

Regular Meeting of the State of CT
Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents for Higher Education
Minutes
March 10, 2023

Present:

Aime, Lois, Admin Fac, At-Large Rep, NCC
Andersen, Jonathan, Fac, alternate, QVCC
Blitz, David, Fac, Vice-Chair, CCSU
Cunningham, Brendan, Fac, ECSU
Dunne, Matthew, Fac, HCC
Farquharson, Patrice, Fac, COSC
Long, Jennifer, Fac, alternate, TRCC
Lumbantobing, Rotua, Fac, alternate, WCSU

Muldoon, Linsey, Fac, alternate, MCC
Rajczewski, MaryBeth, Fac, ACC
Robinson, Dyan, SUOAF, CSU
Sesanker, Colena, Fac, Chair, GWCC
Trieu, Vu, SUOAF, alternate, CSU
Wilder, Linda, Admin Fac, COSC
Yiamouyiannis, Carmen, Fac, alternate, CCC

Absent:

Blaszczynski, Andre, Fac, alternate, TXCC
Fisher, Mikey, Fac, alternate, SCSU
Goh, Bryan, Fac, alternate, MXCC
Jackson, Mark, Fac, alternate, CCSU

Perfetto, Linda, Admin Fac, alternate, COSC
Picard, Ronald, Fac, alternate NVCC
Shea, Michael, Fac, SCSU
Whittemore, Rob, Fac, WCSU

- Meeting called to order at 1:06 pm by Chair Sesanker. Meeting is being recorded as required.
 - Approval of 2/1023 FAC minutes – Motion to approve – David Blitz; seconded – approved unanimously
 - Approval of Agenda – Motion to approve – Lois Aime; seconded – approved unanimously
- Chair Report –
 - Meeting of ASA this morning – new program at SCSU: Health & Wellness Coaching; Intermediate Admin. SCSU Post-Master’s certificate to get people into workforce before completion of dissertation; name change Health Promotions Studies to Public Health – WCSU; policy revisions on centers and institutes approved by ASA; CT State policy recissions that were out dated that have been cleaned up.
 - At last meeting Provost Kathuria asked us to get back to him on program review revisions but that document hasn’t been sent yet
 - There are questions concerning “consortial” degrees that have been talked about with no specifics. We hope to get more clarity on this soon.
- Co-Chair Report –
 - Amendment to minutes of December BOR meeting – Public comment from 4Cs president that was not included because it was noted that it was a “fraudulent” statement. That was challenged by FAC members. Statement referenced payment issues to faculty over winter session. The minutes were revised for the February meeting to reflect that statement and its accuracy.
- FAC Elections Committee Formation –
 - Colena Sesanker, Lois Aime, and Jennifer Long volunteered for this committee
- CC Resolutions and statements
 - Tunxis CC passed a resolution on “Restoring a Student-Centered Campus”
 - FAC voted to endorse this resolution with one No vote
 - Capital CC passed a resolution supporting SB1105 – a bill that would increase full-time faculty numbers at the community colleges over the next few years, thus reducing the reliance on adjunct faculty. Currently about 75% of classes are taught by adjuncts at CT community colleges. CT has the 4th highest ratio of part-time to full-time faculty at two-year colleges in the nation.
 - FAC passed a resolution, with one abstention, in support of SB1195
- An update was given on legislative hearings that have occurred recently
- Draft comments to the BOR and the legislature were reviewed

Regular Meeting of the State of CT
Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents for Higher Education
Minutes
March 10, 2023

- An update on the consolidation process was discussed, including the implementation of the governance structure
- The possible implementation of “consortial” degrees was discussed. There is no real detail on what these might be or how they might be implemented. There have been some comments about the fact that a particular university might own the degree and the enrollment however the courses would/could be taught by faculty from other universities.
- There have been and continue to be CSU leadership changes

NOTE: These minutes are very minimalist because the WebEx of the meeting only recorded for the first 12+ minutes of the meeting, so there was no way to review what occurred after that time.

