Patricia Gregson, Associate Commissioner, will be available at the November 25 meeting to answer questions.

Attachments:

Proposed Amendments to Vocational Technical Education Regulations-clean version Proposed Amendments to Vocational Technical Education Regulations-strike through version Career Vocational-Technical Education Highlights

2014 Accountability Data for Regional and Agricultural Vocational Districts

Motion

1 Under the Board's regulations, 603 CMR 4.03(6)(a)(1)," Each selective vocational technical secondary school in Massachusetts shall use a combination of selection criteria to determine which applicants have an ability to benefit, and therefore be admitted to the school unless the school opts to use first come-first served or a lottery for admissions. The criteria used shall include academic grades, attendance record, discipline/conduct record, recommendations from sending-school personnel and may include student interview, provided however, that no one criterion exceeds 50% of the total. Schools shall condition admission on a student having been promoted to the grade that they have been admitted to enter. Schools may condition admission on a student having passed courses in English Language Arts or its equivalent and mathematics for the school year immediately preceding their enrollment in a selective vocational technical school or program."

C. Memo from Commissioner Chester re: changes to Chapter 74 Regulations (for 2/24/15 ESE Board meeting)

The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Amendments to Vocational-Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00

To:

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From:

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date:

February 21, 2015

At the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's November 25, 2014, meeting, the Board voted to solicit public comment on several proposed amendments to the regulations on vocational-technical education (603 CMR 4.00). This month I am asking the Board for a final vote to adopt the proposed amendments, with some modifications in response to the public comments.

Secretary of Administration and Finance Kristen Lepore has given her approval for the Board to take this action this month, as an exception to the Governor's moratorium on new regulatory actions by executive branch agencies. We requested this exception to provide timely notice to vocational schools and prospective students as they begin the admissions process for the 2015 16 school year.

As we discussed last November, these proposed amendments deal primarily with operational issues related to vocational schools, including program approval, student admission, and non-resident tuition. They are intended to address various concerns that have been raised in recent years by superintendents in the vocational districts and in the districts that send students to vocational schools. They do not address the much larger policy question of how to expand vocational and career education opportunities for secondary school students within the fiscal constraints facing the state and our local school districts. Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito have already signaled a strong interest in expanding career education, and I am looking forward to discussing these issues with Secretary Peyser and the Board.

Synopsis of Proposed Changes

The complete text of the proposed regulatory changes is attached to this memorandum in two versions - a "clean" version and a "red-lined" version showing the material that has been added or deleted. The substantive changes are as follows:

- Provides an opportunity for school counselors to provide input to the admissions process.
- Requires vocational schools to give admissions preference to resident students who meet the school's minimum requirements.
- Requires vocational schools to document their determinations for applicants who do not meet the minimum requirements, and to provide that information to the Department or the student's parent/guardian upon request.
- Clarifies the process and criteria for admission of non-resident students under the Chapter 74 non-resident tuition program, including the consideration of transportation costs.
- Limits the enrollment of non-resident students in ninth grade exploratory programs where an approved Chapter 74 exploratory program is available in the student's home district. Creates an exception to this rule for non-resident students interested in exploring specialized agriculture and natural resource programs that are not widely available.
- Sets a cap on non-resident tuition rates determined by the Department, and clarifies the process for including special education costs.
- Permits a capital facilities surcharge for non-resident students in certain limited instances.
- Requires districts that are members of a regional vocational school district to provide the names and addresses of 7th and 8th grade students to the regional vocational school upon the school's request, so that students can be fully informed of their options for high school.
- Clarifies the Department's process for granting Chapter 74 program approval, including an extension of time until November 1 for the completion of all required reviews.
- Provides an opportunity for regional vocational superintendents to comment on applications for duplicative programs in comprehensive high schools.
- Adds an educator license for criminal justice programs, and makes a number of technical changes to the vocational educators' licensing process.

Public Comments on the Proposed Amendments

We received comments on the proposed amendments from various groups and individuals. Copies of these comments are enclosed with this memorandum.

In response to these comments, we have made three substantive modifications to the draft you sent out for comment in November:

1. We received a number of comments regarding the specialized agricultural programs offered at a small number of vocational schools[1]. In order to ensure continued student access to these important regional resources, the revised amendments will allow non-resident students to apply for admission to the ninth-grade exploratory program.
2. The requirement for districts that are members of a regional vocational school district to provide the vocational school with the names and addresses of 8th graders has been extended to include 7th graders (recognizing that families' planning for secondary school admissions can often begin in that year), and a deadline of October 15 has been added to ensure the timely receipt of information.
3. The proposal for "provisional approval" of Chapter 74 programs has been deleted. There was considerable concern that this could be interpreted as a lessening of the approval criteria, although this was never our intent. We have substituted a grace period until November 1 of each school for the approval of new programs.

We received a number of comments relating to the Chapter 74 non-resident tuition process, particularly as it relates to ninth grade admissions (for exploratory programs) and the proposed capital facilities surcharge. As is often the case when students attend school outside of their home district,

we need to weigh the benefits of expanded choices for students against the impact of higher tuition payments. There are legitimate arguments on
both sides of this equation and there is no solution that will please everyone. I believe the proposals relating to non-resident students that I presented last November represent a reasonable compromise, and so I have not offered any further changes.

We also received several suggestions that may be worthy of further consideration, including proposals to collect and post data on vocational school admissions, to ensure sending district participation in the development of individualized education programs for students with disabilities, and to grandfather certain teachers from the initial licensure requirements. Since these and other suggestions went beyond the scope of the November 2014 proposals that were circulated for public comment, they are more appropriately held for consideration in a future round of rule-making.

A suggested motion for the Board's approval of these regulatory changes is enclosed. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson and Associate
Commissioner Patricia Gregson will be available at the February 24 meeting to answer questions.

1 Traditionally these specialized programs have been associated with the county agricultural schools in Norfolk and Bristol, Essex Agricultural High School (formerly a county school, now a part of the Essex North Shore Regional District), and the independent Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton.

Massachusetts Department of
Elementary & Secondary Education

D. Revised Chapter 74 Regulations, as passed by the ESE Board

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION
603 CMR 4.00

- Presented to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for initial review and vote to solicit public comment: **November 25, 2014**
- Period of public comment: **through January 16, 2015**
- Final action by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education anticipated: **February 24, 2015**

For the complete text of the current Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603, CMR 4.00, see http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr4.html

603 CMR 4.00: Vocational Technical Education

Section:
4.01 Authority and Purpose
4.02 Definitions
4.03 Program Approval Criteria
4.04 Program Approval Procedures and Policies
4.05 Program Outcomes
4.06 Unpaid Off-Campus Construction and Maintenance Projects
4.07 Types of Vocational Technical Teacher Licenses, Requirements for Licensure and Licenses Issued
4.08 Types of Vocational Technical Administrator Licenses and Requirements for Licensure
4.09 Types of Vocational Technical Cooperative Education Coordinator Licenses and Requirements for Licensure
4.10 Professional Standards
4.11 Preliminary Vocational Technical Teacher License Renewal
4.12 Professional Vocational Technical Educator License Renewal and Professional Development
4.13 General Provisions Regarding Educator Licensure
4.14 Certificate of Occupational Proficiency

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4.02: Definitions

District of residence: The school district of the city or town where a student resides.

Non-resident student: A student who has been, or seeks to be, admitted to a Chapter 74-approved program outside of her/his district of residence.

…

Receiving school: The school in which a nonresident seeks to enroll or enrolls.

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4.03: Program Approval Criteria

Each school district requesting full approval of a vocational technical education program shall demonstrate that the program meets the following approval criteria:

…

(6) Admission of Students

(a) Each vocational technical school and comprehensive school which is selective in terms of admission to its secondary vocational technical programs shall develop and implement an admission policy that is consistent with the Department's "*Guidelines for Admission Policies of Vocational Technical Secondary Schools and Comprehensive Secondary Schools*" that are incorporated into 603 CMR 4.00 by reference. The policy must be approved by the Department prior to implementation. The policy shall be published in the Program of Studies and a copy shall be provided to each student applicant and their parent/guardian. The policy must include the following:

1. The criteria to be used in selecting students and the process for application and admission to the school. Each selective vocational technical secondary school in Massachusetts shall use a combination of selection criteria to determine which applicants have an ability to benefit, and therefore be admitted to the school unless the school opts to use first come-first served or a lottery for admissions. The criteria used shall include academic grades, attendance record, discipline/conduct record, recommendations from the sending-school school counselor, and may include a student interview, provided however, that no one criterion exceeds 50% of the total. Resident students who meet the minimum requirements for admission shall be admitted prior to acceptance of any non-resident students seeking the same course of study. Schools shall condition admission on a student having been promoted to the grade that they have been admitted to enter. Schools may condition admission on a student having passed courses in English Language Arts or its equivalent and mathematics for the school year immediately preceding their enrollment in a selective vocational technical school or program;
2. A description of the Exploratory Program;
3. The criteria and process to be used in selecting students for admission to particular vocational technical education programs commonly referred to as

vocational technical majors within the selective vocational technical secondary school or comprehensive secondary school; and

4. A Review Process and an Appeal Process. A process at the school district level for students and parents/guardians to review and appeal the decision to deny the student admission to the school or program shall be included. The district shall maintain documentation as to the specific admission requirements that were not met, and must provide such documentation to the Department or to the student's parent/guardian upon request.

(b) Non-resident students. Students who reside in cities and towns not maintaining approved vocational technical education programs in the vocational technical program area sought by the student may apply for admission to a school of another city, town or district offering the desired instruction as set forth in M.G.L. c. 74, § 7.

1. Students who reside in cities and towns that do not maintain an exploratory program may apply for admission to a school of another city, town or district offering an exploratory program. Ninth grade students who reside in cities and towns that offer an approved exploratory program shall attend the exploratory program provided by the district of residence; provided however, that students may apply for non-resident admission for the purpose of exploring specialized agriculture and natural resources programs designated by the Commissioner and not available in the student's district of residence.
2. Non-resident students shall submit an application of admission to the receiving school no later than March 15 of the preceding school year and shall be subject to the admissions criteria of the receiving school. A non-resident student must submit a copy of the application to the district of residence no later than April 1 of the preceding school year. Upon receipt of the application, the superintendent in the district of residence must either approve or disapprove the application and submit it to the receiving school and the non-resident student's parent/guardian within 10 school days of receipt. If the application is disapproved, the reason for disapproval must be clearly stated. The non-resident student's parent or guardian may request that the Department review the disapproval. The request for a review and any supporting documentation shall be submitted in writing to the Department no later than May 1. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final. In making his decision, the Commissioner shall take into consideration the following:
    a. The availability of a comparable program that is closer in proximity to the non-resident student's residence.
    b. Whether the cost of providing transportation to the non-resident student would exceed the resident district's prior-year average non-resident transportation cost.
3. Once a non-resident student has been accepted to a receiving school for an approved vocational technical program and has been approved by the district of residence or the Department, the city or town of residence shall pay tuition to the receiving school at the rate established by the Department. The receiving school shall notify a non-resident student in writing that admission is program specific and that a change in program by a non-resident student will require the submission of a new application of admission. The non-resident student is entitled to the same rights and privileges of students who reside in the receiving school district. The non-resident student has the right to remain in the receiving school until completion of his/her secondary program. If the non-resident student requires additional time to complete the program and a resident student would

have been offered the right to continue until completion at the expense of member districts, the city or town of residence must continue to pay tuition for the additional time. If a non-resident student leaves the program but returns within one year, the student shall be entitled to be reinstated if that privilege would have been extended to a resident student. Schools must pro-rate the tuition if the student attends for less than a full year.

4. In instances where there is no tuition agreement in place between sending and receiving districts, the commissioner shall establish tuitions rates for the purposes of M.G.L. c.74, s.7C. In calculating and establishing said tuition rates the commissioner:
    a. Shall base the calculation on actual expenditures made by the receiving district during the most recent fiscal year for which such expenditures are available to the Department, adjusted for inflation in any subsequent year prior to the year of enrollment for which the tuition is to be paid. Said inflation adjustment shall be made in a manner consistent with calculations of inflation for foundation budgets pursuant to M.G.L. c.70.
    b. Shall establish a maximum tuition cap based on a percentage of the per pupil foundation budget rate for vocational technical students. Beginning in fiscal year 2017 the established cap shall not exceed 125% of the per pupil foundation rate.
    c. May, in instances where the receiving district has been authorized to operate a facility that serves a high percentage of non–resident students, establish a capital construction and renovation increment to be added to the tuitions paid on behalf of non-resident students attending the school. In calculating any such increments, the Commissioner shall use the actual expenditures for this purpose, as reported by the district for the year for which the non-resident tuition was calculated, divided by the total school enrollment. Students who reside in a city or town that is a member of a district which offers at least five approved vocational technical programs shall not be required to pay more than 75% of the calculated per pupil amount. The capital construction and renovation increment shall not be subject to the cap established in pursuant to 603 CMR 4.03 (6)(b)4.b.
    d. May approve the addition of increments to tuitions for non-resident students enrolled in special education programming. Such increments must be consistent with those approved for use as part of school choice special education calculations pursuant to 603 CMR 10.00. Any special education increment to non-resident tuitions shall not be subject to the cap established pursuant to 603 CMR 4.03 (6)(b)4.b.

(c) Each school shall have a code of conduct which shall include standards and procedures for suspension and expulsion of students in accordance with M.G.L c. 71, §37H. The code shall be published in the Student Handbook and a copy shall be provided to each student, parent/guardian. Expulsion for reasons not included in the code shall not be allowed.

(d) Each school with postsecondary vocational technical education programs shall develop and implement an admission policy for the postsecondary programs. The policy must be approved by the Department prior to implementation.

(e) Each school that admits postgraduate students shall develop and implement an admission policy for the postgraduate openings. The policy must be approved by the Department prior to implementation.

(f) In order to provide students and their parents with information on the availability of vocational technical education, a school shall release the names and addresses of grade 7 and grade 8 students no later than October 15 of each year to authorized school personnel of a regional vocational school district if the city or town in which the school is located is a member of the regional vocational school district; provided that the school shall give public notice that it releases this information and allows parents and eligible students, as defined by 603 CMR 23.02, a reasonable time after such notice to request that this information not be released without the prior consent of the eligible student or parent.

…

4.04: Program Approval Procedures and Policies

(1) In order to receive vocational technical education program approval, the Superintendent shall submit an application to the Commissioner that provides clear evidence of secondary student and labor market demand for the program and demonstrates compliance with the approval criteria.

…

(7) A town that belongs to a regional vocational district may not offer an approved vocational technical program in its municipal high school if that program is offered in the regional district, unless the Commissioner approves an exception. Thus, an exception must be requested for projects which include programs that are duplicative of programs offered in a school district's member regional vocational technical school. In making the determination, the Commissioner will consider the district's statement of need and in addition, will seek comment on the district's request for an exception from the regional vocational school district school committee.

(8) For the purpose of reporting student enrollment, approvals of new programs that are granted by the Commissioner on or before November 1 of any school year shall be retroactive to October 1 of that school year.

