September 4, 2015

Dr. Elmore Alexander, Dean
Louis M. Ricciardi College of Business
Bridgewater State University
Harrington Hall, Room 104
95 Grove Street
Bridgewater, MA 02325

Dear Dr. Alexander,

On August 26, the Cape Cod Times printed an article reporting on your address to the Town of Barnstable Economic Development Commission. As a daily reader of the Cape Cod Times, and the Chair of the Cape Cod Economic Development Council (County), I was stunned at some of the declarations reported about your descriptions of the lack of economic development efforts on Cape Cod.

The next day, I, as representative of the CCEDC, authored an op-ed “Our View” piece, which the Cape Cod Times has not printed. I am enclosing a copy of that piece here for your review. I hope you find it informative, as the purpose of writing it was to apprise the readers that Cape Cod, in fact, does have a regional economic plan, is planning for changes and new developments in our infrastructure, and has a vision for our economic future beyond the service sector jobs that you highlighted in your talk.

As you can see, several years ago, when BSU announced its intention to locate on Cape Cod, I met with Fred Clark to inform him of the ongoing efforts and agenda of Cape Cod leaders (SmarterCape) and urged BSU to enhance our agenda via course offerings that support this agenda. (see enclosure)

We believed then, as we do now, that BSU can play a pivotal role in the development of a highly skilled knowledge-based work force here on Cape Cod. In addition, BSU can serve as a catalyst for the attraction and retention of young families—so important to our economic future. The CCEDC has always supported educational development on Cape Cod, as we see it as the conduit for endless opportunity.

If you are interested, I invite you and others from BSU to attend a CCEDC or SmarterCape meeting to explore how BSU might integrate and participate in building a better economic future for Cape Cod.

Sincerely,

Felicia R Penn
Chair, CCEDC

Cc: Dr. Fred Clark, President, BSU
Business dean: Cape needs to change to survive

By Geoff Spillane
geoff@capecodonline.com

HYANNIS — The dean of the Ricciardi College of Business at Bridgewater State University addressed the Barnstable Economic Development Commission on Tuesday afternoon and the message was a familiar one — the Cape's current economy is not sustainable and is in dire need of a makeover.

Dr. Elmore Alexander, in a presentation titled "Economic Development Challenges for Cape Cod," said the region is facing a "perfect storm" of economic conditions, and not in a good way.

"It's like the book and the movie," he said, referring to the 1991 weather system that caused massive destruction along the coast and killed several Gloucester fishermen.

Alexander cites the Cape's aging population, with a median age of 50-10 years higher than the national median, a declining job base geared to seasonal and service jobs and a lack of infrastructure in place to support economic growth.

In what is likely to be a controversial stance, Alexander said the Cape needs to stop thinking "big box" retailers are inherently bad, and quite often, it's the small retailers that don't pay high wages.

Alexander also told the commission that Bridgewater State, which now has a satellite campus in Yarmouth, is committed to working with the community to develop programs to pair skills with industry needs, enabling students to graduate and stay on the Cape.

"To save the Cape, you're going to have to change the Cape," he said.
"My View". Written August 26, 2015. Submitted August 27, 2015 to the Cape Cod Times.

I take exception to the article printed on August 26, reporting the presentation by Dr. Elmore Alexander, Business Dean of the Ricciardi College of Business @ BSU.

Dr. Alexander stated that Cape Cod has no comprehensive economic development plan. This is inaccurate. The Cape has a comprehensive economic development plan. It is called the CEDS, which stands for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Cape Cod Economic Development Council manages the implementation of this plan, and the funds for the implementation and planning derive from the Cape and Island License Plate. The actual planning and creation of the CEDS is in the capable hands of the Director of Economic Development, Leslie Richardson and CEO Paul Niedzwiecki of the Cape Cod Commission. The plan was recently updated and submitted to the EDA this past June.

Dr. Alexander states that our infrastructure needs to be addressed for a new economy to take hold here. He is evidently not aware of the efforts of the SmarterCape Partnership. For the past six years, they have been working to not only improve our infrastructure, but educate the public as to the economic applications of how these improvements serve as positive impacts on our economy. This includes the build out of OpenCape (middle mile broadband network), building a "smarter economy", tackling the wastewater issues, density (zoning), and most recently, housing.

