

Education

Editorial: A chance to diversify college leadership

[Email](#) [Share](#) [Share](#) [Tweet](#) [Share Article](#) [Print](#) [Order Reprints](#)

Gary Higgins / Boston Business Journal

Jul 28, 2022

Massachusetts colleges have an unprecedented opportunity to increase diversity at the highest levels in coming months. At least 11 local institutions of higher learning are seeking new presidents, including such giants of the sector as Harvard, MIT, Tufts and UMass-Amherst, according to a recent report [from the Eos Foundation](#).

Over the past four years, there has been little progress in attempts to add more women presidents at local universities. Of the 88 colleges the Eos Foundation looked at, 34% now have women presidents — up just 1% since 2018. The number of women presidents at community colleges has dropped from 53% in 2019 to 36% in 2022.

And while the portion who are women of color has risen to 12%, from 6% in 2018, there are still no Latinx women college presidents in Massachusetts, a higher education center of excellence in the U.S.

Why focus on academia when the percentage of women leaders is even lower in other sectors, such as technology or the life sciences? For the simple reason that colleges are in a unique position to prepare and teach the next generation of workers to be alert to the communication styles and workplace contributions of both genders. That sensitivity is needed in the corporate world, and having women in the corner offices of our institutions of learning makes it more likely that it will happen.

A similar sentiment was expressed by new chancellor of UMass Lowell, Julie Chen, when she recently told the Business Journal that being the second woman, the first Asian-American and the first LGBTQ chancellor was “an important piece” of why she decided to take the job.

“I think it does make a difference to me because I know if I’m going to talk about why there should be more women in engineering or why there should be more people of color in leadership roles or more LGBTQ, I have the opportunity to represent that,” she said. “And if it makes a few more students think, hey, you know, I could be a chancellor of a university one day, then that is an important part of what I can help the next generation.”

We urge the boards of local colleges now conducting searches for new leaders to make diversification one of their top priorities.

Source: <https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2022/07/28/editorial-a-chance-to-diversify-college-leadership.html>