



Mark E. Ojakian
President

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Dear CSCU Community,

When we launched Students First back in April, it was with the goal of strengthening our ability to provide students with a high quality, affordable, and accessible post-secondary education that enables them to achieve their life and career goals. We did this in the context of a growing structural deficit, declining state support, and recognition that our system is unsustainable in both the short and long term without real structural change. None of this has changed over the last six months and, in fact, fiscal challenges have become more pressing.

Despite these challenges, planning has continued. Our Students First teams have identified recommendations to put us on a viable path forward, help us to meet our savings targets over time, and in some cases, increase revenue for the CSCU system. We are providing the Board of Regents with an update during the October 19, 2017 meeting and want to share our progress with the greater CSCU community.

This summer over 100 CSCU faculty and staff engaged in the design and planning of the two Students First strategies endorsed and approved by the Board of Regents:

- **Strategy 1: a single administrative infrastructure to eliminate redundant functions system wide and provide shared services to all universities and colleges**
- **Strategy 2: one centrally managed community college with campuses statewide**

Led by a system office or campus leader, the functional area teams included subject matter experts from across the system. In support of shared governance, members, either elected or nominated by their campus leadership groups representing faculty, professional staff and other campus employees, were integral members of the planning teams.

All recommendations were required to meet our guiding principles:

- Ensure students are at the center of all decisions
- Prioritize teaching, learning, and high quality academic programming
- Preserve and enhance student support services
- Safeguard educational access and affordability
- Be conscientious stewards of the students' and state's investments in our institutions

Strategy 1: A Single Administrative Infrastructure

For the first strategy, teams identified a sustainable administrative structure in the areas of Facilities Management, Financial Aid, Fiscal Affairs, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Institutional Research. These strategies wherever possible included all 17 institutions and system office; however, given the current centralization of our community college enterprise systems, more opportunities for efficiency can be identified at the community colleges, which share one platform. We fully intend to reach our original plan for targeted savings though the timeline may take longer and alternative strategies may be necessary.

The Students First Planning Teams drafted reports in their respective areas of focus outlining in detail many strategies, reporting structures, and best practices that promote shared services and collaboration among all of our institutions. The process to develop the proposals extended over several months, not only for the thoughtful development of ideas, but also in respect to shared governance--where each stakeholder could participate and return to their agency and deliberate as the process unfolded.

These reports, reviewed by our Students First Steering Committee, are now ready for public comment. I encourage everyone to read the reports as well as the summary presentation prepared for the Board of Regents meeting on October 19, 2017 that are hosted on our website at www.ct.edu/studentsfirst.

Some notable system wide recommendations from the first strategy include activities that increase opportunities for students to fund their education and promote services that increase financial literacy. To meet the goal of safeguarding affordability, the Financial Aid Team recommended creation of a system-wide financial literacy initiative to provide personal finance workshops and directly advise students and their families on money management, paying for college, personal budgeting and loan repayment. This effort can help address the issue of growing student debt and help families to make informed decisions about managing the cost of education.

The Fiscal Affairs Team recommends the creation of shared services for all 17 colleges and universities in areas such as purchasing and contracts. This will allow CSCU to take advantage of our collective volume in negotiating the best prices for non-academic goods and services and streamlining the contracting process for our institutions.

Additionally, our Human Resources and Institutional Research Teams recommend new models for shared services with a new reporting structure designed to leverage system wide expertise. The teams recommend the creation of centers of expertise in topics such as benefits and labor relations in the human resources area and data analytics and assessment in the institutional research area. This use of staff and resources can improve not only our strategic human resources management but also our reporting both to external stakeholders such as the state legislature and to our institutions to assess their effectiveness.

The above recommendations are just a few examples of the cooperation and creative thinking we have witnessed throughout the summer that make our CSU system great. We put faculty and staff experts together to solve our challenges. They leveraged our collective size and scale to find efficiencies across our system; all with the goal of improving our administrative practices so that critical resources can be devoted to student teaching and learning. Only a few of these recommendations will require policy changes by the Board of Regents. The majority of the administrative recommendations can be implemented as soon as time and resources are available to complete.

