

**BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION  
CT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (CSCU)  
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.  
CONDUCTED IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY  
LIVESTREAMED ON <https://www.youtube.com/live/rUFcS8rJKxo>**

<b>REGENTS – PARTICIPATING (Y = yes / N = no)</b>	
Marty Guay, Chair	Y
Richard J. Balducci	Y
Ira Bloom	Y
Shian Earlington, Student Regent	Y
Juanita James	N
Sophia Jappinen	Y
Richard Porth	Y
Luis Sanchez, Student Regent	Y
Ari Santiago	Y (Remote)
Erin Stewart	N
Elease E. Wright	Y(Remote)
Ted Yang	Y (Remote)
*Brendan Cunningham, FAC Chair	Y (Remote)
*Colena Sesanker, FAC Vice Chair	Y
*Dante Bartolomeo, Labor Commissioner	N
*Dr. Manisha Juthani, Public Health Commissioner	N
*Daniel O’Keefe, DECD Commissioner	N COS Steuber Attended
*Charlene Russell-Tucker, Education Commissioner	N
*Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer	Y
*Charlene Casamento, OPM Undersecretary	Y
Pam Heleen – Secretary to the Board of Regents	Y
<i>*ex-officio, non-voting member</i>	

**CSCU STAFF:**

Terrence Cheng, CSCU Chancellor  
 Jessica Paquette, Vice Chancellor for System Affairs & Chief of Staff  
 Danny Aniello, Special Asst to the Chancellor, Executive Director for System Project Management  
 Dr. Lloyd Blanchard, CSCU Interim Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer  
 Adam Joseph, Vice Chancellor of External Affairs  
 Karen Buffkin, General Counsel  
 Dr. Aynsley Diamond, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs  
 Dr. Tamara O’Day Stevens, Interim AVP, Enrollment Management and Student Success  
 Lesley Mara, AVP, Systemwide Initiatives and Sponsored Programs  
 Cameron Liston, Chief Compliance Officer  
 Jen Person, Executive Director of HR Operations  
 Dr. Manohar Singh, Interim President, Western CT State University  
 Ed Klonoski, President, Charter Oak State College (arrived at 9:33)  
 Dr. Dwayne Smith, Interim President, Southern CT State University  
 Dr. Zulma Toro, President, Central CT State University  
 Dr. Karim Ismaili, Incoming President, Eastern CT State University  
 Dr. John Maduko, President, CT State Community College (arrived at 9:23)

Tom Yelich, CT State Chief of Staff

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Guay called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Following roll call, a quorum was declared.

2. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

*On a motion by Regent Balducci and second from Regent Bloom, the agenda was adopted by unanimous voice vote.*

3. **CHANCELLOR CHENG'S REMARKS (00:06:26)**

- Chancellor Cheng stated that the Office of the State Comptroller released its findings of its audit of the CSCU system. He thanked the Comptroller's office for their thorough review of CSCU's policies, p-card and travel records, and for their recommendations to apply tighter controls and improve processes across the entire system. CSCU leadership is reviewing the recommendations and findings from the Comptroller's Office and is committed to implementing stronger controls, policies, and comprehensive training. These recommendations will support the goals of accountability and transparency across the system and protect taxpayer dollars and student funds. He added that the system has begun to take steps in this direction and will, over the next 100 days, implement recommendations to improve compliance and reporting. The Chancellor stated that he looked forward to working closely with the Board of Regents to not only implement the policies but put them into action.

The Chancellor publicly recognized that the Comptroller's work was spurred by his actions taken on behalf of the system and that it was clear that his judgment in several instances was lacking. He felt terribly that his actions distracted from the work of faculty, staff, and students.

- The Chancellor stated that during the week of December 9, he announced a new partnership between Western Connecticut State University, Central Connecticut State University, and the System Office. President Toro and the Chancellor attended a meeting with members of Western's community to hear their concerns. The work before this endeavor is to try to solve is the fact that Western Connecticut State University has a \$12M unsustainable structural deficit which means, that every year, in its current situation of enrollment, services, operations, and revenue, Western loses \$12M.

The reality is that even with the progress made to date, more must be done. The institution deserves stability and predictability, and the search for WCSU's next permanent president has begun. President Toro is chairing the search.

With the announced partnership and the search, people around our system have described this as a "takeover" of Western. It is not a takeover. Central's leaders are not making decisions for Western. The Chancellor's office is not making decisions for Western. Everyone is working together to support and bolster Western. In a few months, Central will produce a report of recommendations that will be given to the Chancellor and the Western leadership team. Then, discussions will take place as to what recommendations may be implemented; this work would take up to 3 years.

Professor Cunningham had remarks concerning issues at WCSU. However, due to technical difficulties, Chair Guay asked Professor Cunningham to submit his comments in writing for the record. They are included as Attachment A.

Western's reserves, which currently stand at \$11M, have been buttressed by \$10M in support received from the System Office over the last two years. Western must, and will, stand on its own.

- Chancellor Cheng recently met with bargaining unit leaders to discuss the development of the ACT framework and the upcoming legislative session. It was an honest and spirited discussion, and he appreciated the candor of our labor partners and leaders. It was helpful to hear their questions and concerns, and their ideas, which will help CSCU move forward and coordinate better the development of ACT at each institution across our system.
- The goal for the ACT Framework is to unite CSCU's efforts to expand access, enhance educational experiences, and align learning with real-world needs, supporting CSCU's mission to provide high-quality, innovative, rigorous and affordable academic programs that empower students to achieve their goals and make them ever stronger in their careers and communities. ACT will help CSCU communicate and advocate as the System works hard to secure more resources and support. As institutions and campuses work on key performance indicators through their shared governance structures, the final ACT framework will transform challenges into opportunities, unite stakeholders under a shared vision, and help to ensure that CSCU remains a leader in education and social mobility.
- The Chancellor shared that Dr. O. John Maduko has been reappointed as President of Connecticut State Community College. Dr. Maduko began his tenure as CT State's leader in June 2022 following the merger of Connecticut's 12 community colleges. Under his leadership, CT State has seen a 4% increase in enrollment for CT State's fall 2024 semester, marking the first year-over-year growth since fall 2012. This includes consistent enrollment gains among Hispanic, black, and adult students, reflecting the college's commitment to fostering inclusive access to higher education. Increasing participation in Connecticut's free tuition initiative, which now serves more than 59% of CT State students assures affordability and access. Results include solidifying CT State's position as the leading producer of professionals in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology, thus meeting the state's evolving economic and workforce demands. Developing a comprehensive, college-wide equity and civil rights framework, advancing CT State's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has also been a mark of CT State's success. Dr. Maduko has put access, excellence, and inclusion at the forefront of every decision and initiative. Chancellor Cheng congratulated Dr. Maduko on his reappointment.
- He noted that the Board of Regents will consider a proposal to freeze tuition for the 2025-2026 academic year. He added that it is critical that CSCU do everything possible to decrease the financial burden students face. Freezing tuition rates is part of CSCU's efforts to ensure that CSCU colleges and universities remain accessible and affordable for all. He urged the Board members to approve this proposal.

**4. BOR CHAIR GUAY REMARKS (00:23:40)**

- Chair Guay announced that on December 18, the Office of the State Controller Sean Scanlon released its report to the Governor on the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. The report was direct and blunt and identified the financial activities problems, particularly related to p-card usage and state-owned vehicles. Chair Guay noted that the System has a lack of documentation, a lack of policies and some poor judgment. Several recommendations have been put forth by the Office of the State Controller. Chair Guay stated that he is thankful for the work that Controller Scanlon and his team have done and is grateful for the full transparency and the path for

improvement. He added his personal and professional assurance that we will clean this up. The Chair set up a Financial Accountability Task Force that will lead this oversight effort led by Audit Chair Elise Wright. The Board will receive routine reports on the program review and recommendations, assessment, and implementation. He will be asking other Regents and system leaders to be part of this task force and will announce this group at the January BOR meeting. This team will meet with outside auditors who review our results annually to get a better understanding of what they're seeing, what they're not seeing and how we can do better.

- Chair Guay spoke of his priorities to build a better and stronger culture of shared governance and student success. He noted that we have made some progress in many areas. The CSCU transfer policy throughout the system will yield great benefits for student success for a long time to come. After a long shared and thoughtful shared governance collaboration, the restoration of student services demonstrates commitment to students and their needs. Task forces on Healthcare and Charter Oak will bear fruit for CSCU students, faculty, and external stakeholders.
- Chair Guay welcomes the opportunity to meet and to work with CSCU faculty to better collaborate Board Secretary Pam Heleen will schedule these meetings in 2025. He has appreciated the opportunity to work with the Senate presidents and is grateful for their service, experience, and inputs.

5. **BOR STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC) PRESENTATION** (00:27:49)

Student Advisory Committee Chair Luis Sanchez and Vice Chair Shian Earlington made their presentation to the Board as required by CT General Statute. The full PowerPoint is included as Attachment B.

- Chair Guay requested a list of the SAC representatives so that he could thank them for their service and a budget for 2025 activities. He also offered his attendance at one of their campus visits.

6. **SPECIAL TASK FORCE REPORT ON ONLINE EDUCATION** (00:48:20)

Due to technical difficulties, Regent Yang's brief presentation could not be heard. A copy of his report is included as Attachment C.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT** (00:48:59)

In addition to the two individuals who signed up for Public Comment, the Board received written testimony from two other individuals. The Regents received these documents in advance of the Board meeting. They are included as Attachment D.

Due to technical difficulties, Public Comment could not be heard. Both individuals were asked to submit their commentary in writing (Attachment E)

8. **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES** (00:51:18)

– **October 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Regent Balducci and seconded by Regent Jappinen, the October 24, 2024 Regular Meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

- **November 21 Special Board Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Chair Guay and seconded by Regent Bloom, the November 21, 2024 Special Meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

9. **CONSENT AGENDA** (00:52:11)

*On a motion by Regent Balducci, seconded by Regent Jappinen, the Consent Agenda was unanimously adopted.*

**RESOLUTIONS APPROVED ON CONSENT**

- a. Academic Programs – New Programs
  - i. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the licensure of a Curriculum and Instruction Program (CIP Code: 13.0301, OHE# TBD) leading to a Master of Science degree at Charter Oak State College; and grant its accreditation for a period of seven semesters beginning with its initiation, such initiation to be determined in compliance with BOR guidelines for new programs approved on or after April 3, 2020.
  - ii. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the licensure of a Data Analytics program (CIP Code: 30.7101, OHE# TBD) leading to a Bachelor of Science degree at Charter Oak State College; and grant its accreditation for a period of seven semesters beginning with its initiation, such initiation to be determined in compliance with BOR guidelines for new programs approved on or after April 3, 2020.
  - iii. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the licensure of a Marketing program (CIP Code: 52.1401, OHE# TBD) leading to a Bachelor of Science degree at Charter Oak State College; and grant its accreditation for a period of seven semesters beginning with its initiation, such initiation to be determined in compliance with BOR guidelines for new programs approved on or after April 3, 2020.
- b. Academic Programs – Modifications
  - i. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the modification of a program – specifically a name change to the Master of Science in Counselor Education: Specialization in Student Development in Higher Education at Central Connecticut State University.
  - ii. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the modification of the Associate of Science in General Studies program at Connecticut State Community College, specifically significant modifications of courses, program outcomes and program descriptions.
  - iii. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the modification of a program – specifically a name change to the Master of Science in Health Informatics at Charter Oak State College.
  - iv. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the modification of a program – specifically a name change to both the Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Health Care Administration at Charter Oak State College.
- c. Academic Programs – Discontinuations
  - i. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the discontinuation of the following undergraduate certificate at Charter Oak State College effective May 2026:  
Clinical Documentation Improvement CIP Code: 51.0707 OHE#: 20262
  - ii. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the discontinuation of the following undergraduate certificate at Charter Oak State College effective May 2026:  
Health Insurance Customer Service CIP Code: 51.0713 OHE#: 15447

- iii. **RESOLVED:** That the Board of Regents for Higher Education approve the discontinuation of the following undergraduate certificate at Charter Oak State College effective May 2026:  
Leadership in Health Care Administration CIP Code: 51.0701 OHE#: 16818
- d. 2025 BOR Calendar of Meetings – Attachment F
- e. Extension of Deadline for Submission of Five Year Sustainability Plan  
WHEREAS, The deadline for the submission of drafts of five (5) year sustainability plans to the Chief Financial Officer for the System Office was January 15, 2025; and  
WHEREAS, It is recognized that additional time is necessary to prepare the draft plans for review; now therefore be it  
**RESOLVED,** That the deadline for submission of draft plans from CSCU institution presidents to the Chief Financial Officer be extended from January 15, 2025 to end-of-business on February 28, 2025.

