

FAQs

Why are the community colleges being consolidated?

Our goal as a public higher education institution is to provide a high quality, affordable and accessible post-secondary education that enables students to achieve their life and career goals. We recognize that without real structural change our system is unsustainable in both the short and long term. Our institutions are facing a true structural deficit because of year-over-year declining appropriations, decreased tuition revenue and increased costs.

In April 2017, at the request of the CT Board of Regents, the CSCU System President proposed two strategies to address these concerns, known as Students First. This included the consolidation of the 12 community colleges into one singly accredited institution, as well as system wide consolidation of administrative back-office functions.

More details can be found here: [President Ojakian, April 2017](#)

How will one community college benefit students?

Benefits of a single community for students are numerous. The new structure eliminates many barriers to success and degree completion. This will significantly reduce management at the colleges while maintaining critical resources for students at the campus level. In particular, the new structure calls for an increased focus on enrollment management, advising and retention to maximize the impact of our guided pathways initiative.

Colleges currently are not able to share student information from one to another. When students take classes at multiple colleges, as they sometimes need to do to get the classes they need, they must transfer classes between schools. However, those transfer credits do NOT count towards the students' GPA. At the same time, they have to provide duplicate documents needed to enroll, such as high school transcripts, immunization records, and previous college transcripts. They also may have to pay the \$20 application fee multiple times.

Under the new structure, students would apply once, and be able to take classes at any of the 12 campuses, and all courses taken would apply to their degree program and their GPA.

How will the consolidation affect CSCU's accreditation?

The 12 community colleges all are currently accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). They are accredited separately, which requires that each institution meet the 9 NEASC standards required for continued accreditation. By consolidating the 12 colleges into one, this constitutes a change in the accreditation.

NEASC standards for accreditation

What does the leadership structure of one single community college look like?

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 must be included in the organizational structure. Campuses will be organized into three regions with three Regional Presidents, managing the coordination between campuses. Each campus will have a Vice-President to manage the campus and play the critical role of serving the surrounding community. The three regional presidents will also dually serve as a campus Vice-President for one of the campuses in their region.

Each campus would maintain their local identity and have a campus Vice President with responsibility for local campus operations, delivery of academic programs and services and community relations. Regular communication with NEASC has been central to this effort and we are invited to bring forward a substantive change to the Commission this spring.

What is the purpose of the three regions and why does each have a President?

Consolidating 12 separate colleges, each with a long history of working independently, into a single college will take considerable effort to align processes and practices. To effectively manage an entity of this size, and to coordinate processes across the 12 campuses, we will need regional positions. These positions will be in many areas, such as finance, enrollment management, planning and research, I.T. and marketing. Staff currently working at one college now will shift into regional roles, working with their colleagues across four campuses and the other two regions.

For the consolidation to truly benefit students, there needs to be a leadership structure serving these regions that allows for better alignment of processes and practices than we have now. Over the last few months, we have learned that when campuses work together, such as Gateway and Housatonic, and Tunxis and Asnuntuck, there are many ways to achieve more efficiencies and better coordinate delivery of services to students. In an effort to compound these efficiencies, the three regional presidents will also serve as a campus vice-president for one campus within their respective region.

How will the three regions be staffed? Does this create more positions?

Staffing will primarily be done by searching among current community college personnel, to identify those who have the skills and experience to move into regional positions, wherever possible. These positions will have responsibilities beyond their immediate campus location, and will work closely with their colleagues at the other campuses within their region. Drawing from our amazing talent currently within the community colleges, will avoid the need to create additional positions. While an overall reduction in administrative headcount will take place primarily through attrition.

What is the main responsibility of the campus Vice President?

The campus vice-presidents will effectively be campus CEOs, reporting to the regional presidents. They will lead their campuses and manage day-to-day operations with the campus community. A very important task for the campus V.P. is to work closely with the surrounding community to ensure that the campus and the college remain responsive to those communities; both in terms of workforce development and helping students achieve their goals.

Which positions will change because of the consolidation? Will the functions of registrar, financial aid and admissions be the same?

Primarily the positions that will change are those in leadership roles and any positions that are elevated to regional positions. Enrollment management positions such as those in admissions, financial aid, registrars and student retention may shift focus from serving one campus to eventually serving the college as a whole.

All functions will be similar except that they will operate under a single college, with a single set of policies. Instead of having three separate departments, financial aid, admissions and registrar, the departments would instead work together. Staff in the future would be cross-trained, to handle admissions and financial aid, to help students enroll quicker and easier.

Why specifically is "enrollment management" being consolidated?

Currently, the 12 colleges each handle enrollment management in twelve different ways. This leads to students experiencing very different processes when applying to more than one college. A major advantage to having a single college is that we can coordinate a common admission, financial aid, and registration process for every student. They will only need to complete one application, provide one set of documents, and obtain one financial aid package.

The proposed enrollment management structure will be lead by a VP for enrollment management, who will work with three regional executive directors of enrollment management. These directors will be charged with managing all financial aid, admission,

recruitment, and registration of all students within their region. They will also coordinate approaches between the three regions to ensure that all students receive the best possible experience.

How does consolidation affect academic programs?

The implications for academic programs will need to be carefully determined, and will take time to do so. Having common degrees among the 12 campuses will better serve students, as it will remove the uncertainty of course applicability between campuses. The single college would eventually award all degree programs. In accordance with NEASC standard 3.13 and 3.15, faculty has an important responsibility to determine the curriculum for any degree programs that need to be common. Where it makes sense based on local needs or area of focus, there will continue to be some programs that are unique and differentiated across campuses. Where degrees and certificate programs are similar, there is an opportunity for faculty to work together to agree on a single, common degree program in certain areas, especially those that exist across the 12 campuses. Externally accredited programs will likely need to apply for a single external accreditation over time. Courses will need common course numbers and common pre-requisites.

Will there need to be common general education?

In accordance with NEASC standards 4.14 - 4.18, there will need to be a common general education core for all undergraduate degree programs within the college. The curriculum will need to be determined by a faculty committee as soon as possible, built upon the significant progress made among the TAP competencies.

Will there still be a strong connection between the 12 campuses and their local community?

Yes, this is one of the most important elements of this proposal. The campuses will continue to work closely with the local business and civic leadership within their respective communities to develop the needed programs that are essential to the workforce needs of that region. There will also be better coordination and alignment of programs offered within each region, with campuses working together to develop academic programming with the regional community.

Will campuses still have foundations and advisory boards?

Yes, each of the 12 colleges currently has its own foundation and regional advisory boards. The foundations are legally separate 501c(3) entities, and will be completely unaffected by this proposed consolidation. As part of the commitment to retain the local connections between campuses and the local community, it is important that these organizations continue to operate as they do now.

The foundations will continue to operate in support of the local campus as they do now; raising funds to benefit students on their campuses. Any funds raised by the foundation will be controlled by the foundation and used to support their local campus.

How much money is likely to be saved because of the consolidation?

The projected savings targets were \$28 million for the consolidation of the community colleges. We intend to fully achieve the projected savings targets.

How long will the consolidation take to complete?

We are seeking approval from the Board of Regents and CIHE of NEASC to begin the new consolidated community college on July 1, 2019. A substantive change proposal is due to CIHE in the spring of 2018 with an anticipated approval from NEASC in June 2018. Once the new institution is formed, it is likely that a comprehensive self-study would be necessary within the first 2-3 years to report on progress and to ensure that standards are being met.