

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION MINUTES - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

8:30 am, Friday, May 4, 2018

Boardroom, System Office, 61 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT 06105

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING

Matt Fleury, Chair	Y
Yvette Melendez	Y
Richard J. Balducci	Y
Naomi K. Cohen	Y
Merle W. Harris	Y
Elease E. Wright	Y

STAFF

Mark Ojakian, President
Alice Pritchard, Chief of Staff
Jane Gates, Provost & SVP Academic & Student Affairs
Ernestine Y. Weaver, Counsel
Steve Weinberger, VP Human Resources & Labor Relations
Erin A. Fitzgerald, Associate Director of Board Affairs/BOR Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fleury called the meeting to order at 8:30am, declaring a quorum present.

STUDENTS FIRST COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONSOLIDATION PLAN / NEASC 4-24-18 RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE REQUEST

Chairman Fleury offered the following remarks.

"These past weeks have been eventful and challenging. Nothing less should be expected amid the financial issues of our beloved state and the magnificent universities and colleges for which we are accountable.

I want to thank President Ojakian for his continuing leadership, which is especially valued in challenging times. I also want to acknowledge the members of the board, and those throughout the college and university community and the business community, and others who have reached out to offer comments, advice, ideas, thoughts and critique. Your caring and continued interest is invaluable to us.

A year ago, we considered various scenarios to stabilize our colleges in the face of imminent, crippling deficits. Each of these concepts presented opportunities and risks, advocates and detractors, and, certainly, questions. By necessity, there was no plan that this Board ever seriously considered that was called, "do nothing", or "leave it as is and hope the world becomes a better place for us and our students without us doing our job." There is not such a plan today: there cannot be and there won't be.

The plan we settled on, comprising an administrative consolidation of the community colleges and the reorganizing of various college and university functions across the system, remains the right idea: reduce management cost; protect student services; and contain tuition.

Contrary to some interpretations of NEASC's response last week, our respected accreditors did not reject the principals of that plan and the end state that we espoused. Rather, they conducted the critical review that is their role and that we anticipated, and they did so, in many cases, in a specific and actionable manner. This is a necessary step in the process and it moves us forward.

To be sure, we were surprised by the determination that our plan should shift from one accreditation process to another, a new process that could carry us into a four to six-year timeframe on the outside for implementation. As we stated, a process that forces us to wait that long to implement changes would be devastating to our ability to carry out the vision that we share: a sustainable system that protects campus locations where we serve our students, and holds the line on tuition. We said that because it is true. We don't have that much time, as long as those are our priorities.

Shutting locations and dramatically raising tuition can be avoided. Students First showed that. It must be avoided; we know that. By working with NEASC, our partners in government, who are substantially the funding stream other than students, for our institutions, and by being open to improvements and refinements in our own thinking, it will be avoided:

NEASC's letter explicitly invited us to continue a dialogue with them about how to move forward, noting that we might consider a range of options at the NEASC level, as well as those within our own domain, and recognizing that we are on a timeline.

Naturally, President Ojakian immediately picked up the phone and entered the next stage of the conversation, resulting in a continued dialog that he will brief us on. I would characterize them, to the extent I have been aware of them and participated, as constructive. Regent Harris and I were in one such conversation --you'll hear more about that as Mark and his leadership team have digested that and reflected on how to move forward.

Ours will ultimately be an institution, at a time when it is do desperately needed in our state, that unwaveringly steps up to its reality, recognizes its significant constraints, and yet, undaunted, boldly accepts and fulfills the responsibility to make it work for those it serves.

We now forge ahead, led by our leader President Ojakian, to protect and build the road to opportunity for our citizens."

CSUS President Ojakian offered the following remarks.

"I want to thank the Chairman and members of the Executive committee for their continued support of not only me, but my team, as we move forward in some very difficult times. As the Chairman said, our goal has been, and will continue to be, to provide students with a high-quality affordable education which preserves locations and holds down tuition costs so that everybody has access to an educational experience that betters their lives.

That's why we were surprised that NEASC asked us to go down a slightly different path, did not support our Substantive Change proposal in the format that it was written and asked us to consider some other alternatives.

I just want to be clear that the intent to talk to the General Assembly about choices and what would have to happen, or what we would have to consider, if we were not to consider adequate funding in the near term and if we were not able to go down the STUDENTS FIRST path, was not an attempt to scare people, but an attempt to sound an alarm. This is about choices and our choice has never been to increase tuition rates dramatically or close campus locations. Many of you know I have been the first one to support the continuation of all the current locations. As you also know, at the end of next year our colleges are poised to end the year with a \$35 million deficit, which would, in most cases, wipe out the majority of reserves that we currently have. We know that we cannot continue on that path towards insolvency, but that we need to continue to be creative so that students in our system don't suffer because of our fiscal crisis.

As you know, our fringe benefits rates are posed to go up 13% beginning July 1, 2018, and we have a significant obligation under the SEBAC agreement on the wage side in our salary expenses.