**10. ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – Committee Chair Bloom (00:52:35)**

Regent Bloom reported that the Academic & Student Affairs Committee met on December 6th and thanked the Board for their approval of the Consent Agenda. The first portion of the December 6<sup>th</sup> meeting was held jointly with the BOR HR and Administration Committee to receive the annual presentation from the CSCU Title IX Coordinator of the Sexual Misconduct Report.

Regent Bloom presented one item for Board consideration. Western Connecticut State University is putting forward a new program – a Bachelor of Science program in Atmospheric and Climate Sciences. The proposal outlines a comprehensive education in the fundamental principles of meteorology, climate systems, and environmental sciences with interdisciplinary studies in physics, chemistry, and mathematics to explore the dynamic processes that govern Earth’s atmosphere and climate. Western’s BS in Atmospheric and Climate Sciences, with an accelerated option for MS in Meteorology attainment, will complement existing WCSU Science programs by developing students who can predict weather, analyze climate patterns, and contextualize the importance of this study in building an equitable and climate resilient workforce, as well as offering access and opportunity for diverse students to apply current technological advances, for example work in AI, weather forecasting, and climate modeling. This new program introduction is concurrent with the discontinuation of the BS in Meteorology program and fills the need for a higher education degree in climate science in southern New England. Initiatives in Connecticut, and elsewhere, now include climate studies in the K-12 curriculum of primary and secondary public schools which will fuel the interest in this relevant and important environmental topic. This program draws on faculty expertise across disciplines (e.g., physics, meteorology, mathematics, chemistry, computer science) who will collaboratively work with students towards solving the most pressing environmental issues of our time.

*On a motion by Regent Bloom, seconded by Regent Jappinen, the new program was unanimously approved by voice vote.*

**11. AUDIT COMMITTEE – Committee Chair Elise Wright (00:57:00)**

Regent Wright delegated her report to CFO Blanchard to explain why this year’s audit has been delayed. CFO Blanchard stated that normally the audit report would be presented to the Board at the December meeting. This year the report had a few issues that led CFO Blanchard to seek a delay. The reason for the delay was that FY24 (which is the year of this audit) was the first year of the fringe policy change and that many questions emerged about how to account for fringe costs under the GASB rules (Government Accounting Standard Board which governs accounting for public entities in

the United States). In addition to the questions raised, the CSCU Controller left in September leaving the decisions on these technical accounting rules to CFO Blanchard. Consultation occurred with the Office of State Controller, the UConn accounting department, as well as our auditors at Grant Thornton. Grant Thornton sought consultation with national partners to try to get guidance on how they should handle this new fringe accounting. As time passed, CFO Blanchard was under pressure to make a call because accountants throughout CSCU needed to get the work done; so, he made a decision that was later contradicted by the auditors and that required CSCU to reverse many postings of fringe cost to CSCU books and led to the delay.

12. **FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE** – **Committee Chair Rich Balducci** (00:59:29)

Committee Chair Balducci introduced one action item for Board consideration - a resolution dealing with the CSCU FY2026 Tuition and Fee schedule. He reiterated the Chancellor's comment that there is no increase in tuition. The resolution does include raising two fees:

- food costs at the universities which have contractually gone up and require Board approval
- a credit card fee which is presently passed on to students who use their credit cards at the CSCU universities; this fee will now be implemented at CT State Community College.

*On a motion by Regent Balducci, seconded by Regent Bloom, the new resolution passed by unanimous voice vote.*

Chancellor Cheng thanked the Board for approving the tuition freeze.

13. **GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE** – **Committee Chair Juanita James**

No report.

14. **HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE** – **Committee Chair Sophia Jappinen**

No report.

15. **TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE** – **Committee Chair Ted Yang**

No report.

16. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – Chair Guay announced that there would be no Executive Session this month.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

*On a motion by Regent Jappinen, seconded by Regent Bloom, the meeting adjourned at 11:11 a.m.*

Submitted,

Pamela Heleen  
Secretary of the CT Board of Regents for Higher Education

## Board of Regents Meeting

### List of Attachments

Attachment A	Professor Brendan Cunninham Remarks
Attachment B	Student Advisory Committee Presentation
Attachment C	Scaling Task Force Report
Attachment D	Written Testimony Received Prior to BOR Meeting
Attachment E	Public Comment Remarks
Attachment F	2025 BOR Calendar of Meetings



## **Remarks submitted by Brendan Cunningham for 12/19/24 BOR Meeting**

**There are two parts to my remarks. The first part is purely my own and contains responses to recent statements, including during the meeting. The second part is a statement developed in collaboration with stakeholders at Western.**

### **Remarks attributable to me (Brendan Cunningham):**

I do not believe there is a \$12M structural deficit at Western. Our financial specialists are not able to calculate fringe. Predicting the future is much harder than that. The track record shows that future financial predictions from management about CSCU are akin to a dice roll. So my professional advice is: do not believe them when they say there is a \$12M structural deficit at Western. I do not believe them, nobody should.

Just this morning, a part-time faculty member expressed serious concern in an email to me based upon this quote from Chancellor Cheng: “Originally for FY 2025, a budget deficit of about \$33.5 million was projected. The results actually reflected an unanticipated surplus of \$72 million.” Cheng admits that that their projection was off in sign. They initially predicted a negative balance but the result was positive. Cheng admits that their projection was off by an astonishing 328%.

So let’s use that result. I would like to congratulate Western on the number Chancellor Cheng touts in this meeting because it suggests that Western is running a \$25.8 million surplus. This is a fantastic accomplishment and it confirms what I already know: Western is an incredibly accomplished and important community.

Also, the record shows that Chancellor Cheng does not respect Western’s students, faculty, staff or the educational work that faculty and staff do. Respect is shown through actions not words. Chancellor Cheng’s actions, in the recent past and even in this meeting, show he does not respect the Western community. I do not believe him when he says he respects Western. The remarks below, prepared in collaboration with Western stakeholders, elaborate on why this is the case:

### **Remarks prepared in collaboration with Western stakeholders**

On Friday the 13th, Chancellor Cheng officially imposed on my colleagues at Western a three-year “consultancy”. Cheng plans to send to Western a team of administrators from Central led by Central’s president, Zulma Toro.

Cheng's announcement arrived amidst faculty working on grading, without any prior consultation. It was made without any recognition of the significant and important faculty-led progress made at Western so far.

In response, 120 Western faculty, as well as faculty from the other CSU campuses and our sibling unions, gathered yesterday to press Toro and Cheng to commit to fixing the problems with this scheme.

And despite evasiveness from Chancellor Cheng, that group of faculty did get some clarity—clarity about how half-baked this whole thing is.

- Chancellor Cheng did not know why the consultancy was being described as lasting “three years”— until faculty pointed out that is what he said in his email.
- Chancellor Cheng refused to commit to any specific work product or parameters for the consultant's work.
- And there is a basic conflict of interest presented by the chair of the Western presidential search committee also leading the consulting team. Chancellor Cheng even admitted that there was the appearance of a conflict but that it was OK because, quote, “I trust her.”

Over the last few days, colleagues at Western have been told that Central is a “flagship university” and that Western is some sort of drag on the system. As a colleague from a different CSU, I want to be very clear: we are one faculty, one system, one union, and we will not be divided. The faculty at Western should be incredibly proud of the work they do, the work they are doing, and the students they serve.

The drag on the system is the abject failure to consult with faculty about consequential changes in governance. Even worse is that management harmed students by taking this step during finals and grading.

The drag on the system is the endless series of post-hoc apologies for communication failures without any actual change in how Chancellor Cheng and the system office behaves. Apologies are hollow. We do not accept Chancellor Cheng's apologies anymore.

The drag on the system is the kneecapping of the presidential search process at Western through obvious conflicts of interest.

The drag on the system is the refusal of Chancellor Cheng and this Board to ask for adequate funding for Western and allof the CSUs.

The drag on the system is the appointment of endless consultants whose only job is to find ways to invest less in our students and in the people of Connecticut.

So yes. there are “drags on the system.” But they are not coming from Western or from any campus faculty. They are coming from the institutions of the Board of Regents and the System Office.