...

4.07: Types of Vocational Technical Teacher Licenses, Requirements for Licensure, and Licenses Issued

(1) Types
(a) Preliminary
(b) Professional

(2) Requirements for the Preliminary Vocational Technical Teacher License

(a) Evidence of sound moral character.

(b) Education:

1. Candidates for the following licenses must document an associate's degree or higher degree related to the subject matter and skills they will teach:
    a. Dental Assisting
    b. Design & Visual Communications
    c. Drafting
    d. Electronics
    e. Hospitality Management
    f. Programming and Web Development
    g. Information Support Services & Networking
    h. Medical Assisting
    i. Medical Laboratory Technology
    j. Business Technology
    k. Radio and Television Broadcasting
    l. Telecommunications - Fiber Optics
    m. Criminal Justice
    n. Robotics & Automation Technology
2. Candidates for the following licenses must document a bachelor's degree or higher degree related to the subject matter and skills they will teach:
    a. Animal Science
    b. Biotechnology
    c. Early Education and Care
    d. Engineering Technology
    e. Environmental Science &Technology
    f. Health Assisting
    g. Horticulture
    h. Marketing
    i. Operating Room Technology
    j. Practical Nursing (LPN)
3. All other vocational technical teacher license candidates must document a high school diploma or the equivalent.

(c) Massachusetts and/or federal government or industry issued licenses or certifications required by industry or government to work in the technical area and by the Department to teach the vocational technical subject matter and skills as set forth in "*Guidelines for Vocational Technical Education Programs and Educator Licensure*."

(d) Passing scores on the written and performance tests in the vocational technical subject matter and skills the candidate will teach.

(e) Passing score on the Technical Communication and Literacy Skills Test.

(f) Employment Experience: All vocational technical teacher license candidates must document recent employment experience directly related to the subject matter and skills they will teach. Recent employment experience is defined as employment experience within seven years of the date of an application for a vocational technical teacher license.

1. Candidates for a vocational technical teacher license for which a bachelor's degree is required must document a minimum of three years recent, full-time employment experience, provided however, that a master's degree related to the subject matter and skills to be taught may substitute for one of the three years of required employment experience.
2. Candidates for a vocational technical teacher license for which an associate's degree is required must document a minimum of four years recent, full-time employment experience, provided however, that a bachelor's degree related to the subject matter and skills to be taught may substitute for one of the four years of required employment experience and a master's degree related to the subject matter and skills to be taught may substitute for one of the four years of required employment experience.
3. Vocational technical teacher candidates who are required to possess a minimum of a high school diploma must document a minimum of five years of recent, full-time employment experience, provided however, that an associate's degree related to the subject matter and skills to be taught may substitute for one of the five years of employment experience and a bachelor's degree related to the subject matter and skills to be taught may substitute for two of the five years of required employment experience.
4. Actual time spent on cooperative education employment by a graduate of a vocational technical education program may be counted toward meeting a portion of the employment experience requirement.

(g) Candidates who have at least three full years of employment as a Department approved Criminal Justice vocational technical teacher will be exempt from the requirements set forth in 603 CMR 4.07(2) (d) and (f) if they apply and complete all the requirements for licensure no later than December 31, 2015.

(3) Requirements for the Professional Vocational Technical Teacher License

(a) Evidence of sound moral character.

(b) Possession of a Preliminary Vocational Technical Teacher License pursuant to 603 CMR 4.00.

(c) Massachusetts and/or federal government or industry issued licenses or certifications required by industry or government to work in the technical program area and by the Department to teach the vocational technical subject matter and skills as set forth in "*Guidelines for Vocational Technical Education Programs and Educator Licensure*."

(d) Completion of a one-year induction program with a trained mentor.

(e) The completion of at least three full years of employment in the role of licensed vocational technical teacher in the program area of the license or three years of experience as a Department approved Criminal Justice vocational technical teacher.

(f) The completion of 39 college degree credits or the equivalent as follows:

1. Six college degree credits in English to include three college degree credits in English Composition 101 or a higher level and three additional college degree credits in higher level English.
2. 12 college degree credits in mathematics and science to include a minimum of three college degree credits of college mathematics and a minimum of three college degree credits of college science. The remaining six college degree credits may be earned in college mathematics and/or science.
3. 21 college degree credits in professional education courses approved by the Department including a three college degree credit seminar specifically designed for new teachers to be taken during their first year of teaching. These courses shall address the Professional Standards for Vocational Technical Teachers set forth in 603 CMR 4.10.

(4) Vocational Technical Teacher Licenses Issued. Licenses listed under the following occupational clusters will be issued.

(a) Agriculture and Natural Resources Cluster.

1. Agricultural Mechanics
2. Animal Science
3. Environmental Science & Technology
4. Horticulture

(b) Arts and Communication Services Cluster.

1. Design & Visual Communications
2. Graphic Communications
3. Radio and Television Broadcasting

(c) Business and Consumer Services Cluster.

1. Cosmetology
2. Fashion Technology
3. Marketing
4. Business_Technology

(d) Construction Cluster.

1. Building and Property Maintenance
2. Cabinetmaking
3. Carpentry
4. Electricity
5. Heating - Air Conditioning - Ventilation - Refrigeration
6. Mason and Tile Setting
7. Painting and Design Technologies
8. Plumbing
9. Sheet Metalworking
10. Construction Craft Laborer

(e) Manufacturing, Engineering & Technological Cluster.

1. Biotechnology
2. Drafting
3. Electronics
4. Engineering Technology
5. Machine Tool Technology
6. Major Appliance Installation/Repairing
7. Metal Fabrication & Joining Technologies
8. Stationary Engineering
9. Telecommunications - Fiber Optics
10. Welding
11. Robotics & Automation Technology

(f) Health Services Cluster.

1. Dental Assisting
2. Health Assisting
3. Medical Assisting
4. Medical Laboratory Technology
5. Operating Room Technology
6. Practical Nursing (LPN)

(g) Hospitality and Tourism Cluster.

1. Baking
2. Culinary Arts
3. Hospitality Management

(h) Education Cluster.

1. Early Education and Care

(i) Information Technology Services Cluster.

1. Programming & Web Development
2. Information Support Services & Networking

(j) Transportation Cluster.

1. Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing
2. Automotive Technology
3. Diesel Technology
4. Marine Service Technology
5. Power Equipment Technology

(k) Legal and Protective Services

Criminal Justice

...

4.12: Professional Vocational Technical Educator License Renewal and Professional Development

…

(10) Failure to Satisfy Renewal Requirements

(a) If the Department determines that the educator has failed to demonstrate that the educator has met the requirements to renew the license, the educator's license will be deemed inactive.
(b) Before the Department deems the license inactive, it shall notify the educator in writing that the Department intends to deem the license inactive and of the educators right to request a hearing before the Commissioner in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A and 801 CMR 1.00: Adjudicatory Rules of Practice and Procedure. This notice shall operate as a notice of the action and does not operate as an order to show cause.
(c) The educator shall have 21 days from receipt of the notice to make a written request for a hearing. If the Commissioner does not receive a written request for a hearing in accordance with the above, the educator's license shall be deemed to be inactive and the educator shall be so notified by return mail.
(d) Hearing.

1. If the Commissioner receives a request for a hearing from the educator in accordance with 603 CMR 44.11(3), the Commissioner or his designee shall schedule a hearing. The hearing shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 30A and 801 CMR 1.00. At such hearing, the educator shall bear the burden of proof. The hearing shall not be open to the public unless the educator requests a public hearing.
2. The Commissioner or his designee shall issue a written decision determining whether or not the educator's license shall be deemed inactive. The decision shall comply with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 30A, §11 and 801 CMR 1.00.
3. The Commissioner shall send a copy of the decision to the educator along with a notice informing the educator of the right to appeal in accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. c. 30A, § 14.

