

**BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
CT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (CSCU)
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024 – 9:00 a.m.
CONDUCTED IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY
LIVESTREAMED ON <https://www.youtube.com/live/QWVoDsOg4YE>**

REGENTS – PARTICIPATING (Y = yes / N = no)	
Marty Guay, Chair	Y
Richard J. Balducci	Y
Ira Bloom	Y (Remote)
Shian Earlington, Student Regent	Y (Remote)
Juanita James	Y (Remote)
Sophia Jappinen	Y (Remote)
Richard Porth	Y
Luis Sanchez, Student Regent	Y
Ari Santiago	Y (Remote)
Erin Stewart	Y (Remote)
Elease E. Wright	Y (Remote)
Ted Yang	Y
*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
*Charlene Russell-Tucker, Education Commissioner	N
*Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer	Y
*Charlene Casamento, OPM Undersecretary	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
 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
 Keith Epstein, Vice President for Facilities, Real Estate & Infrastructure Planning

Pam Heleen, Secretary of the Board of Regents

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Guay called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Following roll call, a quorum was declared.

2. **BOR CHAIR GUAY REMARKS (00:07:49)**

- Chair Guay thanked everyone for joining the meeting in person and online and noted that the Board is present to hear the report from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).
- He also announced that generally, there is no invitation for public comment at Special Meetings of the Board of Regents. However, questions and comments from the public regarding the NCHEMS study will be welcomed following questions from the Regents and Institution Presidents, time permitting, based on the availability of our NCHEMS presenter.
- He acknowledged the receipt of a written response from AAUP (Attachment A) which has been shared with the Regents in advance of the meeting.
- Chair Guay noted that OPM commissioned the study by NCHEMS and will turn the meeting over to Undersecretary Casamento. The study will allow the Board and CSCU to understand our program and structure better in comparison to our peers in the higher education setting, consider recommendations, and short and long term operational support needs for long-term sustainability.

3. **CHANCELLOR CHENG'S REMARKS (00:09:27)**

- Chancellor Cheng thanked everyone for joining the meeting and expressed his appreciation for the work of NCHEMS. He noted that we are looking forward to hearing the presentation and reviewing their recommendations. He stressed that CSCU will take advantage of any asset available to help improve CSCU with the goal of helping students and improving their experience. One of the best investments that Connecticut can make is the continued funding of CSCU's colleges and universities.

4. **NCHEMS PRESENTATION (00:10:38)**

- OPM Undersecretary Charlene Casamento introduced the presentation by thanking the Board for the opportunity to provide an overview of the NCHEMS report. She thanked everyone who contributed to the report - Chancellor Cheng, Chair Guay, faculty, staff, System Office and institution presidents across the System. She added that as part of the FY24-25 biennial budget, the legislature provided OPM with funding to contract with a higher education expert to conduct an independent third-party study of CSCU. The NCHEMS report is intended to position CSCU to meet student demand, to become more fiscally stable and efficient, while improving student outcomes and meeting the workforce needs of Connecticut's economy. She noted that it will take time to digest the information in the NCHEMS report, to hear from stakeholders, to evaluate which of the recommendations and on what scale and timeline are in the interest of CSCU, as well as the state, and to proceed with implementation. She concluded by stating that it is our hope that the NCHEMS recommendations will become a resource for CSCU, as well as the state, to strengthen higher education in Connecticut. She introduced Brian Prescott, President of NCHEMS to provide an overview of the NCHEMS report.
- Brian Prescott, President of NCHEMS presented information on the project and about NCHEMS (00:12:42 – 01:09:16 - slide deck is included as Attachment B). NCHEMS is a nonprofit organization that is located in Boulder, Colorado whose mission is to use data and evidence to

drive strategic decision-making for systems, state agencies, institutions and legislators around postsecondary education. NCHEMS has been pursuing that mission for 55 years. NCHEMS work has touched at some point every state in the country in various ways.

