I note this month that the lists of tenure and promotion of faculty are being approved and graduation ceremonies are being held for students; a significant moment for the faculty and students that we all celebrate. I wish that the same could be said for the faculty who are retiring, though much more can and will be said.

The CSCU system is, to put it bluntly, in continuing difficulty – I hesitate to use the word crisis as that is a technical term – , despite the recent and welcome injection of an additional $80 million of one time ARPA funding, for which the CSCU leadership, Faculty Advisory Committee, and union leadership, despite my criticisms of them, deserve full praise. But we all know that the structural deficits at two of the six CSCU institutions – CTState and Western, will not go away so readily.

Nor will the lack of collegiality and civility in interpersonal relations. This was evidenced in the recent dismissal of the CSCU Provost who in my opinion was making considerable progress to improving system/faculty relations. It is evidenced by union leaders’ continued denunciations of members of the Board and in particular the ex-officio member who wrote this, now derided as leader of an anti-union cabal, a convenient if false claim intended to silence anyone critical of how the union leadership handled the retirement initiative.

“Systemness” will not solve the problem, as it is just another ill-defined term for over-centralization and a command and control approach by CSCU leadership; nor will a redefinition of union goals to focus on power to the detriment of groups of its own members – retirees come to mind. Both approaches, mirror images of each other, neglect basic components of problem solving. Conflict will not disappear, but it can be handled in ways that facilitate resolution rather than escalation.

These include items which should be common sense but often in the heat of conflict are forgotten: listen and learn, even with those with whom we disagree, and perhaps especially with them, communicate and consult with all parties involved, instead of making decisions based on the closed door thinking of small groups, review and revise decisions made in the light of new information and changed circumstances, be realistic and reasonable in making demands, and my two favorites: seek truth from facts and speak truth to power.

I have appropriated all of these items from other sources and claim no originality except perhaps in synthesis and application. I admit that all of us, including those I have criticized above, agree on the principle of protecting and promoting public higher education in our state. But though necessary that is not sufficient. A strategy involving a recognition of both the scope and the limits of power, and correlative, the respect for all parties despite disagreement and disputes is needed as well. And that is just the beginning.

More could be said, and I am available to discuss with anyone interested. In the meantime, I am working on several dossiers I consider as pertinent and with which I have been involved: the first on lessons learned in the process leading to the vaccine mandate, as we may face another pandemic in the future; the second on a system of system approach to governance, focused on cooperation and coordination, not command and control; and a third on the recent retirement initiative which has been a failure for all concerned. The dossier on the retirement initiative is now complete and available on request.

David Blitz, Professor of Philosophy and retiree after 35 years of service at CCSU