



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the State Auditor
Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better

Official Audit Report – Issued December 20, 2019

Bristol Community College

For the period July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018





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December 20, 2019

Laura Douglas, PhD, President
Office of the President
Bristol Community College
777 Elsbree Street
Fall River, MA 02720

Dear President Douglas:

I am pleased to provide this performance audit of Bristol Community College. This report details the audit objective, scope, methodology, finding, and recommendation for the audit period, July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018. My audit staff discussed the contents of this report with management of the college, whose comments are reflected in this report.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Bristol Community College for the cooperation and assistance provided to my staff during the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SMB", written over a light blue circular background.

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

cc: Joan M. Medeiros, Chair, Bristol Community College Board of Trustees

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Section 12 of Chapter 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of the State Auditor has performed an audit of Bristol Community College (BCC) for the period July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018. In this performance audit, we determined whether BCC ensured that students who were enrolled in its Early Childhood Education and Child Care (ECE) Program, before being granted teaching practicums that involved working with children, passed a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background check performed by the college.

Below is a summary of our finding and recommendation, with links to each page listed.

Finding 1 Page 5	BCC did not ensure that some of its ECE Program students received background checks.
Recommendation Page 5	BCC should implement a process to track students in the ECE Program to ensure that they pass CORI background checks performed by the college before they are granted teaching practicums.

OVERVIEW OF AUDITED ENTITY

Bristol Community College (BCC) is authorized by Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the Massachusetts General Laws and operates under the direction of a board of trustees, whose members are appointed by the Governor. The board is responsible for operating under the regulations promulgated by the state's Board of Higher Education. The president of BCC reports to the board of trustees and is the administrative head of the college.

BCC is a member of the Massachusetts public higher-education system, which consists of 15 community colleges, nine state universities, and five University of Massachusetts campuses. BCC is an accredited public two-year institution serving 20 cities and towns in southeastern Massachusetts. The 105-acre main campus is located at 777 Elsbree Street in Fall River; satellite sites are located in Attleboro, New Bedford, and Taunton. As of December 31, 2018, BCC had 7,214 students enrolled.

Early Childhood Education and Child Care Program

BCC's Early Childhood Education and Child Care (ECE) Department offers programs that provide students with the opportunity to become eligible for teacher certifications or licenses in Massachusetts. Within the ECE Department, there are two programs where students are required to complete teaching practicums as part of their course curriculum: the Career Program and the Licensure Program. Career Program students participate in teaching practicums for infant/toddler, preschool, or school-age children, mainly in community-based daycares. Licensure Program students participate in teaching practicums for preschool, kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 children, mainly in public school systems.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance with Section 12 of Chapter 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of the State Auditor has conducted a performance audit of Bristol Community College (BCC) for the period July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusion based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusion based on our audit objective.

Below is our audit objective, indicating the question we intended our audit to answer, the conclusion we reached regarding the objective, and where the objective is discussed in this report.

Objective	Conclusion
1. Does BCC ensure that its Early Childhood Education and Child Care (ECE) Program students pass a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background check before it grants them teaching practicums that involve working with children?	No; see Finding <u>1</u>

To achieve our objective, we gained an understanding of the internal controls related to our audit objective by reviewing applicable laws, policies, and procedures, as well as conducting interviews with BCC officials.

Data Reliability

BCC officials (the vice president of the Administration and Finance Department and the chair of the ECE Department) provided us with an Excel workbook that contained a list of 64 BCC students who had enrolled in the college's ECE Program and had completed teaching practicums during the audit period. We examined this workbook and tested for macros, hidden rows and columns, and hidden worksheets. We performed additional validity and integrity tests on the data, including (1) testing for missing records or missing values in key data elements, (2) scanning for duplicate entries, (3) verifying fields to detect any data validity errors, and (4) testing for values outside a designated range.

We then traced 100% of the student population from this workbook to an original list of student enrollment information maintained by BCC's registrar's office. Next, we examined 100% of the original registrar's list of students who completed teaching practicums and traced the information back to the workbook.

Based on the results of these data reliability assessment procedures, we determined that the information obtained for our audit period was sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our audit work.

CORI Background Checks

To determine whether BCC performed CORI background checks on students enrolled in its ECE Program before granting them teaching practicums, we first obtained a list of students who completed teaching practicums during the audit period, July 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018. We then examined all 64 students' personnel files to determine whether there was documentation to substantiate that each student had passed a CORI background check performed by BCC's Human Resources Department before being assigned a teaching practicum.

DETAILED AUDIT FINDINGS WITH AUDITEE'S RESPONSE

1. Bristol Community College did not ensure that some of its Early Childhood Education and Child Care Program students received background checks.

Bristol Community College (BCC) had not performed Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background checks on 46 of the 64 Early Childhood Education and Child Care (ECE) Program students who completed teaching practicums during our audit period. Granting students teaching practicums at public schools or daycares without knowing if they have criminal records may pose a risk to children at those facilities.

Authoritative Guidance

The BCC ECE Department's "Policy and Protocol for Field Experiences" requires that ECE Program students receive CORI background checks by BCC before being granted teaching practicums.

Reasons for Issue

BCC does not have a process to track students in its ECE Program to ensure that they pass CORI background checks performed by the college before they are granted teaching practicums.

Recommendation

BCC should implement a process to track students in the ECE Program to ensure that they pass CORI background checks performed by the college before they are granted teaching practicums.

Auditee's Response

The College agrees with the Auditor's recommendation and will implement a tracking system. We agree this is necessary to avoid missing someone in the future and to be sure we are sending the appropriate students in the field. This system will include working with Human Resources to perform the CORI. After we were informed of this finding, we confirmed with each of the schools and daycares that all students did in fact have a CORI conducted at the place of their teaching practicum.

Auditor's Reply

It appears that BCC is taking measures to address this finding by implementing a tracking system to ensure that all students receive a CORI by BCC before they are assigned to a school or daycare. In addition, although BCC informed us that it recently confirmed that each school or daycare performed a

CORI on any student we noted as an exception, we did not receive documentation to support that this was indeed completed.