# **CSCU SAC Board Of Regents Presentation**

**December 19, 2024**

# Meet Your SAC Chairs



**Luis Sanchez-Chiriboga**  
**Chair**

**Central Connecticut State University**  
**Management Informational Systems**



**Shian Earlington**  
**Vice Chair**

**CT State Asnuntuck**  
**Business Administration**

# SAC Standards

**R** Recognize, Responsibility

**E** Empathy, Equity, Exploration

**S** Sensitivity, Speak One At a Time

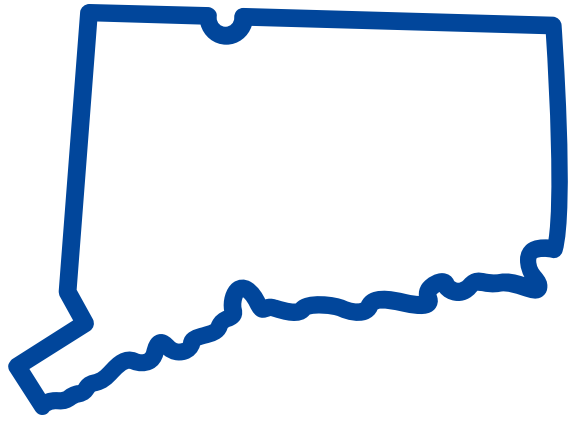
**P** Perspective, Patience

**E** Engagement, Escuchar

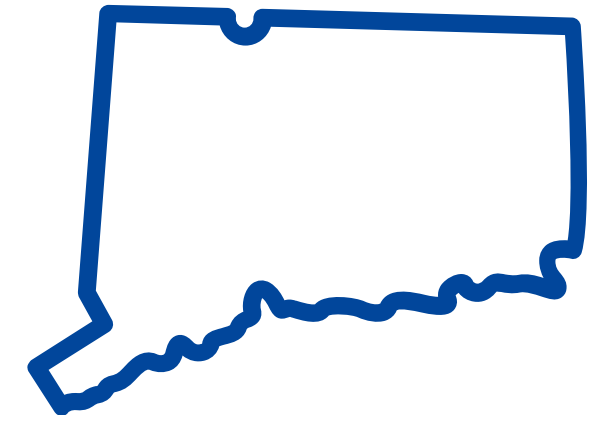
**C** Collaboration

**T** Trust, Time





# SAC Membership



Institution	Primary Representative	Email
WCSU	Isabel Montero	montero012@wcsu.edu
SCSU	Pierce Kozlowski	kozlowskip1@southernct.edu
ECSU	Madison Dashnaw	dashnawm@my.easternct.edu
Charter Oak	Donna Wagoner	dwagoner2@charteroak.edu
CCSU	Luis Sanchez	lsanchez@my.ccsu.edu
Norwalk CC	Leticia Franca	leticia.franca@ctstate.edu
Naugatuck Valley CC	Victor Jones	vjone0039@mail.ct.edu
Northwestern CC	Dakota Lawson	dakota.lawson@ctstate.edu
Asnuntuck CC	Shian Earlington	shian.earlington@ctstate.edu
Capital CC	Ana Escobedo	ana.escobedo@ctstate.edu
MCC	Chris Virdokian	chris.virdokian@ctstate.edu
TXCC	Taegan Miller	taegan.miller@ctstate.edu
MXCC	Emily Newman (Ellis, they/them)	emily.newman@ctstate.edu
TRCC	Malichi Brown	malachi.brown@ctstate.edu
GWCC	Jaleel Harris	jaleel.harris@ctstate.edu
HCC	Michele Rentz	michele.rentz@ctstate.edu
QVCC	Toby Stanley	toby.stanley@ctstate.edu

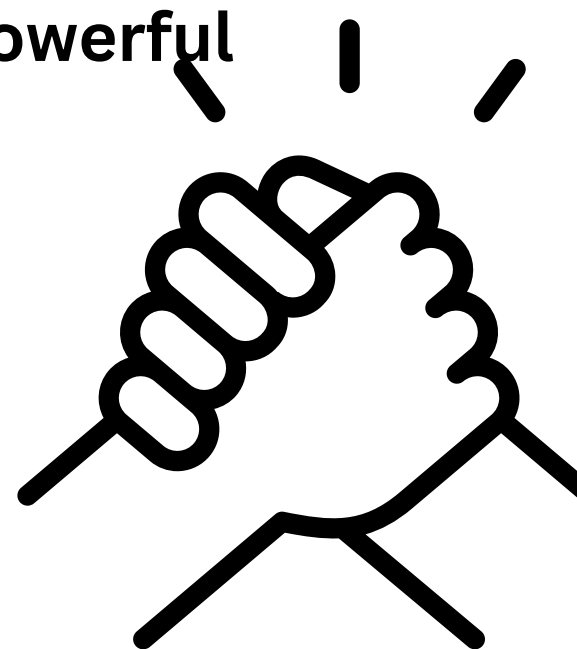
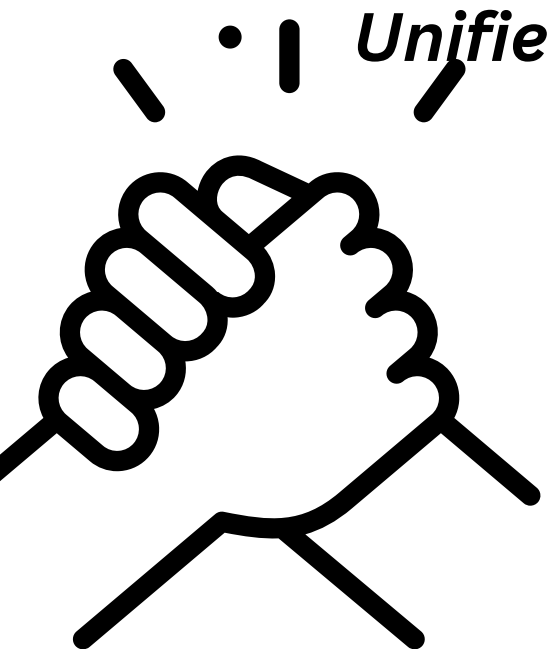
# **What's On The Horizon For SAC?**

- 1. Supporting Legislative Session**
- 2. CSCU Student Survey**
- 3. Student Leadership Conference - FALL 2025**
- 4. Bylaw Updates**
- 5. SGA campus visits**
- 6. Virtual CSCU Community Connections**



# Supporting Legislative Session

- ***Beyond the Basics:*** Advocate for funding that not only meets; but, exceeds minimum needs, to provide resources that truly support student well-being and success.
- ***Empower Student Voices:*** Train students to confidently communicate their stories and needs to legislators.
- ***Comprehensive Support:*** Address critical areas such as mental health, academic resources, campus facilities, and student engagement opportunities.
- ***Strategic Guidance:*** Provide students with a roadmap for effectively navigating the legislative process, including crafting compelling messages and building relationships with decision-makers.
- ***Unified Effort:*** Foster collaboration among students, staff, and stakeholders to create a powerful collective voice for change.



# CSCU Student Survey

To assess the various factors impacting student success—such as modality, class scheduling, wraparound services, transportation, and other key areas—we will collaborate with students to design and refine the survey. Additionally, we will work closely with the Institutional Research Department (IR) to ensure that the process is effective.

In recognizing the importance of broad participation, we acknowledge that incentives may be necessary to secure a wider range of responses. We would like to request the board's support in funding appealing incentives to encourage students to complete the survey.

[www.reallygreatsite.com](http://www.reallygreatsite.com)



# SAC Bylaws Update

**SAC Bylaws are outdated, they were updated in 2013.**

**SAC will be working on them this spring & will be done by the end of the semester.**



# Exploration Of Student Leadership Conference

**We are exploring offering a systemwide student leadership conference. Collaborations with the system Student Activities Directors will convene in the spring of 2025!**



# SGA Spring 2025 Visits & Virtual Community Connections

## ***Shian***

1. **Capital**
2. **CCSU**
3. **Manchester**
4. **Housatonic**
5. **WCSU**
6. **SCSU**
7. **Norwalk**
8. **Quinebaug**

## ***Luis***

1. **Asnuntuck**
2. **ESCU**
3. **Gateway**
4. **Middlesex**
5. **Naugatuck**
6. **Charter Oak**
7. **Northwestern**
8. **Three Rivers**
9. **Tunxis**

***We will host virtual community connection sessions, open to all students, to give feedback & suggestions, to improve student success. Launching Spring 2025!***

**Thank you!**

***Questions?***

**CharterOak**  
STATE COLLEGE  
A Higher Degree of Online Learning

# Scaling Taskforce Report



# Executive Summary

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**Charter Oak State College (COSC) aims to become Connecticut's premier online workforce college**, as it scales up affordable pathways for Connecticut's Workforce and increases its enrollment from 2,000 to 6,000 students over the next five years (2,400 in Fall 2025, 3,100 in Fall 2026, 4,000 in Fall 2027, 5,000 in Fall 2028, and 6,000 in Fall 2029). Reaching this enrollment milestone will maximize economies of scale and allow COSC to transform 100% of its current direct state support into student scholarships.

These scholarships will allow Charter Oak to redefine affordable higher education in Connecticut through a bold new initiative: the Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree. This pathway, targeted only to Connecticut residents, focuses on high-demand fields identified by the Governor's Workforce Council: Healthcare, Education, Social Work, and Data & Technology. Graduates of the Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree program will be required to reside in Connecticut for at least three years post-graduation, aligning with the state's workforce retention goals.

Charter Oak is uniquely positioned as Connecticut's only fully online public college; COSC is accessible statewide, reaching students in every corner of Connecticut. COSC's flexibility allows it to respond rapidly to workforce needs, developing programs in high-demand fields that align with state priorities. Already offering the most affordable bachelor's degree in Connecticut, COSC can scale further without compromising affordability due to its innovative faculty and intellectual property model, recently enshrined in a collective bargaining agreement.

COSC will drive enrollment by building on current strengths. First, it will expand its partnership with CT State Community College and its 7500+ fully online students through the Leveraging Academic Degrees to Drive Employment Readiness and Success (LADDERS) initiative. This will establish a stackable, seamless 2+2 transfer partnership, incorporating concurrent enrollment and creating wage growth opportunities.

Second, COSC will create a School of Education that expands on its success as the premier online educator for Early Childhood Education, expanding to other education programs to address Connecticut's critical need for skilled educators in a sought after and flexible format that caters to working residents.

Thirdly, COSC will increase its competitiveness. Charter Oak provides the most cost effective, fully online and workforce ready programs for Connecticut residents, but currently, COSC lacks strong brand recognition and marketing has been underinvested. COSC will explore rebranding options and pursue targeted initiatives to expand into new student markets, focusing on growth opportunities in groups such as Some College, No Credential (SCNC) individuals, K-12 students (dual enrollment), and Multilingual Learners (which can be cost-effectively enabled with technology). COSC will explore the possibility of



adopting university status and the possibility of becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution.

All the initiatives listed above are expected to have minimal to no impact on enrollment at the CSUs within the system. For instance, the LADDERS initiative targets CT State students who are exclusively online and therefore more likely to seek a fully online, asynchronous bachelor's degree for transfer. The new programs proposed through the School of Education focus on addressing workforce shortages and offering programs that are not currently available in a fully online, asynchronous format.

To support the CSUs and CT State, COSC can collaborate with other CSCU institutions as an Online Program Experience (OPX) provider. This voluntary partnership would assist CSCU institutions in developing, delivering, and expanding online programs and services. COSC plans to create an OPX rate card and make these services available on a voluntary basis to CSCU institutions.

In addition, COSC will reduce and eliminate its programs that don't offer strong workforce pathways or have clear student demand. Our goal is to serve our students best and we do that by giving them strong career paths.

To support this growth, COSC will make strategic investments in proven best in class technology tools such as adaptive learning content in addition to innovative technology, particularly artificial intelligence. This will be used to enhance the student experience, streamline operations, and maximize economies of scale. These investments will reduce the need for proportional staffing increases as enrollment grows, creating a substantial return on investment by the end of the five-year plan.

The plan outlined here will establish COSC as the top choice for online learners in Connecticut, prioritize student success through the bold new Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree, strengthen existing areas of expertise, enhance its brand, and expand into underrepresented populations. This roadmap paves the way for COSC to educate thousands more Connecticut employees each year and ultimately create dozens of jobs at COSC. Students that otherwise may leave the state or pay tuition dollars out of state, will now stay in Connecticut which benefits both the college and the state by producing a skilled, career-ready workforce. With a focused temporary investment of \$3.8M over 2 years above current support levels (in addition to establishing investments in tuition-free bachelor's and dual credit), COSC can accelerate its transition to financial self-sufficiency, eliminating the need for state funding while expanding its capacity to serve Connecticut.

