



*Governor-elect Deval Patrick strides to the podium to make his acceptance speech at the Hynes Convention Center Tuesday, Nov. 7. Behind him on stage are Senator John Kerry, Lt. Governor-elect Tim Murray and Senator Edward Kennedy.*

# Sweeping Patrick Victory Promises New Era in College–State Relations

*Brett M. Rhyne, Perspective editor*

Deval Patrick's rousing acceptance speech to an overflow crowd of supporters at the Hynes Convention Center Nov. 7 acknowledged many of the constituencies that got him elected as the Commonwealth's first Democratic governor in 16 years, including "union members wondering why there is so little work when there is so much to do."

Patrick's recognition of workers was not gratuitous: he owes much of his success to the efforts of organized labor in general and unionized educators in particular. MSCA members, and our partners in MTA, supported Patrick's candidacy early and enthusiastically.

We like Deval because he believes in the mission of public higher education. "Massachusetts is the birthplace of public education and the university capital of the world," he says. "We must... ensure that our public schools, universities and colleges are preparing all our young people for work, citizenship and life itself."

"Higher education opportunities in Massachusetts will be second to none," he promises. In his platform, he proposes to "reinvest in public higher education," by issuing bonds "to invest in expansion and development of public colleges and universities. Proceeds from the bonds issued to support stem cell research, for example, will be invested in research facilities and faculty development in public colleges and universities."

Ambitious plans are all well and good; there are also smaller steps the Patrick administration can take to improve the state college system. These include:

- **Appointing people to the Board of Higher Education who are education-friendly.** The recent departures of Chancellor Judith Gill and Chairman Stephen Tocco (see related story on page four) provide Patrick with an opportunity to reshape BHE into a more generous, public-spirited body.
- Likewise, Gov. Patrick will hold tremendous sway over the appointments of

state college presidents and trustees. Currently, both Salem and Westfield State are looking for new presidents (see related story on page four) and trusteeships are continually opening throughout the system. **Encouraging the appointment of public-minded people** to these posts would do on the local level what their appointment to BHE would do on the state level.

- Putting generous, public-spirited people in governance positions would go a long way toward creating another vast improvement in public higher education: **Fostering fair bargaining practices on the part of the state.** Members don't need to be reminded how long we worked without a contract, or how arduous a process it was to get that negotiated contract put in place. As we begin another round of bargaining—union leaders have already started meeting with campus locals about the 2007-10 contract—having a negotiating partner we can trust is invaluable.
- The final, bitter lesson of 16 years of Republican rule came in mid-November, when Gov. Romney froze \$425 million in spending already approved by the Legislature. Included in those cuts are \$30 million from the Group Insurance Commission and \$3.7 million from state colleges; since retroactive pay raises have already been paid, college budgets have been cut by the amount of those raises. The lesson for Gov. Patrick? The value of a governor **working with, instead of against, the Legislature.**

Throughout the campaign, candidate Patrick said, "Public higher education has been chronically under-funded and under-valued by the Romney/Healey administration." No one knows the sad, hard truth of that statement more than our membership. But soon he'll be Gov. Patrick, and we'll all have reason to hope for something better.