

Jennie-Rebecca Falcetta, humanities professor at MassArt

February 10, 2026

Board of Higher Education

Good morning! My name is Jennie-Rebecca Falcetta, and I am professor of Humanities here at MassArt, where I love to work and teach. A favorite classroom assignment for me is the required first year seminar. Together the students and I do a great deal of discussion about what college is, how it works, and how to make these four years at MassArt their own. Their end-of-semester written reflections offer valuable insights about their experiences struggling to find their way, manage their workload, and make friends during their period of adjustment.

MassArt students frequently cite their humanities, history of art, and science courses as a welcome relief from the rigors of the studio. Now, I know that MassArt has a particular mission and that not every first-year college student is thrust into the intensity of a five-hour studio course, but new college students need time – most of the first year, in fact – to gain their footing in a new learning and social environment. Then in the senior year, a major emphasis is on thesis projects, internships, workforce preparation, and other such completions. A 90-credit program would leave a single year – two semesters – in between the adjustment to being at college and the preparation for leaving it.

Imagine if you will an employer considering two applicants: both high achievers in rigorous professional coursework, including internships. One of the students is 21, with

three years and 90 credits of college. The other student is 22, with a four-year, 120-credit degree, including not only their major courses and gen ed requirements, but electives in Mandarin, political science, and the sociology of food. Which candidate actually will look more attractive to that prospective employer?

A cost-effective option for students looking to pursue a more focused professional or vocational degree already exists: it's called an associate degree. College absolutely needs to be more affordable: but the solution is to diminish the cost, not the quality or the duration. Let's graduate social workers who've had time to read not only case studies, but also *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and nutritionists who have witnessed the powerful community meal at the center of *Babette's Feast* because they had room in their schedules for a film course.

90-credit graduates will not be better equipped to compete with alumni from schools whose extra year of intellectual development gives them an edge. By lopping off ten courses from a college degree, we deprive students of an entire year of exploratory, serendipitous intellectual and imaginative encounters. We are graduating students into a society that is increasingly polarized, surface-oriented, and perplexing. We owe them not only good job prospects but well-rounded preparation for citizenship and for life.