## Scaling Taskforce Members

### **Ted Yang**

*Chair & Board of Regents Representative*

### **Samantha Fisher**

*Managing Director, Global Education Practice, Accenture*

### **Dr. Maureen Hogan**

*Professor and Director of Early Childhood Education, Charter Oak State College*

### **Ed Klonoski**

*President, Charter Oak State College*

### **Dr. Rick Levin**

*Former CEO Coursera, Former President of Yale University*

### **Matt McCooe**

*CEO, Connecticut Innovations*

### **Cynthia Pugliese**

*SVP, Revenue Cycle Services at Hartford Healthcare*

### **Bruce Soltys**

*VP of HR and Emerging Talent, Travelers Insurance*

### **Dr. Bogdan Zamfir**

*Director of the Center for Educational and Assistive Technology and Adjunct Professor, SCSU*

## Statement of Problem

Scaling Charter Oak State College (COSC) seeks to address two major challenges facing Connecticut. First, the state experiences a net loss of online enrollments, as residents increasingly choose out-of-state institutions, resulting in the export of above-market tuition revenues that fund the profit margins of external entities. For instance, in Connecticut, online bachelor’s degree completions (a lagging indicator of student enrollment) grew from 1,950 in 2017 to 2,300 in 2022—an 18% increase. However, during this same period, COSC’s enrollment remained flat, meaning that this growth was captured by other online competitors, causing those tuition dollars to flow outside the CSU system and to out-of-state institutions.

Second, the state faces a workforce shortage, with over 90,000 unfilled jobs according to the Connecticut Department of Labor. By aligning growth strategies and initiatives with programs targeting workforce shortage areas, COSC can help close this employment gap in key sectors such as healthcare, business, education, and technology. This effort not only addresses workforce needs but also has the potential to boost future state tax revenues. The data referenced below is sourced from the NC-SARA Data Dashboard (Fall 2023 enrollment numbers).

CT Online Students Attending Out of State (Top5)		CT Students Attending In-State (Top 5)	
INSTITUTION	NUMBER	INSTITUTION	NUMBER
SNHU	3,786	CT State	7,501
WGU	1,206	Post	1,855
Penn Foster	813	Goodwin	1,626
U of Phoenix	689	COSC	1,560
Capella	650	UCONN	1,084
<b>All Out of State Colleges</b>	<b>20,352</b>	<b>All CT Colleges</b>	<b>18,832</b>

## Scale Up Plan

Charter Oak State College (COSC) has developed a multifaceted Scale Up Plan designed to grow enrollment from 2,000 to 6,000 students over the next five years. This strategic approach includes the Tuition-Free Bachelor’s Degree, LADDERS, academic reorganization starting with the School of Education, technology investments with a focus on AI, a focused branding strategy, and exploring new markets. This plan will strengthen COSC’s position as Connecticut’s premier online workforce college, offering high-quality, affordable education to meet the needs of today’s students and employers.

### STUDENT GROWTH GOAL TARGETS BY YEAR

Achieving 6,000 enrollments within five years requires a calculated and phased expansion across COSC’s operations, with each area of the Scale Up Plan playing a critical role. This growth goal is central to ensuring COSC can increase access to education for Connecticut residents while meeting workforce demands and achieving operational efficiencies. By leveraging partnerships, introducing in-demand programs, reducing student debt, adopting advanced technology, and increasing brand visibility, COSC will create a streamlined pathway to degree completion for students across the state. The targeted

headcount for each year to measure progress is: Fall 2025 - 2,400, Fall 2026 - 3,100, Fall 2027 - 4,000, Fall 2028 - 5,000, Fall 2029 - 6,000.

## TUITION-FREE BACHELOR'S DEGREE PATHWAY

The Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree pathway is a cornerstone of COSC's mission to make higher education accessible and financially manageable for Connecticut residents. By utilizing a last-dollar scholarship model, the program ensures students can complete their degrees without tuition expenses, reducing financial barriers and aligning with the state's workforce retention goals.

- **Program Framework and Eligibility:** The Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree pathway is available to Connecticut residents who begin their educational journey at one of Connecticut State Community Colleges (CT State) through the state's free community college program or who have some college credits but no credential equivalent to an associate's degree and want to complete a bachelor's degree in an in-demand workforce program. This pathway, targeted to Connecticut residents, focuses on high-demand fields identified by the Governor's Workforce Council, such as Healthcare, Education, Social Work, and Data & Technology. Graduates of the Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree program will be required to reside in Connecticut for at least three years post-graduation, aligning with the state's workforce retention goals.
- **Financial Model and Last-Dollar Approach:** COSC will use a "last-dollar" scholarship approach, leveraging institutional funding alongside state scholarship support to cover any remaining tuition costs after financial aid is applied. By acting as a financial safety net, the last-dollar scholarship model ensures that any financial gaps are covered, reducing the need for student loans.
- **Community College Tuition Match Program:** COSC will fund its Community College Tuition Match Program, covering up to 100% of tuition for students transferring from CT State. This alignment with CT State's free community college program ensures that students have a cost-effective, streamlined pathway to a bachelor's degree and mitigates some of the cost needed from the state budget.
- **Incentives for Graduates to Remain in Connecticut:** As part of this pathway, COSC will implement incentives to encourage graduates to stay and work in Connecticut. The Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree program operates as a conditional loan designed to support student success while aligning with Connecticut's workforce retention goals. Under this model, tuition costs are provided upfront to eligible students as a forgivable loan. Graduates who live and work in Connecticut for at least three years following their degree completion will have their loan fully forgiven, converting the support into a true tuition-free benefit. This approach ensures that state resources directly contribute to retaining skilled talent within Connecticut, while providing students with a financially accessible pathway to achieving their educational goals. Graduates unable to meet the residency and employment requirements may be required to repay the loan, reinforcing the program's alignment with state economic development objectives.
- **COSC will cover interest payments** while the 3-year service is ongoing, with full payoff only upon completion of 3 years of service in the field in the state of Connecticut.
- **Impact on Accessibility and Enrollment:** This pathway significantly broadens COSC's appeal to underserved populations, including first-generation college students, working professionals, and residents from low-income backgrounds. By eliminating financial barriers, COSC aims to expand its reach within these demographics, contributing to the state's educational attainment rates and supporting inclusive workforce readiness.
- **Mitigating Impact on State Universities:** COSC will position the Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree pathway as an online-exclusive option, complementing rather than competing with traditional on-ground offerings at the state universities. The program will be marketed to students who are predisposed to pursue their education online, ensuring it does not detract from the enrollment pipelines of the state universities.

Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree	Enrollment Gain FY26 (AY25-26)	Enrollment Gain FY27 (AY26-27)	Enrollment Gain FY28 (AY27-28)	Enrollment Gain FY29 (AY28-29)	Enrollment Gain FY30 (AY29-30)
	0	450	900	1400	1900
	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment
	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$4,000,000
	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source
	N/A	State Scholarship (PACT+)	State Scholarship (PACT+)	State Scholarship (PACT+)	State Scholarship (PACT+)

## FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE FROM STATE SUPPORT

Achieving zero-dollar state support within five years is a bold financial objective that underscores COSC's commitment to operational sustainability and fiscal responsibility.

- Enrollment Growth as a Revenue Strategy:** COSC's targeted enrollment growth from 2,000 to 6,000 students will create economies of scale, allowing the institution to generate significant revenue from tuition without compromising affordability. Each additional student brings revenue that contributes to COSC's financial independence and reduces reliance on state funding.
- Cost-Saving Measures and Operational Efficiencies:** COSC will implement a series of cost-saving measures to optimize operations while maintaining its commitment to affordability and quality. These efforts will include streamlined administrative processes, automation of high-volume transactional tasks, and renegotiated vendor contracts. By reducing operational inefficiencies, COSC can reallocate savings to high-impact student services and institutional growth, ensuring resources are used where they are needed most. For example, COSC will continue to operate with a single bursar, a single Director of Financial Aid, and a single Provost, among other key leadership roles. This centralized and efficient model significantly lowers the cost per full-time equivalent (FTE) student compared to institutions with larger and more distributed administrative structures.
- Enhanced Retention and Completion Rates:** By investing in student support services that enhance retention and degree completion rates, COSC will reduce the costs associated with student attrition. High retention rates lead to increased tuition revenue per student cohort, allowing COSC to stabilize its financial model and reduce dependence on state funds.
- Revenue-Generating Programs and Services:** COSC will develop new revenue streams, including non-credit workforce training programs, professional development offerings, and certificate programs aligned with high-demand skills. These programs will target working professionals and employers, creating additional sources of revenue outside traditional degree programs.

## LADDERS Pathway with CT State Community College

CT State Community College currently has over 7,500+ exclusively online students in associate degree programs, making them the largest online institution in the state and the single largest pipeline into online bachelor's degrees. Charter Oak recognizes that CT State's 7,500+ online students often encounter fragmented course availability, lack of standardization, and scheduling challenges. The Leveraging Academic Degrees to Drive Employment Readiness and Success (LADDERS) Pathway is an essential part of COSC's growth strategy, creating clear pathways from CT State associate degrees to COSC bachelor's degrees. This proactive approach will ensure CT State students understand their options early, facilitating smoother transitions and higher completion rates.

- **Targeted Communication and Student Outreach:** COSC and CT State will implement a collaborative communication strategy to introduce students to the LADDERS pathway while enrolled at CT State. Communication will focus on the benefits of seamless transfer and Tuition-Free options. Using text, email, and virtual open houses, COSC will provide CT State students with tailored information about COSC’s degree completion programs.
- **Concurrent Enrollment and 2+2 Pathways:** COSC will expand its concurrent enrollment options, allowing CT State students to begin taking COSC courses before completing their associate degrees in targeted degrees. This model accelerates students’ progress toward a bachelor’s degree, enabling earlier completion and reducing overall education costs.
- **Community College Tuition Match Program:** COSC will support CT State students by covering tuition gaps through its Community College Tuition Match Program. This program not only makes bachelor’s degree completion more affordable but also aligns with the Tuition-Free Bachelor’s Degree pathway, reinforcing COSC’s commitment to accessibility.
- **Employer Partnerships for Workforce-Ready Graduates:** COSC will work with employers in Connecticut to promote the LADDERS pathway as a talent pipeline for high-demand fields.

LADDERS will help mitigate the loss of CT State students that transfer to institutions outside of CT and the CSU system.

CT State Students that Transfer	2012	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Transferred to CCSU	10%	12%	13%	13%	15%	16%
Transferred to WCSU	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Transferred to SCSU	6%	9%	10%	10%	10%	11%
Transferred to ECSU	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Transferred to COSC	4%	5%	5%	6%	6%	5%
Transferred to UConn	7%	9%	10%	11%	13%	14%
Transferred to Other in State College	24%	21%	19%	17%	17%	17%
Transferred to Out of State College	43%	38%	35%	36%	32%	30%

LADDERS	Enrollment Gain FY26 (AY25-26)	Enrollment Gain FY27 (AY26-27)	Enrollment Gain FY28 (AY27-28)	Enrollment Gain FY29 (AY28-29)	Enrollment Gain FY30 (AY29-30)
	75	150	250	400	500
	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment
	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$300,000
	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source
	State Baseline Increase (temp)	State Baseline Increase (temp)	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs

## Programmatic Enhancements: Launching the School of Education

COSC will begin reorganizing the academic structure to look like an institution of 6,000+. The School of Education will serve as COSC’s first signature programmatic enhancement, addressing Connecticut’s critical need for skilled educators, especially in early childhood education. The proposed School of Education leverages COSC’s low-cost, high-quality delivery model to meet urgent demands for skilled

educators. With a focus on early childhood, paraprofessional, and teacher certification pathways, this initiative ensures accessibility and affordability while addressing workforce gaps. State investment in these programs aligns with Connecticut’s goals to expand the educator pipeline.

