Regular Meeting of the State of CT
Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents for Higher Education
Minutes
June 16, 2023

Present:
Aime, Lois, Admin Fac, At-Large Rep, NCC
Blaszczynski, Andre, Fac, alternate, TXCC
Blitz, David, Fac, Vice-Chair, CCSU
Coan, Francis, Fac, TXCC, Emeritus
Dunne, Matthew, Fac, HCC
Emanuel, Michael, Fac, alternate, NWCCC
Farquharson, Patrice, Fac, COSC
Goh, Bryan, Fac, alternate, MXCC
Long, Jennifer, Fac, alternate, TRCC
Muldoon, Linsey, Fac, alternate, MCC
Rajczewski, MaryBeth, Fac, ACC
Robinson, Dyan, SUOAF, CSU
Sesanker, Colena, Fac, Chair, GWCC
Shea, Michael, Fac, SCSU
Stoloff, David, Fac, alternate, ECSU
Yiamouyiannis, Carmen, Fac, alternate, CCC

Absent:
Andersen, Jonathan, Fac, alternate, QVCC
Cunningham, Brendan, Fac, ECSU
Fisher, Mikey, Fac, alternate, SCSU
Lumbantobing, Rotua, Fac, alternate, WCSU
Jackson, Mark, Fac, alternate, CCSU
Perfetto, Linda, Admin Fac, alternate, COSC
Picard, Ronald, Fac, alternate, NVCC
Whittemore, Rob, Fac, WCSU
Wilder, Linda, Admin Fac, COSC

• Meeting called to order at 3:03 pm by Chair Sesanker. Meeting is being recorded as required.
  - Approval of 5/12/23 FAC minutes – not distributed so approval vote deferred until 7/14 meeting
  - Approval of Agenda – Motion to approve – André Blaszczynski; seconded – approved unanimously
• List of questions for joint meeting was shared. Ben Barnes emailed all BOR members about questions, stating he did not have much of this information at the present time. (see list below)
• No comments from BOR members, others, about imminent approval of CSCC for accreditation. However, not surprising as this is in line with previous lack of commentary throughout this process.
• 4Cs and AFSCME sent joint letter to NECHE correcting misinformation regarding IT, Marketing, and other areas, that was part of the Progress Report submitted to NECHE on 6/01/23.
• No comment in the Progress Report that indicates the fiscal issues the system is facing
• CSCU administration needs to state how their mitigation process is going to work in this fiscal environment
• Report of Vice-Chair
  - Statement to Executive Ctte. of BOR on 6/06 contesting the way the deficit is calculated
    - Misstated information; inclusion of PACT in calculations even though PACT is not an operating expense
    - There should be three components – Operating expenses; PACT; SEBAC related costs
• Report of Chair
  - Delivered questions to administrative attendees from 5/12 meeting right after that meeting, however receipt of these questions has not even been acknowledged much less responded to, except for a complaint filed by one of the Vice Presidents in attendance at the 5/12 meeting. This complaint initiated a criminal investigation because of wording used by an FAC member at the April 14 FAC meeting.
• FAC needs a formal statement on this complaint and a formal statement noting the inaccuracies in the 6/01 Progress Report to NECHE along with the fact that the serious concerns associated with the negative fiscal issues facing the system were never even hinted at in that report.
• Enrollment appears to be an issue. The community colleges are seeing something different than what is being stated in New Britain. The published schedule format, which is neither intuitive, nor user-friendly, and therefore difficult to navigate and to interpret, is probably contributing to the enrollment concerns.
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- Selective admissions process for PTA, Respiratory Care, Vet Tech has pretty much decimated Norwalk CC programs, in particular the Vet Tech program. The Program Coordinators who run these programs were not permitted to participate in the admissions process for unknown reasons. This process has been mishandled on every level for these programs.
- In general, college faculty and staff are “sitting on pins and needles” waiting to see how the fall semester will unfold for students, faculty, and staff because of the uncertainty with curriculum issues, registration issues, admissions issues, advising issues, student support services, etc.

Meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm  
Next Meeting: July 14, 2023  
Submitted by FAC Secretary, Lois Aimé
June 14, 2023

President Cheng, CFO Ben Barnes, and Board of Regents,

In the absence of any official updates on our financial outlook since the state budget was voted out of house and senate on 6/6, we submit the following questions in advance of our Joint FAC-BOR meeting on June 16th, 2023.

Some questions concern the administration’s documents, plans, and calculations. For those, we (again) request as much in writing as is feasible in advance of the meeting so that our committee can review and digest the information in time for a productive discussion on Friday. What cannot be provided in advance, we request in writing as soon as it is available.

Other questions concern the administration and board’s perspective and goals. For those questions, we hope you will review and reflect in advance. We look forward to our interaction and to getting to know you all a little better as we problem-solve together at this difficult time.

CSCU administration:

1. Your June 8: response to my and David Blitz’s emailed statement to the BOR in advance of its executive committee meeting on 6/6 noted a difference of $181M between what the system received in state funding and the CSCU 2030 request. But the CSCU 2030 request does not describe the funding needed to maintain a current-services level of operation. It is, rather, a more aspirational document calling for a ‘generational investment’ in our system. The difference between the generational investment number and what we have received could not possibly be the amount required to maintain status quo.