4.13: General Provisions Regarding Educator Licensure

…

(11) Commissioner's Determination. The Commissioner, for good cause, may determine which specific requirements for licensure set forth in 603 CMR 4.07, 4.08, 4.09, 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13 (3) shall apply and/or be modified for applicants who have submitted evidence that they have either substantially met the requirements for licensure prior to a change in the regulations or that they would have met the requirements but were unable to do so because of extreme hardship. No modification of the requirements will be granted without satisfactory evidence that the applicant has made a good faith effort to complete the requirements for licensure. The Commissioner, at his discretion, may impose reasonable conditions upon any modification granted. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final.

...

E. Chapter 70 Worksheets for SVAHS, City of Northampton

Foundation Budget | FY15 Chapter 70 Worksheets | S. Bouvier

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of School Finance

FY15 Chapter 70 Foundation Budget

210 NORTHAMPTON

	Base Foundation Components										Incremental Costs Above The Base				
	(1) Pre-School	(2) Kindergarten Half-Day	(3) Kindergarten Full-Day	(4) Elementary	(5) Jr High/ Middle	(6) High School	(7) ELL PK	(8) ELL K Half	(9) ELL KF - 12	(10) Voca-tional	(11) Special Ed In District	(12) Special Ed Out of Dist	(13) Low Income Elem	(14) Low Income Other	TOTAL*
Foundation Enrollment	62	0	202	965	630	897	0	0	79	1	104	28	567	289	2,805
1 Administration	11,142	0	72,601	346,831	226,428	322,391	0	0	28,393	359	257,981	69,457	0	0	1,335,583
2 Instructional Leadership	20,123	0	131,124	626,410	408,952	582,270	0	0	51,281	649	0	0	0	0	1,820,810
3 Classroom and Specialist Teachers	92,272	0	601,255	2,872,294	1,650,165	3,455,163	0	0	354,134	6,548	851,274	0	1,518,375	584,673	11,986,154
4 Other Teaching Services	23,665	0	154,209	736,691	346,210	410,378	0	0	48,223	458	794,823	1,061	0	0	2,515,717
5 Professional Development	3,649	0	23,790	113,667	80,445	111,058	0	0	12,596	205	41,065	0	33,419	17,034	436,927
6 Instructional Equipment & Tech	13,355	0	87,024	415,732	271,410	618,302	0	0	34,034	1,206	35,844	0	0	0	1,476,907
7 Guidance and Psychological	6,713	0	43,751	209,009	181,635	324,185	0	0	22,776	361	0	0	0	0	788,432
8 Pupil Services	2,670	0	17,406	124,726	132,999	436,678	0	0	10,211	487	0	0	0	0	725,177
9 Operations and Maintenance	25,623	0	166,961	797,611	564,530	779,349	0	0	88,397	1,626	288,179	0	234,506	119,528	3,066,310
10 Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges	23,096	0	150,490	718,973	446,286	610,480	0	0	74,042	1,105	326,471	0	154,128	78,559	2,583,630
11 Special Ed Tuition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	659,454	0	0	659,454
12 Total	**222,310**	**0**	**1,448,611**	**6,961,944**	**4,309,061**	**7,650,253**	**0**	**0**	**724,088**	**13,005**	**2,595,637**	**729,971**	**1,940,427**	**799,793**	**27,395,101**
13 Wage Adjustment Factor	100.0%												**Foundation Budget Per Pupil**		**9,767**

* Total foundation enrollment does not include columns 11 through 14, because those columns represent increments above the base. The pupils are already counted in columns 1 to 10.

Total foundation enrollment assigns pupils in pre-kindergarten and half-time kindergarten an enrollment count of .5.

Special education in-district headcount is an assumed percentage, representing 3.75 percent of K to 12 non-vocational enrollment and 4.75 percent of vocational enrollment.

Special education out-of-district headcount is also an assumed percentage, representing 1 percent of non-vocational K-12 enrollment.

Low income headcounts are the number of pupils in columns 1 through 10 who are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Each component of the foundation budget represents the enrollment on line 1 multiplied by the appropriate state-wide foundation allotment.

The wage adjustment factor is applied to underlying rates in all functions except instructional equipment, benefits and special education tuition.

The foundation budget shown on this page may differ from the final number used in the formula, due to rounding error.

Municipal Contribution | FY15 Chapter 70 Worksheets | S. Bouvier

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Determination of City and Town Total Required Contribution FY15

210 NORTHAMPTON

Effort Goal

1) 2012 equalized valuation	3,341,950,700
2) Property percentage	0.3624%
3) Local effort from property wealth	12,112,727
4) 2011 income	771,162,000
5) Income percentage	1.5113%
6) Local effort from income	11,654,859
7) Combined effort yield (row 3+ row 6)	23,767,586
8) Foundation budget FY15	29,159,915
9) Maximum local contribution (82.5% * row 8)	24,056,929
10) Target local contribution (lesser of row 7 or row 9)	23,767,586
11) Target **local** share (row 10 as % of row 8)	81.51%
12) Target **aid** share (100% minus row 11)	18.49%

FY15 Increments Toward Goal

13) Required local contribution FY14	23,252,027
14) Municipal revenue growth factor (DOR)	3.57%
15) FY15 preliminary contribution (13 x 14)	24,082,124
16) Preliminary contribution pct of foundation (15/8)	82.59%
If preliminary contribution is above the target share:	
17) Excess local effort (15 - 10)	
18) 50% reduction toward target (17 x 50%)	
19) FY15 required local contribution (15 - 18), capped at 90% of foundation	
20) Contribution as percentage of foundation (19 / 8)	
If preliminary contribution is below the target share:	
21) Shortfall from target local share (11 - 16)	
22) Added increment toward target (13 x 1% or 2%)*	
**1% if shortfall is between 2.5% and 7.5%; 2% if shortfall > 7.5%*	
23) Shortfall from target after adding increment (10 - 15 - 22)	
24) FY15 required local contribution (15 + 22)	
25) Contribution as percentage of foundation (24 / 8)	

Regional Allocation | FY15 Chapter 70 Worksheets | S. Bouvier

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
FY15 Chapter 70

Apportionment of Local Contribution Across School Districts

210 NORTHAMPTON	NORTHAMPTON	NORTHAMPTON SMITH	COMBINED TOTAL ALL DISTRICTS
Prior Year Data (for comparison purposes)			
1 FY14 foundation enrollment	2,773	106	2,879
2 FY14 foundation budget	26,834,027	2,020,055	28,854,082
3 Each district's share of municipality's combined FY14 foundation	93.00%	7.00%	100.00%
4 FY14 required contribution	21,624,168	1,627,859	23,252,027
Apportionment of FY15 contribution among community's districts			
5 FY15 total unapportioned required contribution ("municipal contribution" sheet row 19 or 24)			23,924,855
6 FY15 foundation enrollment	2,805	91	2,896
7 FY15 foundation budget	27,395,101	1,764,814	29,159,915
8 Each district's share of municipality's total FY15 foundation	93.95%	6.05%	100.00%
9 **FY15 Required Contribution**	22,476,877	1,447,978	23,924,855
10 Change FY14 to FY15 (9 - 4)	852,709	-179,881	672,828