- **Early Childhood Education and Paraprofessional Training:** Recognizing the growing demand for educators, COSC will develop pathways in early childhood education and paraprofessional training. These programs will prepare students for immediate employment while also providing pathways to advanced certifications and licensure.
- **Apprenticeship Pathways to Teacher Certification:** COSC will create an apprenticeship pathway that enables paraprofessionals to advance to full teacher certification, filling gaps in the education workforce. This approach aligns with state workforce needs and provides students with a structured, affordable route to teaching careers.
- **Partnerships with School Districts and Educational Organizations:** COSC will collaborate with school districts across Connecticut to recruit students into education pathways. By offering a pipeline of paraprofessionals and certified teachers, COSC will strengthen Connecticut’s education workforce while creating enrollment growth.

School of Education	Enrollment Gain FY26 (AY25-26)	Enrollment Gain FY27 (AY26-27)	Enrollment Gain FY28 (AY27-28)	Enrollment Gain FY29 (AY28-29)	Enrollment Gain FY30 (AY29-30)
	100	150	250	350	400
	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment
	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source
	State Baseline Increase (temp)	State Baseline Increase (temp)	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs

## Technology Investments: AI-Driven Support Services

COSC will optimize existing technology platforms to enhance student outcomes and operational efficiency. Leveraging tools such as AI-supported multilingual learning, Coursera Course Builder, and adaptive learning content, COSC ensures that investments directly improve scalability and align with workforce needs without duplicating existing resources.

- **AI Tutoring, Advising, and Accessibility Tools:** COSC will implement AI-based support services to assist students academically and administratively. These services will include virtual tutoring, AI-powered academic advising, and accessibility tools for multilingual learners and students with disabilities, creating an inclusive, supportive environment.
- **AI-Enhanced Career Coaching:** AI-driven career coaching will provide students with tailored guidance on internships, job placement, and skill development. This technology will enable COSC to support students’ career readiness efficiently, reinforcing COSC’s role as a career-aligned educational provider.
- **Automating Administrative Processes:** To improve operational efficiency, COSC will automate high-volume tasks like registration, financial aid inquiries, and appointment scheduling. Automation will reduce staff workloads and allow them to focus on high-touch, personalized services.
- **In addition to AI, COSC will strategically invest in best-in-class technology.** For example, making investments with Coursera and/or adaptive learning content will help us provide this industry-driven curriculum in a number of courses to ensure graduates are best prepared for the workforce.

AI Investments (Multi-Language Learners)	Enrollment Gain FY26 (AY25-26)	Enrollment Gain FY27 (AY26-27)	Enrollment Gain FY28 (AY27-28)	Enrollment Gain FY29 (AY28-29)	Enrollment Gain FY30 (AY29-30)
and increased efficiency operations)	0	0	100	250	450
	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment
	\$500,000	\$1,500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source
	State Baseline Increase (temp)	State Baseline Increase (temp)	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs

## Rebranding Charter Oak State College

Charter Oak will explore rebranding options to better align with its expanded mission and offerings. This effort will focus on positioning COSC as Connecticut’s premier online workforce college while fostering collaboration within the CSCU system. The rebranding strategy will emphasize inclusivity and affordability, ensuring alignment with statewide educational goals.

- **Brand Study:** COSC will conduct a brand study reflecting its expanded role and comprehensive program offerings. The brand would look to position COSC as Connecticut’s leading online workforce institution.
- **Website and Social Media Revamp:** COSC will redesign its website and social media platforms to attract prospective students. By featuring video content, student testimonials, and interactive elements, COSC will create an engaging digital presence that resonates with modern learners.
- **Engaging Working Professionals:** COSC will focus its outreach on working professionals without a bachelor’s degree, highlighting COSC’s affordability, flexible course options, and career-aligned programs.

## Opportunities for Special Population Expansion

To drive enrollment and meet Connecticut’s workforce needs, Charter Oak State College (COSC) can explore new opportunities by expanding access to underserved populations. These targeted expansion areas align with COSC’s mission to provide affordable, accessible education for all Connecticut residents, including those who face unique barriers to higher education. Each group represents a potential growth area for COSC, while also strengthening the state’s workforce pipeline.

### TARGETED EXPANSION AREAS: STRATEGIES FOR REACHING SPECIFIC GROUPS

**1. Some College, No Credential (SCNC)** An estimated 40 million Americans have some college education but no degree, including thousands in Connecticut. COSC can collaborate with educational partners, specializing in supporting students who have “stopped out” of college. By identifying, recruiting, advising, and registering students who left college before completion, COSC can offer these individuals a renewed pathway to finish their degrees, potentially increasing state credential attainment and workforce readiness.

Some College, No Credential (SCNC)	Enrollment Gain FY26 (AY25-26)	Enrollment Gain FY27 (AY26-27)	Enrollment Gain FY28 (AY27-28)	Enrollment Gain FY29 (AY28-29)	Enrollment Gain FY30 (AY29-30)
	200	300	400	400	500
	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment
	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source
	State Baseline Increase (temp)	State Baseline Increase (temp)	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs	COSC Absorbs

**2. K-12 Students** Connecticut is quickly falling behind the region and the rest of the country regarding students obtaining opportunities to achieve college credit while enrolled in high school. For example, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020), the Northeast region ranks last in the country for dual enrollment opportunities funded by the school, district, or state (60.6%). The West stands at 83.5%, the South at 79.4%, and the Midwest is at 79.1%. Within the Northeast region, Rhode Island offers state funding for tuition and fees for up to 8 credits per semester and Maine offers state funding for up to 12 credits per semester as two examples. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS) 2022 analysis, there are currently 27 online dual enrollment/early college programs across the country. Online early college courses are an excellent choice for high school students who want to start college now without traveling to a physical campus for class. COSC has an opportunity to reach students earlier in their educational journey by offering dual credit and online early college programs for high school students. These initiatives allow students to earn college credits while still in high school, introducing them to COSC and setting them up for success in higher education. This strategy not only builds COSC’s brand awareness among younger generations but also provides a cost-effective head start on college for Connecticut families. COSC acknowledges the challenges of scaling early college and dual enrollment programs but remains committed to pursuing these initiatives in alignment with state priorities. By working collaboratively with K-12 partners, COSC will explore sustainable models that enhance access while minimizing financial risks.

Dual Credit w/ K-12 &	Enrollment Gain FY26 (AY25-26)	Enrollment Gain FY27 (AY26-27)	Enrollment Gain FY28 (AY27-28)	Enrollment Gain FY29 (AY28-29)	Enrollment Gain FY30 (AY29-30)
Online Early College	25	50	100	200	250
	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment	Cost/ Investment
	\$80,000	\$37,500	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$225,000
	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source	Funding Source
	OHE Grant	State Scholarship (Dual Credit)	State Scholarship (Dual Credit)	State Scholarship (Dual Credit)	State Scholarship (Dual Credit)

**3. Multilingual Learners** The population of Multilingual Learners in the U.S. has grown significantly, with 10.6% of public school students identified as multilingual (otherwise known as English Language learners or ELL) in 2021. Multilingual students face unique barriers in accessing higher education, with only 19% enrolling in four-year colleges within two years of high school graduation, compared to 45% of native English speakers. Charter Oak State College recognizes the strengths and readiness of our diverse student body, including Multilingual Learners who bring valuable language skills and global perspectives to the classroom. These students, whose native language is not English, possess the proficiency and adaptability to successfully complete college-level coursework in English. By leveraging advanced technology and a supportive learning environment, COSC enables Multilingual Learners to further



enhance their academic English skills, supporting them in reaching their full potential and contributing to Connecticut's workforce with their bilingual capabilities.

## Value Proposition

Charter Oak State College (COSC) stands as a premier educational institution, offering significant benefits to the state of Connecticut, as well as to students, employees, and the college's overall financial health. COSC's unique position as a top-rated public online college highlights its role in contributing to the economic and educational fabric of the state while delivering exceptional value and outcomes to its graduates.

## Benefits to the State of Connecticut

Charter Oak has distinguished itself as Connecticut's top public online college, a position cemented by Forbes' America's Top Colleges ranking, which considered metrics such as return on investment, student debt levels, and graduate outcomes. COSC's high ranking underscores its commitment to educational excellence and financial accessibility. By leading in retention, graduation rates, post-graduation wages, and low student debt, COSC has achieved the highest ranking within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system, making it a trusted public option for Connecticut residents.

As Connecticut's most affordable path to a bachelor's degree, COSC combines low tuition with strong financial returns. According to the College Scorecard, COSC graduates enjoy some of the highest median earnings in the state, demonstrating a clear alignment with workforce needs and career growth. This strong return on investment makes COSC an invaluable asset to the state, fostering an educated, skilled, and financially empowered workforce.

## Benefits to the CSCU System

Charter Oak State College (COSC) is uniquely positioned to serve as an Online Program Experience (OPX) provider for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system, leveraging its expertise in online education to create a shared resource model that benefits all six institutions. COSC proposes a voluntary pilot OPX model, starting with targeted collaborations between individual CSCU institutions. This measured approach will demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of shared online resources, providing a foundation for potential system-wide implementation.

By integrating advanced technology such as Coursera content and AI-driven tools, COSC can efficiently curate online courses that align with industry standards and student needs. This approach not only streamlines the course development process but also ensures high-quality content that adheres to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and full ADA compliance, making education more accessible to a diverse range of learners.

Through this OPX initiative, COSC can develop, and license standardized, high-quality courses for use across the CSCU system. COSC's unique intellectual property model allows the college to license professionally developed courses. For instance, a single professionally designed English 101 course could replace the need for six different versions, reducing duplication of effort and creating economies

of scale. Expert instructional designers and subject matter experts at COSC ensure that the content is pedagogically sound and meets online best practices, providing a consistent and engaging learning experience for students. This shared approach also alleviates the human resource burden on individual institutions, allowing faculty and staff to focus on other priorities such as student support and program innovation.

This initiative can support Connecticut State Universities (CSUs) in developing online courses and programs that go beyond what COSC offers. On-ground bachelor's degree completions declined from 25,600 in 2017 to 25,000 in 2022—a 2.4% decrease—and this trend is expected to accelerate as post-pandemic data is reported. In contrast, online completions grew from 1,950 in 2017 to 2,300 in 2022, reflecting an 18% increase. This shift was even more pronounced at the graduate level, where online master's degree completions surged from 1,430 in 2017 to 3,060 in 2022, an increase of 114%. As CSUs expand their own online offerings, particularly at the graduate level, COSC can provide valuable assistance to help them retain tuition revenue and market share, preventing further losses to out-of-state institutions.

The OPX model enhances operational efficiency while promoting equity and consistency across CSCU institutions. It supports the system's mission to deliver accessible, high-quality education while reducing costs and resource demands. By centralizing content creation and leveraging technological advancements, COSC positions itself as a strategic partner to CSCU, fostering collaboration and driving innovation in online education. This initiative exemplifies how shared resources can transform challenges into opportunities, creating a sustainable framework for success across the system.

