



Written Testimony Submitted by
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to the Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
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Senator Bye, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, I regret that due to other commitments, I am unable to appear before you today. I do, however, wish to submit comments for your consideration regarding two proposed bills that the Committee is considering today.

Senate Bill 288, An Act Requiring a Study of the Delivery of Information Technology Services to Public Institutions of Higher Education.

In order to inform the testimony that follows, I would first like to describe Information Technology (IT) operations as they currently exist within the CSUS.

IT operations emanating from the CSUS System Office provide for system-wide telecommunications and wide area and local area network services for the four universities and the System Office. In addition, the System Office hosts the Learning Management System for all four universities. The IT organization at each university develops and maintains information systems and technologies to support the day-to-day operations of each university. It is also important to note that a majority of the services provided (such as student information systems, housing information systems, and instructional technology) are unique to higher education.

An example which demonstrates just one of the unique requirements of higher education is CSUS's Time Entry Management project. CSUS has approximately 8,000 full- and part-time employees at its four constituent universities – over 2,500 of which are student employees. There are currently nine different employee classes/bargaining units that have individual requirements that must be managed. For all full-time and most part-time employees, CSUS uses CoreCT as its time entry system, just as we use the CoreCT Human Resources and Payroll systems. However, CoreCT as currently configured by the State of Connecticut is unable to accommodate timekeeping for student workers and university assistants. Since 2007, the CSUS has been in talks with DOIT in hopes that the modifications to CoreCT might be made so that we would be able to migrate all employees to the CoreCT timekeeping system. Unfortunately, to date these necessary modifications to CoreCT have not been implemented by DOIT; thus, we have had no choice but to consider alternative solutions for these classes of employees.

In the meantime, however, it is important to know that we have been actively seeking – and achieving – economies and efficiencies in the area of information technology throughout the System. In the past five years, the System, working collaboratively, has adopted a wide array of cost cutting and efficiency improvement strategies. For example, all universities have outsourced their student email system to Microsoft; a number of systemwide contracts have been negotiated with hardware and software vendors, resulting in reduced pricing as a result of economies of scale; maintenance contracts on hardware have been reduced or eliminated; the use of virtualization technologies to streamline data center operations have been expanded; and document imaging and workflow management systems which streamline back office operations have been implemented. All these initiatives have resulted in reductions in cost while improving productivity and service quality.

We recognize that more can be done, and we are now focusing on the following strategies to further improve IT operations at the CSUS:

1. Examine various IT organization and operation models both externally across public higher education and internally across our four universities to identify best practices;
2. Unify telecommunication, network, storage, and server infrastructures across institutions. The unified computing infrastructure will not only take advantage of economies of scale but also will significantly reduce complexity, dynamically utilize computing resources, guarantee interoperability, simplify support, and cut back on operating costs;
3. Where appropriate, consolidate administrative information systems to guarantee data standards and cross-institutional interoperability, streamline business processes, simplify support, and significantly cut down on total cost of ownership;
4. Review further opportunities for outsourcing;
5. Examine open source software solutions and maximize the utilization of internal application development capability;
6. Accelerate the use of virtualization technologies to speed up service deployment, and reduce investments in physical equipment;
7. Maximize the utilization of Data Center and computing facilities; and
8. Partner with other public higher education institutions in the State to take advantage of economies of scale and cloud technologies to deliver common services.

In regard to strategy No. 8, I am pleased to report that the Community Technical Colleges, the University of Connecticut and CSUS are already investigating collaboration opportunities.

One final point on this proposed legislation: because of the uniqueness of information technology in higher education, we strongly urge that any study of the delivery of university Information Technology services include members from higher education with specific expertise in this area as part of the study team.

House Bill 6257, An Act Concerning a Strategic Plan for Higher Education

As many of you know, CSUS has long supported an overarching strategic plan for higher education. We are eager to participate and look forward to being at the table to assist in the development of this important roadmap for the future of Connecticut.

In fact, earlier this week, we testified in support of legislation in the Program Review and Investigations Committee, Raised Committee Bill 1026, that would implement the recommendations of that committee concerning a public agenda for higher education. That bill would establish a leadership group to develop such an agenda that would include statewide goals.

This legislature and all of the constituent units of public higher education in Connecticut share a common goal – to do what is best for our students and our state – and CSUS would like to help achieve that objective. We are ready, willing and able to be a thought partner in this endeavor, to be at the table to work constructively with you and other key stakeholders to sift through the various good ideas to develop the best strategy for Connecticut.

As you are aware, there is not one absolute guaranteed way to assure that an effective, efficient and comprehensive strategy for higher education is established. Different states pursue this objective in different ways, and here in Connecticut, there are varying proposals now being considered as well.

We are committed to a plan that will meet all of Connecticut's needs – a data-informed effort to address state challenges and prepare our students to thrive, and help our state thrive, for years to come. We look forward to working with you to achieve this result.

I hope that this information is helpful in your deliberations on these bills. Please contact Jill E. Ferraiolo, Associate Vice Chancellor for Government Relations/Communications, if you require any additional information or have any questions regarding this matter.