

**ITEM**

Proposal to adopt a policy concerning Holistic Case Management Advising at the CSCU Community Colleges that 1) ensures all degree and certificate seeking students have an assigned professional Guided Pathways Advisor and support network of faculty and staff who collaborate with students to plan for their educational goals and deliver the necessary holistic services to stay on track to completion; 2) reduces the student (headcount) to Guided Pathways Advisor (full time equivalent) ratio to 250:1, with the goal of reaching full scale by Fall 2022; and 3) adopts a student success technology platform that facilitates holistic case management advising.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR FULL BOARD**

**Resolved:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education formally adopts the Holistic Case Management Advising Policy for the CSCU Community Colleges.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This staff report:

- Describes how the structure of advising at the CSCU Community Colleges prevents current advising staff from providing students with the supports necessary to improve retention, completion, and equity;
- Explains how a holistic case management advising model will benefit students at the CSCU Community Colleges and promote Guided Pathways principles;
- Illustrates how a holistic case management advising model ensures all degree and certificate seeking students are assigned a Guided Pathways Advisor for their entire time at the institution, who guides students in the creation of a personalized plan, monitors their progress, and coordinates the holistic supports they need to achieve their academic and career goals;
- Explains how a holistic case management advising model is effective only when Guided Pathways Advisors have reduced caseloads and access to a student success technology platform that facilitates personalized planning, progress monitoring, service coordination, and communication;
- Provides evidence that other community colleges have improved their students' retention and completion rates and reduced equity gaps in achievement after implementing a holistic case management advising model; and
- Documents the process by which the CSCU Holistic Case Management Advising Policy was created.

**THE MODEL**

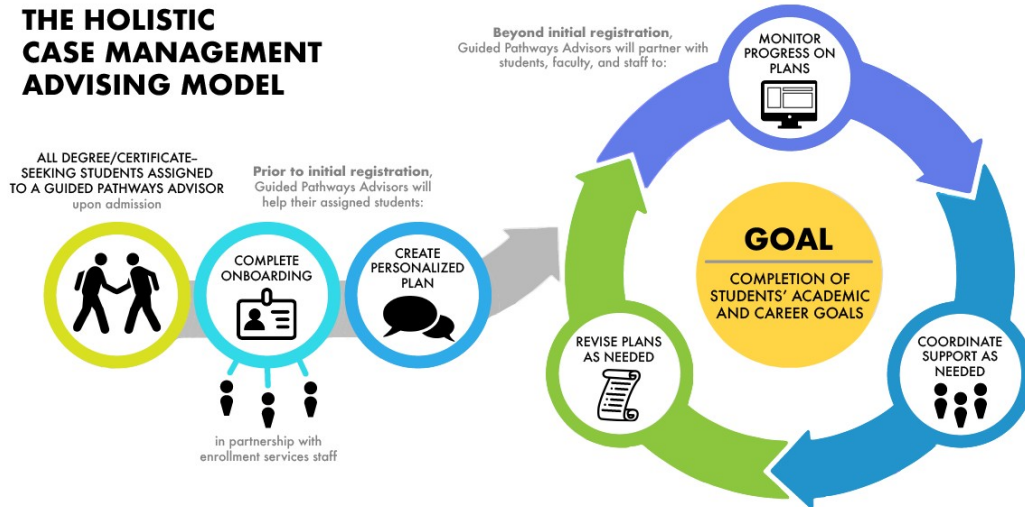
The Guided Pathways framework seeks to help community college students efficiently complete credentials, transfer, and attain jobs with value in the labor market. It consists of four pillars: 1) provide students with clearly structured program pathways with clearly defined expectations and

outcomes for education and employment, 2) get all students on an individualized plan that lays out the steps to achieve their academic and career goals, 3) help students stay on track to completion of a degree or credential, and 4) ensure that students are learning the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to succeed in life.

A holistic case management advising model serves as the foundation of Guided Pathways efforts. Holistic case management advising is integral to helping students identify and plan for their academic and career goals, monitor students’ progress toward their goals and assist those who stray off plan, and ensure that students are learning essential critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills (Bailey et al., 2015).