Meeting adjourned at 3:22 pm

Next Meeting: April 14, 2023

Submitted by FAC Secretary, Lois Aimé

DRAFT

Tunxis Community College Professional Staff Organization Resolution on Restoring a Student-Centered College

Whereas current student payment plans do not meet the needs of Tunxis students; *Whereas* the policy on dropping students for non-payment harms, not helps, Tunxis students;

Whereas rigid adherence to add-drop and overenrollment policies harm, not help, Tunxis students;

Whereas CSCC advertising practices are deceptive and may harm Tunxis students; now therefore, be it

Resolved that the Tunxis Community College Professional Staff Organization calls upon the Board of Regents to review and revise the aforementioned policies and practices, incorporating the solutions suggested below; now therefore, be it

Further Resolved, that the Tunxis Community College Professional Staff Organization calls upon the support of Tunxis Community College management in this endeavor. We wish to highlight four areas of concern concerning maintaining a student-centered focus and upholding the institutional mission. The issues impacting Tunxis Community College students include payment plans that do not meet the needs of our learners, a change in policy surrounding dropping students for non-payment, add-drop and overenrollment policies, and a lack of transparency in CT State Community College Advertising. Whereas our guiding principle of "Open Communication" states "We welcome paradox and constructive conflict as we move toward consensus," we hope that this proposed resolution is received in the manner that it is intended. We intend to shine a light on our concerns about the impact of existing policies and practices that pose barriers and don't fully consider the needs of the students that we serve.

#1- Payment Plans Do Not Meet the Needs of Our Learners

Eight hundred and ten students completed the Holistic Student Support Survey at Tunxis Community College between January 6 and February 2nd. Of those students, sixteen students indicated "In the past month, I have been worried about having a secure and safe place to sleep" and fifty-four students responded, "In the past month, I have been worried whether my food would run out before I got money to buy more". This means that 6.67% of our students who chose to complete the survey have food insecurity and 1.97% have housing insecurity. We enrolled 2861 students in the Spring semester, so if we were to apply the same percentages to the total Spring 2023 population it would account for 56 students with housing insecurity and 190 students with food insecurity. It is important to understand that nearly 250 students at Tunxis have admitted to us that they are struggling financially with regard to food and housing when we think about the concept of a payment plan. The intention of a payment plan

at an institution of higher education is to spread out college fees into installments that you can pay over time. The benefit to the student is that this makes college accessible for those who would not otherwise be able to attend due to ineligibility for federal funding. The intended outcome is to reduce the burden on the student by making education attainable by paying small amounts over time. The payment plan at Tunxis does not accomplish this goal. Our payment plans expect a student to pay 40% of their tuition at the time they enroll in the plan in addition to a \$25 installment plan fee. This was taken directly from the Tunxis.edu website:

Please note:

There will be a minimum payment due upon enrollment. This payment will include 40% of your tuition and fees as well as a \$25 non-refundable payment plan enrollment fee. Two installments of 30% each will be due according to the below schedule.

	Summer 2022:	Fall 2022:
40% Deposit:	Upon Enrollment	Upon Enrollment
30% Installment Payment 1:	06/22/2022	09/14/2022
30% Installment Payment 2:	07/20/2022	10/05/2022

Sample Payment Plan Breakdown FALL 2022:				
	12 Credits No labs/studios	9 Credits No labs/studios	6 Credits No labs/studios	3 Credits No labs/studios
Tuition:	\$ 2,058.00	\$ 1,566.00	\$ 1,044.00	\$ 522.00
College Service Fee:	\$ 262.00	\$ 207.00	\$ 151.00	\$ 107.00
Student Activity Fee:	\$ 20.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00
Transportation Fee:	\$ 40.00	\$ 40.00	\$ 40.00	\$ 40.00
Total Cost Before Payment Plan:	\$ 2,410.00	\$ 1,823.00	\$ 1,245.00	\$ 679.00
Installment Plan Fee:	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00
Deposit 40%:	\$ 964.00	\$ 729.20	\$ 498.00	\$ 271.60
Total Down Payment:	\$ 989.00	\$ 754.20	\$ 523.00	\$ 296.60
Installment 1 due 09/14/2022:	\$ 723.00	\$ 546.90	\$ 373.50	\$ 203.70
Installment 2 due 10/05/2022:	\$ 723.00	\$ 546.90	\$ 373.50	\$ 203.70
Total Cost For Payment Plan:	\$ 2,435.00	\$ 1,848.00	\$ 1,270.00	\$ 704.00

