

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

Thursday, April 2, 2020

Meeting conducted via remote participation

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING

Matt Fleury, Chair	Y
Richard J. Balducci	Y
Naomi K. Cohen	Y
Merle W. Harris	Y
David R. Jimenez	Y
Elease E. Wright	Y

CSCU STAFF PARTICIPATING

Mark E. Ojakian, President
Dr. Alice Pritchard, Chief of Staff
Dr. Jane Gates, Provost & SVP Academic & Student Affairs
Ben Barnes, Chief Financial Officer
Andrew Kripp, VP for Human Resources
Joe Tolisano, Chief Information Officer
Ernestine Y. Weaver, Counsel
Keith Epstein, VP for Facilities, Real Estate & Infrastructure Planning
Leigh Appleby, Director of Communications
Alexandra Pilon, Director of Government Relations
Erin A. Fitzgerald, Director of Board Affairs

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fleury called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and offered the following opening remarks.

“We’re going to hear about the work across the campuses and the System Office with regard to the COVID19 crisis. We’ve been in touch with a number of you throughout this and we’ve appreciated the ongoing efforts and communication. I want to state for the record how much the Board appreciates the response of so many people at the campus level, in particular for adjusting to an entirely dramatic and urgent sea change in the way we are delivering services from the classrooms to an online platform, which is certainly not as easy as everybody always represents it to be. I want to acknowledge the inconvenience and upset for not only faculty and staff but also our students and the tremendous burden this places on the administrative teams across the system. These are just extraordinarily difficult and trying times. We found ourselves not only at the apex of this in terms of a very important part of peoples lives, nearing, in many cases, the culmination of their academic careers but, also, in serving, as per our recent Emergency Meeting, as a venue for the response by our communities to this crisis. So thank you all for everything you are doing in this regard and, please, continue to ask us for whatever support or actions we need to do to enable you to move forward in that regard.”

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On a motion by Regent Cohen, seconded by Vice Chair Merle Harris, the [minutes from the January 16, 2020 Regular Meeting and the March 26, 2020 Emergency Meeting](#), were approved as submitted.

COVID19 – SYSTEM RESPONSE & FUTURE PLANNING

Overview - President Ojakian provided an overview on the COVID19 System Responsiveness and Future Planning. Highlights of his comments are listed below

- Thanked members of the Executive Committee and the Board for the support they've provided to enable Administration in transition to a new normal in providing higher education services to the students that we collectively serve.
- Advised that since it became clear at the beginning of the crisis that CSCU would be forced to close campuses for an extended period, the top priority at the System has been to help students to adjust to the new reality.
- Reiterated his thanks and appreciation to faculty and staff at all of the campuses for rising to the occasion and being in a very short period of time to deliver all classes offered online. Noted this has been an effort of great magnitude and stated that everyone has met the challenge and understood and embraced the fact that what we were attempting to do was to provide our students with as seamless a path forward as possible to complete their academic career.
- Offered the following from a financial perspective (adding that CFO Barnes will provide more specificity):
 - CSCU has pledged to continue to pay student workers for the remainder of the semester (regardless of whether or not they were able to work)
 - All faculty and staff at colleges and universities will continue to be paid through end of semester
 - CSCU has been working with the university and college foundations who have been reallocating funds to be able to assist students in making ends meet during the crisis.
- From a technical standpoint, CSCU is working to ensure students have necessary resources necessary to complete with devices being made available where possible through the ordering of laptops, tablets and computers (including working directly with internet providers concerning access to high speed internet). Despite all efforts collectively, some students won't be able to complete; staff members are working with each campus to understand what those challenges are and identify ways to assist those students.
- CSCU is an integral part of the Governor's overall response team to the COVID19 pandemic, which includes daily interaction with team and Governor directly.
- CSCU spaces and facilities are now being or will be utilized as overflow for hospitals in communities to provide beds and for other to-be-identified purposes.
- Expressed his appreciation for his Team at the System Office, noting they have been working tirelessly with all the campuses to ensure SO staff response is consistent, meets the needs of the state, the community and, ultimately, the needs of the students we all service. He stated he especially wanted to thank his Chief of Staff, Dr. Alice Pritchard, for her extraordinary efforts in coordinating the System's responsiveness during this very difficult time.
- He restated his appreciation to all members of the CSCU community for rising to the challenge and to making a difficult task possible for our students who, he noted, are one of the most resilient groups of people he has ever met.