The central premise of a holistic case management advising model is that every student is assigned to a professional advisor (such as a Guided Pathways Advisor) who guides students through college from intake to graduation, monitors their academic progress, and coordinates the seamless provision of support services with a team of faculty and staff that stretches across traditional departmental lines. Professional advisors are able to provide deeper, more personalized services to students as a result of reduced caseloads and regular contact with their advisees. The ultimate benefit of a holistic case management advising model is that students are more likely to build a meaningful relationship with their assigned advisor and to receive a continuum of care that helps ensure their efficient completion of a credential (Richardson, 2008).

*Figure 1: Overview of the Holistic Case Management Advising model*



Under this model, every degree and certificate-seeking student at the CSCU Community Colleges is matched with a professional advisor, named their Guided Pathways Advisor, upon admission, who remains with the student for their entire time at the institution. Once assigned, Guided Pathways Advisors guide their respective students through an intake process that involves an initial conversation about their academic and career goals. Based on this conversation, Guided Pathways Advisors work with students to develop action steps toward these goals in the form of a plan that not only maps out the courses toward their declared area/program of study, but also identifies financial needs, opportunities for employment and

transfer, and resources and services relevant to their academic and holistic needs. Guided Pathways Advisors and students continually assess and revise plans based on academic performance and clarification of a students' interests, goals, and life circumstances.

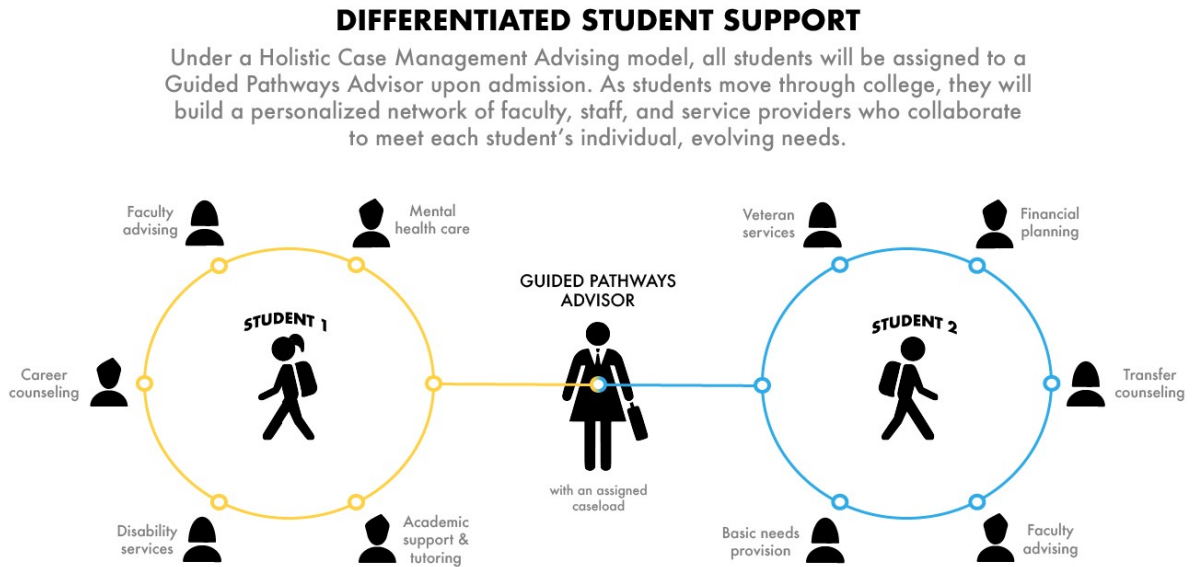
Students' plans are maintained on a student success technology platform, which students can access at any time to check their academic progress and adjust their plan. This technology platform also enables Guided Pathways Advisors, faculty, and other academic and student affairs staff to continually track students' progress on their personalized plans through academic performance indicators, risk factors, and metrics. It also facilitates communication between these stakeholders, enabling them to share feedback, through reports and early alerts regarding student performance and progress.

The continuous monitoring of student progress allows Guided Pathways Advisors, faculty, and other academic and student affairs staff to identify emerging barriers to student success and proactively intervene before problems worsen. Real-time student information collected on the technology platform also helps advisors triage cases, target resources to students who need them most, and tailor interventions to the specific, holistic needs of each student. If Guided Pathways Advisors can't provide the support themselves, then they are able to make referrals to other service providers on campus or in the community and track students' use of services through a system of case notes; access and user rights will be determined based on role and will comply with all federal guidelines as outlined in FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) or any other relevant policies and regulations.

