



Connecticut State University System

*Developing a State of Minds*

BR#02-28



RESOLUTION

concerning

ONLINE LEARNING  
IN THE  
CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

June 14, 2002

WHEREAS, The Board of Trustees has encouraged and authorized funding for the development of online learning opportunities for students who want more convenient and ready access to, or who would otherwise be unable to overcome barriers to, educational opportunities at universities within the Connecticut State University System, and

WHEREAS, The initial implementation of *OnlineCSU*, the virtual classroom of the four CSU universities authorized by the Board to coordinate and facilitate the delivery of online courses and programs offered for credit by the universities, has resulted in a significant number of students benefiting from online learning, and

WHEREAS, The Board has indicated its desire that, in order to obtain economies of scale and to benefit from a single brand name for its online offerings, *OnlineCSU* be coordinated by a dedicated *OnlineCSU* staff, and

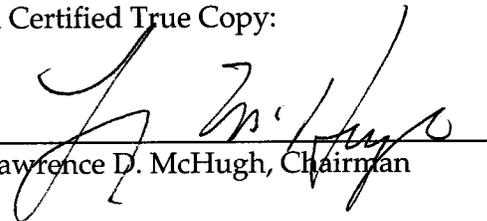
WHEREAS, The need has arisen to develop pricing based on a fee for certain graduate programs rather than pricing all offerings by course on a per credit basis, using a market pricing strategy that minimally reflects true costs and that assures earlier and more substantial revenues to offset start-up costs, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That for-credit undergraduate and graduate offerings by the universities within the Connecticut State University System delivered via the Internet shall continue to be offered through *OnlineCSU*, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Chancellor of the Connecticut State University, in collaboration with the universities, will develop and maintain appropriate procedures for the administration of *OnlineCSU* including the process to be followed for the setting and payment of program and/or course fees, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the universities and *OnlineCSU* staff will continue to collaborate fully to build enrollments through the development of innovative programs and course offerings.

A Certified True Copy:



Lawrence D. McHugh, Chairman

**ITEM**

Online learning in the Connecticut State University System

**BACKGROUND**

The Board of Trustees authorized the funding and delivery of online instruction under the coordination of the System Office via *OnlineCSU* in May 1998. The mission of the CSU System and subsequent actions in authorizing fee levels and refund policies for *OnlineCSU* have acknowledged *OnlineCSU* as the exclusive virtual classroom of the universities of the Connecticut State University System.

Since its first classes in Fall 1999, *OnlineCSU* has expanded rapidly, including fully online Master's programs in Library Science at SCSU and Data Mining at CCSU with other Master's programs in the planning stages. More than 7,500 persons have enrolled in courses delivered by *OnlineCSU* since its inception.

**ANALYSIS**

The System Office and the universities have agreed on a long-term strategy for *OnlineCSU* to offer graduate level programs and a broad array of general education courses at the undergraduate level.

Previous Board actions reflect the assumption that the CSU is in the strongest position to compete in regional, national, and international markets and to develop appropriate "best practices" if these programs and courses are delivered via a single venue, rather than separately by each university. The Board also has indicated its desire that, in order to obtain economies of scale and to capitalize on a single brand name for its online offerings, *OnlineCSU* should be coordinated by a dedicated staff. These actions are congruent with, and supported by, the current vendor agreement to provide a common platform and standards for all online instruction.

The proposed policy recognizes the need to use a market pricing strategy that minimally reflects true costs and that assures earlier and more substantial revenues to offset start-up costs; reinforces that all for-credit offerings by the universities within the CSU System delivered via the Internet should be offered through *OnlineCSU*; and, authorizes the Chancellor of the Connecticut State University, in collaboration with the universities, to develop and maintain appropriate procedures for the administration of *OnlineCSU*, including the process to be followed for the setting and payment of program and/or course fees.

**CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the policy concerning online learning in the CSU System.

## PROCEDURES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND PRICING OF ONLINECSU

### I. Policy Statement

- A. All for-credit undergraduate and graduate offerings by the universities within the Connecticut State University System delivered via the Internet shall be offered through *OnlineCSU* and subject to oversight by representatives of all collaborators.
- B. *OnlineCSU* should primarily focus on reducing the barriers to learning for students in Connecticut, and secondarily on extending learning opportunities for students outside the state.
- C. Based on considerations of market need, *OnlineCSU* should focus on the establishment and maintenance of online graduate programs resulting in the attainment of a masters degree.
- D. The technology tools associated with on-ground courses (such as the learning platform and portal) should, if possible, be identical to the technology tools associated with *OnlineCSU*, so that faculty may "web-enhance" their on-ground courses as well as improve the delivery of online courses.

### II. Administration

- A. The universities – represented in each case by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs or other designee of the President – will work with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs on a Policy Group to recommend policies and procedures to the Chancellor, the Council of Presidents and the Board of Trustees.
- B. Among other responsibilities, the Policy Group will:
  - consider policies and procedures for the operation of *OnlineCSU*,
  - recommend new policies and procedures or changes in existing policies to the Council of Presidents and the Chancellor,
  - consult with appropriate individuals or groups within CSU regarding those policies and procedures that normally fall into their realm of responsibility prior to making recommendations,
  - assure that representatives of the functional groups impacted have reviewed recommendations for new or changed policies.
- C. A secretariat affiliated with the system office will handle relationships with vendors (including contract negotiation and contract management), coordinate the overall *OnlineCSU* program with the universities, and handle overall marketing of *OnlineCSU* to prospective students. Staff of the secretariat (hereafter the "*OnlineCSU* staff") will also perform other duties as required – particularly in periods of transition.

- D. An analysis will be conducted during FY 2003 to determine if it is possible and cost-effective to transition the functions and costs of the secretariat to the universities.

### III. Pricing

- A. Course fees and tuition may be set by the Trustees on either a course by course, per credit hour basis, or on the basis of a fee for a complete graduate program, hereafter called a "program fee." In either case, the pricing strategy should take into account the market, minimally reflect the true costs of offering the course or program, and, if possible, assure early and more substantial revenues to offset start-up costs.
- B. Program fees for online degrees offered through *OnlineCSU* are to be recommended by the universities, in response to market considerations, the need to discount for clients guaranteeing minimum enrollments or contributing in-kind services, or the need to engage in a strategic partnership, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Connecticut State University System and subject to approval by the Board of Trustees through its statutory authority to set tuition and fees. "Program fees" may vary.
- C. Students enrolling in courses or programs offered through *OnlineCSU* will enroll and pay tuition and/or course fees to the university offering the program or course and all revenues generated by these enrollments will be collected by the universities.
- D. The universities will remit to the CSU System Finance Office per-credit hour amounts necessary to pay the vendor costs associated with *OnlineCSU*, and will also remit to the CSU System Finance Office per-credit hour amounts, up to a set level of enrollments, of sufficient magnitude determined by the Board of Trustees in its annual review and approval of spending plans, to cover the costs of vendor management, coordination and other core services provided by *OnlineCSU* staff.