Summary | FY15 Chapter 70 Worksheets | S. Bouvier

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
FY15 Chapter 70 Summary

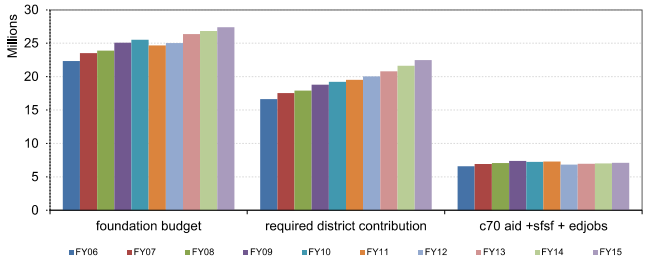
210 NORTHAMPTON

Aid Calculation FY15

Prior Year Aid	
1 Chapter 70 FY14	**7,023,429**
Foundation Aid	
2 Foundation budget FY15	27,395,101
3 Required district contribution FY15	22,476,877
4 Foundation aid (2 -3)	4,918,224
5 Increase over FY14 (4 - 1)	**0**
Downpayment Aid	
6 Target aid %	18.49%
7 Foundation aid with fully reduced effort	5,065,354
8 Increase over FY14 to reach 35% phase-ir	0
9 Downpayment aid	**0**
Minimum Aid	
10 Minimum $25 per pupil increase	**70,125**
Non-Operating District Reduction to Foundation	
11 Reduction to foundation	**0**
FY15 Preliminary Chapter 70 Aid	
12 **sum of line 1, 5, 9 and 10 minus 11**	**7,093,554**

Comparison to FY14

	FY14	FY15	Change	Pct Chg
Enrollment	2,773	2,805	32	1.15%
Foundation budget	26,834,027	27,395,101	561,074	2.09%
Required district contribution	21,624,168	22,476,877	852,709	3.94%
Chapter 70 aid	**7,023,429**	**7,093,554**	70,125	1.00%
Required net school spending (NSS)	28,647,597	29,570,431	922,834	3.22%
Target aid share	18.31%	18.49%		
C70 % of foundation	26.17%	25.89%		
Required NSS % of foundation	106.76%	107.94%		



Foundation Budget | FY 15 Chapter 70 Worksheets | S. Bouvier

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Office of School Finance

FY15 Chapter 70 Foundation Budget

406 NORTHAMPTON SMITH

	Base Foundation Components										Incremental Costs Above The Base				
	(1) Pre-School	(2) Kindergarten Half-Day	(3) Kindergarten Full-Day	(4) Elementary	(5) Jr High/ Middle	(6) High School	(7) ELL PK	(8) ELL K Half	(9) ELL KF - 12	(10) Vocational	(11) Special Ed In District	(12) Special Ed Out of Dist	(13) Low Income Elem	(14) Low Income Other	TOTAL*
Foundation Enrollment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	91	4	0	0	174	91
1 Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,706	9,922	0	0	0	42,629
2 Instructional Leadership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59,071	0	0	0	0	59,071
3 Classroom and Specialist Teachers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	595,894	32,741	0	0	352,018	980,653
4 Other Teaching Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41,633	30,570	0	0	0	72,203
5 Professional Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18,628	1,579	0	0	10,256	30,463
6 Instructional Equipment & Tech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	109,770	1,379	0	0	0	111,148
7 Guidance and Psychological	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,888	0	0	0	0	32,888
8 Pupil Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44,301	0	0	0	0	44,301
9 Operations and Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	147,971	11,084	0	0	71,965	231,020
10 Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,584	12,557	0	0	47,298	160,439
11 Special Ed Tuition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1,183,446**	**99,832**	**0**	**0**	**481,536**	**1,764,814**
13 Wage Adjustment Factor	100.0%													**Foundation Budget Per Pupil**	**19,394**

* Total foundation enrollment does not include columns 11 through 14, because those columns represent increments above the base. The pupils are already counted in columns 1 to 10.

Total foundation enrollment assigns pupils in pre-kindergarten and half-time kindergarten an enrollment count of .5.

Special education in-district headcount is an assumed percentage, representing 3.75 percent of K to 12 non-vocational enrollment and 4.75 percent of vocational enrollment.

Special education out-of-district headcount is also an assumed percentage, representing 1 percent of non-vocational K-12 enrollment.

Low income headcounts are the number of pupils in columns 1 through 10 who are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Each component of the foundation budget represents the enrollment on line 1 multiplied by the appropriate state-wide foundation allotment.

The wage adjustment factor is applied to underlying rates in all functions except instructional equipment, benefits and special education tuition.

The foundation budget shown on this page may differ from the final number used in the formula, due to rounding error.

Summary | FY 15 Chapter 70 Worksheets | S. Bouvier

7/8/14

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

FY15 Chapter 70 Summary

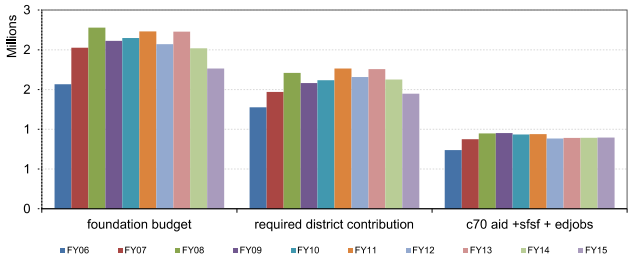
406 NORTHAMPTON SMITH

Aid Calculation FY15

Prior Year Aid	
1 Chapter 70 FY14	**893,210**
Foundation Aid	
2 Foundation budget FY15	1,764,814
3 Required district contribution FY15	1,447,978
4 Foundation aid (2 -3)	316,836
5 Increase over FY14 (4 - 1)	**0**
Downpayment Aid	
6 Target aid %	18.49%
7 Foundation aid with fully reduced effort	326,314
8 Increase over FY14 to reach 35% phase-in	0
9 Downpayment aid	**0**
Minimum Aid	
10 Minimum $25 per pupil increase	**2,275**
Non-Operating District Reduction to Foundation	
11 Reduction to foundation	**0**
FY15 Preliminary Chapter 70 Aid	
12 **sum of line 1, 5, 9 and 10 minus 11**	**895,485**

Comparison to FY14

	FY14	FY15	Change	Pct Chg
Enrollment	106	91	-15	-14.15%
Foundation budget	2,020,055	1,764,814	-255,241	-12.64%
Required district contribution	1,627,859	1,447,978	-179,881	-11.05%
Chapter 70 aid	**893,210**	**895,485**	2,275	0.25%
Required net school spending (NSS)	2,521,069	2,343,463	-177,606	-7.04%
Target aid share	18.31%	18.49%		
C70 % of foundation	44.22%	50.74%		
Required NSS % of foundation	124.80%	132.79%		



Regional District Members FY 15 Chapter 70 Worksheets S. Bouvier

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
FY15 Chapter 70

Regional District Enrollment and Contributions by Member City or Town

406 NORTHAMPTON SMITH

		Foundation Enrollment			Required Minimum Contribution		
LEA	**Member**	**FY14**	**FY15**	**Change**	**FY14**	**FY15**	**Change**
	District Total	**106**	**91**	**-15**	**1,627,859**	**1,447,978**	**-179,881**
210	NORTHAMPTON	106	91	-15	1,627,859	1,447,978	-179,881

F. Survey Cover Letter

Dear Chairperson or President:

Enclosed you will find a survey concerning Smith Vocational and Agricultural School. As I am sure you know, Smith has a long and proud history as the only vocational-technical high school that offers an agricultural program in western and central Massachusetts. As expectations for 21st-century vocational-technical education have grown, there has been increasing interest in upgrading Smith's facilities. Discussions regarding how to support those improvements have raised a number of important questions about Smith's future direction and operations.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) recognizes Smith's unique role in the state, and the importance that decisions about Smith's future have for the nearly 60 communities that send students to Smith. ESE recently contracted with the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) to conduct an independent study regarding the range of fiscal and governance options open to Smith. The study will not make specific recommendations regarding what course Smith should take, but will rather seek to provide objective data and possible options as a means to inform local decision making.