- Discussion with the Regents followed:
 - (01:10:02) Regent Porth noted that he was especially interested in NCHEMS research and recommendations as to how the pipeline works for the dual enrollment issue. He also noted that the cost per FTE stands out in the report and has a lot to do with the long-standing practice in CT of the state government negotiating contracts on behalf of the colleges and universities. His final note was NCHEMS recommendation that CSCU become more nimble, to move more quickly when enrollment changes in different places and when the desire for certain types of courses changes. He stressed that state government leadership and CSCU employees need to equal partners in the work. Dr. Prescott addressed the issues, including exercising more flexibility, engagement with the faculty and a program review.
 - (01:14:43) Professor Cunningham made remarks concerning the K-12 educational achievement gap in CT and the investment needed to support those students when they arrive at CSCU. He also referred to published investigative reports concerning other NCHEMS projects and asked if the Regents thought NCHEMS was the best choice for this analysis. His comments questioned the ethical business practices of NCHEMS. Both Dr. Prescott and Dr. Dennis Jones addressed the comments.
 - (01:22:10) Regent Yang asked questions around technology and the evolving state of higher education, such as generative AI and certificates for technology. Dr. Prescott commented on these issues, addressing pedagogy and the skills and abilities that students will need to be effective in the workforce.
 - (01:28:07) Regent Santiago asked where does NCHEMS see parallels with other systems related to the challenges that CSCU is facing. He continued by asking which systems that have these parallels have been successful in overcoming them or moving in the right direction or conversely, systems where they've made some moves that have either made the situation worse or not had a positive impact. Dr. Prescott noted that there are limited models, especially on the public side of higher education. He shared information concerning higher education in Vermont and Maine.
 - (01:32:38) Professor Sesanker commented on the premise of the report and asked where the office that looks at the needs of the state and understands how higher ed may serve those needs is, costs it out, and decides whether or not we could or should afford it. She noted that this is the unique task that is missing. Dr. Prescott responded that the NCHEMS recommendations about a state policy coordination body discusses that issue specifically.
 - (01:41:56) Regent James noted her appreciation for the thorough, thoughtful and comprehensive report provided by NCHEMS. She asked about NCHEMS' interpretation on the breadth of missteps made by other systems in their attempts to convert to a system strategy. Dr. Prescott noted that he thought that the reality is that institutions should manage their own day-to-day operations, and the system office should focus on where the holes are between institutions and what the students of the state, communities, and employers really need. There are things that the system office can facilitate about management of institutions, but not do them for the institutions. Regent James also noted that the report pointed out the need to place emphasis on improvement of communications, clarity, transparency and improvement of data usage and gathering. She added that the report didn't talk about the need for improvement in process discipline and project management. Dr. Prescott related the case of Vermont's system office failure in trying to centralize their payroll operations.