## **COSC Scaling and Connection to NCHEMS Report**

Aligning with recommendations from the NCHEMS report, Charter Oak proposes linking state support to specific, measurable outcomes. This approach ensures state investments yield tangible benefits, such as increased credential attainment in workforce shortage areas, higher graduate retention within Connecticut, and enhanced economic contributions from skilled professionals. These metrics, in tandem with APT, will provide a transparent framework for evaluating the success of the Tuition-Free Bachelor's Degree and other state-supported initiatives.

Charter Oak State College (COSC) is uniquely positioned within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system to pilot innovative approaches that align with state workforce priorities and enhance student outcomes. The NCHEMS report underscores the importance of leveraging institutions like Charter Oak to test scalable innovations in educational delivery. As Connecticut faces demographic challenges and evolving workforce needs, COSC can act as an incubator for cutting-edge solutions, enabling the state to maximize its investment in higher education.

The NCHEMS report highlights the need for systemic collaboration and data-driven decision-making. COSC's emphasis on technology-enabled education allows it to serve as a model for integrating advanced tools, such as artificial intelligence, into academic advising, career counseling, and course delivery. These tools can enhance student engagement, improve retention, and streamline pathways to graduation.

As part of the system, Charter Oak can partner with other CSCU institutions to offer hybrid programs, evening courses, and weekend schedules that complement the in-person offerings of community colleges and state universities. Such collaboration can help address longstanding challenges, like the difficulty CT State students face in finding required courses online or at convenient times, as noted in the December meeting discussions.

## **Impact on Employees, Students, and Financial Stability**

COSC offers a compelling value to its stakeholders by incorporating stackable credentials into its degree programs, allowing students to earn industry-recognized certifications while progressing toward their degrees. This model not only enhances employability but also ensures that students can build valuable skills incrementally, maximizing their career opportunities at each stage of their educational journey.

In addition, COSC's partnership with the Coursera Career Academy – one of only two such partnerships in Connecticut – provides faculty and students with access to leading industry content from across various fields. This collaboration enriches COSC's curriculum with cutting-edge knowledge and hands-on learning experiences, equipping students with the competencies required in today's fast-evolving job market.

Through these initiatives, COSC continuously bolsters its financial stability while delivering value to the state, supporting workforce development, and preparing Connecticut's working professionals to excel in their careers.

## **Competitive Landscape**

Charter Oak State College (COSC), as Connecticut's fully online public institution within the Connecticut State College and University (CSCU) system, operates in a highly competitive online education environment. While national institutions such as Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and Western Governors University (WGU) dominate the market with aggressive marketing and expansive reach, COSC's strategic efforts focus solely on serving Connecticut residents. This targeted, localized approach distinguishes COSC from larger, nationally focused competitors.

Unlike SNHU, which added 25,000 students in the past year alone, COSC aims to grow its enrollment by 4,000 students over the next five years—a sustainable, incremental expansion that prioritizes quality, accessibility, and alignment with Connecticut's workforce needs. COSC is not seeking to compete on a national scale but rather to meet the specific educational and economic priorities of Connecticut by retaining students who might otherwise enroll in out-of-state institutions.

COSC also distinguishes itself from private institutions within Connecticut, such as Post University and Goodwin University, through its public institution status and mission-driven focus. As the state's most affordable pathway to a bachelor's degree, COSC aligns its programs with Connecticut's high-demand workforce areas, such as healthcare, education, social work, and technology. This approach ensures that COSC remains both accessible and relevant to the needs of its communities.

By leveraging its position within the CSCU system, COSC can also offer benefits that private competitors cannot, such as partnerships with CT State Community Colleges through initiatives like LADDERS. These pathways provide seamless, low-cost options for students to complete their bachelor's degrees while remaining connected to local opportunities.

COSC's deliberate growth strategy is tailored to address Connecticut's unique challenges, including retaining students who are inclined to pursue online degrees. Rather than emulating the broad national appeal of institutions like SNHU or WGU, COSC focuses on creating scalable, innovative solutions to meet the state's workforce demands while maintaining a manageable and mission-aligned enrollment trajectory. This strategy ensures that COSC remains a trusted educational partner for Connecticut residents and a vital contributor to the state's economic future..

## Landscape of COSC: Current Position and Strengths

Charter Oak State College has established itself as Connecticut's top-rated public online college for adult learners, as recognized by Forbes. COSC's asynchronous online model serves a predominantly non-traditional, working student body with an average age of 37, enabling the flexibility that adult learners often require. COSC's low-cost tuition positions it as the most affordable bachelor's degree option in Connecticut, with graduates demonstrating high median earnings, according to the College Scorecard.

COSC also maintains one of the lowest student loan default rates in the state, significantly below the national average and much lower than many of its competitors, particularly private institutions. This indicator of financial stability for graduates underscores COSC's commitment to affordability and responsible borrowing, which is a key advantage over other institutions in Connecticut offering online programs.

## Online Competitors: Competitive Landscape Overview

Despite its strengths, COSC operates in a highly competitive online education market with both public and private institutions offering similar programs nationwide. In the competitive landscape of online education, Charter Oak State College (COSC) distinguishes itself through its public institution status, affordability, and alignment with Connecticut's workforce needs. While COSC faces competition from both regional and national institutions, its unique offerings and strategic initiatives provide a competitive edge.

**Post University** offers a range of online undergraduate and graduate programs targeting adult learners. However, its student loan default rates exceed the national average, indicating potential financial challenges for its graduates. Additionally, as a private institution, Post University's tuition rates are higher than those of public institutions like COSC, potentially leading to greater student debt.

**Goodwin University** provides online programs in fields such as nursing, business, and manufacturing. Similar to Post University, Goodwin's student loan default rates are above the national average, suggesting financial difficulties for some graduates. The higher tuition costs associated with private education at Goodwin may contribute to increased financial burdens for students.

**Thomas Edison State University (TESU)** is a public institution in New Jersey offering online programs aimed at adult learners. While TESU shares similarities with COSC in serving non-traditional students, COSC's focus on Connecticut's workforce needs and its partnerships with local community colleges provide a tailored approach for state residents. Additionally, COSC's lower tuition rates offer a more affordable option compared to TESU.

**Excelsior University** is a private, nonprofit institution based in New York, specializing in online education for adult learners. Excelsior's tuition rates are higher than those of public institutions like COSC, potentially leading to greater student debt. Furthermore, as an out-of-state institution, Excelsior may not offer the same level of alignment with Connecticut's specific workforce needs as COSC.

**Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU)** is a private institution known for its extensive online programs and aggressive national marketing campaigns. SNHU's tuition rates are higher than those of public institutions, which can result in increased student debt. Additionally, SNHU's broad focus may not provide the same level of alignment with Connecticut's workforce needs as COSC's targeted programs.

**IN CONTRAST**, COSC's public institution status allows it to offer lower tuition rates, resulting in a student loan default rate significantly below the national average. COSC's strategic partnerships with Connecticut State Community College and its focus on stackable credentials provide clear, affordable pathways for students to advance their education and careers within the state. These factors position COSC as a compelling choice for Connecticut residents seeking affordable, flexible, and career-aligned education.

## COSC's Competitive Edge

Charter Oak State College's competitive edge lies in its mission-focused approach to serve Connecticut's working professionals through affordable, stackable, and career-aligned education. With low tuition costs, flexible online courses, and a curriculum aligned with state workforce needs, COSC is well-positioned to cater to adult learners seeking to improve their skills and earnings potential without accumulating excessive debt.

COSC's Tuition Match partnership with CT State Community College strengthens its market position by providing a highly affordable option for students, reducing educational costs and time to degree completion with our generous transfer policy. This pathway also facilitates wage growth at each stage, setting COSC apart as a practical choice for those looking to advance within their careers.

Furthermore, COSC's brand study initiative, as outlined in its strategic plan, is a timely effort to increase recognition within Connecticut and beyond. By aligning its brand more closely with its role as Connecticut's premier online workforce college, COSC can differentiate itself from national competitors and establish a more prominent identity within the CSCU system and the broader online education market.

## CHALLENGES

While Charter Oak State College (COSC) embarks on the "Scale Up" growth plan, it must address several internal and external challenges to ensure sustainable success. From enhancing brand visibility to

updating governance structures, modernizing course content, and managing change effectively, these challenges are critical to achieving the strategic goals of “Scale Up”.

## LOW BRAND AWARENESS

COSC currently faces limited brand visibility, particularly within Connecticut. Despite its status as the state’s most affordable option for a bachelor’s degree, many residents and potential students remain unaware of COSC’s offerings, including its highly ranked online programs and focus on workforce alignment. Increasing brand awareness through a comprehensive marketing and outreach strategy will be essential to attract the desired student population and communicate COSC’s value to Connecticut’s workforce and economy.

## GOVERNANCE UPDATES

COSC’s governance structure and decision-making processes require updates to reflect its evolution from a credit aggregator to an academic institution focused on workforce-aligned programs. Current policies and procedures often reflect COSC’s history rather than its role as an institution providing complete degree programs in high-demand fields. Governance updates will involve shifting policies and frameworks to support COSC’s growing academic scope, ensuring that decision-making aligns with the college’s mission to serve as Connecticut’s premier online workforce institution.

## MODERN COURSE DEVELOPMENT

With the rapid evolution of online education and workforce requirements, COSC must prioritize regular updates to its course content and delivery methods. Modern learners expect courses that are engaging, accessible, and technologically advanced, including increased video content and interactive elements. COSC will need to establish a consistent schedule for curriculum updates, aligning course offerings with current industry needs and ensuring that students are equipped with relevant skills. By implementing streamlined course development processes, COSC can maintain a dynamic and responsive curriculum that meets the needs of Connecticut’s workforce.

## BANDWIDTH FOR ENHANCED GUIDES

COSC needs to create comprehensive training and support guides for its different constituencies. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and Instructional Designers (IDs) should have clear guidelines for course design that meet the pedagogical standards of the College and the specific learning needs of the students. Faculty should have comprehensive guides that detail their expectations, various support offices, as well as professional development opportunities. This will help the faculty understand and maintain the College’s standards, especially as the institution grows and the demand for consistent quality increases. Students should be provided with user friendly guides that explain how to access the courses and access the various resources available to them. These guides will help the student experience and help them fully utilize the supports offered by the College.

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The proposed enrollment growth and structural changes represent a significant shift for COSC, which has maintained a stable enrollment level for the past decade. Achieving rapid expansion to 6,000 students requires a robust change management strategy to guide the college community through this transformation. Adaptation to these new realities will involve implementing strategies to support faculty, staff, and students in navigating change. Training, communication, and a shared vision will be crucial to ensuring that the COSC community is aligned and prepared to meet the demands of an expanded institution.

## Conclusion

The “Scale Up: Affordable Pathways for Connecticut’s Workforce” plan outlines a transformative pathway for Charter Oak State College (COSC), centered on a bold initiative of introducing a Tuition-Free Bachelor’s Degree pathway for Connecticut residents to meet the workforce needs of Connecticut. Scale Up is designed to make high-quality, career-focused education accessible while reducing financial burdens for both students and the state. By adopting innovative financial strategies, expanding program offerings, and prioritizing strategic partnerships, COSC is positioned to grow its enrollment to 6,000 students within five years, meeting critical workforce needs across Connecticut. This enrollment goal indicates that COSC does not seek to be the next SNHU. Rather, we look to recapture the students already leaving the state for online degrees to give them a more cost-effective option that is more closely aligned with workforce needs specific to Connecticut.