The student success technology platform, while essential to creating these planning, monitoring, and intervention capacities, is only a tool that colleges must couple with ongoing, intentional professional development focused on developmental advising practices. For holistic case management advising to work effectively, the technology must also be accompanied by an institutional culture in which all stakeholders view themselves as sharing responsibility for student success and equity. Yet another critical ingredient of the model is multi-level leadership that builds support for holistic case management advising practices within and between departments (Kalamkarian et al., 2017).

A combination of these factors—assigned Guided Pathways Advisors, reduced caseloads, a college-wide student success technology platform, professional development resources for staff and faculty, a culture of shared responsibility, and committed leadership—can create the conditions for students to develop more meaningful relationships with an advisor and to receive the holistic supports necessary for completion. Furthermore, a holistic case management advising model better meets the varying needs of community colleges' diverse student bodies, and thus moves colleges closer to providing equitable educational opportunity for historically underserved groups (Achieving the Dream, 2018; Bettinger and Baker, 2011; Karp and Stacey, 2013; Miller and Murray, 2005; Pierce, 2016).

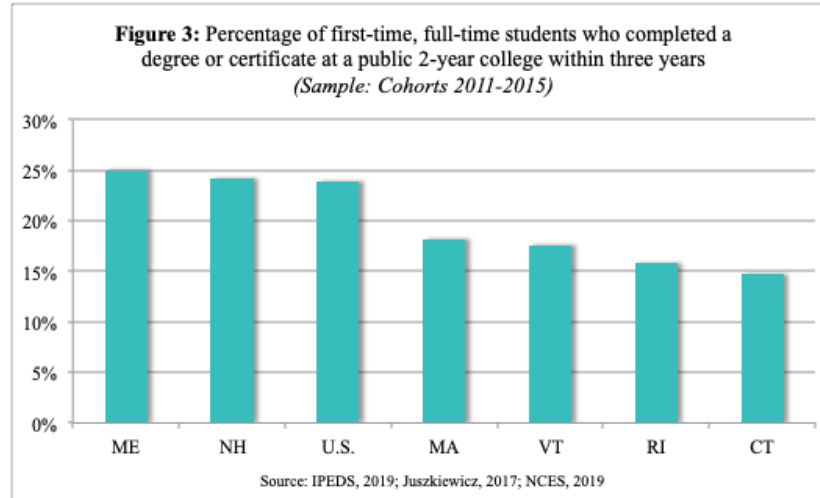
*Figure 2: Student support under the Holistic Case Management Advising model*



**BACKGROUND**

*Why redesign academic advising?*

The students of the CSCU Community Colleges face tremendous challenges to efficient completion of a postsecondary credential. These challenges have resulted in persistently low graduation rates across all twelve community colleges. Among first-time, full-time students who enrolled at the CSCU Community Colleges between 2011 and 2015, fifteen percent completed all the requirements for a degree or certificate within three years of starting. This was lower than the average IPEDS three-year graduation rate for all other state community college systems in New England during the same time period, which includes Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Furthermore, Connecticut’s graduation rate is consistently lower than the national average.



Historically underserved and minoritized student groups at the CSCU Community Colleges face additional barriers to success that make them even less likely to graduate. The average IPEDS three-year graduation rate for Black students has been 7 percent over the past five years and 11 percent for Latinx students, compared to 18 percent for Asian students and 19 percent for White students. The Board of Regents has stated its goals to increase retention and graduation rates and eliminate achievement disparities among different ethnic/racial, economic, and gender groups at the CSCU Community Colleges (CSCU, 2019).

The trends in completion and equity at the 12 CSCU Community Colleges result from many factors. One contributing factor is that the system of academic advising is neither structured nor adequately resourced to meet students' complex and diverse needs. Many of these needs are related to navigating the various decisions and processes involved in completing a credential. Many CSCU community college students also have financial and other individual needs that extend beyond the classroom but inevitably impact their educational experience and outcomes. The purpose of academic advising is to help students meet these holistic needs to maintain progress toward completion of a credential. Furthermore, academic advising should equip students with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to navigate the college environment and manage their needs with increasing independence and confidence (NACADA, 2003, 2006).