- (01:52:34) Student Regent Sanchez asked about the student input that was gathered for the report. He also noted the importance of student input when making decisions for long-term sustainability of the whole system and asked how CSCU can more systematically implement student input into the decision-making process. Dr. Prescott noted that the goal is to get diverse student input and that it's easy to get input from students who are more involved and hard to hear from students are not. Both are needed so that the system can benefit from the knowledge.
- (01:57:09) Chancellor Cheng recognized that this is a hard moment for all due to the significant challenges CSCU faces and he believes that every stakeholder group wants the same thing – the betterment of CSCU. He thanked the faculty and labor partners for being engaged and exercising their voices. He commented that some of the recommendations in the NCHEMS report are already being undertaken by the System – defining what the System Office does versus what the institutions do in an effort to end duplication, eliminating the need for a CSCU Provost, and putting together systemwide councils to position the system as the conduit and aggregator of expertise and best practices. He commented on the P20WIN information sharing from the presentation and added that it is an ongoing dialogue. The Chancellor added that we have to overcome what happened at Western, internalize that, and move on; we have to look at what happened with the Community College merger, an initiative that was well intentioned but was not executed terribly well for a period of time; we cannot change the past, but we can absolutely address it by moving forward into the future.
- (02:04:22) Regent Bloom addressed some of the areas that the report does not touch on very much. He noted that the report is outdated; Board leadership has changed dramatically since the body of the report was written. The role of graduate and professional education is not really mentioned in the report to any great extent. Regent Bloom agreed with the report's description of CSCU as a young system, still learning to be a system. The report is very helpful in pointing out the things that need to be done, but there are crucial things that are missing.
- (02:10:09) Regent Wright noted that she would like to hear more about the particular skill set that is need in today's higher ed – whether in the System Office or in the administration of our institutions. Dr. Prescott responded that there are some characteristics worth noting, including communication ability, style, and regularity, putting a plan that's feasible together and involving the various parties in doing that, and putting a plan in place and sticking to it.
- (02:15:01) President Maduko commented that he has witnessed a fatigue on the part of employees and students around the guessing game that is the level state funding, and he believes that it gets in the way of trying to fulfill the mission of CSCU institutions. He also asked about NCHEMS take on blended systems with 2-year and 4-year institutions, adding that across similar systems, there seems to be a skew or bias towards the four-year institutions. Dr. Prescott agreed that the community colleges have regularly made the same argument that their needs and their appreciation for their very diverse mission is lost in conversations that focus on the four-year bachelor's degree granting institutions. He added that here are some things that the system office can do to ensure that attention is focused on the needs of the community college system in terms of how they build agendas, in terms of the way in which they allocate human resources to address those needs.
- (02:20:48) President Smith thanked Dr. Prescott for explaining the enrollment cliff as an enrollment decline and for the opportunities for dual enrollment. He asked if there was a reason why there was not a focus or recommendation about opportunities for enrollment growth, particularly creating a greater pipeline between CT State and the four-year institutions.

Dr. Prescott responded that one of the values of a system is to better ensure the mobility of student credits from the two-year institutions into the four-year institutions. He would certainly commend efforts on the part of the CSUs to look to transfer student populations as a way to not just to meet their enrollment targets but also to serve the needs of student populations.

- (02:23:00) AAUP President Louise Williams commented that AAUP finds the NCHEMS report both disturbing and problematic. She added that a draft of their detailed responses was included in the meeting information. The NCHEMS report is a political document paid for by OPM to justify decisions they have already made. OPM has already decided that the CSCU system does not deserve any more State funding and that it should shrink in size by cutting personnel and programs. The report does not answer some important questions about how the CSCU can contribute to a better future for all the people of Connecticut and how can it help neighbors lead better lives, help employers have access to thoughtful workers, and help expand the state's tax base. She added that the report provides a simplistic snapshot of the system's problem taken from a height of 30,000 ft. and ignores Connecticut's complex history, its politics, its economy and the lived experiences of students and faculty.
- (02:26:55) President Singh thanked NCHEMS for their report which only pertains to data up to 2022. There have been significant changes at Western since then – in leadership, strategic planning, and academic program development.
- (02:31:37) Undersecretary Casamento thanked everyone for the work. She added that there's a lot in the report to digest – different perspectives, different recommendations. The job for CSCU is to look at the recommendations and think about how they can improve the higher education system. She looks forward to the dialogue that will occur over the coming weeks and months.
- (02:32:40) Chancellor Cheng thanked President Singh because Western and its faculty staff and students have embraced the challenge presented by NCHEMS. Chancellor Cheng presented closing remarks.

6. **CLOSING REMARKS** – Vice Chair James echoed everyone's thanks for participation and interest. She noted that there is a lot of work to do. She appreciated the amount of time, effort, and attention being put into solving the problems and creating the future, noting that the work can be done together. She added that it's very important for us to respect each other's intentions and motives and to appreciate the work that everyone is trying to do to make us better. She thanked Dr. Prescott for the amount of time and attention NCHEMS put into the report and presentation.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chair James adjourned the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Submitted,

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