Since last Tuesday, we have had many productive conversations with leaders on both sides of the aisle who recognize they need to be part of the solution. That if they do nothing and continue to take us down the path of continued reductions that they cannot help but be responsible for the conversations that this board will have to have in the future. I am hopeful. I have been spending a great deal of time talking to leaders on both sides of the aisle and so far, the response has been good. We have to see if there is going to be a budget or if we are going to have to continue along the path of last year's budget that was adopted, which, in no scenario, is good to us. So, we continue to move that forward.

I also want to say that I am not recommending an accelerated review of our tuition rates or an immediate conversation on campus closures. I've never said that and I'm sorry if that has been construed differently. What I am attempting to do is continue the open dialog with NEASC to try to find a path forward and to continue to have the STUDENTS FIRST initiative in my brain as I move forward.

I've met with a number of students since last Tuesday who have said to me, "keep up the path you are on; keep up working for us; we need to make sure that you are committed to seeing something through so that we don't end up in a much-disadvantaged situation."

I believe our discussions with NEASC since Tuesday have been productive. We've only had a few days to digest what a new path forward might look like. I'm not prepared at this time to give the EC options on how we move forward. I would reserve that for the full Board meeting next week when we can have a much more informed and robust conversation

I do believe there is a path forward. The important thing to understand is the Commission is not saying no to our proposal to form a single community college. They want to help us and guide us through a process to get there which may take on a different variation than we had originally

proposed. We have to remember that this is unchartered. Not only in New England but also in the country – they have made that point very clear to us. NEASC wants us to work as close as we can with them and help us get through to the end of the road on this. I think the conversations have been productive and I am encouraged that there will be a path forward that I can share with the Board next week. It's important to understand that there are a number of fronts that we are dealing with here: legislative front (poised to end next week); NEASC front; and the student front (which we are ultimately responsible to).

Thank you again for your support. I continue to be committed to work with you to get through this process and to end up in a much more sustainable, resilient and student-focused system when we are all through."

Following remarks from Chairman Fleury and President Ojakian, Chairman Fleury opened the floor to committee members. Primary concerns expressed centered on ensuring there was not a reoccurrence of a "disconnect" in the information received from NEASC staff and relied upon by CSCU administration and, in turn, the Board of Regents. President Ojakian reiterated that at this point, he was not prepared to announce a recommended path forward, however, did share that was a concern he raised in the conversations between CSCU and NEASC staff since receiving the April 24, 2018 communication (Attachment A hereto).

President Ojakian indicated he would be looking at all options as he continued conversations with NEASC and his team and would provide an update on those discussions at the May 10 meeting of the full Board.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion by Chair Fleury seconded by Vice Chair Melendez, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 9:10 am for discussion concerning:

- the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation...of a public officer or employee

At the request of Chair Fleury, President Ojakian remained with the committee.

The Committee returned to open session at 10:45 am.

Chair Fleury advised there were no votes in executive session and that discussion was limited to the topic previously announced (restated below).

- the appointment, employment, performance, evaluation...of a public officer or employee

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Fleury declared the meeting adjourned at 10:45 am.

Submitted,

Erin A. Fitzgerald, Associate Director, Office of Board Affairs/
Secretary of the Board of Regents for Higher Education
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Attachments to Minutes and/or Meeting Handouts/ Presentations

Posted online at <http://www.ct.edu/regents/minutes>

- A. NEASC 4-24-18 response to Substantive Change Request
Students First Community College consolidation plan /



Founded in 1885

ATTACHMENT A TO MAY 4, 2018 BOR EXEC
COMM SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

DAVID P. ANGEL, Chair (2018)
Clark University

DAVID QUIGLEY, Vice Chair (2018)
Boston College

G. TIMOTHY BOWMAN (2018)
Harvard University

THOMAS L. G. DWYER (2018)
Johnson & Wales University

JOHN F. GABRANSKI (2018)
Haydenville, MA

KAREN L. MUNCASTER (2018)
Brandeis University

CHRISTINE ORTIZ (2018)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

JON S. OXMAN (2018)
Auburn, ME

ROBERT L. PURA (2018)
Greenfield Community College

ABDALLAH A. SFEIR (2018)
Lebanese American University

REV. BRIAN J. SHANLEY, O.P. (2018)
Providence College

HARRY E. DUMAY (2019)
College of Our Lady of the Elms

JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2019)
Groton, CT

COLEEN C. PANTALONE (2019)
Northeastern University

MARIKO SILVER (2019)
Bennington College

GEORGE W. TETLER (2019)
Worcester, MA

KASSANDRA S. ARDINGER (2020)
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL CAREY (2020)
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)
Assumption College

F. JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)
Framingham State University

RICK DANIELS (2020)
Cohasset, MA

DONALD H. DEHAYES (2020)
University of Rhode Island

PAM Y. EDDINGER (2020)
Bunker Hill Community College

THOMAS S. EDWARDS (2020)
Thomas College

KIMBERLY M. GOFF-CREWS (2020)
Yale University

THOMAS C. GREENE (2020)
Vermont College of Fine Arts

MARTIN J. HOWARD (2020)
Boston University

SUSAN D. HUARD (2020)
Manchester Community College (NH)

JEFFREY S. SOLOMON (2020)
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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April 24, 2018

Mr. Mark E. Ojakian
President
Connecticut State System Office
61 Woodland Street Rm 302
Hartford, CT 06105

Dear President Ojakian:

At its meeting on April 19, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report *Students First: Securing Connecticut's Future through Excellence in Higher Education* submitted by the Connecticut State College and University System proposing the creation of a new institution, tentatively named Community College of Connecticut. Because of the intense interest in the Commission's decision, I am conveying it to you in this summary letter, with a more formal letter to follow. The essence of the Commission's decision is outlined below.