Using the example of a student enrolling in 12 credits for the Fall 2022 semester, the student would be responsible for a \$989.00 down payment. If we look at the population that we serve, it is unreasonable to assume that our students can pay \$989 out of pocket followed by two additional installments of \$723.00 a piece (\$1446.00) within a 21-day window. Our for-profit competitors offer students the opportunity to pay in equal monthly installments. When a for-profit institution offers students payment options that are more flexible than a public community college, we need to assess our practices and reflect on how we can better meet the needs of our students. When we look at our guiding principle of “Excellence: We value continuous improvement and growth in every area of college life. We value collaboration, cooperation, teamwork, innovation, and creative problem-solving in our continuous improvement efforts. We value the courage to take risks and provide leadership”.

Benefits

- We will become more accessible to students if we have payment plans that provide lower payments and a longer window of repayment
- We will be upholding the Tunxis Community College mission that we “offer its students a quality, yet affordable education in an accessible and supportive environment, fostering the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex world”

Concerns

- We are preventing vulnerable populations from accessing education which is the antithesis of our mission
- We are not living up to our guiding principles of “Respect: We treat others fairly and with dignity. We value and honor each other in our diversity” because we are not providing an opportunity for students who do not qualify for funding assistance to pursue their education at the same level of access as our students who do qualify for federal funding.

Recommendation

- We propose that the 1st 40% payment be replaced with a flat dollar amount equal to the cost of 1 credit + the Student Activity Fee (\$180 + \$10= \$190) This added to the \$25 fee that is needed to start the payment plan would bring the total upfront cost to the student to \$215, regardless of the number of credits in which they enroll.
- We propose that we create a workgroup reflective of all student-facing offices on campus to brainstorm how the payment plan can be extended over a longer period to provide students with an opportunity to pay for their courses.
- We propose that we consider on-campus employment opportunities for students that could reduce the amount of tuition owed by the student (student worker positions)

#2- Change in Policy Surrounding Dropping Students for Non-Payment

Our guiding principles state, “Responsibility: We value institutional and individual accountability, defined as doing what needs to be done in a timely manner and competent manner. By acceptance of personal responsibility for our own actions and decisions, we help to create a college at which we are proud to work.” When we examine the statement “doing what needs to be done in a timely and competent manner” it infers that the faculty and staff at the college have the latitude to competently make decisions in a manner that maintains a student-centered approach and does not cause a detriment to the institution. In a situation where a student enrolls in a course, attends the course, and then gets dropped for non-payment, the professionals working directly with students should be able to assess if a student can continue in the course if a partial payment is made within 24 hours of the drop. We propose that students make a \$150 or 10% payment (whichever amount is lower) within 24 hours to get re-enrolled, as that is a good faith commitment to paying the institution and is a reasonable amount for the students we serve. This has been the practice at Tunxis Community College in the past and we request that the BOR policy be revised to permit this practice to be reinstated.

Benefits

- Students who have already engaged in the course will receive credit for the work that was

completed instead of being dropped with nothing to show for the effort already exerted • For a course that has a lower engagement or lower enrollment, classmates will benefit from having another engaged student in the course discussions and group work

- It builds goodwill with students. They feel like staff and faculty have heard their individual needs/concerns/financial limitations and have been supported in reaching a favorable resolution

Concerns

- Students may feel like the faculty member isn't supportive of them returning to the class for an academic reason
- Students may feel that their advisor isn't able to help advocate for them and creating distrust in the relationship
- Students who are still enrolled in the class will not benefit from hearing about the experiences of the students removed from their class which can impact the quality of the course discussion

Recommendation

- The Staff and Faculty working directly with the student should have permission to work in conjunction with the business office and financial aid to re-enroll a student who has been dropped from a course prior if payment is made within 24 hours of the drop.