There are certainly pockets of advising excellence within the community college system. Students in cohort-based programs such as nursing or advanced manufacturing receive consistent, often mandatory advising, progress monitoring, and support from assigned faculty and staff; they also boast high rates of completion. However, these best practices in academic advising do not extend to the majority of CSCU community college students. The CSCU Guided Pathways Holistic Student Support Redesign (HSSR) team—through discussions with professional staff and faculty from all 12 CSCU Community Colleges and focus groups with students on four campuses—determined that the inconsistency in the quality of advising is due to resource deficits and structural issues, rather than any individual person, department, or campus.

Most obviously, advising offices are severely understaffed and financially under-resourced. Currently, there are approximately 760 students for every FTE (full time equivalent) professional advisor in the system; this far exceeds the median U.S. two-year institution advising ratio of

441:1, and the Board of Regent's ideal ratio of 250:1 as stated in its FY20/FY21 biennium expansion budget (Board of Regents, 2018; Carlstrom and Miller, 2013). The CSCU Community Colleges' current ratio reduces advisors' capacity to provide all students with the attention and services they need. Overwhelmed by the sheer number of students, professional advisors frequently only have the time to complete perfunctory tasks like course selection and registration. Current advising staff have little to no bandwidth for advising activities such as goal-setting, planning, and having conversations that develop students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Even when students are able to schedule an appointment with an advisor, they often see a different advisor each semester because advisors are not typically assigned to a specific caseload of students. As a result, students often receive inconsistent and conflicting information, leaving them frustrated and their needs unmet.

Another structural issue with the advising system is that not all CSCU community college students are required to work with an advisor when they first enter college to create a detailed plan that maps out the courses, activities, and supports they need to complete their chosen program of study, gain employment, or transfer to a four-year university. Consequently, many students do not establish clear academic and career goals in their early semesters, nor do they identify the action steps and holistic supports needed to achieve their goals efficiently. The lack of a thoughtful and comprehensive plan makes it difficult not only for students to make effective decisions, but also for current advising staff to effectively monitor students' progress toward degree completion.

Current advisors' monitoring abilities are further limited by the available technology. Ellucian Degree Works, the planning and auditing tool currently used at the CSCU Community Colleges, lacks critical functionalities like digital early alerts that would allow advisors, faculty, and other academic and student affairs staff to identify when students run into problems and to intervene proactively. The provision of support often depends on a student initiating a request for support. However, many students either delay coming forward for support or don't come forward at all, limiting advisors' ability to provide students with the support they need, when they need it most.

Finally, the various academic and student affairs departments involved in the CSCU Community Colleges' advising system too often operate in uncoordinated silos, forcing students to visit several offices before getting the support they need. The current student information technology system reinforces this siloed structure by preventing advisors, faculty, and other academic and student affairs staff from collaborating to support students who require resources and services from various providers across campus. For example, they are unable to make referrals to each other or share notes about certain students, leaving it up to the student to coordinate the services themselves and retell their story to every provider. At the end of the day, no one is held accountable for ensuring that the students' needs are fully met.

Altogether, these structural and capacity issues deprive many CSCU community college students of an accountable, "go-to" advisor who actively guides them through college with a thoughtful academic and career plan tailored to their unique goals and circumstances, and an integrated support network of faculty and other academic and student affairs staff. Without one or all of these resources, students are more likely to feel disconnected from their college, make poorly informed and inefficient academic and career decisions, and run up against barriers when moving between different departments and campuses to find the supports and course offerings they need.

These experiences may increase the chances that students delay their education or drop out before completing a credential.

Weaknesses in the current structure and capacity of the CSCU Community Colleges' academic advising system further disadvantage students from historically underserved and minoritized groups. Even though these students face the highest barriers to graduation, they receive the same type and level of advising services due to scarce resources and inadequate student success policies. This standardized approach to advising does not compensate for the unequal opportunities in students' lives beyond the classroom, thus perpetuating the equity gaps in completion rates across the system.

Advising redesign can and should be leveraged to improve the CSCU Community Colleges' low and inequitable completion rates which, if left unabated, will profoundly and negatively impact the livelihood of Connecticut's students, families, communities, workforce, and economy. Advising redesign would also support and reinforce CSCU's Guided Pathways efforts by getting all students on a clearly defined path to completion and helping them stay on track.

### ***Why a holistic case management advising model?***

The CSCU Guided Pathways Holistic Student Support Redesign team's findings suggest that tweaking advising practices at the CSCU Community Colleges without addressing structural and resource deficits will not yield meaningful improvements in student success. Their findings also reveal that students would be better served if the focus of advising moved beyond providing information and course registration to promoting *holistic* student development, which requires meeting students where they are and addressing their individual needs (Achieving the Dream, 2018).

The Community College Research Center and Achieving the Dream identified five guiding principles for colleges looking to design more holistic advising systems—termed SSIPP (Achieving the Dream, 2018; Karp and Stacey, 2013):

- **Sustained:** students receive support throughout their entire time at the institution, particularly at key momentum points.
- **Strategic:** students receive the support they need, when they need them, in a way that is convenient and efficient for them.
- **Integrated:** students receive the support they need in a seamless, coordinated fashion, without being tossed around between departments.
- **Proactive:** students receive the support they need at the earliest stage possible, not when their situation has become a crisis.
- **Personalized:** students receive the type and intensity of support appropriate to their unique needs.

Other community colleges implementing Guided Pathways—such as Lorain County Community College, Sinclair Community College, the Alamo Colleges District, and the Austin Community College District—have shown that changes to institutional policies and practices are a powerful strategy to deliver advising services and supports to students in a more holistic, sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, and personalized way. Specifically, these colleges made a

structural shift from a walk-in, self-service advising system to a *holistic case management advising model*. Their students are now assigned a single point of contact (such as a Guided Pathways Advisor) for their entire time at the institution, and advisors have specific and reduced caseloads. This new structure affords each student-advisor pair the time to build deep relationships with each other and co-create a personalized academic and career plan that considers the student’s evolving, unique goals and needs. Advisors are also trained to utilize student success technology platforms with special functionalities that enable them to regularly and proactively monitor students’ progress on their plans; intervene at the first sign that students are having trouble; refer students to the resources and services they need, when they need them; and collaborate with faculty, staff, and service providers across the institution to provide students with these supports in a seamless fashion.

**Table 1:** How students receive support under different scenarios

<b>WITHOUT holistic case management advising &amp; Guided Pathways, student support is frequently</b>	<b>WITH holistic case management advising &amp; Guided Pathways, student support is always</b>
Intermittent	Sustained
Delayed	Strategic
Siloed	Integrated
Reactive	Proactive
Standardized	Personalized

The combination of holistic case management advising and Guided Pathways practices at these colleges has resulted in significantly higher retention and graduation rates (Ashford, 2019; Dryden, 2018; Excelencia in Education, 2019; Ohio Higher Ed, 2018b). For example, at Lorain County Community College, the IPEDS graduation rate jumped from 8 percent to 25 percent within seven years (Dryden, 2018). At Lorain, the equity gap in developmental completion rates and first-term credit accrual has also narrowed; these short-term measures have been shown to correlate with longer-term measures like completion (Ohio Higher Ed, 2018a). It should be noted that these colleges were largely able to make these gains because of significant investments in human and technological resources, including hiring additional advisors, funding ongoing professional development for staff and faculty, and integrating a student success technology platform into their technical infrastructure. However, Lorain has demonstrated that colleges can make a strong return on these investments through increased student retention (Dryden, 2018).

***Holistic case management advising as part of Guided Pathways efforts***

Consistent with the revised CSCU Students First initiative approved by the Board of Regents on June 18, 2018, implementing a Holistic Case Management Advising Policy is one in a series of Guided Pathways initiatives designed to improve student success and increase student retention, completion, and equity. The new advising model will play a critical role in supporting key pillars of Guided Pathways: getting all students on a personalized plan, keeping them on plan, and ensuring their learning.



Holistic case management advising also complements other Guided Pathways efforts. For instance, faculty workgroups have been charged with developing program maps that include suggested course sequences, career opportunities, and labor market information. These maps will provide students and Guided Pathways Advisors with the foundation for academic and career planning. They will also give Guided Pathways Advisors a benchmark to assess their assigned students' academic progress. The CSCU Community College Areas of Study Policy serves as yet another tool to assist students and Guided Pathways advisors in making informed choices about their career and academic goals. Last but not least, the College and Career Success course (CCS 101) was intentionally designed by our community college faculty to offer students the opportunity for deep exploration of their academic and career goals. Taking CCS 101 would give students a valuable forum to continue the conversations that they begin with their Guided Pathways Advisors and develop a more thoughtful personalized plan to completion.

### *How was this model determined?*

The Holistic Student Support Redesign (HSSR) team was established in February 2018 as part of the CSCU Guided Pathways (GP) work, and charged to explore and make recommendations for best practices in implementing advising models, monitoring student progress, designing a common first-year experience for students, and developing wraparound services to address external factors that impede a student's ability to meet their educational goals.

The team includes a diverse cross section of faculty, staff, and administrators from all 12 CSCU community colleges, CSCU State Universities and CSCU System Office. Members of the team consist of professional staff from core areas such as advising, counseling, enrollment services and financial aid, as well as faculty members and academic and student affairs administration (see Appendix). The team is led by two managers (Gayle Barrett, Middlesex and Michael Buccilli, Gateway), both with practitioner and director-level experience in advising, enrollment management and student affairs, on loan from their current roles at their respective colleges.

In an effort to move the redesign process forward, a HSSR steering team was established with the two primary managers, two collaborating managers (Tamika Davis, Tunxis; Heidi Zenie, Three Rivers) and four members from the HSSR team (Jill Rushbrook, Asnuntuck; Jason Scappaticci, Capital; Nora Uricchio, Manchester; Debra Zavatkey, Northwestern). In September 2019, the HSSR team unanimously adopted a set of design principles to guide the steering team's work. The steering team participated in a facilitated design institute through Achieving the Dream (ATD) in October 2019 and continues to receive individual support from ATD staff with expertise in state-wide advising redesign efforts.

The steering team developed the initial policy draft. Benjamin Wong, a Research Fellow for CSCU Guided Pathways, provided the steering team with research, writing, and editing support. After several rounds of internal feedback, the revised draft was brought to the full HSSR team for endorsement. HSSR managers coordinated regional forums, online feedback process, and specific sessions with key state-wide councils such as advising leads, deans of student affairs and presidents/CEOs. The HSSR steering team will collect and review feedback before moving the revised policy forward for approval by the following bodies: HSSR, Guided Pathways Task Force, and the Community College Implementation Committee (CCIC). If the CCIC approves, it

will then recommend to move the policy forward to the Board of Regents Academic and Student Affairs committee for consideration.

Ensuring student participation continues to be a primary goal of this work. HSSR managers participated in a student panel coordinated by the Student Advisory Council (SAC) to the BOR in spring 2018 and followed up with a SAC briefing and Q&A session in spring 2019. The HSSR team hosted four student focus groups in spring 2019 to dig deeper into the issues students face in our current advising support and structures. Focus groups were held at Gateway, Manchester, Naugatuck Valley and Northwestern and yielded valuable data that has shaped the proposed policy. HSSR managers with the SAC to review the draft policy in February.

***What are the next steps if the policy is approved?***

The HSSR managers, steering team, and full team will continue to develop and refine the holistic case management advising model and create an initial implementation plan to be presented to the Board of Regents Academic and Student Affairs Committee by December 2020. The plan will include detailed timelines, benchmarks, and a full assessment plan to track progress during the various stages during and post-implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is the recommendation of the System's Provost, Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, and Vice President of Enrollment Management that the Board of Regents give favorable consideration to the adoption of the proposed Holistic Case Management Advising Policy for the CSCU Community Colleges.