   Likewise, if you subtract the CSCU2030 ask from the governor’s proposed budget - which is $165M less than we received- you get a number that falls within $2M of our advertised deficit: $337M. But such a comparison is unhelpful and uncredible as a claimed deficit that requires hundreds of layoffs, thousands of part time reductions, tuition increases and other devastation.

   To this end, please describe for us:
   a) How much is the projected current service level for FY24 and FY25?
   b) What are projected revenues for FY24 and FY25?

2. An early deficit mitigation plan identified a $109M system deficit in FY24 and attributed $95M of that to CTState. And yet your public narrative has attributed all shortfalls to the state’s failure to adequately fund the SEBAC wage increases it voted to implement in spring of 2022, backdated to the contract start date of July 1, 2021. What difference between the colleges and universities explains why the colleges suffer so much more, and so very immediately, from this oversight?

3. Please provide an updated breakdown across institutions of projected revenues and expenditures so that we can understand the variations between institutions. If the large disparities between institutions are still there, please explain why there are such wide variations between institutions.

4. Using your estimates of SEBAC-related costs from the CSCU2030 document (p.7) and how they vary relative to FY23, those costs are about $32M less in FY24 than in FY23 and about $0.7M more in FY25 than they were in FY23. In FY24, the approved budget gives us (using the numbers as presented in Ben Barnes’ June 8 email) $13M more than FY23 but $102M less than FY23 in FY25.
a) How do these numbers relate to the system’s claim of a $335M deficit over the biennium?
b) Does your most recent calculation of the cost of wage increases match these numbers? If not, what are they?

5. CSCU has aggregate reserves of $329.0M as of 6/30/23, which constitutes 22.6% of FY24 systemwide expenditures. The initial deficit mitigation plan proposed using only $22.7M of these reserves to offset the projected deficit, and none of the $75.1M in reserves held at the system level, leaving projected systemwide reserves equal to 19.6% of expenditures as of 6/30/25.

a) Does CSCU have a standard for the colleges and universities as to the targeted level of reserves as a percentage of expenditures? If so, how did you arrive at that target?
b) CSCU’s projected systemwide reserves as of 6/30/23 equal 22.6% of expenditures. Are you aware that community colleges in other states, such as California, use a reserve target of 5% of expenditures?
c) Why didn’t the early version of the DMP propose using reserves more aggressively as an alternative to program and staffing cuts and to tuition increases? Will mitigation plans currently being developed take a different approach to use of reserves?

6. Could you share with us the most recent version of the FY24-25 CSCU Deficit Mitigation Plan, including comparable figures on revenue and expenditures for FY22 and 23 for the purpose of comparison?

7. Deficit mitigation, thus far, has been focused on cuts to offerings and increases in tuition but, in the face of reduced state funding, enrollment is an increasingly important source of revenue. These mitigation measures would serve to further depress enrollment, resulting in both reduced revenues and further justification—by the governor’s and OPM’s current logic, anyway—to withhold state funding. As such, no mitigation plan we have seen can be said to successfully address our current challenges to preserving the public service with which we have been entrusted. They are focused, rather, on describing, with numbers, the measure of pain that has been inflicted on us.

a) Now that efforts to alert the legislature and the executive branch to the enormity of the problem are behind us, what other approaches have been considered in the service of preserving the integrity and existence of the system?
b) Related: what are the current enrolment numbers—broken down by college/campus for the community colleges?

8. You have claimed that the transition to the consolidated college has had no cost and indeed the Students First Plan that proposed this transition did not project a cost greater than just over one million dollars for the transition (appendix LL, p.264). If that is true, over the past five years we have managed to achieve the (imminent) opening of the fifth largest community college in the country at almost no cost—perhaps at a savings.

a) If this is true, how do we justify this extended project of targeting the sector of our public college population that is least wealthy and majority non-white for extracting savings? If this assessment has since been modified, what is your estimate of the cost of launching the fifth largest community college in the country?

The following two questions are versions of questions included in a list we submitted to CTState leadership after they met with our committee on May 12. They have not yet answered. We ask for Regents’ responses here:

9. The current budget crisis and political climate do not indicate that this new college will have very
much external support. In fact, in a recent interview, Governor Lamont was quite clear about his vision for the community colleges and unapologetic about the budget’s potential consequences for our workforce.

a) Does the Board agree with the vision that the Governor outlined for the community colleges of more night classes and certificates that can be achieved in a few weeks? If not, what is he missing and how might we best convey that vision to him?

b) There is quite a lot of work ahead of us to get this college running even adequately. How do you launch a college while being starved into reductions by your primary funding source - the state? Is it responsible to launch an enterprise like this one with no investments on the horizon?

c) Given the forecasted budget deficits for the one community college, can we reasonably and responsibly claim that the new college can meet NECHE’s standards for accreditation, especially standard 7 that requires adequate financial resources? (the June 1st submission to NECHE makes no mention of the advertised deficit and mitigation plans)

10. This Consolidated College was advertised as a triumph for equity and even as an antiracist institution but cutting funding, decreasing offerings, increasing class sizes, reducing full time staffing etc are all time-tested austerity measures that have a proven track record of undermining the prospects of the working class and people of color.

a) What is the relationship of this college to the aspiration of equity? How could it be understood as meeting even the most minimal standards of justice in a state that struggles with the challenges of income inequality and disparities exacerbated by racial segregation in education?