#3- Add/Drop and Overenrollment Policies

For many years, and indeed until this semester, Tunxis faculty had broad discretion to accept, on a case by-case basis, students into sections that were fully enrolled or had exceeded the so-called "three hour rule" for add-drop purposes. The pertinent faculty member would approve, or not, a student request; the pertinent DC would approve, or not, the faculty member's request to enroll the student; and the Academic Dean would approve, or not, the DC's recommendation. In most cases, the latter two would simply endorse the faculty member's decision. In this manner, each semester a significant number of students were accommodated, to their benefit as well as to the benefit of the College.

The recent diktat from System Office replaces decentralized, local, informal but informed decision making with enforcement of a uniform policy that harms, not helps students. One assumes many students who were turned away this semester were not interested in taking a late-start (i.e. accelerated) or a seven-week (even more accelerated) section, this assuming such a section was available for them to enroll in, or perhaps could not take such a section due to their work schedules or other commitments. Until the recent past, faculty would have found a place for many of these students because that is what faculty do and because faculty possessed the autonomy to make such judgments. Now, we are informed that we cannot accommodate students in this fashion because it is unfair and inequitable to do so and because this imposes additional work on staff members. We deem this ridiculous and unacceptable.

Concern

- Students are hampered, not helped, by centralized decision-making and inflexible policies

Recommendations

- Hire additional staff for Academic Affairs, Enrollment Services, Records, and Financial Aid
- Modify the current add/drop and overenrollment policies to allow faculty to make exceptions and assist students
- Exercise common sense and honor the spirit, not the letter, of existing policies

#4- Lack of Transparency in CT State Community College Advertising

Our guiding principle of “Integrity” states that “We avoid silence when it may mislead; we seek root causes and solve problems.” It has been brought forward to the attention of leadership that the omission of facts or in this instance “silence” surrounding the lack of caveats used in CT State advertisements is playing a role in students enrolling at Tunxis under the misconception that they do not need to pay for their education. We are marketing to an uneducated population by nature of the work that we do at a community college, which means that we should be expected to fully educate our prospective students at every opportunity. Engaging in marketing practices that do not note with an asterisk ***Restrictions apply** leaves the institution open to potential claims of deceptive marketing practices. The Federal Trade Commission states that “an ad is deceptive if it contains a statement-or omits information- that:

- Is likely to mislead consumers acting reasonably under the circumstances -or • Is “material”- that is, important to a consumer’s decision to buy or use the product

(<https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/advertising-faqs-guide-small-business>)

Benefits

- Adding language to clarify that not everyone who attends a community college will qualify for free tuition should minimize the number of people who believe that it is fully funded • We should see a decrease in the number of students dropped for non-payment because they don’t believe that they owe any money, despite receiving a bill
- Adding in a small disclaimer will ensure that we are not in violation of the FTC’s Deception Policy Statement
- By adding in a disclaimer, we will be adhering to our guiding principle of “Respect” which is that we “Treat others fairly and with dignity”. Instead of taking the approach that students “should have known that they will owe money” we are respecting the fact that many of our students are first-generation and do not have the benefit of an experienced guardian to walk them through the overwhelming process of enrolling in college.

Concerns

- Omission of facts
 - There are no disclaimers on the ads themselves that indicate that students need to meet the criteria to qualify for free tuition

Endorsed by the Faculty Advisory Committee to the BOR at its March 10 2023 Meeting

- Misleading wording/ misleading price claim
 - Using language such as “Debt-Free College”, “1 School. 12 Campuses. 0 Dollars.”, and “Believe it! Free Community College in CT”

Recommendation

- We propose that all CT State Community College Advertising add a disclaimer that “Restrictions Apply” or “Speak with an admissions counselor today to see if you qualify” to make it clear or prospective consumers that there are criteria that need to be met to qualify for this benefit.