RE: targeting specific industries, such as marine technology and developing a skilled workforce to support these industries: I am surprised at his comments. When BSU announced it was coming to the Cape a few years ago, I personally wrote a letter to them outlining how hopeful we were that BSU would, as a four year college, serve as the catalyst to transform the Cape from a service-based economy to an “intelligent community” with a strong knowledge workforce, and help fulfill the SmarterCape mission. Having a four-year college on Cape was a priority project for the CEDS. I personally drove to Bridgewater with the CEO of OpenCape and had a face-to-face meeting with Dr. Fred Clark and his staff in September of 2013, before he became President of BSU, and explained our efforts and our vision and requested that BSU provide degrees in the following concentrations: marine and environmental sciences, computer science, medical technology, land use, and fine arts.

And finally, Dr. Alexander’s comments regarding the pay scales offered at big box stores vs. independently owned retailers couldn’t be more wrong. There are several local economic studies that indicate that just the opposite is true.

I invite Dr. Alexander to read the CEDS, and visit the SmarterCape web site, to see the multiple efforts actively underway here on Cape Cod as we work to transform ourselves to a “smarter” Cape. It’s not too late for Dr. Alexander and BSU to play a major role in facilitating our economic change to a better future.

Felicia R. Penn, Chair
Cape Cod Economic Development Council
Cape already transitioning to a ‘Blue Economy’

By Wendy Northcross

This is in response to an article in the Cape Cod Times (“Business dean: Cape needs to change to survive”, Aug. 26, Page 1).

Dr. Elmore Alexander is 100 percent correct: To ensure a sustainable future, the Cape does need to change. However, the transformation has already begun. This is how:

Over the past few hundred years the Cape has undergone a series of economic eras and transitions, from fishing and agriculture to shipbuilding and whaling, and then tourism in the modern era.

For the better part of a century, Cape Cod thrived with a tourism/retirement-centered economy that leveraged its unique and immense natural resources with a geographic position near population centers in the Northeast megalopolis — the most heavily urbanized region in the country (49 million people).

This strategy brought the Cape back from the brink of a resource failure-based, economic collapse at the end of the 19th century and has been successful in establishing Cape Cod as a world-class travel destination.

The Cape is now undergoing yet another transition as the region moves to supplement its destination economy with one that leverages its 559.6 miles of coastline, world-class research institutions, its quality of life and entrepreneurial spirit to build a sustainable future with private and public sector partners, based on what we are calling a “Blue Economy.”

The Blue Economy is a broad descriptor that recognizes the vast role that water, both salt and fresh, plays in our everyday lives from economic, sociological, as well as physical and human geographic perspectives. It is understanding our relationship with the water resources surrounding us, how we interact, and finding a sustainable and symbiotic course for the future.

We believe that a core set of principles of a balanced economy, environmental stewardship and quality of life will provide a sustainable future for Cape Cod. We do this by maintaining our standing as a world-class travel destination with messaging that promotes all of the benefits of not only visiting Cape Cod, but embraces it as a desirable place to live, work, play and create.

With this secure foundation, we can leverage our existing water-based economy to attract and capture future opportunities in the water sector and related industries.

We have on our shores what is arguably the premier ocean science and research community on the globe. Through the Blue Economy, we will work with this community of scientists to bring their innovations into the growing blue-tech business sector locally through innovative technology transfer partnerships with entrepreneurs.

Our Capewide challenge in confronting wastewater issues presents one of our greatest opportunities to be leaders in the burgeoning alternative wastewater solutions sector. As Dr. Elmore mentioned, AquaGen, a local algae-based water treatment technology, is leading the charge on this front.

Aquaculture Research Corp. in Dennis will combine a working business with the Living Lab concept, by educating young and old alike on aquaculture farming practices and disease resistance research while at the same time supporting the foundation of the region’s shellfish aquaculture sector.

We are also working with our region’s professional planners at the Cape Cod Commission to streamline the permitting process for blue-tech companies to get up and running quickly, and to update the Regional Policy Plan and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to reflect the importance of Blue Economy activities.

Over the coming months and years you will see results of this vision. We are planning a Startup Weekend in October focused on the Blue Economy to bring thinkers and doers together to conceptualize, validate and start new companies targeting the largest opportunities presented by the Blue Economy. We are in the planning phases of a venture fund focused on investing in Blue companies to incubate and accelerate their formation and growth with innovative company building curriculum and programming. Next spring we will bring the region together at the SmarterCape Summit to develop the next phase of the Blue Economy.

We love Cape Cod, and believe it is a great place to live, work, play and create and are committed to work passionately with others to ensure a successful, thriving and sustainable Cape Cod. Stay tuned, it is an exciting blue future.

— Wendy Northcross is CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce.