



The Board of Regents makes CSCU more efficient, effective

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As the Board of Regents for Higher Education deals with the budget proposal the legislature is considering — leaving a gap of \$48.6 million gap for the 17 Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) to fill — a Three Rivers Community College staff member wrote an op-ed letter to the *CT Mirror* suggesting it is time to dismantle the Board of Regents — a central office that provides critical support services to CSCU campuses that otherwise would need to be replicated at each of the campuses.

In response to the suggestion of Jon Brammer, an administrator and an adjunct instructor at Three Rivers Community College, we feel strongly that the Board of Regents should not be dismantled.

The Board of Regents has continually strived to be responsible and effective in its use of public funding, driving efficiencies in the system office, and reallocating as many dollars as possible to student services and instruction. For example, IT management and facilities master planning functions are housed in the central office. Without these services, each and every campus would need to replicate these functions individually, at a far greater cost to students and the state.

It is also important to The number of central office staff has also shrunk since the 2012 reorganization of the Connecticut State University System and Connecticut Community Colleges system offices. In 2010, 193 staff worked in the two system offices comprising 3.5 percent of the total budget of the entire systems. Today, that number is down to 159.5 positions, a reduction of 33.5 staff. As a percentage of the total system budget, these costs are down to 2.69 percent. That's \$7.9 million in annual savings. At the same time, despite absorbing a \$6 million rescission, we are now operating close to break even for the current year.

The CSCU System has taken steps to control costs, and ensure that funding from students and state appropriations is returned to students in the form of additional faculty. In fact, in the last 18 months, we have hired 176 new instructional faculty across the system.

However, this current budget crisis has presented an historic and potentially devastating cut to CSCU, so hard decisions will have to be made. Some campuses — such as Three Rivers Community College, as Mr. Brammer mentioned — have made the decision to discontinue employment agreements based on the current state budget picture, not on performance, until there is greater clarity on the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 budget. In his letter, Mr. Brammer also mentioned a re-organization at Three Rivers Community College campus that he claims simply adds more administration. The reality is that the proposed reorganization will save money and return faculty to the classroom full-time.

I am confident that CSCU students, faculty, staff and administration all wish we did not have to address the financial dilemma we face this year, and in the next.

CSCU continues to play a critical role in the state's future. But to succeed, it will need the resources to ensure our students have an affordable opportunity for higher education. To that the Board of Regents has undertaken a long-term planning effort called Transform CSCU 2020 to promote access and affordability, to increase retention and completion rates, to better manage limited state funding, and continue to identify and source the highest caliber faculty for our institutions.

Therefore, I disagree with Mr. Brammer. The Board of Regents should not be dismantled, as it continually works with its 17 institutions to become a more effective higher education system for the students we serve from all backgrounds and income levels. I firmly believe in the work of Jim Collins who wrote *Good to Great*. And under the leadership of the Board of Regents, that is what we as a system shall become — great.