

Patrick should rethink plan to centralize power

DISRESPECT PERMEATES

Governor Patrick's plan to reform our community colleges ("Senate leader hits Patrick proposal on community colleges," Metro, Feb. 1). Patrick says the current system isn't working, and asserts that community colleges must be retooled and realigned to train the mythical 120,000 jobs that go unfilled each year. What are those jobs? Where are they located? What do they pay? What will it cost the Commonwealth to provide this training? Will employers hire workers with associate's degrees and community college certificates to fill these jobs?

The governor's plan would centralize power in the Board of Higher Education. The board would assume control over allocating state funding to individual colleges; setting local fees; assessing local operational goals, in-

stitutional performance, and curricula; approving local mission statements; and hiring and firing local presidents.

Dealing with such big issues in an outside section of next year's budget is inappropriate. This language should be stripped from the budget. Instead of engaging in what he warned would be a "blood fight" on Beacon Hill, the governor and his education advisers should start from scratch, seek input from all the system's stakeholders, and file a new bill.

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Keep government's hands off these schools

IF THERE is anything in education that has worked over the last 50 years, it is the community college concept. Many young people got a start by attending a

community college — a start that they may not have had.

These schools save students and their parents a ton of money, and provide an excellent education. What's more, they help students who may not have applied themselves in high school to get their education back on track.

Many people who started in a community college went on to become successful and prominent. Many went on to four-year schools and beyond. In fact, I know of students who found that their community college education placed them in better standing at the four-year school, where they excelled.

The message I would like to give to Governor Deval Patrick is: Keep your hands off community colleges. The worst thing that could happen is to have them placed into a new centralized system. More government control almost always leads to failure. There are many examples of this at the federal and state levels.

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