COSC’s targeted outreach to underserved populations—such as individuals with some college but no credential, high school students in dual credit programs, and Multilingual Learners—reinforces its commitment to inclusive and accessible education. The Tuition-Free Bachelor’s Degree pathway, in particular, ensures that Connecticut residents can pursue their educational goals without accumulating significant debt, while COSC’s partnerships with CT State Community College create seamless pathways to bachelor’s degree completion.

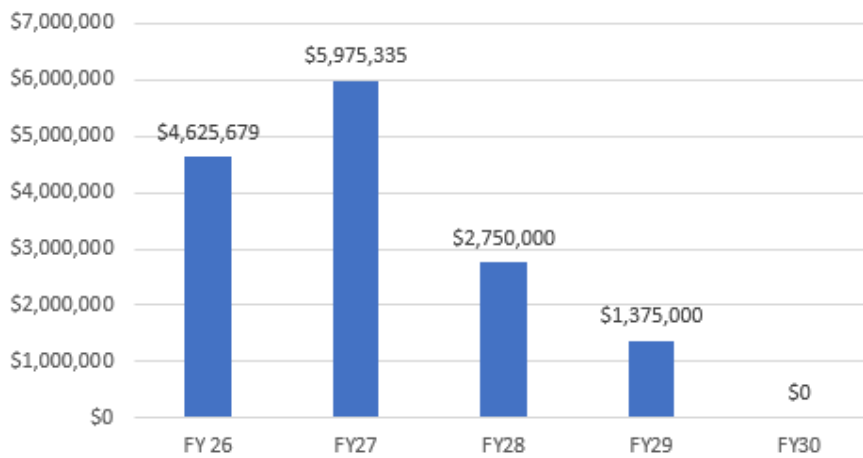
By reducing dependency on state funding, Charter Oak State College not only enhances its operational sustainability but also sets a precedent for financial independence within public higher education. “Scale Up: Affordable Pathways for Connecticut’s Workforce” aims to bolster Connecticut’s economy by creating a skilled, career-ready workforce, expanding educational access for residents, and supporting long-term economic growth. This plan is an investment in both the college and the future of Connecticut, creating a lasting, positive impact on the state’s educational and economic landscape.

## SUMMARY OF FISCAL ASK AND STUDENT ENROLLMENT

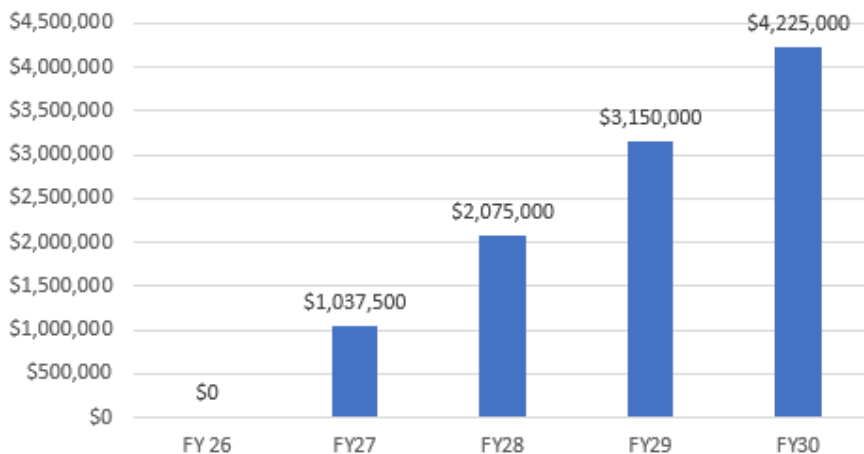
### Enrollment Impact of Scale Up Plan



### COSC Block Grant Under Scale Up



### Direct State Support for Tuition Scholarships





# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Scale Up Plan for Charter Oak State College

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## 1. WHAT IS THE “SCALE UP” PLAN?

The Scale Up Plan is a five-year initiative to increase Charter Oak State College (COSC) enrollment from 2,000 to 6,000 students. The plan emphasizes workforce-aligned programs, affordable education through initiatives like the Tuition-Free Bachelor’s Degree, and partnerships with institutions like CT State Community College.

## 2. WHAT IS THE TUITION-FREE BACHELOR’S DEGREE AND WHAT PROGRAMS WILL QUALIFY?

This initiative provides Connecticut residents with a pathway to earn a bachelor’s degree without tuition costs. It uses a “last-dollar” scholarship model, covering remaining costs after financial aid. Graduates must reside and work in Connecticut for at least three years post-graduation for full loan forgiveness. COSC will coordinate with Connecticut’s Office of Workforce Strategies (OWS) yearly to confirm the programs that would qualify for tuition-free bachelor’s degree.

## 3. HOW DOES THE LADDERS PATHWAY WORK?

LADDERS (Leveraging Academic Degrees to Drive Employment Readiness and Success) create seamless 2+2 transfer pathways for CT State students into COSC programs. It includes concurrent enrollment options, tuition matching, and targeted communication to guide students through degree completion.

## 4. WHAT PROGRAMS WILL COSC EXPAND THROUGH THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION?

The School of Education will focus on early childhood education and paraprofessional-to-

teacher certification pathways. New programs within the school are currently not offered in an online asynchronous format within CSCU and aim to address workforce shortages in Connecticut’s education sector.

## 5. WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL GOAL OF THE SCALE UP PLAN?

The ultimate goal is to achieve financial independence from state support within five years by scaling enrollment, implementing cost-saving measures, and developing revenue-generating programs. Once the financial goal is complete, all dollars from the state will go directly to students for initiatives such as tuition-free bachelor’s degree and dual credit.

## 6. HOW WILL COSC SUPPORT MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS?

COSC will use AI-driven tools to translate educational materials, provide multilingual accessibility, and support students in completing college-level coursework in English, enabling them to contribute to Connecticut’s workforce.

## 7. HOW DOES THE SCALE UP PLAN BENEFIT CONNECTICUT’S ECONOMY?

By aligning programs with workforce needs, the plan aims to address labor shortages in key industries, retain talent within the state, and increase the economic contributions of graduates through higher employment rates and wages.

## 8. HOW DOES COSC ENSURE ITS OFFERINGS ALIGN WITH WORKFORCE NEEDS?

COSC partners with the Governor's Workforce Council, employers, and industry experts to develop programs in high-demand fields like healthcare, technology, education, and social work. As mentioned earlier, COSC will coordinate yearly with OWS for the list of programs that would be eligible for tuition-free bachelor's degree.

## 9. WHAT IS COSC'S ROLE AS AN ONLINE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE (OPX) PROVIDER AND IS A CSCU INSTITUTION REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE?

As an Online Program Experience (OPX) provider, Charter Oak State College (COSC) offers shared resources and expertise in online education to other Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) institutions. These initiatives foster collaboration, reduce duplication, and enhance efficiency. Participation in any OPX initiative is entirely voluntary, allowing each CSCU institution to evaluate whether a particular initiative aligns with its unique needs. For instance, an institution might partner with COSC to offer a course at a lower per-credit cost than their current rate. This approach enables COSC to leverage its instructional design expertise across the system.

## 10. HOW WILL COSC ADDRESS CHALLENGES LIKE LOW BRAND AWARENESS?

The plan includes a branding assessment, a revamped digital presence, and targeted marketing strategies to enhance visibility and attract more students. COSC will be responsible for the cost of hiring a marketing firm to conduct this work.

## 11. WHAT SUPPORT SERVICES WILL COSC PROVIDE AS IT SCALES UP?

In addition to hiring more professionals, COSC will invest in AI-driven tools for tutoring, advising, predictive analytics, and career coaching. These tools are designed to supplement, not replace, human resources, ensuring that students continue

to receive personalized support. By leveraging AI, the college can scale its services more efficiently while maintaining high-quality interactions. Additionally, COSC will develop comprehensive guides for students, faculty, and instructional designers to enhance the overall experience and ensure consistency as enrollment grows.

## 12. HOW DOES THE TUITION-FREE BACHELOR'S DEGREE ALIGN WITH STATE WORKFORCE GOALS?

The program ties funding to residency and workforce participation, ensuring that state resources are invested in retaining skilled graduates who contribute to Connecticut's economy. Only programs approved by OWS on a yearly basis will be eligible for tuition-free bachelor's degree. For example, it is anticipated programs such as social work, software development, data analytics, etc. would be eligible but a program such as psychology and sociology would not be eligible.

## 13. WHAT ARE THE FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SCALE UP PLAN?

The plan requires a temporary \$3.8 million of additional state investment over two years for initiatives to have COSC achieve long-term sustainability achieved through enrollment growth and operational efficiencies. In addition, we are requesting the state establish investments in tuition-free bachelor's and dual credit to ensure all future dollars go directly to students for specific initiatives as recommended in the NCHEMS report.

## 14. HOW WILL TECHNOLOGY ENHANCE COSC'S OFFERINGS?

COSC will leverage AI and adaptive learning technologies to improve student outcomes, streamline operations, and provide scalable, industry-aligned educational content. COSC will be engaging with technology vendors to assist in the planning and implementation of these solutions over the next two years.

### 15. WHY IS 6,000 THE ENROLLMENT GOAL?

The 6,000 number was targeted as that is the enrollment goal for COSC to become financially self-sufficient based on our financial model. Should COSC exceed that goal in the long-term, the stretch goal of COSC is to become an institution that produces a net profit that can then be reinvested within CSCU.

### 16. WHAT IS SCNC, AND HOW IS COSC POSITIONED TO SERVE THIS POPULATION?

SCNC stands for “Some College, No Credential.” It refers to individuals who started college but did not complete a degree. COSC is uniquely positioned within CSCU to support this population through flexible online programs, six (6) different start dates, low cost, targeted advising, and its generous credit for prior learning (CPL) offerings. By leveraging partnerships with a vendor that specializes in outreach to SCNC, COSC identifies and re-engages SCNC students, providing clear pathways to complete their degrees in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Unlike previous SCNC “one-time” attempts, COSC plans to make this initiative a routine part of its enrollment activities.

### 17. WOULD THIS PLAN IMPACT MY ENROLLMENT AT MY CSCU INSTITUTION?

The Scale Up Plan is designed to have very limited impact on enrollment at other CSCU institutions. Its primary goal is to complement, not compete with, existing programs and minimize disruption within the system. For example, the LADDERS initiative specifically targets CT State students who are exclusively online—a population more likely to seek fully online, asynchronous bachelor’s degree programs. New programs at COSC, such as the School of Education, focus on addressing workforce needs in areas not offered in the same format by other CSCU institutions. This ensures alignment with the CSCU system’s shared goals while avoiding direct competition for on-ground and hybrid students.

National data shows that on-ground programs have been losing enrollment, while online programs, particularly at the graduate level, are experiencing growth. In Connecticut, recent gains in online enrollment have almost exclusively gone to institutions outside the CSCU system. Part of the goal of the Scale Up Plan is to retain these tuition dollars within the system by offering competitive, high-quality online programs.

While some programs within the CSCU system have experienced enrollment shifts due to new online offerings—such as RN to BSN programs—data shows that COSC has not been the primary driver of these changes. Instead, institutions like SNHU, Goodwin University, and Post University have seen significant growth in online programs, as traditional in-person equivalents have declined.

