

## Connecticut State University System

# Making A Difference

**KARL J. KRAPEK**  
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES



I am extremely proud to have been appointed recently by Gov. Rell as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) – among our state’s finest and most important institutions.

I have served on the board for 16 years, primarily as Vice Chair and Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, and each year has truly been a labor of love. My involvement began while I was President of Pratt & Whitney, grew during my years as President and Chief Operating Officer of United Technologies Corporation, and continues still.

Let me explain why, and in doing so offer my perspective on why CSUS is so important to Connecticut. Unquestionably, our state’s future depends, in large measure, on the education that is provided and the opportunities for advancement that are offered to our citizens.

Not widely known is the fact that CSUS is Connecticut’s largest university system, with nearly 36,000 students attending Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State universities.

Ninety-three percent of CSUS students are from Connecticut, and nearly nine in ten of our graduates stay in the state to pursue their careers, raise families and contribute to our economic vitality and quality of life.

CSUS is squarely focused in a myriad of ways on student success and our state’s well-being; space permits me to share only the top ten:

### **Universities of Choice**

CSUS has the highest number of full-time undergraduate students ever. Full-time enrollment has grown nearly 44 percent since 1996,

and a record setting 6,870 degrees and certificates were awarded a year ago. The four universities have become universities of choice for Connecticut residents, 49 percent of whom are the first generation in their families to attend college. Applications for admission were up 11 percent this year, on top of an 18 percent increase over the past four years.

### **Compelling Value**

When comparing CSUS’s average tuition and mandatory fees to those of 18 other universities that are also typically considered by students attending one of the CSUS universities, our price is among the lowest. And three-quarters of full-time students received financial aid last year, bringing higher education within their financial reach.

### **Economic Impact**

The annual economic impact was \$1.84 billion in the fiscal year just concluded, including CSUS operations and spending by employees and students. Collaborations with municipalities, not-for-profit and charitable organizations, and cultural and community-based groups bring results that reverberate through every sector of our economy in every region of the state.

### **Return on Investment**

CSUS generates \$5 of economic activity in Connecticut for every \$1 of state appropriation, including capital funds. Research makes clear that the level of educational attainment makes a difference in individual earnings, year after year, and over a lifetime. Those benefits accrue not only to individuals and their families, but to communities and the state as a whole.

### **Coming Home**

The number of transfer students entering CSUS universities has increased 23% since 2001, and set an all-time record in 2008. Transfers from Connecticut Community Colleges are up 46 percent

“our state’s future  
depends on the  
education we provide”

since 2001, and a year ago just over 1,000 students transferred in from out-of-state colleges, with three out of four being Connecticut residents. Since nearly nine of ten CSUS graduates stay in Connecticut after graduation, those returning students are likely to enter the state's workforce.

### **Academic Excellence**

Connecticut's future depends upon workers possessing critical thinking skills and technical expertise. With an exceptional, committed faculty – nearly 90 percent with the highest degrees in their respective fields – CSUS offers 160 fields of study, ever-cognizant of business needs. CSUS awards the most bachelor's degrees in Connecticut in Nursing (over the past five years), Mathematics & Statistics, Computer & Information Science, and Business, Management & Marketing.

### **Readiness and Retention**

First to second year retention of students continues to improve, edging up four percentage points this past year. Initiatives that collaborate with local school districts to ensure that incoming freshmen are prepared for college level work show tremendous promise, with one program achieving a two-year retention rate among students that was 16.1 percent higher than their peers.

### **Innovation and Collaboration**

A new dual admission program with Connecticut Community Colleges allows students to be accepted as college and university students simultaneously. This initiative will ease the transfer of credits, improve alignment of advising, and assist students striving to earn a bachelor's degree. Partnerships aimed at improving college awareness and preparation among middle and high school students across the state are also flourishing, making college a viable option for more students.


### **Diverse and Accomplished**

Since 2003, retention rates for Hispanic and African-American students across CSUS have each grown by 8 percent, and students of color comprise 17.4 percent of the student body, an increase of nearly 16 percent from only four years ago. Significantly, the gap in the six-year graduation rate between white students and students of color has been nearly cut in half over the past five years.

### **Focus on the Future**

Reinvigorated "first year experience" programs responding to the specific needs of freshmen, involvement in initiatives aimed at providing opportunities to low-income and underserved populations, collaborations with the new Connecticut Science Center and participation in statewide efforts to improve alignment of curriculum all place CSUS on the cutting edge of critical advances in higher education.

A well-educated citizenry leads to greater civic engagement, cultural enrichment and participation in philanthropy, and a better Connecticut. The numbers only begin to tell the story; what makes the universities of CSUS so dynamic and critical to Connecticut's future are the people on each campus every day – administrators, staff, faculty and students. Their collective commitment, dedication and accomplishment are nothing short of inspiring.

 *Karl J. Krapek was appointed as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System in July 2009. A former President & Chief Operating Officer of United Technologies Corporation, Krapek operates a real estate development company and provides business consulting services.*

*Portions of this article were published on September 22, 2009*

**New Haven Register**