Faculty Advisory Committee Resolution in Support of SB 1105

Whereas, the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee of the CT General Assembly has raised [Senate Bill 1105](#) *AN ACT CONCERNING THE PERCENTAGE OF COURSES TAUGHT BY PART-TIME FACULTY AT THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY- TECHNICAL COLLEGES*;

Whereas, the stated purpose of SB 1105 is to require a phased-in reduction of the percentage of courses taught by part-time faculty at the regional community-technical colleges;

Whereas, if enacted, SB 1105 would require the CT Board of Regents to enact a policy to permit not more than forty-five per cent of courses taught by part-time faculty on and after July 1, 2025, not more than thirty-five per cent of such courses on and after July 1, 2026, and not more than twenty-five per cent of such courses on and after July 1, 2027;

Whereas, SB 1105 is designed to fix the long-standing problem of over-reliance on adjunct faculty in our community college system;

Whereas, [research suggests](#) the rising numbers of part-time faculty, their poor working conditions, and the lack of support they receive from their institutions directly adversely impacts student success;

Whereas, adjunct faculty are systematically denied the opportunity to fully participate in and contribute to our college and academic community;

Whereas, our public higher educational system in Connecticut perpetuates [racialized austerity](#) and structural racism, wherein the utilization of part-time/non-tenure track faculty increases as the percentage of Hispanic and Black student body populations increase;

Whereas, SB 1105 would advance equity in our public higher education system by ensuring community college students are finally provided equitable access to full-time faculty as students in our state universities and University of Connecticut;

Whereas, the CSCU Board of Regents currently has a policy in place in the state university system that caps the percentage of courses taught by adjunct faculty at twenty percent, yet the CSCU Board of Regents has refused to enact such policy for our community colleges;

Whereas, SB 1105 would realize a goal of the CSCU 2030 plan to provide “enhanced investment in our faculty and academic innovation”;

Resolved, the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education fully supports SB 1105 as a necessary policy change to greatly improve the educational services we provide to our students and fix long standing inequities in our workforce.

Resolution Adopted March 10th 2023

CSCU, as a system, has had no academic leadership until now. Its first five years saw almost as many presidents. For the following six years, it was effectively annexed as an arm of the governor's office when Governor Malloy's chief of staff took over leadership of 17 academic institutions without a search, a terminal degree, or any experience as an educator. He committed himself to remaining uninformed by academic expertise, sometimes resorting to even using security guards to block faculty from the room while he visited campuses to address students-- in spite of the fact that, or perhaps because, any one of the faculty waiting outside the door was more qualified than he for the job. Even after votes of no confidence¹, he advertises himself as a consultant qualified to advise on issues of higher ed.

This is a new moment in the history of the system. We have a new president who appears likely to stick around, a new system provost, and a newly minted, if controversial, community college to replace the twelve that will no longer exist on July 1. It is important to reflect at this moment, and in this legislative budget session, about the future of our public higher education system in the context of its past and present. It is very easy to lose all faith in the possibility of such a thing these days and some central issues need to be considered as we fight for its survival.

There are many ways to privatize or eliminate a thing. Consider, for example, the elimination over the past five years of the substance of every community college in the state: their curriculum, policies, and the input of the educators that compose it. Legislators continue to express their deep affection, gratitude, and support for their area colleges without realizing that their promised support is hollowed out by the equivocation on which it is premised: All that remains of the colleges that once were are the buildings and some of the employees who will, perhaps, once again have a role to play in its form and function. That remains to be seen.

1. Corporate subsidy or public good?

Public higher education is cannibalizing itself. Underfunding from public sources and overreliance on tuition requires levels of enrolment that are unsustainable, increasing financial burdens on students, and that we potentially pump out credentials at a rate that floods the marketplace, depressing our graduates' future earnings. By the same token, overreliance on contingent workers degrades the value of the credentials we offer. Overreliance on grant funding and foundations to fill the gap that public funding has left incentivizes us to chase measures of success determined by foundations, think tanks, and institutes through which we gain access to the profits of wall street.

Rather than resist the financing, leadership, and values of corporate industry, we find ourselves actively pursuing them. Consider, for example,

- the narrative of failure, promoted by an incestuous think tank circuit, based on graduation rates that has fueled the transition to consolidation, even though we have all long known that, without better data, graduation rates are a poor indicator of success for community colleges. We have simultaneously abandoned preexisting efforts to gather more appropriate data from our system. 'Student success' dashboards developed in the consolidation process track the rates of students attempting 15 credits or more per semester when it is well known that the majority of our students are, and must be, part time students—an increase in this rate may be not a measure of success, but of exclusion.