While the Commission appreciates the considerable work done already to develop a proposal that addressed both the significant financial challenges faced by the twelve community colleges and the importance of improving student success, the Commission was not persuaded that planning for the new Community College of Connecticut as outlined in the *Students First* report is realistic.

The Commission determined that the Community College of Connecticut will be a new institution, and not a "substantive change" for the current twelve separately accredited community colleges. Therefore, in order to become accredited, the Community College of Connecticut will need to go through our established processes to become a candidate for accreditation and then an accredited institution. Because of the magnitude of the proposed changes, the proposed timeline, and the limited investment in supporting the changes, the Commission is concerned that the potential for a disorderly environment for students is too high for it to approve the proposed Community College of Connecticut as a candidate for accreditation based on this proposal.

Community College of Connecticut will be eligible to apply for candidacy for accreditation. This eligibility is the first step in the accreditation process, to be followed by a comprehensive evaluation of the new institution to consider it for candidacy, a status that can last no longer than five years, per federal regulation. Students at candidate institutions are eligible for Title IV federal financial aid. Students at institutions that are "eligible," but not candidate or accredited institutions, are not eligible for federal aid.

Many of the matters needed to assure a smooth transition, including alignment of academic programs, are in the early stages of development, and the Commission does not yet have confidence that sufficient progress will be made on implementation in the proposed two-year timeframe to ensure the College will be able to provide a clear and orderly environment necessary to support students. We note the considerable time and effort required in the proposed consolidation of 434 current degree programs into 225-250 degree programs, providing a way to ensure that identically named programs are in fact identical, while retaining certain unique programs at individual locations. We believe that this program rationalization, while necessary for a single community college, will take longer and require greater investment to support faculty and administrator time than is reflected in the current proposal. We are further concerned that consolidating the institutional research functions into the System office rather than at the institutional level will not provide the institution and the campuses with sufficiently responsive information and feedback to support planning and evaluation.

While the Commission is gratified to learn of plans to use the Guided Pathways model to improve performance on measures of student success, providing an academic plan for each student will take additional time and significant investment in training and professional development for the faculty and staff who will develop these plans and use them to support and increase student success.

In addition, we are concerned that the proposed institution does not appear to have sufficient support for academic administration to plan, oversee, and evaluate hundreds of academic degree and certificate programs, given that the chief academic officer will also be the chief student affairs officer and have only three other staff in the office (an administrative assistant, an Executive Director of Retention and Completion, and a Registrar). At the campus level, department chair and division director positions will be eliminated, to be replaced with program coordinators and academic discipline coordinators, with one academic officer per campus (who, on the smaller campuses, will also serve as the chief student affairs officer). It is also not clear how faculty can act in concert across up to twelve campuses to oversee the quality of the academic program. While this concern applies to all academic programs, it can be illustrated by the lack of clarity on how the specialized accreditation process would be overseen for multi-campus programs, such as nursing. Further, given the lightly staffed office of the Provost, we are not persuaded that the institution's chief academic officer will have the capacity to provide the important academic leadership required of what would be one of this country's largest community colleges.

The twelve separately accredited community colleges are continued in accreditation, with the previously determined requirements for scheduled monitoring by the Commission remaining in place.

If the Connecticut State College and University System wishes to pursue the plan as outlined, Commission staff are prepared to work with you as you prepare for a comprehensive evaluation for candidacy. Commission staff are also prepared to work with you should the System decide to pursue other options to address the twin financial and student success challenges.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the System's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. We will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Matt Fleury. The System and the twelve community colleges are free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

Mr. Mark E. Ojakian

April 24, 2018

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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David P. Angel

BB/srh

cc: Mr. Matt Fleury, Chair

Dr. James P. Lombella, Asnuntuck Community College/Tunxis Community College

Dr. Wilfredo Nieves, Capital Community College

Dr. Paul Broadie, Gateway Community College/Housatonic Community College

Dr. Gena Glickman, Manchester Community College

Dr. Steven Minkler, Middlesex Community College

Dr. Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Naugatuck Community College

Dr. Michael Rooke, Northwestern Community College

Dr. David L. Levinson, Norwalk Community College

Dr. Carlee Rader Drummer, Quinebaug Valley Community College

Dr. Mary Ellen Jukoski, Three Rivers Community College