The study resources are limited and are focused primarily on establishing the core facts relative to Smith's fiscal and governance situation. However, UMDI is also seeking community input through this survey, which is being administered to a municipal representative from each of the 15 communities that sent the greatest number of students to Smith over the last school year. The survey asks for your insights and perspective on the programs Smith offers, your input to Smith's Board of Trustees, and your thoughts on some of the structural and governance options Smith might consider.

We hope you will take time to provide input to this study on behalf of your community. The deadline for survey responses is Wednesday, November 5. The tight timeframe for this study will not allow for extension of this deadline. We expect that this survey will take ten to fifteen minutes to complete. Should you feel unable to adequately answer any questions, please feel free to designate another person to complete the survey. If you do forward the survey to another designee, please let us know to whom you forwarded it, as well as their email address and phone number, if possible.

Should you have any questions, please contact Sonia Bouvier, Research Analyst with UMDI at sbouvier@donahue.umassp.edu or (413) 587-2413.

We greatly appreciate your time and input.

Thank you,

Sonia Bouvier, MPH

UMass Donahue Institute - Applied Research and Program Evaluation | 100 Venture Way | Suite 5 | Hadley, MA 01035
voice: 413.587.2400 | fax: 413.587.2410 | web: www.donahue.umassp.edu

G. Survey of municipal contacts in sending towns

Survey of Sending Towns to Smith Vocational Agricultural School

The UMass Donahue Institute is conducting this survey for ESE. We will report findings in the aggregate but may include comments as illustrative quotes in our reporting.

The survey is due on **November 5, 2014. Please return it in the attached stamped envelope.**

Please contact Sonia Bouvier at sbouvier@donahue.umassp.edu or (413) 587-2413 if you have questions or are in need of more information.

Information and communication

1. Which, if any, of the following do you rely on as key sources of information regarding Smith Vocational Technical School?

   Please select all that apply.

   - ○ Local media (radio, television or newspaper)
   - ○ Social media
   - ○ School newsletter
   - ○ Written communication from Smith
   - ○ Attendance at a Smith Trustee meeting
   - ○ Presentation(s) at town or select board meetings
   - ○ Current students
   - ○ Alumni
   - ○ Employer of Smith students
   - ○ Word of mouth
   - ○ Other: _____

2. In the past year, have you or your colleagues received an invitation to attend a meeting or event at Smith?

   Yes No

3. If yes, which of the following types of events have you attended at Smith over the past year?

   - ○ Trustee meeting
   - ○ Budget meetings
   - ○ Technical program advisory committee meetings
   - ○ Other school business meeting: _____
   - ○ School information session
   - ○ Parent night
   - ○ Sporting event
   - ○ Drama, musical, or other event
   - ○ Other: _____

Programs and opportunities for improvement

4. What do you feel is your level of understanding regarding the programs currently offered at Smith? Would you describe yourself as having …

   - ○ Extensive knowledge
   - ○ General working knowledge
   - ○ Little or no knowledge (skip to question 7)

Survey of Sending Towns to Smith Vocational Agricultural School

5. How well do you feel Smith's programs align with the vocational, technical, and agricultural education needs in your community?

Poorly Adequately Well Very well

6. If there were opportunities to improve or expand programs offered at Smith, what would you suggest?

Decisions and opportunities for input

At present, communities that send students to Smith are not voting members of the Smith Board of Trustees. They are, of course, permitted to attend their regular meetings.

7. Have you ever attended a Smith Trustee meeting?

Yes No (skip to question11)

8. If yes, why did you attend?

9. If yes, did you want to provide input or comments?

Yes No (skip to question11)

10. If yes, were you able to do so?

Yes No

Survey of Sending Towns to Smith Vocational Agricultural School

15. In your opinion, would it be in the best interest of your community to maintain the current arrangement of sending students to Smith?

Yes No Unsure

Why or why not?

16. If a new governance structure was a possibility for Smith, and this gave your community a vote in school decisions at about the same cost per student, would you encourage your community to formally affiliate itself with the "new" Smith, becoming a member town that would commit to sending its vocational/agricultural-focused students to Smith?

Yes No Maybe

17. Please provide some explanation to help us better understand your response.

18. Do you have any other comments or suggestions relative to Smith's future operations and direction?

Thank you very much for your time and participation. Please return the survey in the enclosed stamped envelope, to:

Sonia Bouvier
Research Analyst/Coordinator
Applied Research and Program Evaluation
UMass Donahue Institute
100 Venture Way, Suite 5
Hadley, MA 01035

H. How the Foundation Budget is Calculated (from ESE website)

7/8/14

The Massachusetts Foundation Budget

In Massachusetts, the definition of an adequate spending level for a school district is called its "foundation budget." It is a statistical measure that was developed by a group of superintendents and an economist in the early 1990s. They developed a "model school budget" which quantified "for the average school district what constitutes an adequate—but not excessive—level of funding[5]." The goal of the Chapter 70 formula is to ensure that every district has sufficient resources to meet its foundation budget spending level, through an equitable combination of local property taxes and state aid.

Each district's foundation budget is updated each year to reflect inflation and changes in enrollment. Enrollment plays an important role not just because of the total number of pupils, but also because there are differences in the costs associated with various educational programs, grade levels, and student needs. Districts differ greatly in the percentages of their student population that fall into these enrollment categories. As a result, when districts' foundation budgets are presented in per pupil terms, there is considerable variation. The FY 15 statewide average is $10,486 per pupil, but the range for academic districts is from $8,608 in Carlisle to $12,376 in Boston. Vocational districts, whose programs are more expensive, range from $14,672 to $19,394.

The FY 15 foundation budget continues the major changes to the calculations first implemented in FY 07. The changes directly aligned the foundation budget categories with the chart of accounts which schools use to track how they spend their money.

It is notable that since FY0 5, charter school tuition rates have relied upon foundation budgets calculated for each sending district's pupils at each charter school.

How the Foundation Budget Is Calculated

A district's foundation budget is derived by multiplying the number of pupils in fourteen enrollment categories by cost rates in eleven functional areas. Any district's FY15 calculations can be seen on the "foundation budget" link available in the FY 15 Chapter 70 formula spreadsheet. Here we use the Marshfield school district's calculations as an example.

Foundation Enrollment

Any given year's foundation enrollment is a count of the number of pupils for whom a school district is financially responsible, on October 1st of the previous year[6]. It is comprised primarily of local resident school-children attending their community's local or regional school district. However, the measure also includes students for whom the district is paying tuition, at Commonwealth charter schools, other school districts, special education schools and other settings. It does not include tuitioned-in students from other districts, because their home districts are paying for those students' costs.

The columns going across the page are the fourteen enrollment categories used in the foundation budget calculation.

[5] Edward Moscovitch, "Model School Budget". Cape Ann Economics, Rockport, Massachusetts, 1992, p1.
[6] For example, FY 15 foundation enrollment is based upon Oct 1, 2013 headcount. The one-year lag is necessary because the next year's enrollment is not known until after the state budget is finalized.