Strategy 2: One Centrally Managed Community College

For the second strategy, a community college consolidation team made up of presidents, academic deans, and deans of students and administration developed a new organizational structure for a single accredited community college. The proposed structure includes one community college, with regional management and twelve campuses. **This structure keeps open all of our existing campuses and satellites.** Colleges are organized under three regions to create efficiencies, promote consistency across regions, build upon strong relationships across campuses, and align resources such as academic programs, student services, and enrollment. This new structure seeks to eliminate duplication and allow for implementation of services wherever most appropriate--at the campus, regional, new institutional level.

The presentation prepared for the Board of Regents, as well as a frequently asked questions document on the community college consolidation are also available on our website at www.ct.edu/studentsfirst.

In order to meet NEASC requirements for accreditation, new institutional leadership positions of Vice Chancellor for the Community College, Chief Academic Officer and a Chief Financial Officer are included in the organizational structure. Each campus would be led by a Vice President with responsibility for local campus operations, delivery of academic and student programs and services, and community relations. This ensures that we maintain the local identity and community connection of each campus. As we developed this proposal over the summer, we communicated regularly with NEASC to seek their guidance and are invited to bring forward a substantive change to the Commission in the spring.

Benefits of a single community college for students are vast. The new structure eliminates many barriers to success and degree completion that currently exist. For example, students will be able to register and take classes easily at multiple campuses without needing to transfer credits back and forth and all courses will count towards the student's GPA as well as their degree. This allows students the opportunity to pursue academic fields based on their interest and schedule rather than geography, and to transfer seamlessly to both in-state and out-of-state universities. The proposed structure significantly reduces management at the colleges while maintaining critical resources for students at the campus level. In particular, it calls for an increased focus on enrollment management, advising and retention to maximize the impact of our guided pathways initiative.

This proposal is the first phase of planning for the single college. We will be developing a process to align curriculum across the 12 campuses with broad faculty participation. Initial work in this area has already begun with a group of community college representatives from the Faculty Advisory Committee who have drafted a proposed shared governance curriculum review structure. Their input has been essential in getting this conversation started, and much more will be done in the months ahead leveraging faculty efforts and experiences such as TAP, our coordinated college-wide nursing program, and other innovative models.

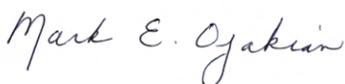
By re-examining our administrative functions and establishing a single community college for the state, we can eliminate unnecessary duplication of efforts, find efficiencies through scale and shared resources, remove obstacles to students' academic progress, integrate best practices in student support, increase access to unique programs, facilitate seamless transfers, and ensure all students' career readiness.

Both the administrative and community college consolidation recommendations require us to embrace change and new ways of doing our work together. The strategies combined provide a targeted savings of \$41M and as I said earlier, we fully intend to reach those goals though it may take us longer than planned to reach them. Those who have labored this summer to design these recommendations have seen the promise of these improvements for our system and our students.

We are now ready for input from the broader CSCU community and have created a survey to capture direct feedback at www.ct.edu/studentsfirst. In addition, we will host discussions, particularly with community college students, faculty, and staff about these proposals in the coming weeks. The planning teams will review input and make adjustments to their recommendations if needed and the Students First Steering Committee will conduct a last review as well before submission of final recommendations to the Board of Regents at their December 14, 2017 meeting.

Again, I want to thank all the CSCU faculty, staff, and college and university presidents who worked tirelessly this summer to prepare these recommendations. I am confident with their best thinking, your input and our collective energy we can place our system on a sustainable path forward that strengthens the high quality, affordable and accessible education our colleges and universities provide to students.

Sincerely,



Mark E. Ojakian, President
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)