¹ May 2019, at 12 CSCU institutions

- The outsized influence of the Community College Research Center, even when its advice contradicts the wisdom and experience of seasoned educators in our system, though CCRC is staffed with and run by characters devoid of any experience at community colleges, or even in public higher education. Community colleges and their students are, for them, apparently objects of a priori contemplation or of anthropological study unworthy of even field work, given their simplicity.
- Our 12-college partnership with Achieving the Dream at great cost, if not unnecessarily then prematurely- occupying many hours of faculty and staff time with no tangible results. At Gateway, our ATD investment has resulted in an increasingly frustrating version of groundhog day. There are only so many times we can get excited about being on the cusp of addressing students' problems but instead investing in consultants unfamiliar with our students and communities to fly in from another city to coach us in generalities of which we are already aware, rather than investing in solutions.
- Our apparent reverence for association with and endorsement by the Aspen Institute and other elite collectives over measures of substantive material commitments to the students and communities our community colleges are designed to serve.
- Highly publicized partnerships with Google and Amazon while more traditional degree pathways are left to flail.

These trends, at the expense of input from and accountability to the colleges and communities themselves, represent the colonization of a space, through ceding executive control, that increasingly serves historically excluded populations and is therefore a reason for close scrutiny and public discussion.

Going forward, we must ask ourselves: to what extent are the community colleges to function as a corporate subsidy and to what extent as a public good? Are we as committed to meeting the long term needs of students as we are to meeting the short term needs of area (and other) businesses? Businesses used to train their own workers, now they pass the cost of training on to the workers, leaving them with debt at the beginning of careers that do not provide the stability or quality of life that they once did. The last generation's good union jobs now come with an entry fee. If we offer certificate programs that will be outdated or commonplace in a year or two with the incentives of job placement, what longer term investments are we negotiating with these employers on our students' behalf? How might we leverage these relationships for future investments in students' development?

We often pat ourselves on the back for providing opportunities for first generation students. That means nothing if we leave them equally at the mercy of market whims and exploitative employment as their parents have been—or even, perhaps, more so. Many of our students can expect a lower standard of living than their parents had even with college degrees. We cannot abandon the substance of a quality liberal arts education to chase immediate employment goals.

2. Equity and Antiracism: a weapon of the elites or a tool of the disempowered?

There is another aspect of our identity that has undergone elite capture: the aims of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. We must take care that these initiatives are not just peddled as branding, but are infused in and arise from the communities in which these values are advertised as being practiced.

FAC Comments to the BOR, February 2023.

We must also take care that the words retain their meaning- they are, these days, overused and corrupted in the service of all manner of petitions for individual privilege and license.

The consolidated college, rightly or no, was advertised as a triumph for equity. There are any number of controversies regarding the way it lives up to this aspiration academically. One such area of contention is a useful study that can be generalized: CCS101 is a BOR-dictated course worth three college credits that bears a diversity designation even though its diversity content is unspecified and is secondary to the course's primary function. Though as a universal requirement, many, many sections would run simultaneously each semester, no effort was made to determine whether our workforce had the requisite expertise or whether we had the resources to recruit the expertise to do this justice—remembering that most of us were educated in institutions that did not have such commitments and therefore are ourselves undereducated in anything outside of the western canon and its theoretical constructs.

One would need academic or equivalent expertise to deliver western content adequately. Why is that not true of content that has been historically excluded from academia? And, if one were to claim that expertise is not necessary, how does that express values significantly different from recent declarations in Florida, for example, that African American History contains no true academic content? The only difference is that we're willing to give college credit for whatever one chooses to deliver under its guise—this is more of an embarrassment for us than for those who would therefore refuse to teach it or give credit for it.

There is also reason to worry that just as assimilationist ideals went uncorrected in the course's description (as was pointed out in previous Board meetings)—and remain documented in our board approved documents-- they may go equally unchecked in the course's delivery of necessity because no effort has been made to ensure or pursue the necessary expertise, commitments, and content.