Following President Ojakian's comments, Committee members received updates on the following topics listed below.

General – Dr. Alice Pritchard, Chief of Staff

- Noting that while there are only four individuals who will be reporting out, there is a strong team working with them who are reporting out on those group efforts. In introducing CFO Barnes, she noted the efforts of Keith Epstein, VP for Facilities, Real Estate & Infrastructure Planning, as someone who has been working around the clock in responsiveness to the Governor's Response Team.

Finance and Facilities impact – Ben Barnes, Chief Financial Officer

- Universities have all undertaken to refund prorated room and board payments (on average \$3,200 per students, for an approximate total of \$24.5M (subject to minor offsets from food services companies)
- Looking into community colleges concerning possible refunds for those courses which **cannot** be offered online.
- Finance sent out a detailed cost-reporting survey to all campuses. CFO Barnes indicated he anticipated having a first cost-reporting early next week and that he expects to do so every other week to ensure we're up to date on fiscal impact of costs related to the crisis.
- Federal government CARES Act – includes a considerable amount of support for colleges and universities, including grants to individual institutions. Anticipated that the totals for the universities will be 25M for CSU and just under \$30M for colleges. Nothing for COSC as it is only for institutions that were not on a 100% online platform prior to the beginning of the emergency. Half of the CARES Act grants must be used for emergency financial assistance for students; Finance will be proposing some alternative ways to satisfy that obligation.
- Facilities – we've turned over dormitories and field houses at Southern and Western. Working to clear out dorms at Central and Eastern as well—anticipate providing facilities at all four of those universities to provide overflow hospital beds for healthcare and first responders as needed.
- Thanked Keith Epstein and CIO Joe Tolisano and their teams at the SO and campus levels for their perseverance and willingness to jump into the fray to make the above-referenced accomplishments happen.

Academic & Student Affairs – Dr. Jane Gates, Provost & SVP, Academic/Student Affairs

- Remote learning – faculty and staff have been exemplary in meeting the challenges faced, with the universities leading on-ground and virtual sessions, while the community colleges have been offering multiple virtual training sessions. Added that both faculty and students have adopted virtual learning extremely well.
- Pass/Fail grade option – the current procedure for pass/fail is being amended to further clarify the procedure in response to numerous comments received from faculty and staff. Under construction are an FAQ and an online application for students (will be available April 15). She added that the procedure revision is being coordinated with State Department of Education to ensure alignment of their grade option criteria with what CSCU will be promulgating.
- Crisis Teams for **Community Colleges**
 - Enrollment Management – chaired by Alison Buckley, VP for Enrollment for Community Colleges. Charge is to identify and prioritize the issues that limit student enrollment and persistence in a remote environment and to provide immediate solutions at the system or college level that impacts student enrollment, registration,

student records, student finance and financial aid and academic advising Title IV compliance and any other type of student communication.

- Remote Teaching and Learning – chaired by Mike Stefanowicz, Interim VP for Academic Affairs for the community colleges. Charge is identifying and prioritizing issues that relate to successful completion of courses for the Spring 2020 semester. The Team will establish timelines for delivery of those issues and push them back out to all of the campuses, particularly community college campuses that may be experiencing any type of remote teaching and learning challenge, online libraries and other critical academic student support services.
- Multiple Measures Placement/High School GPA. The CT Math Advisory Council has moved forward the recommendation that the high school GPA as a means of course placement for this current timeframe for students to be placed in the Math and English courses at the community colleges.
- In closing, Dr. Gates noted that the items she addressed are the major high-level kinds of initiatives that have been undertaken to ensure that students experience less anxiety and stress in being admitted to our colleges and universities. She added that CSCU is working very carefully with high school to ensure that those students who will have no grading periods during this period, will be able to enter our institutions without having any undue problems in the admissions process as it relates to the current pass/fail process for our universities and colleges.

