

**Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Recruitment/Retention Taskforce Meeting Minutes  
August 19, 2016**

**Agenda:**

1. Introductions
2. System Planning Parameters
3. Committee Expectations
4. Meeting Dates

**Introductions/Membership:**

Co-Chair Elsa Nunez, President of Eastern Connecticut State University; Co-Chair Jane Gates, Provost, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System; Michael Rooke, President of Northwestern Connecticut Community College; Myrna Garcia-Bowen, Director of the Office of Transfer and Academic Articulation, Central Connecticut State University (via conference call); Michael Shea, English Department Chair, Southern Connecticut State University; Barbara Richards, Professor of Sociology, Housatonic Community College and CSCU Faculty Advisory Committee member; William Gammell, Director of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System; Jim Lombella, President of Asnuntuck Community College (via conference call); Daisy Cocco De Flippis, President of Naugatuck Valley Community College (not present).

(The work group possesses a great deal of experience in education, business, legislative relations, community organizing and other professional sectors. It includes four CSCU presidents; the former provost at Western who is now at CSCU; several CSCU faculty members; and other CSUS staff. As a group, the members have served many different institutions.)

**System Planning Parameters:**

CSCU President Mark Ojakian has asked the CSCU community to come together to address a set of shared issues to improve student learning within the CSCU and to enhance our 17 institutions' operations. The plan is to have workgroups develop action plans to address the six issues during the fall 2016 semester, with committee reports/recommendations due to Mr. Ojakian in December.

Workgroups have been created around the following six areas:

- Financial Aid
- Purchasing/Contracts
- Human Resources
- Compliance Issues
- Recruitment and Retention
- Branding/Marketing

The workgroups are small enough to be able to meet easily and move issues forward, while having broad campus representation from Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and other campus departments. In this way, workgroup reports and recommendations will reflect the thoughts of the 17 campuses (using appropriate input and feedback processes) so that recommendations presented to Mr. Ojakian reflect system-wide input and perspectives.

While Mr. Ojakian is looking for draft recommendations by early December, he understands that recommendations will not have been fully vetted at that time. The various committees' work will help drive the System's budgeting and planning processes. While the hope is that the committees will be done by December, some committee work may have to move into the spring semester. All workgroup deliberations and reports should be completed by May 2017 at the latest, with the preference that the work be completed by December. A descriptive Progress Report is due in October to Mr. Ojakian.

If campus and outside experts are needed to help the committee in its deliberations, they will be contacted. Mr. Ojakian wants the committee to be as innovative and creative as possible. While the state budget is limited, idea generation should not be limited based on concerns about budget.

### **Questions/Committee Concerns:**

Who are the stakeholders related to recruitment and retention? How do we ensure that campus constituencies are involved and represented in the final outcomes of the committee, reflecting campus expertise? The committee should look at best practices in the region. A concern was voiced that prior CSCU planning processes were proscriptive and unwieldy. Since each institution has its own best practices in the areas of recruitment and retention, a "one size fits all" will not work. What are the guiding, overriding principles in the area of recruitment and retention that the system office can share across the campuses for the benefit of students?

### **Work Plan Expectations:**

#### **DATA/RESEARCH**

- Use data and technology to inform decisions and improve retention
- Gather current enrollment/retention data by campus
- Where are we now (baseline data)?
  - Where do we want to go? (benchmarks, targets)
  - How do we get there?
  - Look at a recent article on Georgia State University. They have a culture that experiments to improve retention of low-income students, and measure the effectiveness of each strategy
  - We must encourage ongoing data collection and analysis.
  - We need more accessible data across the system; we currently have fragmented, incompatible databases

#### **GOALS/PROJECTIONS**

- Recruitment and retention must be addressed together.
- Since each institution is different, the issue of recruitment must be campus-driven and based on projections and goals.
- Have the campuses thought about their maximum enrollment levels? What will be the enrollment goal for each institution in five years? 10 years?
- How much of enrollment projections will be due to new students? How much due to retention?
- What should the full-time enrollment at each institution be? (Some, like Eastern, are not seeking to expand enrollments. They want to retain more students, and improve the quality of incoming students. Asnuntuck, on the other hand, is doubling its manufacturing center enrollments. Northwestern Connecticut CC wants to stay small and improve quality.)

## **EXTERNAL FORCES/COMPETITION**

- We need to consider the landscape around us. Private, for-profit educational enterprises are very aggressive in today's competitive marketplace. We must consider not only institutional goals but the marketplace itself.
- What is the competition among CSCU? With our other in-state competitors? Across New England?
- Because the high school graduate class in Connecticut is declining and the percentage of students who stay in Connecticut to go to college is static, our pool is declining. We need to find ways to get more students to stay in Connecticut.
- Increasing educational access for underrepresented populations is also key.
- Each CSCU institution has a list of known competitors. For instance, Albertus Magnus, UNH and Quinnipiac are all SCSU competitors. Is it not Connecticut's interest to use our public education system to educate state residents? Privates are monetarily driven.

## **MAKE ENROLLMENT DECISIONS BASED ON MISSION**

- What are the workforce needs of Connecticut? (nursing, manufacturing, etc.)
- We need to advocate for more funding to turn our students into the state's future workforce. As the quality of our educational programs improves, so will retention and graduation rates.
- The liberal arts is central to student success as well, not just specific job skills. Students need to have the ability to learn over a lifetime, ready to adapt to change. (Workforce development and the liberal arts are not mutually exclusive. This is a fundamental point the committee must make in the introduction of its report. We need tax-paying citizens who are critical thinkers)
- The increase in low-skill jobs in Connecticut and the declining level of high-skill jobs and failed companies supports our argument for more education, higher education, higher level skills.

## **AFFORDABILITY/FUNDING**

- There is a growing financial gap for students to afford college, and it impacts retention. Families cannot meet the growing gap. We need to advocate for more financial aid for students, in addition to operating fund increases.
- We must make a case for more investment from the General Assembly, whether they have the wherewithal or not. (What campus operations are most likely to be supported? Academic support services? Research? Other?)
- Look at the cost of education and how student pay, keeping mind the competition we have with institutions that heavily discount tuition.
- We should look at the perceived value of our colleges and universities; are students/customers finding that their needs are being met and do they see their investment as having a sound return?
- How are we going to account for and respond to nontraditional students? We cannot simply look at the traditional high school graduate market. What are the programming implications for doing so?
- How can we address the needs of other populations not currently being served, esp. low-income students? (The Achievement Gap speaks to the public nature of our mission. Meeting the gap must be an important element of our enrollment mix and drive special funding requests.
- We can also look at SNAP funding, which is being used at Asnuntuck to support scholarships. Foundations can also be solicited.
- We should solicit funding for technology related to retention.

**SERVICES TO STUDENTS**

- How can we improve services to nontraditional students? For example, evening services are not routinely available on our campuses — counseling, library, food service, etc. Perhaps we could ask for library funding at nighttime, or on-campus childcare.
- The committee should identify best practices for retention across our system and beyond.
- Some students are not ready to go to college. Part of our serving them is helping them realize that “timing is everything.”
- How to accommodate differing student goals without being penalized for it is another aspect of this issue. (We could develop a grid that demonstrates that a better model would be to create cohorts based on preparation and education goals.)

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

Dr. Nunez has distributed a list of possible dates through October in hopes of holding two meetings before the Progress Report is due in October.