

**BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
CT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (CSCU)
Minutes of Finance & Infrastructure Meeting
March 13, 2024
Conducted Via Remote Participation**

REGENTS - PARTICIPATING (Y = yes / N = no)	
Richard J. Balducci, Committee Chair	Y
Marty Guay	Y
JoAnn Ryan, BOR Chair	Y
Ari Santiago	Y
Erin Stewart	N
Ted Yang	Y
*Brendan Cunningham, FAC Chair	Y
Carla Galaise, Student Regent	N
<i>*ex-officio, non-voting member</i>	

CSCU STAFF:

Lloyd Blanchard, VP of Administration / Chief Financial Officer
 Lisa Bucher, Chief Budget & Compliance Officer, Central Connecticut State University
 Terrence Cheng, Chancellor
 Rachel Cunningham, Admin Assistant to Lloyd Blanchard (recorder)
 Beatrice Fevry, VP for Finance & Administration, Western Connecticut State University
 Pamela Heleen, Secretary of the Board of Regents
 James Howarth, VP for Finance & Administration, Eastern Connecticut State University
 Lori Lamb, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor of Human Resources & Labor Relations
 Michael Moriarty, VP for Administration & Chief Financial Officer, Charter Oak State College
 Jessica Paquette, Vice Chancellor of System Affairs & Chief of Staff
 Mark Rozewski, Exec VP for Finance & Administration, Southern Connecticut State University

CALL TO ORDER:

Committee Chair Balducci called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM. Following the roll call, Rachel Cunningham recorded a quorum present.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Balducci requested a motion to accept the minutes of the February 14, 2024, meeting, seconded by Regent Yang, which was approved by a unanimous vote.

ACTION ITEMS:

CSCU – Equitable Access Program Fee

CFO Blanchard welcomed the CFOs from the Universities and Charter Oak and provided a detailed overview of the program, Attachment A.

Q: Regent Guay asked for further info on the RFP development process and the decision-making regarding Barnes & Noble as the best deal.

CFO Blanchard explained that the Barnes & Noble contract hasn't been signed yet. The normal RFP process was followed; for this RFP, each of the campuses developed requirements regarding what they need in terms of bookstore services through their committees as shown in the slides. The requirements were reconciled for the final RFP that was posted to the public. 4 vendors submitted proposals. The RFP committee reviewed all the proposals for the set criteria and in the end, Barnes & Noble met their requirements more than the other proposals.

Q: Regent Guay asked what the negotiated terms are for the proposed contract and if there are any kind of performance clauses or provisions.

CFO Blanchard responded the term of the contract would be five years with one-year extensions. There are performance provisions, but those are still being negotiated with a termination clause for either side of the contract.

Q: Regent Guay asked what the default setting is for students who opt-out and if it is for the entire year.

CFO Blanchard responded that "opting out" is by semester and coincides with selecting courses every semester.

Regent Guay requested that the students be made aware in a formal communication as part of the routine communication process every semester that they must opt-out if that is what they'd like to do.

CFO Blanchard referenced a recent news story of a UConn student who at first was opposed to the plan and along with a large portion of their population opted out in the beginning. After learning more about the benefits and convenience provided to students now support it. This is an example of something we fully expect from our CSCU students.

Q: Regent Yang asked if CT State was part of this plan or if they intend to join in the future.

CFO Blanchard stated CT State's contract dates were not aligned with the universities and Charter Oak. There are a few years on their current contract, but when the time comes, it will be addressed.

Prof. Cunningham stated there are some inaccuracies in the information shared for this meeting. The pie charts of sample sizes do not add up to the 701 students surveyed about this topic and questioned where they came from. He stated further that faculty and students were not adequately prepared to discuss the program.

Chair Balducci thanked Prof Cunningham for his comments and stated that survey respondents are never 100% of the entire population and can be sporadic numbers of students based on how many completed the survey. He confirmed that the full BOR meeting will determine if this resolution is passed or not by the Regents and the faculty and students are welcome to bring their comments.

Chair Balducci stated his initial concerns and opposition to the program. Through communication with CSU faculty and their awareness, as well as the research by the Obama/Biden administration that it supports lower and middle-class students' success, he is now in favor of it.

Chair Balducci highlighted the following information and expectations for the program to be successful:

- All the communications on the opt-in/opt-out material distributed to students must be clear and equally visible.
- There will be penalties that students are responsible for paying if the book is damaged (broken spine/torn pages), but clarified highlighting and usage are acceptable, they are borrowed materials that must be returned.

Prof. Cunningham commented that he has data to share that the plan does not save money based on national averages and reiterated that his point was not about the small sample size of the surveys, but about the basic arithmetic that does not add up.

Q: Regent Yang asked about what news is being circulated, and what is known and not known about the federal recommendations for opt-in/opt-out programs.

CFO Blanchard clarified that the sample sizes on the slides are different as the footnote shows, they are samples from 2022 and 2023.

CFO Blanchard commented that when it comes to rulemaking, there are ongoing debates between consumer groups and policymakers.

Regent Santiago stated the program doesn't limit the professors in any way and allows the students to get the materials on time with a seamless start while giving an opportunity to opt-out for those who look for options to find books and materials at a lower cost.

Prof. Cunningham stated many faculty are upset about the program and choose books that are free from OER (open education resources).

Q: Regent Yang asked what percentage of faculty are using OER materials and if it can be shared before the next full BOR meeting.

CFO Blanchard stated this program does not preclude the use of OER and appreciates the faculty who use those materials to lower costs for students. He clarified that the OER program shifts the cost of the fees for the materials provided from the students to the institutions.

Chair Balducci requested a motion to support the adoption of the resolution to bring forward to the full BOR meeting next week for further discussion, seconded by Regent Santiago, which was approved by a unanimous vote.

Chair Balducci stated he would like to have further discussion about the AAUP's opposition to the retirement incentive program.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 11:54 AM on a motion by Chair Balducci, seconded by Regent Yang, the committee voted unanimously to go to Executive Session to discuss matters under the Connecticut General Statute section 1- 210b 9, no votes will be taken.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Balducci adjourned the meeting at 1:00 PM.