To address potential overlap, all proposed program changes that could impact existing offerings are carefully analyzed, and any potential effects are presented to the board for assessment as part of the new program approval process.

**CharterOak**  
STATE COLLEGE  
A Higher Degree of Online Learning

# Scaling Taskforce Report

Esteemed members of the Board of Regents,

As we consider the findings of the recent special audit by Sean Scanlon's office, I would like to draw your attention to a critical point often overlooked in discussions about the CSCU system: when concerns are raised or questions asked, they are not given the careful consideration they deserve. I acknowledge additional conversations are sometimes necessary to understand the concern or the question, but at some point, we should return to those issues and address them clearly.

When the consolidation of Connecticut's community colleges was first proposed, faculty from these once-independent institutions raised numerous concerns about potential issues, including financial mismanagement, lack of oversight, and a decline in the ethical guardrails that were in place for decades. These concerns were voiced directly to CSCU, the Board of Regents, governor, and legislators.

While the details of the current audit may differ from those raised by faculty over the last 12 years, many were identical or strikingly similar to the recommendations in Scanlon's report:

1. Internal Auditing - The absence of a robust internal auditing system, a concern we voiced, has directly contributed to the financial irregularities uncovered.
2. Residency Requirements - The removal of residency requirements for senior leadership, has clearly impacted accountability.
3. Open Connecticut - Our concerns about CSCU's exclusion from Open Connecticut have been validated.
4. Uniform Training - The need for consistent training across the system, from faculty to chancellor, should be a foregone conclusion. No one should be exempt.
5. Accountability - The lack of a clear accountability framework has enabled the questionable practices exposed in the report.
6. Post-Spending Audits - Mandatory post-spending audits would have prevented many of the issues identified.

The importance of strong financial controls, ethical leadership, and transparency cannot be overstated. Without these, academic excellence is compromised.

The consolidation itself, a political decision, laid the groundwork for many of the problems we now face.

As we move forward, we must recognize the mistakes of the past and learn from them. Implementing the recommendations of the Scanlon report and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability are essential steps toward rebuilding public trust in CSCU.

Finally, I want to emphasize the need to address the issue of Shared Services. They are infrastructure necessary for the effective and essential functions of CT State. And yet, we do not control the offices, resources, or budget related to them. This entity, which is neither shared nor particularly serviceable, should be transferred to CT State, where it belongs. CSCU needs to focus its efforts internally and CT State needs control over necessary infrastructure.

I urge this board to take action to address the issues identified in the report and to work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students to build a stronger, more equitable, and more financially sound CSCU. By taking these steps, we can begin to repair the damage done to our system.

Elle Van Dermark, Prof of History  
CT Sate Senate President

36 Overlook Place  
Trumbull, CT 06611

Martin Guay, Chair  
Board of Regents  
61 Woodland Street  
Hartford, CT 06105

Dear Chair Guay and Members of the Board of Regents,

In a June 2024 article in the *Connecticut Mirror*, you were quoted as saying that instead of “protesting,” you would like us to “come in and sit down and have a coffee” with CSU-AAUP to “figure out a way to move forward.”

At WCSU-AAUP, we appreciate your willingness to engage in dialogue and collaboration. However, we are disappointed that a scheduling conflict prevented you from attending our recent meeting on the “consulting” plans initiated by Central’s administration at the WCSU campus. These plans, along with other decisions such as the ACT Framework, have been implemented without sufficient consultation with faculty. We would love to sit down for coffee before protesting, but you keep making and implementing decisions before we can start up our percolators.

We would welcome the opportunity for a meaningful discussion before such decisions are made. In this spirit, we hope to take you up on your offer for a coffee meeting to address several key concerns:

- **Respecting shared governance:** Ensuring that the plan for “consultancy” at WCSU includes a timeline and agenda that reflects our priorities and strategic plan through discussing with us.
- **Establishing a reasonable timeline:** Ensuring that a report from the consultants is submitted before our new WCSU President is appointed to avoid deterring those who are applying from thinking that they will not be afforded full decision-making power.
- **Removing the conflict of interest:** Removing President Toro’s apparent conflict of interest in being both the Chair of our Presidential Search and the “consultant”—a conflict apparent when one considers that presumably President Singh, who will be the recipient of President Toro’s advice as “consultant,” is also a candidate being evaluated by President Toro, and therefore he would not be in a position to objectively evaluate her advice.

These matters are critical to fostering trust and collaboration as we work toward the shared goal of strengthening WCSU.

Though you were unable to attend our meeting, we remain eager to meet with you. As a coffee enthusiast from the San Francisco Bay Area, I can assure you that our coffee will not disappoint. My colleague, WCSU-AAUP’s President Manoj Misra, brings years of experience from Edmonton, where the coffee is also excellent. We’ll have a fresh pot ready—just let us know when it would be convenient.

Sincerely,



Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox  
Professor and Chair, Department of History, Philosophy, and World Perspectives, WCSU  
Vice President, WCSU-AAUP

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. As you are probably all aware, the recent announcement of the collaboration/consultancy between Central and Western administrations has created a bit of a stir. I understand Chancellor Cheng will be making a statement about this to you today. I am here to provide a University-wide perspective as President of our University Senate.

Clearly the announcement was received by our community as a bombshell, leading to concern across the entire campus. I say this to clarify that it is not just AAUP who is expressing dismay. All the constituencies of WCSU are on high alert and seeking clarification about what this imposed partnership means for us.

I want to thank President Toro for coming here yesterday and meeting with many of us in an attempt to alleviate our concerns. I believe her efforts are helping repair the bombshell damage, and I encourage her to continue her outreach to our entire community.

A common theme I have heard from various people at WCSU is respect. Faculty feel disrespected that they were not asked to contribute to this plan before it was imposed. Staff and administration are concerned that their members will be viewed negatively, people who are not good enough at their jobs. Outsiders are contacting faculty and staff asking us whether Central is taking over Western (a direct quote from one of our staff), contributing to a public perception that WCSU is adrift.

As I mentioned in my last comments to this body, we are doing the hard work required to change. All components of WCSU are working tirelessly to move our University forward. Our highly skilled and compassionate community has been given a Herculean task, and we are responding.

We welcome any help and best practice advice any of our sister schools can offer. What we ask in return is that we are treated with the respect we deserve, the respect the students who choose to come to WCSU deserve.

Thank you for your time.

Jeff Schlicht, University Senate President  
Western Connecticut State University

Good Morning Chancellor Cheng, CFO Blanchard, and Chair Guay:

My name is John O'Connor – I teach in the Sociology Department at Central, and I am an active member of CSU-AAUP.

Yesterday was quite a day – we suffered through another episode of OPM's Higher Education Sustainability Advisory Board, we had a sleepy discussion about the ACT Framework, a contentious exchange about the system's legislative non-ask ask, we watched an embarrassing shared governance debacle at Western, Scanlon released his report to the governor, and we finished the day off with some ugly media stories. Wow, I hope your eggnog was spiked.

What connects all of those things? I think that is an important question to consider. Some faculty might argue that this is a consequence of this board scrambling for quick solutions to difficult problems. Yesterday, in our discussions, Chancellor Cheng angrily asked the unions what their investment proposal was, later he heatedly asked my colleagues what their plan was to save Western? Interestingly, those questions were posed after the fact – but it is faculty more than anyone that knows our system – what it needs and what it is. Faculty ideas and input should be considered first, not after the fact. We talk a lot about shared governance, but we do not practice it in a meaningful way. Yesterday, was proof of that.

In watching the second presentation of NChems' Anti-education manifesto, we heard Secretary Beckham celebrate data driven recommendations that he hoped would “scale the system to meet student demand, make the system fiscally stable, make it operationally efficient, improve student outcomes, and meet the state's workforce needs.” Once again, we were told that the NChems report was a resource for the CSU system. But it is the knowledge of the faculty that is the resource, not some overpriced report of some consultant.

Nowhere in the NChems report, or in the presentations, was there a serious discussion about students or education. This board may not know it, but your job is not to produce commodities for the job market. Our collective goal here is simple – it is to foster creative and independent thought and inquiry, it is to get students to challenge perceived beliefs, it is to encourage students to



explore new horizons. First and foremost, that is what this board should help faculty do in classrooms at Western, Eastern, Southern, Central and in our Community College.

In terms of solutions, we heard about leveraging Charter Oak. Chancellor Cheng went so far to claim that “Charter Oak is the best kept secret in CT.” No, it’s not; it is a diploma mill. This morning Regent Yang will tell us about online education – but education is more than a series of URLs.

I’m sure Regent Yang will talk about costs, but will he talk about quality, learning, connectedness, social capital, relationships, dialogue, AI, and student satisfaction? Online education has a role, but it should be faculty that determines that role not this board.

Students are not customers, we cannot reduce everything to the market. Markets fail.

To end this morning, I would like to leave you with a reminder, a tale of two of my students: one is a young trans student who is going to apply to several graduate schools this winter, including NYU. This student is formidable – they are smart, serious, and very clear about where they want to go. This student would shine at any higher education institution, and they are in our system. This student want to change the world, they are not interested in workforce development.

I have another student, in the same class, she is an older African-American woman; a single mother – who has all sorts of employment struggles and challenges. Her class attendance is dodgy, her assignments get submitted when she is able. But she is brilliant. The best part of my job is when she raises her hand in class and jumps into the fray. Yes, she is in my classroom to upskill and to get ahead.

Both students are who this system serves – their classroom experiences matter. Shame on all of us if we shortchange them.

Thank you.

John O’Connor

<b>Student Advisory Committee 10 am Fridays</b>	<b>Faculty Advisory Committee 1 pm Fridays</b>	<b>Academic and Student Affairs 9:30 am Fridays</b>	<b>Audit 10 am Tuesdays</b>	<b>HR &amp; Administration 3:30 pm Fridays</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Infrastructure 10:30 am Wednesdays</b>	<b>Technology 12:30 Wednesdays</b>	<b>Governance &amp; Nominations 12:30 p.m. Fridays</b>	<b>Board of Regents 10 am Thursdays</b>
January 17	January 24		January 14		January 15	January 15		January 23
February 21	February 21	February 14			February 19			February 27
March 28	March 7	March 7		March 14		March 19	March 7	March 27
April 11 <i>Joint BOR/SAC</i>	April 11	April 4						April 11 <i>Joint BOR/SAC</i>
May 2	May 16	May 9	May 27		May 14	May 14		May 22
	June 13 ( <i>Joint BOR/FAC</i> )	June 6		June 13	June 18	June 18	June 6	June 13 ( <i>Joint BOR/FAC</i> ) June 26 (Regular BOR Mtg)
	July 18							
	August 22				August 20			August 28
September 19	September 19	September 5		September 12		September 10	September 5	September 26
October 18	October 10	October 3			October 15	October 8		October 23
November 14	November 14 ( <i>Joint BOR/FAC</i> )					November 12		November 14 1PM ( <i>Joint BOR/FAC</i> )
December 12 ( <i>Joint BOR/SAC</i> )	December 12	December 5 (joint w/HR)	December 16	Friday, December 5 (joint w/ASA)	December 10	December 10	December 5	December 12 ( <i>Joint BOR/SAC</i> ) December 18 (Regular BOR Mtg)