FY15 Chapter 70 Foundation Budget

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	Base Foundation Components										Incremental Costs Above The Base				
	(1) Pre-School	(2) Half-Day	(3) Full-Day	(4) Elementary	(5) Jr High/ Middle	(6) High School	(7) ELL PK	(8) ELL K Half	(9) ELL KF - 12	(10) Voca-tional	(11) Special Ed In District	(12) Special Ed Out of Dist	(13) Low Income Elem	(14) Low Income Other	TOTAL*
Foundation Enrollment	149	242	23	1,630	1,079	1,318	0	0	8	45	159	42	422	226	4,299
1 Administration	27,393	44,490	8,457	599,313	396,723	484,598	0	0	2,941	16,545	403,485	106,581	0	0	2,090,525
2 Instructional Leadership	49,473	80,352	15,273	1,082,418	716,521	875,231	0	0	5,312	29,883	0	0	0	0	2,854,464
3 Classroom and Specialist Teachers	226,851	368,443	70,034	4,963,234	2,891,239	5,193,584	0	0	36,686	301,451	1,331,401	0	1,156,070	467,734	17,006,727
4 Other Teaching Services	58,180	94,493	17,962	1,272,979	606,592	616,854	0	0	4,996	21,061	1,243,111	1,628	0	0	3,937,855
5 Professional Development	8,972	14,572	2,771	196,414	140,946	166,935	0	0	1,305	9,423	64,227	0	25,445	13,627	644,636
6 Instructional Equipment & Tech	32,096	52,129	9,909	702,220	464,844	908,497	0	0	3,446	54,282	54,799	0	0	0	2,282,223
7 Guidance and Psychological	16,505	26,806	5,096	361,162	318,241	487,294	0	0	2,360	16,638	0	0	0	0	1,234,102
8 Pupil Services	6,565	10,663	2,027	215,523	233,027	656,386	0	0	1,058	22,411	0	0	0	0	1,147,660
9 Operations and Maintenance	62,994	102,312	19,448	1,378,247	989,108	1,171,469	0	0	9,157	74,856	450,714	0	178,549	95,621	4,532,475
10 Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges	55,505	90,150	17,135	1,214,432	764,353	897,004	0	0	7,498	49,739	499,123	0	114,712	61,434	3,771,085
11 Special Ed Tuition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	989,181	0	0	989,181
12 Total	544,534	884,410	168,112	11,385,940	7,521,594	11,457,853	0	0	74,760	596,288	4,046,861	1,097,390	1,474,776	638,416	40,490,934
13 Wage Adjustment Factor	102.3%												Foundation Budget Per Pupil		9,419

Based upon the pupil-specific information submitted by each school district to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, a student is classified as being in one of the following categories, which appear in columns 1 through 10 of the report.

Column	Description
1	regular education or special education pre-kindergarten
2	regular or special education half-day kindergarten
3	regular or special education full-day kindergarten
4	regular or special education elementary (grades 1-5)
5	regular or special education junior high/middle (grades 6-8)
6	regular or special education senior high (grades 9-13)
7	limited English pre-kindergarten
8	limited English half-day kindergarten
9	limited English (grades 1-12)
10	vocational education (grades 9-12)[7]

These headcounts are used to compute total foundation enrollment at the far right of the report. Note that for the purpose of computing this total, pre-school and half-day kindergarten categories count as .5 full-time equivalent pupils because they typically attend for half the school day. For example, Marshfield's total foundation enrollment of 4,299 (shown in the last column on the right) counts its 149 pre-schoolers (columns 1 and 7) as 75 pupils; and its 242 half-day kindergartners (column 2) count as 121 pupils.

In columns 11 through 14 there are four cost increment categories that are intended to reflect the additional resources needed to educate special education and low-income students. These students have already been counted in columns 1 through 10, and are therefore not added to total enrollment.

- Assumed in-district special education enrollment (column 11) is set at 3.75 percent of foundation enrollment (not including pre-kindergarten and vocational pupils) and 4.75 percent of vocational

[7] If a town is a member of a regional vocational district, its resident pupils at that district are not counted in local district enrollment. The vocational district reports those pupils and Chapter 70 aid goes directly to the vocational district. Post-graduate and post-secondary pupils in programs run by vocational districts may be counted if they pay less than the state-approved tuition rate.

enrollment. These headcounts are "assumed" rather than actual counts of pupils, an approach which is practiced in other states around the country.[8]

- Assumed out-of-district special education enrollment (column 12) is set at one percent of total foundation enrollment (again not including pre-kindergarten and vocational pupils).

- Low-income status is reported on the basis of eligibility for free and reduced lunch programs. The FY 15 increment for grade 1 to 8 low income students (column 13) is $3,422 per pupil. The FY15 increment for grade 9 to 12 low income students is $2,767 (column 14). Massachusetts has been ranked as having the highest such poverty factors in the nation.[9]

A lengthier description of how foundation enrollment is generated can be found on the ESE School Finance web site at http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/enrollment_desc.docx.

Associating a cost with each enrollment category and function

Each pupil generates a specific cost in each functional category. The costs are higher at the upper grades. They are also higher in the limited English and vocational programs. Special education and low-income increments add substantial costs as well.

A summary of the assumptions underlying foundation rates describes how all eleven categories are derived. The largest dollar amount is represented by the class size and salary assumptions for teachers. The statutory class sizes of 22 for elementary, 25 for junior high/middle, and 17 for high school remain in effect. The FY 94 teacher salary of $38,000 has been factored up by inflation so that in FY 15 it stands at $65,929.

The Wage Adjustment Factor

The "wage adjustment factor" gives a district credit for having higher school costs if it is located in a geographic area where average wages are higher than in other areas of the state. In theory it is more expensive for them to attract teachers and other staff to come to work there, because the cost of living is higher. Massachusetts is one of the few states in the country to use such a factor.

The wage factor is calculated using the latest available average wage data supplied by the state's Department of Employment. The factor reflects a town's own average, but is much more heavily weighted to the average of the "labor market area" the town is located in. There are 23 labor market areas used. There are real differences in these averages, which represent the combined total for all industries both private and public.

[8] Verstegen, D. A. (2011) "Public education finance systems in the United States and funding policies for populations with special educational needs". Education Policy Analysis Archives, 19 (21). Retrieved 7/5/2012, from http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/769. As of 2011, 5 states used a "census-based approach" similar to Massachusetts.

[9] Kevin Carey, "The Funding Gap 2004." The Education Trust, Special Report: Washington, DC. 2005, p.13.

Labor Market Area	CY12 Wages	CY12 Employment	CY12 LMA Avg
unassigned	157,958,280	4,644	34,013
Great Barrington, MA LMA	478,595,587	13,437	35,618
Tisbury, MA LMA	348,462,856	8,038	43,352
Nantucket County/town LMA	291,026,431	6,031	48,255
Amherst Center, MA Micropolitan NECTA	750,266,716	16,825	44,592
Athol, MA Micropolitan NECTA	201,688,512	5,688	35,459
Barnstable MA Metropolitan NECTA	4,038,219,422	98,679	40,923
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA NECTA Division	120,703,890,349	1,698,769	71,054
Brockton-Bridgewater-Easton, MA NECTA Division	3,971,479,991	88,138	45,060
Framingham, MA NECTA Division	11,206,128,705	156,599	71,559
Greenfield, MA Micropolitan NECTA	575,553,829	16,028	35,909
Haverhill-North Andover-Amesbury, MA-NH NECTA Division	2,103,685,946	45,772	45,960
Lawrence-Methuen-Salem, MA-NH NECTA Division	1,810,794,105	40,891	44,283
Leominster-Fitchburg-Gardner, MA Metropolitan NECTA	1,892,391,706	47,708	39,666
Lowell-Billerica-Chelmsford, MA-NH NECTA Division	7,388,311,923	115,169	64,152
Nashua, NH-MA NECTA Division	133,268,880	3,322	40,117
New Bedford, MA Metropolitan NECTA	2,835,052,240	67,163	42,212
North Adams, MA-VT Micropolitan NECTA	456,097,071	11,820	38,587
Peabody, MA NECTA Division	4,841,946,848	101,072	47,906
Pittsfield, MA Metropolitan NECTA	1,495,032,346	35,344	42,299
Providence-Fall River-Warwick, RI-MA Metropolitan NECTA	3,715,017,352	95,182	39,031
Springfield, MA-CT Metropolitan NECTA	10,683,509,401	246,823	43,284
Taunton-Norton-Raynham, MA NECTA Division	2,080,051,913	43,637	47,667
Worcester, MA-CT Metropolitan NECTA	11,255,369,843	232,594	48,391
State Total	**193,413,800,252**	**3,199,373**	**60,454**

A district's wage factor is a percentage that is applied to the eight salary-related functional categories in the foundation budget[10]. The labor market area for a district is compared to the state average and weighted at 80 percent. The town's own factor is weighted at 20 percent. The distance above or below the state average is then divided by three to determine the wage adjustment factor.