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## APPENDIX

HSSR Membership List\*

Rebecca Adams	<i>Professor of English, Chair of Humanities Department</i>	Housatonic Community College
Kathleen Ahern	<i>Interim Director of Advising &amp; Retention</i>	Gateway Community College
Gayle Barrett (Non-Voting Member)	<i>Director of Enrollment Management/ Guided Pathways Manager/Student Success Center College Coach</i>	Middlesex Community College/System Office
Kerry Beckford	<i>Assistant Professor of English</i>	Tunxis Community College
Caitlin Boger-Hawkins	<i>Director of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness</i>	Northwestern Community College
Victoria Bozzuto (Ex-Officio)	<i>Guided Pathways Manager</i>	System Office
Paul Broadie	<i>President</i>	Gateway & Housatonic Community College
Michael Buccilli (Non-Voting Member)	<i>Director of Student Success, Guided Pathways Manager</i>	Gateway Community College/System Office
Alison Buckley	<i>Vice President for Enrollment Management</i>	System Office
Kellie Byrd-Danso	<i>Dean of Students</i>	Norwalk Community College
Patrick Carr	<i>Program Manager for Library Consortium Operations</i>	System Office
Diane Clokey	<i>Registrar</i>	Asnuntuck Community College
Jonah Cohen	<i>Professor of Human Services</i>	Gateway Community College
Les Cropley	<i>Director of Project Management and Academic Initiatives, Student Success Center</i>	System Office
Tamika Davis (Non-Voting Member)	<i>Director of Admissions/ Guided Pathways Manager/Student Success Center College Coach</i>	Tunxis Community College/System Office
Greg DeSantis (Ex-Officio)	<i>Executive Director Student Success Center and Academic Initiatives</i>	System Office
David Ferreira	<i>Dean of Academic &amp; Student Affairs</i>	Northwestern Community College
Sarah Gager	<i>Dean of Student Services</i>	Naugatuck Valley Community College

Keith Gauvin	<i>Registrar</i>	Western Connecticut State University
Jeannine Gibson	<i>Acting Director of Academic Advising &amp; Student Retention</i>	Housatonic Community College
Bonnie Goulet	<i>Director of Student Services</i>	Naugatuck Valley Community College
Sarah Hendrick	<i>Associate Director of Admissions</i>	Quinebaug Valley Community College
Bob Kozlowski	<i>Director of Advising and Retention</i>	Quinebaug Valley Community College
Amanda MacTaggart (Ex-Officio)	<i>Associate Director of the CSCU Student Success Center</i>	System Office
Margaret Malaspina	<i>Director of Financial Aid</i>	Capital Community College
Lesley Mara	<i>Director of Workforce Development, Strategic Partnerships &amp; Sponsored Programs</i>	System Office
Helen Marx	<i>Associate Professor of Curriculum and Learning/ Faculty Director of Advising</i>	Southern Connecticut State University
J.D. Mathewson (Ex-Officio)	<i>Senior Research Associate</i>	System Office
Judy Mazgulski	<i>Retention Specialist</i>	Middlesex Community College
Steve McDowell (Ex-Officio)	<i>Director of Financial Aid Services</i>	System Office
Steve Mendes	<i>Registrar</i>	Norwalk Community College
Alese Mulvihill	<i>Interim Dean of Student Affairs</i>	Gateway Community College
Joseph Navarra	<i>Coordinator of Disability Services</i>	Manchester Community College
Latisha Nielsen	<i>First Year and New Student Advisor</i>	Manchester Community College
Kelly Pittman	<i>Transfer Coordinator/Academic Advisor</i>	Tunxis Community College
Francine Rosselli-Navarra (Ex-Officio)	<i>Professor &amp; Chair, Department of Psychology &amp; Anthropology, Guided Pathways Manager</i>	Manchester Community College/System Office

Jill Rushbrook	<i>Director of Advising</i>	Asnuntuck Community College
Jason Scappaticci	<i>Associate Dean of Student Affairs</i>	Capital Community College
Daniela Squizzato	<i>Acting Director of Student Success Initiatives</i>	Housatonic Community College
Tim St. James	<i>Interim Dean of Students</i>	Asnuntuck Community College
Kathy Taylor	<i>Associate Professor Legal/Business</i>	Naugatuck Valley Community College
Kristina Testa-Buzzee	<i>Associate Dean of Continuing Education and Workforce</i>	Norwalk Community College
Nora Uricchio	<i>Associate Professor, Radiologic Science; Program Coordinator, Radiation Therapy</i>	Manchester Community College
Pam Williams	<i>Research Librarian</i>	Three Rivers Community College
Jama Yusuf (Ex-Officio)	<i>Sr. Information Systems Development Manager, Information Technology</i>	System Office
Brenda Zanta (Ex-Officio)	<i>Student/Academic Information Systems Support Specialist</i>	System Office
Debra Zavatkay	<i>Registrar</i>	Northwestern Community College
Heidi Zenie (Non-Voting Member)	<i>Program Coordinator, Exercise Science and Sports &amp; Leisure Management/ Guided Pathways Manager/Student Success Center College Coach</i>	Three Rivers Community College/System Office

\*HSSR Membership as of December 18, 2019.