If we are to honor those commitments, we must start with academic integrity and genuine respect for the cultures and origins of our students. In requiring that those who teach this content have at least some graduate level training, or academic, or cultural contributions in the content they deliver, we regain the academic integrity of our curriculum and also, thereby, diversify our workforce by bringing into our community or empowering those who have demonstrated commitments and investments in diverse lineages of thought and practice. We ought not colonize the academic space. Knowledge of other cultures has always been an object of study in academia, but it has not always resulted in more inclusive environments, often further cementing social divisions instead. If our public higher education system is to be an equalizing force, it requires intention and investment.

It is time to take a look at the extent to which we measure ourselves by standards and goals cultivated by JP Morgan and the like at the various Institutes and Centers they fund. Private industry has necessarily different priorities and values from those of public education and it is inappropriate to, without scrutiny, use public money to further agendas over which these private forces have outsized influence. Private money certainly has a place in our institutions as do workforce initiatives, outside consultation, and contingent labor. It is the point at which we capitulate to their priorities and accept that dismal future as an inevitability that we fail our students and our future. The trajectory of our community colleges over the past few years suggests that we have gone past the tipping point.

3. The Transformative Effects of Chronic Underfunding

By starving us of public money and necessitating philanthropic support, the legislature has, in essence put us on a path to privatization. By centralizing the community colleges and outsourcing control to managers at a location distant from students, the space is less democratized and more susceptible to that sort of external influence. We, flailing to survive, often contort ourselves to fit a model of success shaped by almost exclusively billionaires and those they sponsor.

Students, likewise, are transformed by this shift. They, paying more for tuition, fees, course materials and living and transportation expenses, even when Pell grants and last-dollar PACT are taken into consideration. And they are getting less for it:

- Given that students can no longer easily pay for a year's college education with just a summer's work at minimum wage, as they might have in the 60s, students often have to juggle the challenges of both work and school at the same time.
- Under increasing financial strain, students may feel that they cannot afford to fail. They might be right. But one cannot learn if one cannot risk failure. The classroom experience is less one of exploration and growth but rather that of a white-knuckled gamble in which everything is on the line
- At the community colleges, one is more likely to be taught by an adjunct instructor than by a member of full-time faculty. One is more likely to visit an understaffed student service office or interact with an off-site call center than to have professionals on hand to help navigate the space with them. In fact, across the system, as the ratio of students from historically excluded communities increases, investment in the classroom decreases.
- Degrees are being hollowed out with liberal arts and critical thinking content whittled away in favor of professional and workforce training that reflects current demand rather than anticipating future needs.

The consolidated community college, advertised as promoting equity and antiracism, reenacts the all-too-familiar injustices of disinvestment in the places where populations of color are on the rise while sabotaging educational content in the service of producing trained workers to benefit global business owners. It is the old, old story of race and education which has changed in detail but very little in form since the reconstruction era.

And all of this is accomplished by way of exploitative labor practices which keep more than 75% of the community college workforce employed contract-to-contract, with a commitment from the colleges of no more than a few weeks at a time for years on end with no budget or plan to transition these workers to more permanent positions. The consolidated community college is, in reality, a site of great injustice. It is an enactment of racialized austerity.

4. Action Steps: Funding, Accountability, Respect for Local Expertise

Regents, faculty and staff, legislators, and our governor must commit to quality, truly public, higher education. We must assess whether the values and mission of public higher education are reflected in our practices. Under current conditions, there is a real risk that we not only fall short of our mission but threaten to accomplish its opposite- a sort of social engineering that favors those who would exploit our students.

FAC Comments to the BOR, February 2023.

- We request from the system office a process of disclosure for every consultant, non-profit, and grantor along with their funding sources to adequately determine their net effect on our system now and into the future.
- We insist on a return to a practice of true, substantive, shared governance so that the system can be informed by educators and students.
- We call upon the legislature: fund us at a level that takes into consideration the extreme underfunding we have suffered for years, and which is documented well by the office of higher education so that we can return to our mission.

Colena Sesanker

Chair, Faculty Advisory Committee to the CT Board of Regents.

February 2023

Approved: March 10 2023