Prior to FY 2000, districts in lower-wage areas saw significant reductions in their foundation budgets, by as much as ten percent. Since then, annual budget language has cushioned districts from these reductions, to the point where beginning in FY 04, only those with above-average wages have been affected by the wage adjustment factor. Those below the average are set to 100 percent. In FY 15, 115 municipalities in just three labor market areas are affected:

Boston/Cambridge/Quincy NECTA division

Framingham

[10] The wage factor is not applied to instructional equipment, employee benefits, or special education tuition.

Lowell/Billerica/Chelmsford NECTA division

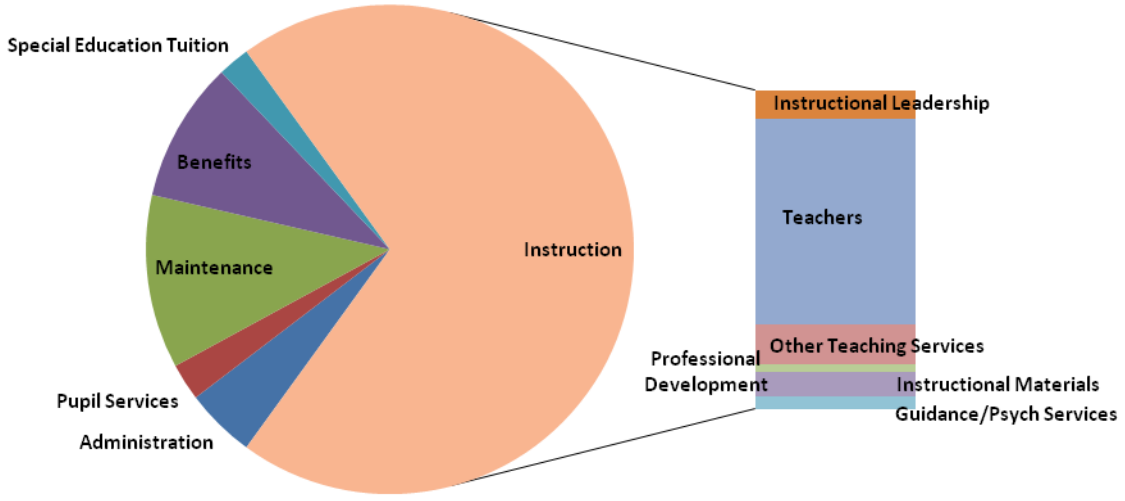
A district's wage factor appears at the bottom left of its foundation budget report. Marshfield's wage factor is 102.3 percent.

FY 15 Foundation Budget: Massachusetts State Totals

After applying the wage factor, the statewide total for all school districts in FY 15 is $9,866,011,311. Teaching makes up 45 percent. The six instructional categories (instructional leadership, teachers, other teaching services, professional development, instructional materials/technology, and guidance/psychological) account for a combined 70 percent.

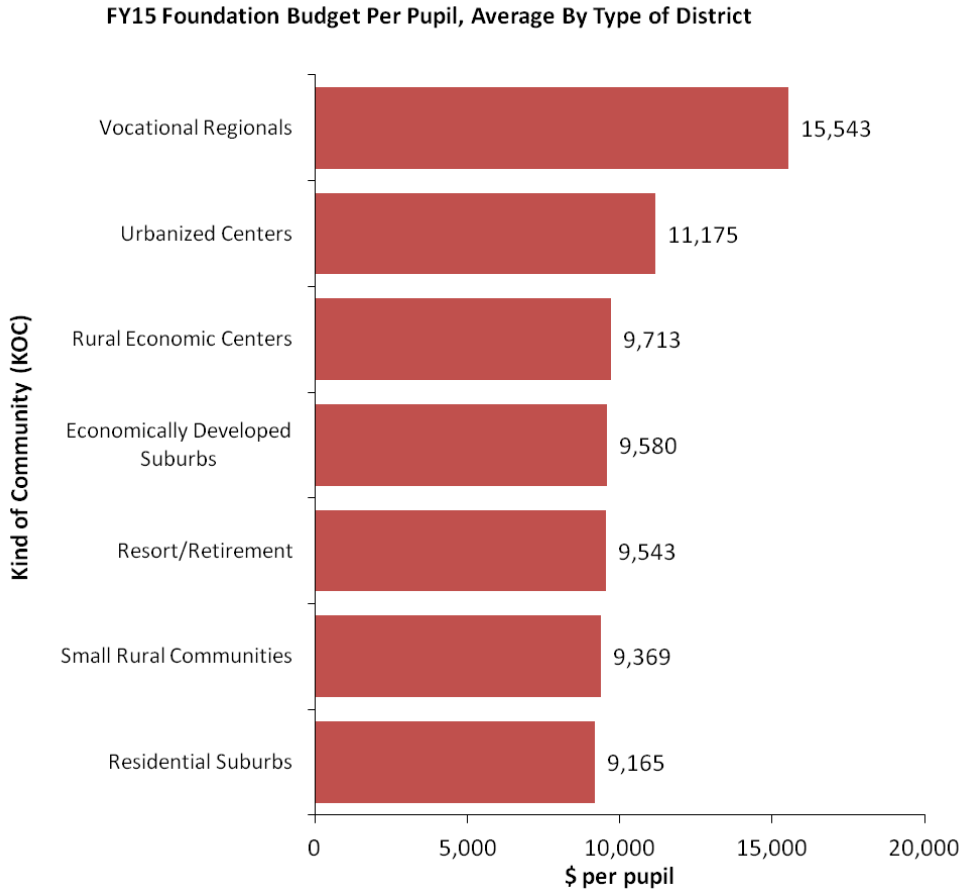
FY 15 Foundation Budget by Category

Category	Dollars	Pct of Total
Administration	457,847,083	4.6
Pupil Services	242,076,375	2.5
Maintenance	1,132,013,033	11.5
Benefits	917,613,023	9.3
Special Education Tuition	207,845,782	2.1
Instructional Leadership	624,728,305	6.3
Teachers	4,472,408,521	45.3
Other Teaching Services	866,293,117	8.8
Professional Development	160,033,777	1.6
Instructional Materials	514,461,912	5.2
Guidance/Psych Services	270,690,383	2.7
Total	9,866,011,311	30.0



FY 15 Foundation Budget: District Results

When presented in per pupil terms there is considerable variation among districts in their foundation budgets. After separating out vocational districts as a separate category, urbanized centers are higher than other types of districts by more than $1,400 per pupil.



A listing by district shows each district's per pupil amount, with some of the key factors that can contribute to higher foundation budgets.

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