IT – Joe Tolisano, Chief Information Officer

- Noted that the pandemic hit right before spring break, permitting IT to utilize those eight or nine days to migrate coursework online.
- All 17 institutions create a shell for every course that is being offered online so CSCU was prepositioned to transition the content for thousands of courses to online learning.
- Noted the use of two other collaboration suites (Microsoft Teams and WebEx) which results in three formats which can be used, not only to deliver content but also for advising and counseling purposes.
- SO IT has distributed inventoried equipment and also dismantled SO computer labs to provide to faculty and administrators who needed them for remote work.
- Investments in Cloud have paid huge dividends: with very little infrastructure left at SO and 17 institutions, IT is leveraging those relationships to deliver content and to administer the system remotely.
- The system is being operated remotely, with very small teams going into the SO periodically for maintenance of servers or deliver laptops.
- IT is working diligently to maintain system security
- Assistance to the State – Responsive to the Governor’s request for volunteers in the healthcare field to assist with COVID19 efforts, IT has been able to pull data from systems for nursing and allied health students to message them through the institutions.
- IT has worked closely with area hospitals re use of CSCU facilities by providing internet connections and other assistance upon request.
- Noting that the supply chain is extremely compressed, CIO Tolisano spoke to gaps and difficulty to obtain equipment, extending to student technology and internet access. IT has deployed hot spots to libraries and students, however, those resources are becoming constrained with the internet congested due to large increase in individuals working remotely.

Human Resources impact and response – Andrew Kripp, VP for Human Resources

- Working to keep all employees whole in terms of compensation through the end of semester.
- Reported that the overwhelming majority of employees are working remotely; HR has provided guidance and support to maximize their effectiveness and set expectations for telework.
- Expressed a great deal of appreciation to IT facilitating our employees in the transition to remote work.
- Essential staff (Level 1) employees are the only individuals working on campus.
- Managing shift schedules to mitigate exposure of employees to each other and the public.
- Advised that “business as usual” is occurring; getting work done and continuing to hire staff.
- Initiated daily meetings with union leaders from classified and unclassified bargaining units which have led to the ability to resolve issues quickly and sometimes on the fly. Expressed his appreciation for the bargaining units’ participation and cooperation.
- Noted that the primary focus is the health and safety of our Level 1 employees that are still working on the campuses (primarily limited to maintenance, janitorial, police and IT staff). This includes ensuring that they are able to come and go to work, maintain the appropriate distancing and mitigating their exposure while they perform their critical work.

Dr. Pritchard thanked everyone for their reports and added that there are other members on the System Office Crisis Team who participate and contribute to the effectiveness of the system’s response during this crisis. She noted they are all on daily, sometimes multiple, calls with the Governor’s Office and other agencies. She thanked Alex Beaudoin, Leigh Appleby, Keith Epstein, Angelo Simoni and Ernestine Weaver for their significant contributions.

President Ojakian stated that the CSCU faculty adapted extremely well and quickly; to the point where when CSCU began transitioning to teaching fully online, many other institutions in the region and the State were just thinking about how they were going to do it. He added that while there have been some challenges, as there always are, CSCU faculty did an incredible job of adapting to the online environment.

Responsive to an inquiry from Regent Jimenez, President Ojakian stated that there are no anticipated workforce reductions for this semester (he also referenced the SEBAC agreement job protections which extend to 2022). VP Kripp noted that through the technology we have been able to deploy, the overwhelming majority of employees are able to be productive working on a remote basis.

Dr. Pritchard noted an update will be offered to the full Board at the April 16 Board meeting. She advised that they meeting weekly with Presidents, Regional Presidents and CEOs of the universities, colleges and Charter Oak and that the Crisis Team will keep bringing forward their concerns and their accomplishments, the latter of which they’ve had many during this time.

STUDENTS FIRST

President Ojakian shared that the scheduled April meeting with NECHE to give them a Students First status report and implementation plan was postponed until June. He added that NECHE is meeting virtually this month but they are only taking up a few issues which don't require a lot of attention or a lot of in person conversation and discussion. CSCU will be attending NECHE's June annual meeting and perhaps spend as much as a half day with them. President Ojakian indicated the postponement does not provide any sort of slow down to the work that needs to be done over the next couple of months and through this year.

FLEURY -**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On a motion by Regent Wright, seconded by Vice Chair Harris, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 10:52 am for discussion concerning the evaluation or appointment of a public officer or employee. Chair Fleury noted there would be no votes in Executive, that the discussion was limited to the above-referenced topics and that President Ojakian, Alice Pritchard and Erin Fitzgerald would be included in Executive Session. He additionally noted that there would be no votes when the Committee left Executive Session, with the exception of his declaring the meeting adjourned.

Executive Session concluded at 11:50 m.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Fleury declared the meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.

Submitted,

Erin A. Fitzgerald, Director of Board Affairs/
Secretary of the Board of Regents for Higher Education

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